

# EXTRACTS FROM THE VÂHAN

*Including Answers by*

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

SINCE 1891 *The Vâhan* has been the vehicle for the exchange of opinion among members of the European Section (now the British Section) of the Theosophical Society. Issued as a Sectional Journal, its circulation has necessarily been limited, but, with the growth of the Theosophical Movement throughout the world, an increasing interest has been taken in the subjects discussed in its pages, and a keen demand has arisen among students for the twelve volumes, which contain much information nowhere else available. Complete sets of volumes are extremely rare, and are not to be found even in many theosophical libraries. It is in answer to the demand for the information thus accumulated during so many years—much of it being the work of the older and more experienced students of Theosophy—that the present volume has been prepared.

The fact that the whole of the material was originally furnished as answers to questions, promulgated from many sources, explains the wide field of subject matter, and affords a guarantee that it will have a permanent value for students and inquirers, as it deals with innumerable points which are likely to occur to those who commence the study of Theosophy. The number of such inquirers is steadily growing, and it is therefore felt that the present volume will have an increasing value as a book of reference in all the English-speaking countries where Theosophy is destined to spread.



## EDITORIAL NOTE

IN preparing the following Extracts, twelve volumes of *The Vâhan*, from August 1891 to July 1903, have been carefully searched for answers likely to be helpful to students at the present time. Very few answers written before 1895 have been inserted, as in almost all cases better answers on the subjects discussed were found in the later *Vâhans*.

Of the answers written after 1895, the greater number are included in the Extracts, but in some cases, where a large number of answers have been given to one question, one or two representative answers only have been taken.

The questions are not arranged in order of time as originally issued. The aim has been to reduce the material as far as possible to some order in regard to the subject matter, and questions relating to allied subjects have been placed together.

The year in which any question, with its answers, was first published has been generally added in brackets after each question, but in cases where several answers of different dates are attached to a question, the corresponding date is placed after each answer.

It is hoped that the Extracts may prove useful for lodge work and individual study, giving, as they do, a broad and varied statement of opinion on theosophic subjects. Even those members who are fortunate enough to possess the whole twelve volumes of *The Vâhan* may find in the Extracts some help to study, as the subject matter is rearranged, and a copious index provided.

In conclusion, I have to express my thanks to the Executive Committee of the British Section of the Theosophical Society for permission to make and publish these Extracts; and to Mr Keightley, Miss Ward, and other members for advice and practical help.

SARAH CORBETT.

March 1904.



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# EXTRACTS FROM THE VÂHAN

## DIVISION I

### MEANING AND SCOPE OF THEOSOPHY

#### QUESTION I.

*What is Theosophy? Is it an attempt to propagate Buddhism or Brahmanism? How does it differ from the Vedânta Philosophy?*

A. B.—Theosophy is the ancient "Wisdom-Religion," as handed down for thousands of years by generation after generation of Initiates, who from time to time have given out portions of its doctrines, as the evolution of the human race rendered mankind at large ready for the teaching. These Initiates are merely men more highly evolved than their fellow-men, who have become capable of apprehending the deeper truths of nature, by developing the intellectual and spiritual parts of their being, and so coming in contact with portions of the Universe unknown to the race at large. For it must be remembered that while our knowledge of the Universe is bounded by our capacity to receive impressions from it, the Universe itself is not so bounded. Every fresh sense, every new point of contact, that can be developed in man opens up new avenues to knowledge of the infinite stores of nature. The Initiates—called sometimes Adepts, Mahâtmas, Masters—are men who have opened up many such new avenues, and who pass on the knowledge thus acquired to their more backward brethren, as these are able to understand it.

This Wisdom-Religion—to give it its older name, for "Theosophy" is a modern title, dating only from the third century, A.D.

—is the foundation of all exoteric religions, the source of all true sciences and philosophies. The chief doctrines of the great religions of the world are allegories, too often distorted, clustered round a nucleus of esoteric truth. The science of the nineteenth century draws some of its most cherished theories from the Initiates of Greece, and the chief “discoveries” of the Middle Ages were made by men who had been trained in Occultism in the East—as the discovery of hydrogen by Paracelsus. Every student can see how the most advanced philosophies of Germany are penetrated with the spirit of the Eastern schools. And so, in the course of ages the time has come when Theosophy can stand out to claim a hearing for its doctrines from the intellectual world, to challenge the theory of materialism, to lay the scientific foundation of religion, and to give that sure basis for ethics of which modern society is so much in need.

Theosophy teaches that the Universe is Life embodied, and regards “spirit” and “matter” as the two poles of this manifesting energy, which evolves into seven planes or stages of existence, each characterised by its own attributes. Man is an image in miniature of the Universe, and is therefore sevenfold in his constitution, being related by each plane of his being to the corresponding plane in the Universe. Hence as he evolves the higher parts of himself he comes into contact with the higher planes of the Universe, and can study, investigate, and know them with as much certainty as he can study, investigate, and know the physical plane through his five physical senses. The department of Theosophy that deals with the methods of evolution is called Occultism; it is the study of the Universe by theory and by practice. Few have the self-sacrifice, the endurance, the courage, the purity for such investigation, and emphatically it is true of students of Occultism that “few are chosen.”

Accepting the correspondence between the Universe and Man, it follows that man must also be spirit embodied, *i.e.*, that he is a spirit using a body, not a body possessed of a spirit. This spirit can become self-conscious on all planes of existence only by experience, and this experience can only be won by treading each plane in all its phases, until the Perfect Man, living on all planes in full self-consciousness, is ultimately evolved. The task is a long and weary one, needing myriads of years for complete accomplishment, so that the spirit and intelligence, which are the permanent part of man, must return to earth-life over and over

again, inhabiting body after body, and building up brick by brick the splendid temple of a Divine Humanity. Theosophy, then, teaches the doctrine of Reincarnation, and further of Reincarnation under law. This law named Karma (the Sanskrit word for action), is the enunciation of causation in all worlds, mental and moral and spiritual, and Reincarnation is under its sway. As the man sows in one life, he reaps in succeeding lives, and he can never escape the consequences of his own actions. "Action" in the theosophical vocabulary, it should be said, includes all mental as well as bodily activities, the mental being, indeed, by far the most potent in their effects. In a fashion, any description of which would far outrun the limits of my space, man in each life casts the mould for his future capacities, power of self-expression, climbing slowly up with many slips and falls, alas! that long ladder of life eternal, whose highest rungs are veiled in light too dazzling to be pierced by mortal eye. Reincarnation and Karma are the foundation of theosophical ethics, affording the categorical imperative for which every ethical system craves.

Such is a bold outline of a fragment hewn from the rock of Theosophy, a fragment only of a mighty whole. Those who would grasp the teachings of the Wisdom-Religion must study for themselves, and not hope to catch more than a glimpse of it in a short answer. But the glimpse may attract one here and there to long to see the unveiled truth. (1891.)

C. W. L.—Theosophy is not an attempt to propagate any religion, but rather to set forth the ancient wisdom which underlies them all. No doubt to many a Western mind its teachings seem to savour of the Oriental religions, because as a matter of fact those religions have retained within their popular doctrine more of the great truths of nature than has the orthodox faith as commonly preached in Europe; and, consequently, some of the first ideas which a Theosophist acquires from the study of our literature are likely to remind him of what he has heard of the great Eastern systems.

But if the questioner went out to India he would find that there are some men there who have misunderstood Theosophy in a very similar way—who, because the founders of the Society and some of its prominent officials happen to be Buddhists by religion, have hinted that the whole work of the Society is nothing but the propagation of Buddhism; and this rumour has occasionally caused

hesitation on the part of Indians who were about to join the ranks of its adherents.

In Ceylon and other Buddhist countries the misunderstanding has taken exactly the opposite direction, and some Buddhists, whose zeal outran their discretion and their knowledge, accused the theosophical leaders of unduly favouring the faith of our Hindu brothers. The very fact that such contradictory reports are afloat ought to show where the truth lies to those who have eyes to see—whose minds are large enough and their heads steady enough to stand upon the real theosophical platform.

In one sense the statement has truth in it. Theosophy *is* identical with *esoteric* Buddhism and Hinduism, but then so it is also with esoteric Zoroastrianism, esoteric Mohammedanism, esoteric Christianity.

It should be pointed out to the objector that the motto of the Society is, "There is no religion higher than truth," and that as a corporate body it holds no particular belief or dogma. No one on joining it is required to change his faith, or even asked what his faith is. It has members among Hindus, Buddhists, Parsis, Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians, and each is entirely at liberty to seek to attain the highest truth along the lines of thought to the use of which he is most accustomed; indeed, adherents of each of these systems have again and again spoken gratefully of the flood of light which Theosophy has thrown upon the real meaning of the more obscure points in the teaching handed down to them from their ancestors. The only stipulation which is made when a man joins our ranks is that he shall show to his brothers of other religions the same enlightened tolerance and kindly courtesy which he himself would wish to receive at their hands.

This is the true theosophical standpoint, but it is a high one, and its air is too rarefied for the respiration of the sectarian or the bigot. He finds himself unable to exist at this unaccustomed altitude, and he must either sink back again into his own dismal swamp of self-complacency, or cast off for ever his shell of spiritual pride, and evolve into a higher and nobler creature. No wonder, then, that those who can see no light but that which shines from their own tiny lamps should be unable to grasp so great and generous an idea, and should consequently misunderstand those leaders of thought whose minds are cast in a nobler mould than their own.

Truth is one, but its aspects are many; and on the lower levels

its pursuit often *seems* to lead men in different directions, just as to travellers who approach a mountain from opposite sides, the upward road lies in one case to the north and in the other to the south, so that each might well suppose the other to be entirely wrong. Yet ever as they reach the higher levels and the purer air, the searchers, however unconsciously, are drawing nearer and nearer to each other, till that supreme moment arrives when they stand side by side upon the loftiest peak, and for the first time fully realise the difference between the real and the unreal. (1897.)

G. R. S. M.—First of all what are the teachings of the Vedānta Philosophy? Does our inquirer refer to the later systematised Vedānta of the commentators; and if so, to which of its varieties? Or does he refer to the various expressions of the Vedānta found in the earlier Upanishads? Or does he refer to the inner realities lying behind these expressions? Can he on the one hand produce a body of dogmas subscribed to by all Vedāntists, and on the other a body of dogmas accepted by all Theosophists? Then, again, is it the part of a Theosophist to “differ” and “disagree”?

But let us go further into the matter. Our inquirer tacitly assumes that there is a body of persons called Theosophists, and that this body of persons is in possession of the Wisdom-Religion! This question should be a warning to all members of the Theosophical Society. We are before the world taking on the complexion of a sect. Do we desire to do so; can we prevent it? This depends entirely on the general body of our members. If our own members persist in phrasing their statements in our own periodicals in this fashion, then we well deserve to be regarded as sectarians and have no one to blame but ourselves. It is time we seriously bestirred ourselves to prevent so calamitous a result; and, with a little care, we can prevent it.

What then is the Wisdom-Religion? Can we call the members of our Society Theosophists in the sense of their subscribing to a definite body of dogmas? Do we belong to some particular school of philosophy, or constitute a distinct body of religionists, or subscribe to some peculiar form of faith? Surely the very essence of our ideal is that its lovers do none of these things?

It is true that we have chosen the word Theosophy as a means of expressing the striving after our ideal, the search for truth, without distinction of creed—as a means of denoting our aspiration towards that reality behind all appearances, the truth which is incapable of expression in any system or body of dogmas.

It is true that many of us are convinced that behind the very best expression of that which is greatest in the manifold phases of religion, philosophy and science in the world, there is a living and all-satisfying reality, an all-enlightening sun of truth. And if the true lovers of this hidden way teach that the very best expression of that truth possible for mortal man is but a faint shadow of the infinite possibilities of that stupendous reality, shall we be so inattentive to the voice of their knowledge as to mistake the fleeting expression in our own day of some small shadow of the immemorial Wisdom, for an authoritative exposition of the whole?

Nay, rather let us be ever on our guard against this ancient ingrained error of humanity. Let us, if we can do no more, at least be able to say: We are striving to avoid this abyss which has engulfed every previous effort. Let us ever revive the question among us: Is our theosophical body to become crystallised round some set form of dogma and become rigid and lifeless; or is it continually to receive the formless seed which may be ever-living in the hearts of its members and so vitalise the whole body? And if we decide for life, then, to live, each of us (the many as well as the few), must strive to open his eyes to the light and express it, *when necessary*, each in his own way; we must not be mere mimics of each other, parroting empty words.

The only question, therefore, that can be put with any profit is: What is the opinion of A or B (who are presumed among members of the Theosophical Society to have some knowledge of the inner life) concerning the Vedānta Philosophy? To answer the question, A or B must have made a special study of that Philosophy, be familiar with its history and developments and imbued with the spirit of what is best in it. They must distinguish between the later phases based on the commentaries of the schools, such as those known by the generic name of Shankarāchārya, and the Shruti or "revelation" (acknowledged by all those schools), the highest expression of which is found in the oldest Upanishads. They must know the various dates of these documents, and they must distinguish between the apologetic position of the commentators who assert that there are no real contradictions in the Shruti and strive to explain away all discrepancies, and the patent fact of criticism that the Upanishads are human documents of schools of thinkers not in entire agreement with themselves on various points, and at times in distinct contradiction with each



other. Between these two extreme positions they would have to take an intermediate view, and show by the aid of their practical knowledge of the soul and its nature, that the discrepancies and contradictions are far less than are apparent at first sight, and when judged solely by the intellect prejudiced by the preconceptions of an exclusively physical view of things ; while, on the other hand, they would avoid the absurdity of ascribing inerrancy to the seers of the Upanishads. In any case, they would show that these most beautiful treatises are vibrant with spiritual life and that they are one of the most precious inheritances of every Theosophist. (1899.)

## QUESTION 2.

*"Theosophy is only for the rich." Such is an objection I frequently hear urged against it in the East End. Is this true? (1891.)*

A. B.—It would be interesting to know on what arguments this objection is based in the mind of the objector. If the word "rich" had been "educated," one would have understood that the speaker was thinking of the abstruse side of Theosophy, a side that it undoubtedly has, like all other philosophies and sciences. But "rich" and "educated" are not synonymous terms, and I have heard a sounder argument in a pitman's cottage than round a fashionable dinner-table. But to the rich Theosophy seems to offer on the whole a more repellent view of life than to the poor. Its doctrine of brotherhood makes claims more readily conceded by the poor than by the rich. Its doctrine of self-sacrifice is more easily practised in poverty than in wealth. Its doctrine of Karma has heavier menace for the rich than for the poor, since responsibility equals opportunity, and faults on the planes of the intellect and the emotions bear more bitter fruit than merely physical offences. The selfishness and isolation fostered by wealth bring the worst karmic consequences, while the self-sacrifice and ready sympathy common among the poor are signs of a spiritual progress that will ensure in the subsequent incarnation wider opportunities for service. "Help the poor, but pity the rich," are words of a Master, bearing a deep significance. Reincarnation and Karma are doctrines that lift the darkness of human life and human pain, that teach us how to escape from misery, and set Humanity on the road that leads to final liberation.

G. R. S. M.—Theosophy is for “every man that cometh into the world.” If it were not so, how could it possibly be “without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour”? Perhaps it would have been well, however, to add “class” to the above, and so to have given no chance of escape even to the most cavilling of mortals.

Theosophy is for all, but whether or not Theosophists have yet succeeded in proportion to their efforts to make it plain to the poor is another question. They are trying to do so, and intend to do so. But the poor are like scared animals, who look with suspicion even on those who have the kindest and most compassionate feelings to them. Did not the Christ appeal to the poor perhaps more than to any other class? Did not the Buddha preach the “cessation of sorrow” to all? And were not both the Christ and Buddha Masters of Theosophy?

But who are the “poor”? Are they alone poor who are destitute of the riches of this world? Are there not intellectual and moral paupers as well, men and women and children who equally deserve the pity of the wise? But let us answer in the sense in which the question is intended. What can the Theosophical Society teach the poor and miserable of the East End now to-day? Is it possible to gain a hearing for a doctrine which replaces selfishness by self-sacrifice, and the hopes of benefit or reward here or hereafter by a stern sense of duty and justice? Will a starving and oppressed populace have any feeling but that of resentment to one who is bold enough to enunciate such a gospel to them? Who can say for certain! This much we know, that the poor, as one of our contributors well says, have ever been more capable of self-sacrifice than the rich. Once persuade a man that he is something more than an animal, that he is a spiritual entity learning the lesson of life, and his manhood will awaken in him. The poor do not want charity; they want justice. Let them know that they are all men; that their birthright is *knowledge*, and their privilege forgiveness of the wrongs done them by their *ignorant* fellows. For man is unjust; though the Law is just. Charity, as generally understood, is an infamy. He who has, is a *debtor* to humanity to the extent of his riches, whether material, mental or moral. And the poor could become millionaires in morality more easily than the rich. Such a doctrine will, of course, make the demagogue snarl and say that this is just what all the priests have preached to the people in

order to keep them under their heel. But Theosophy is not being preached to the poor and starving alone; it is being preached to all classes of society. No real and permanent reformation can come from any one class. The masses may rise against classes, the rabble may initiate a religious movement; but both efforts will eventually result in failure. The only hope of a permanent reformation is by gathering together the best of *all* classes and using them as channels whereby the purifying streams of true compassion and brotherhood may permeate all strata of society. It is evident that as far as material well-being is concerned more can be done towards the alleviation of the physical misery of the poor and obtaining justice for them at the hands of their fellows, on the *physical* plane, by converting the employer of 1000 hands to Theosophy than by teaching a dozen of his workmen to lead purer and better lives.

But what besides the principle of unswerving justice and the doctrine that "whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap," have we to offer in explanation of human suffering misery? We have the great *fact* of Reincarnation to offer once more to the West from which it has been so long shut out. If you wish to teach Reincarnation to others you must first be absolutely convinced of its truth yourself. And if you are not, do not speak of it to the poor and ignorant; for you will have no common ground of meeting with them. They do not care for working hypotheses, for metaphysical themes. They want the enunciation of a great human truth that vibrates in the heart and awakens the memory of the past within them. Then will you speak as one soul to another on the common plane of humanity. We shall never be able to teach Theosophy to the poor by cold scientific analysis and metaphysical argumentation. It is true that we must go through the evidence ourselves carefully, honestly and fearlessly, and be prepared to give it to those who demand it; but if we are to help the poor it must be with the heart first and not with the head. Humanity is stronger than physical and metaphysical evidences.

A contributor suggests that generally the Karma of the poor is heaviest. This we believe to be a fallacy. It is true that grinding poverty, with its vile and bestial environment, is a hard teacher, but it is one that can teach the most advanced lessons in the school of life. The sufferer is not of choice creating fresh causes of suffering for others like his apparently more favoured fellow-student of the middle and upper classes of society. Once we

have passed through this difficult training we shall in future births have a fellow-feeling for physical suffering and misery, a recollection of the lesson we have learned, for those who gaze with indifference upon the sorrows of their fellows, have yet to learn the lesson of sorrow. In speaking of the poor, H. P. B. once said that their poverty and misery were the labour pains of a new birth to greater self-consciousness and knowledge.

### QUESTION 3.

#### *Is Theosophy for the masses ? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—Theosophy is for all men and all minds undoubtedly, just in proportion as they can understand its sublime message and its magnificent liberty. Theosophy knows no classes and no masses as the world understands such things ; nevertheless it calls to all men to come out of the indistinguishable mass of souls and set forward on the path which leads through ever-ascending classes and hierarchies of wisdom and purity to the supreme of the supreme. The ethics and the simplest teachings of Theosophy are for all as the history of religion bears witness ; but beyond that it depends on the individual himself. Ignorance will not bring us near to wisdom, nor vice to virtue, and the perfect man is he who is perfected in every department of his nature. The higher problems of Theosophy require as great an understanding as the most abstruse doctrines of theology or the most advanced researches of science, or rather a greater understanding, for in Theosophy it is not solely a question of intellect, but of that which transcends intellect and exhausts the most fertile resources of the mind. From this point of view Theosophy is not for the masses of souls, just as the higher problems of Christianity, Brahmanism or Buddhism, are not for the masses of souls, simply because they cannot understand them. We should, however, never lose sight of the fact that there are numbers of souls among the so-called masses in the external world which belong to the classes within, and numbers of souls among the classes here which belong to the masses of unprogressed souls in that world over there. The question, however, seems to suggest that Theosophy is some new thing. This is not so ; it is the old, old wisdom taught by the great founders and teachers of religion. Each of these suited his instruction to his listeners, following the rule of common sense.

## DIVISION II

### “INSPIRATION” OF “THE SECRET DOCTRINE”

#### QUESTION 4.

*To what extent is it reasonable to regard The Secret Doctrine as “inspired”?* (1899.)

(The following, from the “Watch-Tower” notes in the August number of *The Theosophical Review*, is reprinted in reply.—ED.)

A. B.—The attempt made by some ill-instructed Theosophists to set up this truly wonderful and splendid book as an inspired revelation dictated by the revered Masters, accurate in every detail, and free from any error is ill-judged and mischievous. It contains an extraordinary number of occult truths, learned by H. P. B. from her great Teachers, and we can never be too grateful to her for the selfless and laborious efforts she made to present these truths accurately to the world. The more one learns, the more one wonders at the vast range of her knowledge, the clearness of her insight, and the strength of her grasp of profound and obscure truths. But she often, in her humility, buttresses her own true statements with a mass of rubbish from inferior writers, picked up haphazard; on minor points she often speaks hastily and carelessly; and further, she confuses her teachings with excessive digressions. But as to these, even, we may remember her own saying: “It is only hoped that the desire to do so [to justify the Ancient Wisdom], which has led the writer to be constantly bringing ancient and modern evidence as a corroboration of the archaic and quite unhistoric Past, will not bring on her the accusation of having sorely jumbled up, without order or method, the various and widely-separated periods of history and tradition.” (ii. 841.)

And here is her own judgment on her great work: "No true Theosophist, from the most ignorant, up to the most learned, ought to claim infallibility for anything he may say or write upon occult matters. The chief point is to admit that, in many a way in the classification of either cosmic or human principles, in addition to mistakes in the order of evolution, and especially on metaphysical questions, those of us who pretend to teach others more ignorant than ourselves—are all liable to err. Thus mistakes have been made in *Isis Unveiled*, in *Esoteric Buddhism*, in *Man*, in *Magic Black and White*, etc., and more than one mistake is likely to be found in the present work. This cannot be helped. For a large or even a small work on such abtruse subjects to be entirely exempt from error and blunder, it would have to be written from its first to its last page by a great Adept if not by an Avatâra. Then only should we say: 'This is verily a work without sin or blemish in it.' But so long as the artist is imperfect, how can this work be perfect?" (ii. 676, 677.) Such is H. P. B.'s own opinion of her book. Greatest, strongest and humblest is she of the teachers sent to our age.

## DIVISION III

### KARMA AND REINCARNATION

#### QUESTION 5.

*How far back in history is it possible to trace the beliefs of Karma and Reincarnation? Are they to be found in the earliest religions of which we have any knowledge? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—This is a question that demands considerable research. The oldest known religions are the Hindu, Egyptian and Chaldæan traditions. The dates of these traditions are absolutely so far indeterminate. It is denied that Reincarnation is to be found in the mantras of the Rig Veda, the oldest document of Hinduism. The Egyptians undeniably taught this doctrine. The records of the Chaldæans, so far as I am aware, have not disclosed a belief in the tenet. The doctrine of Karma, as at present understood, without the doctrine of Reincarnation, is unthinkable. But all these traditions teach the doctrine of "destiny" in some form or other. It is, however, to be believed that these doctrines go back to remote antiquity among the informed of mankind; but this is a question entirely apart from historical research. One thing is certain, that too much care cannot be exercised in making assertions on the subject. Vague and unverifiable statements based on tenth-rate evidence are not only reprehensible, but display an utter lack of responsibility and love for truth.

#### QUESTION 6.

*Can any approximate estimate be given of the number of people who believe in the ideas of Karma and Reincarnation as a part of their religious creed? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—Speaking generally, the people who believe in

Karma and Reincarnation are the Hindus and the nations which believe in Buddhism.

The population of Hindustan numbers some 300,000,000, and from this must be subtracted, first of all, 50,000,000 Mahomedans, the Anglo-Indian population, the Eurasians probably, French and Portuguese, and Christian converts, a comparatively inconsiderable body of people. There are also a small number of Hindus educated on Western lines who have abandoned their ancestral faith. The hill tribes and Dravidian remnants also have in some cases to be eliminated. Let us, then, put down the number of believers in Karma and Reincarnation in Hindustan as roughly somewhere about 240,000,000.

As to the Buddhists, their numbers have for long been reckoned at 400,000,000; but this is a mere guess, arrived at by lumping in the population of China. Now we know hardly anything definitely about this huge population and its religious census. The state functionaries and "scholars" are nearly all Confucianists, and despise Buddhism, and large numbers of the people are of this opinion. The population of Tibet is inconsiderable; of the Buddhist population of Siberia we know comparatively nothing. The populations of Japan, Siam, Cambodia, Burma and Ceylon do not go far to make up the huge sum of 400,000,000. Nepal and Bootan are also not very populous. In India itself there are, so to speak, no Buddhists.

The vague total of 400,000,000 must therefore be received with very great caution, and probably be discounted by 100,000,000.

This would make a grand total of 540,000,000 out of the probable 1,400,000,000 present inhabitants of the world. The number of people who hold a belief in Karma and Reincarnation in the Western world and in the British colonies is, of course, inconsiderable.

The above is given from memory and is not intended as a definite answer to the question.

A. B.—It is exceedingly difficult to estimate the number of people belonging to each of the different faiths of the world, yet this is the only basis we have for computing the number of those who believe in Reincarnation and Karma. We may take it that all who believe in a continuing entity passing from life to life are believers "in the idea of Reincarnation," but the details of their belief vary, while all are at one on the main idea. Thus, among the Hindus, some believe that the reincarnating entity, the



human Ego, is confined to the human kingdom, others hold that if it degrades itself to the level of the brute it may pass a life or lives attached to animals, but all alike believe that the Ego reincarnates, and their whole religion and philosophy are built on this fundamental idea. Of making quotations to prove this there would be no end, but I may refer to *Brihadâraṇyakopaniṣad* iv. iv. 4-6; *Śvetâshvatara*, i. 6 (in this wheel of Brahman which is the support as well as the end of all beings, which is infinite, roams about the pilgrim soul when it fancies itself and the Ruler different); *Kâthopaniṣad* iv. 4; *Mundakopaniṣad*, III. ii. 2. An immense part of the population of China are Buddhists, and reference to their sacred books, whether translated from the Chinese or the Pâli recensions, will show the student that, like those of the Hindus, they are built on Reincarnation as a fundamental idea; in the *Udânavarga*, for instance (xxix. 37), we read that those who learn the law reach the other side "of the great sea of birth and death that is difficult to cross"; a Brâhmana is defined by the Buddha as a man "having his last body" (xxxiii. 41), and he speaks of him as one "who has found the way to put an end to birth" (xxxiii. 55). The Taoists, whose tenets come down from Atlantean times, hold the doctrine in a very elementary form, if we may judge from the writings of Kwangtze (Bk. vi. Pt. i. Sec. vi.), where it is argued that a man must not claim to choose his next birth, for the world is a melting pot and the Creator a founder, and "where can we have to go to that shall not be right for us? We are born as from a quiet sleep, and we die to a calm awaking."

The Hindus number about 250,000,000; the number of Buddhists is not very easy to ascertain accurately; Rhys Davids gives from census returns (those affecting Burma, Siam and Anam are based on military returns of males) 30,000,000 of Southern Buddhists; he gives the Northern at 470,000,000 (counting in the total population of China, and this seems excessive), thus making a total of 500,000,000 Buddhists. The article by Dr. Findlater in Chambers' *Encyclopædia* gives a majority of the Chinese population to Buddhism, and places the total number of Buddhists at "more than 340 millions, or nearly a fourth of the whole human race." The Hebrews, now, do not seem to accept Reincarnation, although it is taught in the Kabala, and belief in it in the old times peeps out from their Scriptures here and there. The same statement applies to the Parsis, with less support from their sacred books. Of later faiths Christianity now rejects it,

though a good case may be made out for belief in it during the early centuries, while Mahommedanism never had it, though some of its Sūfis hold it. At the most, a few thousands among those reckoned as Christians believe it at the present time. Among the scattered remnants of old races on the American continent the belief is occasionally found, as among the Zuni Indians. Even at the present time it would seem that nearly half the human race believe in it, while in the past the proportion would be very much greater, as it was also current in the lands then dominated by Chaldæan, Egyptian and Greek thought. If in addition to quantity we consider quality, the believers in Reincarnation sweep all before them, all the greatest minds of the past being its maintainers. As Professor Max Müller says in his *Vedānta Philosophy*: "Of course, no Indian philosopher doubts the fact of transmigration. It is to him as certain as our migration through this life. The physiological details of this migration or transmigration are often fanciful and childish. How could they be otherwise in those early days? But the broad fact of transmigration remains unaffected by these fanciful details, and it is well known that this dogma has been accepted by the greatest philosophers of all countries."

Belief in Reincarnation and Karma go together, Karma being but the name given to the law by which the soul reaps in later lives the consequences of causes set going in the earlier.

#### QUESTION 7.

*What is the basis of the belief current among the Hindus that human souls are born into the lower kingdoms to reap their evil Karma? Is it supported by their oldest Scriptures? (1897.)*

J. C. C.—The basis of the belief in transmigration into the animal and other lower kingdoms, held, as far as I know, by the less informed and the populace, lies in the ignorance and misunderstanding of certain passages in the Vedas, which alone can be taken as the ultimate Scriptural authority on all Hindu beliefs and ideas. Of the Vedas again, it is the Vedāntas—that is, the Upanishads—which are considered as the highest authority on all such questions. So far as I know, there is not a single passage in the genuine Upanishads which, unless misinterpreted, supports this view of transmigration.

I believe the only passage which can be taken to support it occurs in the second section of the Kathopanishad. There Yama, explaining to Nachiketas what happens after death, says :

“Some souls go into wombs, to take a body ; into the ‘motionless’ (?) do others pass according to their deeds, as is their knowledge.” (Kathop. v. 7.)

On the strength of this passage some have been led to suppose that certain souls go down to the “motionless,” that is to say, the vegetable and mineral kingdoms. But the Sanskrit word for which “motionless” only tentatively stands is “sthānu,” and it is exceedingly doubtful what this means. From the context it would appear that the word refers to a condition in which the soul becomes like an immovable rock and does not go out “to take a body” as other souls do. It is probably of this condition that the Bible speaks, when it says : “He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar (sthānu also means a pillar) in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more” (Rev. iii. 12). Sthānu is also a name of Shiva, he being immovable and unshakable under any circumstances. The passage may probably refer to the Shivatva, which is the goal of every Jīva or living individual soul. Every Jīva after passing through myriads of incarnations and taking many bodies, mineral, vegetable, animal and human, must eventually become the Shiva, the Shānta, that is, peace and tranquillity, motionlessness and rest itself.

There is no reason, therefore, to suppose, merely on the strength of this passage, that the Vedas teach transmigration into the lower kingdoms.

Apart from the ambiguity of the meaning, the passage occurs in a portion of the Kathopanishad, which is, in all likelihood, an after addition—a fact which, if taken into consideration, will diminish much of its authoritative importance.

The real teaching of the Upanishads on Reincarnation is very sensible and logical. And it is, in the language of the Prashnopanishad : “The up-going upward life (udāna) with purity leads to the pure, with sin unto the world of sin, but with the two unto the land of man.” (Prash. iii. 7.) This means that if a soul is absolutely pure, without the slightest touch of evil, it is thereby lifted up to the higher worlds, those of the gods and angels. If, on the contrary, it is absolutely evil, it is destined to go downwards, while all souls of a mixed nature, having both good and evil in them, are to be re-born

as human beings, higher or lower, according as the good or the evil is predominant.

This most rational doctrine has been taught in the Bhagavad Gītā and by all the great teachers, including the great Vedānta master, Shri Shankarāchārya himself. In the Bhagavad Gītā we read: "Good, evil and mixed—threefold is the fruit of action hereafter for the non-abandoner; but there is none ever for the renouncer." (Bhag. Gītā, xviii. 12.) Explaining this verse Shri Shankarāchārya says: "'Evil' means the Karma that leads to Hades and the lower animal life: 'good' leads to the gods and the rest, and 'mixed' means both good and evil and it leads to rebirth as a human being."

Shri Shankarāchārya expresses exactly the same view in his introduction to the Commentary on the Brihadāranyakopanishad (see Brih. Up., p. 9, Anandāshrama edition). And there Ananda-Giri quotes a passage in explanation of the Achārya's statement which says: "One comes, perforce, to humanity by Karma, which is a mixture of both good and evil."

Now all these sayings, both from the Shruti and the Smṛiti, explain clearly and without a shadow of doubt what is the teaching of the authoritative Scriptures on Reincarnation. This teaching, however, does admit, as far as I can judge, the possibility of a soul going down if it is entirely evil, without a spark of good in it. But it is only a theoretical and hardly a practical case. For I doubt if there is any living soul at the present moment which is *absolutely* evil. Almost everyone has, at least, a little spark, however feeble, of good in him. Therefore souls, as a rule, being of a mixed nature, come back as human beings and not lower animals.

Then, again, granting that there are souls absolutely evil, it is doubtful what the Upanishads mean when they say that such souls go downwards. They may refer to what are called in modern theosophical literature "lost souls." Or it may mean, as seems most likely from the context and association of Hades with animal rebirth, that such souls take animal and other shapes in the Hades or the astral world. There their evil and animal thoughts and passions shape the matter into animal forms more readily than on the physical plane, though even in the physical body evil passions hardly fail to leave traces of animality on the countenance of the brutal man. (Cf. *The Ancient Wisdom*, p. 120, Eng. ed.) It was this view which was taken, if I remember rightly, by the late Pandit Nabin Chandra Roy of Lahore.

Now from this theoretical idea of the transmigration of absolutely evil souls, arose in later times the absurd notion that even for a single evil deed of a particular kind, souls however good in other ways were re-born as animals and even minerals. And because, in the later age, the Smriti literature, of which the main ideas are as old as those of the Vedas or the Shruti, has been clothed and reclothed in new garbs, erroneous ideas, such as down-going transmigration and so on, have, consciously or unconsciously, crept into it. That is the reason why the modern version of the *Manu Samhitâ* contains so many absurd statements regarding transmigration. I do not believe that the original *Manu* had anything to do with them, but although I hold this view I am nevertheless as much a believer in the sacred *shâstras* as any of my countrymen.

#### QUESTION 8.

*Are people in a series of incarnations generally born into the same class, or do they commonly pass from the higher to the lower social classes in order to learn from a more varied range of life? (1897.)*

E. G.—The great natural sweep of evolution would, I take it, gradually carry a man onwards from lower to higher grades in the social organism, but within this primary sweep, as it were, there is to be considered the factor of the individual will—the individual will which, first in its ignorance and then in its perversity, is constantly setting itself against the cosmic or evolutionary will. In this vast interplay of individual wills there results the complexity of the social structures of advanced civilisations—of a civilisation such as ours of to-day, which bears little resemblance to the ideal fourfold class-division which characterised our fifth race at its start—the “classification of the people according to their recognised fitness for this or that career,” not according to birth or outside possessions, but in accordance with development of character and faculty.

Class distinction to-day, therefore, being so much on the surface, it would hardly be possible, I should imagine, to lay down any general rule in answer to the above question. It is, of course, quite conceivable that an advanced Ego might need to enter a low social class for the working out of some bad piece of

Karma, the development of some lacking quality, or even might find there, in some instances, better conditions of inner purity.

B. K.—Apart from definite and special individual Karma it appears that social status, *broadly speaking*, corresponds to the general level of evolution which the Ego in question has reached. Or to express the same fact in another way, we may say that the lowest savages and most backward races consist mainly of Egos who have no Pitri ancestry behind them, *i.e.*, of those who have attained to full human individuality from the animal kingdom upon our own chain of globes in the present manvantara. Above them come the third-class Pitris who form the large majority of the lower social strata in the advanced sub-races of our own fifth race, *e.g.*, of the European nations. The social strata above these contain a majority of second-class Pitris, while the first-class Pitris preponderate in the still higher and the topmost strata of our social organisation.

This statement of the facts, it must be remembered, expresses, as it were, the percentage constitution of any given class, and forms, so to speak, the law of gravitation in the social organism, abstracting from the many and wide divergencies which individual Karma introduces. It is the law according to which an Ego would gravitate to this or the other social level, supposing it to have simply drifted with the general tide of evolutionary progress, maintaining its natural level on the whole, neither forging markedly ahead of its class nor dropping distinctly behind, and *not* to have generated any specially marked Karma which would give it exceptional opportunity or subject it to circumstances of exceptional difficulty or disadvantage.

To make this a little clearer, it may be said that while the majority of the upper classes, say in England, is formed of first-class Pitris, yet as an observed fact a second-class Pitri has been noted—and probably there are many more—quite in the highest social level, among the royalties—while very many cases, such as the late Mr. Bradlaugh's, and not a few men distinguished in science, literature or art, illustrate the fact that special Karma of one kind or another not infrequently causes an Ego to take birth in social surroundings much below its natural level. Such cases tend to become more numerous in proportion as the Egos under consideration reach the levels on which they cease to follow the general average law, and become so highly developed and individualised that each successive birth becomes a problem of

enormous complexity, owing to the accumulated and highly specialised Karma that has been engendered. Of course when once the Path has been entered upon, the Ego works off very rapidly his past Karma, and learns more and more how to abstain from making fresh by the renunciation of desire for Self. But we are not here concerned with these later stages of growth, as no general rules applicable to them can be stated; while if we are to understand the general law, we must look to averages for its exemplification, and not seek to apply it in individual cases without knowing the individual Karma involved.

A. A. W.—We can hardly fail to find in this question the (probably quite unconscious) “shrinking from the soiled garment which *may* be ours in the next life,” of which a well-known passage speaks. It is a most natural feeling. To look at the poor creatures we meet in the London streets, to think of their life, of the scanty, ragged, filthy clothing, the cold and the hunger; of the rising in the morning from the foul crowd of the twopenny lodging house and the going out shivering and empty into the desolate cold, bare, endless streets, to wander up and down, up and down, hour after hour, starving in the midst of the well-clad, well-fed crowds of passers, hopelessly waiting to see if some one will be moved to give a copper that they may break their long fast with a morsel of bread; and then, in imagination, to put our own dainty, fastidious, well-dressed and cared-for selves into such a “soiled garment” as *that*, may well be a shock to our delicate nerves. You say, “They are used to it—they don’t feel it as we should!” My friend, *that* is the crowning horror of the thing; that day after day like this should be their *life*—that thousands of our brothers and sisters have no other life to look back upon, nothing else to look forward to till death, but just endless wandering, hungry and cold, through the weary, weary streets! You say once more, “They are properly provided for—there is the workhouse for them.” You do not, then, yet understand, my friend, *why* the Lords of the World refuse to allow you to sweep all the poor into workhouses, out of your fastidious sight? It is for *your* sake. You *must* learn the lessons of such a life, as you have rightly guessed. Only you have your choice. You *may* learn them by sympathy with those you meet. It is not giving to collections or subscribing to charities which will help you, or save you from their fate. It is not indiscriminate putting of money into their hands, often undeserving enough. You must learn to

take your delicacy of sense, your pride of position—nay, your consciousness of virtue—sternly in hand as you would a restive, shying horse, and force them to look steadily upon these pitiful creatures till they see in the foulest of them your poor, ill-used brothers and sisters, far behind in the race indeed, but of the same royal blood; and *then* do to them as your heart prompts. It should not be hard. To me, in such cases, there always comes into mind the cry of a French peasant brought out, in the old pre-Revolution days, to suffer on the scaffold. “And must I die? I—who have never in my whole life had as much as I could eat—even of dry bread?” But it is strictly necessary. Unless you, my fine gentleman, can learn to put aside your dignity and your pride of virtue, and look on the most wretched drunkard who reels from the public-house almost under the wheels of your carriage, steadily, pitifully, as you would on a patient, stricken with mortal disease, in a hospital; unless with the eyes of your soul, you can pierce through all that foul degradation, which is after all of the body and mind of this one incarnation only, to the true Self which is learning its lessons through it—a spark of the Divine Flame as noble as your own—your faith in Universal Brotherhood will not stand the test. And for the fine lady the trial is perhaps harder still: to place herself, in imagination at least, amidst the crowd of poor souls who make some of the London streets impassable at night for modest women, and to let her sympathies touch them, as she would never in actual life permit the hem of her garment to do; to recognise that the foulest vice (as the highest virtue) is a thing of the passing life only, and soils not the true soul; to trace out by the quick sense of the heart the lessons which may be learnt even in such a life—the virtues which find there a more congenial soil than in polite society (there *are* such in spite of your indignant denial!); until she can claim them too as sisters—poor, shamed, spoiled, *lost* souls, but sisters still.

You are shocked, scandalised, insulted at such a suggestion? Then, be assured, you have not passed that trial, and the “soiled garment” is yet waiting to be flung on your shoulders. The lesson of a beautiful story in *Lucifer* a year or two back is the true one; if we will not put ourselves in their place by sympathy there is no help for it, we must be put there in actual life; and a hard school that life may well be.



## DIVISION IV

### METHOD OF REINCARNATION

#### QUESTION 9.

*In some of the early mystical writings it is said that the soul does not enter a child's body until it is seven years old. This has been repeated in theosophical literature. What does the statement mean in reality? (1896.)*

F. A.—The statement “that the soul does not enter a child's body until it is seven years old” is somewhat misleading. In the first place, the soul can hardly be said to be *in* the body at any time. The Higher Self of any individual, even of the lowest in development, is always in touch with its own plane of consciousness, even while manifesting in physical life through the personality. It is evident, therefore, that in no case are we to conceive of the soul, or Higher Self, as solely centred in the body. In the case of the Ego coming into a new incarnation we have been told that the mould according to which the etheric double is formed, is supplied by the Lipika in accordance with the Karma of the entity seeking incarnation. Bit by bit the physical frame is built up till it forms a suitable vehicle for the requirements of the incarnating Ego. It may be before birth, but certainly at birth, the connecting link between the Ego and its new physical manifestation is established, and it has to begin its work. But it must be evident that the feeble life of an infant, or even of a young child, offers but little scope for the full manifestation of the entity, and when seven years is given as a limit it may be inferred that it generally takes that time before the entity can be said to manifest as an individuality through the new organism. Of course, the time will differ in different cases. For the developed it may be less than seven, with many it may be more, but in all cases

there is a period in which it may be said that the soul is not fully manifest in its new vehicle.

QUESTION 10.

*A. A. W. says that a child until seven years old is an animal. I understood that quite the opposite was the case; that we were nearer the Divine in infancy, and that the "prison house" closes round us and Heaven is further off as we grow older. I should be glad of some explanation of this. (1901.)*

A. A. W.—I did not say that even at birth it was *only* an animal, without an important qualification, which the querist has not noticed. The Self which is to animate that baby-frame is *always* close at hand, watching its growth and trying to make use of it; even (as F. A. rightly reminds us) before its birth. The limit of seven years is only an average. A soul whose Karma has deserved a peculiarly suitable body may bring it into working order long before; whilst, at the other extreme, a congenital idiot is a case in which this spiritualisation is quite impossible. I am glad that the querist has referred to Wordsworth's Ode. What *he* had in his mind is the other side of the matter. Whilst the body is being spiritualised, what happens to the soul is the converse; *that* is being for the time immeshed—immersed, in flesh. The readers of that very remarkable theosophical novel, Du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson*, may recall a vivid presentation of this in the chapter where the heroine, after physical death, succeeds in materialising herself for her lover's eyes and describes to him the strangeness and discomfort with which she finds her spiritual senses once more limited and obscured by physical organs. The soul, accustomed to the spiritual and immediate intercourse of the higher planes, has to see and hear vaguely and imperfectly through its human eyes and ears; can know nothing of its fellows but what these senses convey to it; and when this subjection of spirit to body is complete there is a very real and intelligible meaning in saying that the "prison house" has closed round us, at all events during our waking life. It was to this I referred when I said that in the glance of her baby's eyes the mother may possibly have soul communion deeper than ever again in after life; for the soul which speaks through them is not yet in prison, and the prison bars do not yet come between them.

It seems to me that in this view we have, for the first time, an intelligible explanation of the child state. Its *faults* are those of the animal nature, not yet under full control of the Higher Ego; not *sins*, for the soul is not responsible for what has not yet been taught to obey it. They will pass when the soul takes command; whilst, on the other hand, the beauties of its infant character, the things which its mother, like Mary the mother of Jesus, "keeps and ponders in her heart," are of the true Self, which does not come into existence at birth and dies not with the death of the body.

Of course to make this account complete, much needs to be added. The very animal nature which I so sharply distinguish from the soul within, is itself the work of that soul in previous lives, and the complete rule of it by the soul is not (in actual fact) gained in seven years or in seventy. All is a matter of degree; but the statement of the broad general principles is all which can be made here.

#### QUESTION II.

*It has been stated that through want of care and self-restraint on the part of the parent many incarnations of children are wasted. How can wasted incarnations be accounted for while we are taught that the Lords of Karma regulate and are responsible for the incarnations, which ought to be for the further development of the Ego? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—It is foolish for us, who understand nothing of the necessities of the case, to pretend to criticise the action of karmic deities, who by the hypothesis must understand *all* about it on every plane. But, obviously, their responsibility ends with the provision of conditions; the use which a man makes of those conditions must be left to his free will.

If a parent through ill-conduct or want of self-restraint injures the character of his child (and it is unfortunately true that many do this) then it is the parent who is responsible for the waste of time caused, and not the karmic deities. It must be remembered, too, that a child is born into a certain family not only because the conditions there provided for him are such as he has deserved, but in many cases because he has previously-existing ties of affection or service with some of its members. A great opportunity is thus afforded to those members, whether it be to discharge an

ancient debt, to repay affection shown to them long ago, or perhaps to resume their loving care of one who has been their child in former days ; whether they will take advantage of that opportunity, of course, rests entirely with themselves.

Underlying this question, and many others, there seems to be a lurking doubt of the justice of the action of Karma. When will students understand that it is utterly *impossible* for the action of Karma to be unjust—that if it could be so in even one case for a single moment, or in the smallest particular, it would mean the absolute upsetting of the law of the Universe—a failure in the power of the Logos Himself?

#### QUESTION 12.

*As the physical body rapidly passes through the stages of previous evolution, does the Reincarnating Ego sum up its previous experiences in the early years of physical life? And if so, is it possible for the average person to be guided to a knowledge of his Dharma from the consideration of his early life? (1901.)*

A. P. S.—Certainly not in the early stages of physical life. It has, I think, been hinted that there is a stage, moment, or period in the descent of an Ego towards a new incarnation, when something like a preliminary glance at the programme of the coming life is possible. But at the present stage of human evolution this does not count for much in the direction of guidance for the new personality. Perhaps the forecast will be more useful for men of a later time, more richly endowed with faculties ranging over super-physical experience than are common with us now.

E. L.—If we observe carefully those around us we can see in every day and hour of a person's life this "summing up of previous experiences" going on, in the power of judgment shown, the course of action taken. What is that but the memory—however dim—of the past? No, the average person though he might (if at all a believer in the inner teaching) get useful hints from self-introspection, could not acquire a knowledge of his Dharma in the way suggested. Knowledge of Dharma means that a high stage has been reached, and if *full* knowledge is implied, then a very high stage indeed. But it would be very useful to retrace the present life (all that is within the reach of most of us consciously) and find out as far as possible its fundamental lines, seeing the results arrived at, and checking them for future guidance. Then

he will return to earth with a clearer conception of Dharma, and as he progresses gain an ever clearer idea of the path he should tread, and thus it will be seen that the summing up is not confined to the early years of physical life, but is continuous, as continuous as the man himself.

G. R. S. M.—There seems reason to believe that when an individual “wakes up” in any birth, he finds that his past Karma has been already impressed upon his physical, psychic and mental make up. The self-conscious Ego then takes up the task where it was left off. When this self-consciousness arises it may be possible for us to see the “why” of many things which have happened to us in our present bodies, but this intelligence will not, in our opinion, help the Ego to know his Dharma, for, like Paul, he will say: “When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things,” and my Dharma now is to do the will of Him who sent me.

#### QUESTION 13.

*Is anything known with regard to the law of sex—whether there is an alternation of sex incarnation after incarnation, or whether there is a continuous series of incarnations in the same sex? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—We were told long ago that as a general rule an Ego took not less than three, and not more than seven, successive incarnations in one sex before changing to the other. Such investigations as have been made since then into the subject of Reincarnation confirm this teaching, though one or two exceptions to the rule have come under our notice. These latter, however, have so far been observed only in the cases of Egos already developed beyond the average, and can therefore hardly be considered as violations of what appears to be the rule for ordinary men.

Though the laws governing Reincarnation probably work, as it were, mechanically upon the vast majority of undeveloped Egos, it seems certain from the instances observed, that as soon as any one Ego makes a little progress of any sort, and so becomes hopeful from the evolutionary point of view, considerable elasticity is introduced into the arrangements, and within certain definite limits he would be likely to be born into the sex and race which were best

sued to give him an opportunity of strengthening the weak points in his character.

QUESTION 14.

*Would Theosophy assert positively, of any highly-evolved individual, that Reincarnation elsewhere than on this earth, is impossible? (1901.)*

G. R. S. M.—I should say that the assertion of the impossibility of anything concerning the soul of man would be highly unphilosophical and unscientific and therefore untheosophical. As far as I understand the matter, just as there are all kinds of exceptions to the average period of time between rebirths, so there are all kinds of exceptions to normal rebirth on *this* earth; that is to say, that there are possibilities of rebirth on other “globes” of our “planetary chain” in the case of people not “highly developed,” and, in the case of those very highly developed, into other spheres of activity beyond our “chain.” So far, however, I am not acquainted with any advocate in our ranks of an incarnation of a normal person of our humanity on another planet, in the sense in which this is usually understood.

QUESTION 15.

*Is there any means of estimating the total number of Egos concerned in our evolution, and the proportion of those which will probably be successful? (1896.)*

B. K.—It has, I believe, been stated by those in a position to know at first hand that the total number of human Egos included in our evolution is, in round numbers, about sixty thousand millions (60,000,000,000). Of these it is at present expected that three-fifths will successfully pass the critical period at the middle of the Fifth Round, and will complete their evolution in the remaining one and a-half Rounds of this Manvantara. These three-fifths, then, will form the “successful” portion of the Egos now engaged in evolving on this chain of globes; but, of course, there will be very wide differences of level among these, even when the end of the Seventh Round has been reached. Some, the most advanced, will have attained that perfected culmination and efflorescence of human evolution which is now represented by the

Asekha Adept; others, falling short of that highest achievement, will have developed to Arhat levels; while others again will have attained only to stages of perfection answering to the lower grades of Initiation. But all, it is said, who pass the critical period of the Middle Fifth Round and so attain to the Seventh, will ere that Round closes find themselves definitely upon the Path.

The consideration of what befalls the failures—the two-fifths or thereabouts of the sixty thousand millions who are left behind at the middle point of the Fifth Round—would lead us too far. It must suffice to state generally that these “failures” resume their evolutionary career in the next chain of globes, or, more accurately, in the new chain of globes which will be the Reincarnation of our present earth and its companions, just as our present earth and the other globes of our chain are Reincarnations of the moon, and the other globes of the lunar chain. It is these “failures” who will there play a part analogous to that of the third-class Pitris in our chain; to them will fall the earlier and coarser work of building and formation, so that they may acquire the experience and development they lack, and thus become fitted to participate in that higher and more perfect evolution of which the new chain of globes will be the theatre.

#### QUESTION 16.

*In view of the well-known fact that as this race advances, as the Mânasic powers unfold, the fewer is the proportionate number of births, until it would seem that those in the forefront are almost childless (e.g., the Carlyles, George Eliot), in the future, will the pressure of the Reincarnating Personalities on the Incarnate be a force counteracting this tendency?—(may I call it “Law”?)—and, if so, is it likely to be a force sufficiently strong entirely to counteract the tendency? Otherwise it would appear that from the operation of this law alone the race must become extinct. (1900.)*

A. A. W.—I think a careful study of what has already been said on Reincarnation in theosophical literature would enable the querist himself to answer this question better than can be done in the short compass to which a writer is here limited. Theosophists regard the present method of sexual reproduction as one destined to cease altogether in the progress of evolution, and

there cannot be much doubt that the multiplication of human forms by this means will be (as the querist suggests) more and more diminished as this time draws nearer. But the phrase "the pressure of the Reincarnating Personalities on the Incarnate" has to us no meaning whatever. All the Reincarnating Ego can do is to descend and take possession of the forms provided for them by the Lords of Karma; it is upon the practically unlimited power of these Rulers the continuance of the race depends, and may safely be left to depend. Other modes of multiplication will take the place of sexual reproduction, as other modes preceded it. If it be remembered that the race, *as a whole*, exists, and always has existed, on the higher planes where death is unknown—only from time to time sending out a small proportion into the physical world and withdrawing them again after a short period of what we here call life, but which they most likely call death—it will be seen clearly enough that even if manifestation on the physical plane ceased entirely (as in process of time it will) the very last phrase we could think of applying to the occurrence would be that of the "extinction of the race." We must learn to think better of ourselves than that!

#### QUESTION 17.

*Granted that Reincarnation is a fact, and is intended as the method of human evolution, what is it that gives a man the upward tendency? Why should he not be just as bad in the next life as in this? (1897.)*

A. B.—There are two forces—one attracting and one driving—which constantly play on man and cause his upward evolution. (1) The attractive force is the drawing power of the One Self, whose life-essence forms the spirit in man. As water rises to its own level, the spirit in man rises to the Divine spirit—a clumsy way of imaging the indrawing force whose presence is evidenced by the ever-repeated cries of man in search for God. "My soul is athirst for God, for the living God." Enfolded in ignorance, and by ignorance feeling itself as separate, the soul thus expresses its longing for union with That which is really its innermost life:

Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.

This fundamental unity acts in the world of manifestation as a



steady, up-drawing force. (2) The driving force is the suffering caused when the soul flings itself against the law.

The world is an evolving organism, and the Logos has given it birth for a definite purpose; for the carrying out of this purpose evolution is the means, and the whole world is set for evolution. The law of its being is a law of growth; as we watch the development of a plant or of an animal, we see its various parts developing along certain definite lines of growth, and it gradually acquires a likeness to its parent organism; if growth be forcibly prevented along any one of these lines, a monstrosity results, and, if the creature be sentient, pain accompanies the frustration of its orderly evolution. Man is no exception. He has reached a stage of his evolution in which mental and moral capacities are developing, and if he sets himself against his own orderly progress along these definite lines of growth, he dashes himself against the laws of his being, and pain is the inevitable result. Impelled by passion, he may do this again and again, but when death has deprived him of his body, he suffers all the cravings of his encouraged passions, but has lost the instruments for their gratification. The folly of thus laying up for himself inevitable sufferings dawns on him, however slowly, and he realises that continually to do the things which bring on him misery in this and in other worlds is the act of a fool. Suffering chastises him when he goes against the law; happiness suffuses his being when he lives in harmony therewith, and develops his nature harmoniously. Inevitably, sooner or later, he accommodates himself to his surroundings, submits to the law, and treads the upward path.

#### QUESTION 18.

*Is it necessary that every Ego in the course of its incarnations should pass through every experience, including both vice and virtue?*

*Has every individual alive to-day, as a certain passage in Light on the Path would seem to imply, at some time or another in his past, committed murder, theft, and all the other crimes in the calendar? (1903.)*

G. R. S. M.—The question is, what do we mean by *Ego*? What incarnates; is it the soul or the mind? In my opinion—which is not knowledge, as any reader of Plato is well aware, for opinion pertains to “soul” and not to “mind”—the “man,”

the true humanity, "passes through every experience," and yet does not do so, for (*pace* Kant) it contains in itself the categories of time and space, and is not determined by them. This "man" is not separate or individual in any physical or psychic sense, but is both same and other, and therefore truly human in the ideal sense of the term. It is the great mystery, the sphinx of the ages. "Man," however, when looked upon as "soul" is a separate individual, and soul presumably has a beginning in time and space; this "soul" may perhaps be regarded as "Ego," it is a *continuum* of sense at best, and does not pertain to the truly immortal world, and will therefore be dissolved in time. This "soul" is equally a most difficult concept to grasp, but its proper understanding will hardly be facilitated by describing it in *physical* terms. It is brooded over by the "mind," and it gives "life" to "form," or perhaps, more correctly, is the "mover" of the "moved," that is "body." If, however, the question is asked: Does the soul—the human soul or soul brooded over *most directly* by mind—have to pass through all experiences?—the answer would seem to be that as only all souls can pass through all experiences, a separate soul does not do so, but develops along a special line of experience, this experience, of course, including both vice and virtue, for virtue in its true sense means the atoning of the *will* of the soul with the *will* of the mind, the true humanity, while vice means the persistence in the *Dharma* of the animal as animal.

It seems that when a man wins to that *Siddhi* or power which is called *Punarjanasmriti*, or the memory of past births, that he can as easily "see" the past of another as the past of his own soul, and therefore that the "memory" *acquired* is the memory of many other lines of evolution besides that of his own soul-*continuum*. It has also been said that in the course of the long evolution of man towards union with that great Mind which we call the Logos, there is a moment when the man is still apart, worshipping and aspiring, and then a moment when he is that Logos regarding the aspirant as His beloved. But when this consummation is reached, the man does not feel that he has acquired anything new, or has *attained*; he *knows* that he has been the Logos all the time. So, too, with every lesser extension of consciousness and knowledge we may acquire, when we have acquired it we have ever been it. As an ancient writing says: "This race of men is never taught; but when the time is ripe its

*memory is restored by God."* And we, as men, have it in our own hands to retard or hasten this ripening.

A. R. O.—It would be a very hard fate surely if every one of us were doomed to pass through every experience. We could not even profit by our own mistakes to the extent of not repeating them, nor even, which is more absurd, by the mistakes of others! I suppose there are a number of what may be called types of experience; they may be the abstract ideas. And since by virtue of our Divinity we have each the germ of the ideas in us, it follows that it would be possible to rise to the ideas by means of one experience only of each idea. For example, the idea of triangularity might conceivably be reached after experience of one or a few triangles. One purpose of meditation is, in fact, to reduce the number of examples necessary to awaken the idea: and thus to quicken evolution. I do not suggest that one experience is enough for most of us. We are not like the American statesman who declared he had made as many mistakes as most people, but never the same mistake twice. On the other hand, were this treadmill conception true, there would be neither end nor possible hastening of evolution, which is absurd.

#### QUESTION 19.

*Is it known whether in the descent to re-birth the law that force always works along the line of least resistance is in any way fulfilled? Where the mental affinity, and consequently the attraction, is greatest, the resistance which the embodiment offers is obviously least. (1903.)*

A. A. W.—The short answer is that if it is a Law, it must be fulfilled. It is, however, well to point out that, as we are taught, these laws of heredity and the like do not work out *blindly* their results, but that they are only the means whereby the Powers above provide for the needs of Karma. The confusion of thought and language whereby even writers on philosophy allow themselves to speak of an observed mode of succession (which is all a "law" really means) as having somehow power to *cause* that succession, is at the present time so universal that it is needful to emphasise this point. The Lords of Karma by the intelligent use of the law of heredity and other "laws" produce a suitable body for the reincarnating soul. But the soul's descent into it cannot

be regarded as a matter of "mental affinity and attraction" only. In many cases (perhaps in most), it is a body to which the soul is *not* attracted, a means of karmic punishment instead of reward; the soul takes it, not as water flows away through any chance crack it may find, "along the line of least resistance," but guided, and, if necessary, forced to that body and no other, by the active, intelligent Will of the Powers concerned. Of course, in a sense, it follows the line of least resistance; for in any other direction it would find itself stopped. But I am not sure that the querist is clear that this is the result of a living Will, not of chance or "law," a Will which overrules all affinities or attractions in its way.

A. H. W.—The writer thinks that the impersonal and abstract mode of expressing the mystery of being which this question illustrates is probably more near the truth of things than the personal and anthropomorphic imagery in which much theological teaching is clothed. That action and re-action are always equal and opposite, that a man puts out energy in a certain direction and to that extent alters the balance of the Universe, which must be restored inevitably by the return of the re-action, is cold and hopeless to the type of mind which loves to attribute its joys and sorrows to some outside agent, some adored Lord or Master who loveth whom he chasteneth. The two points of view might be called passive and active. The active regards a man as energised and ever growing from within, continually assimilating experience, and continually modifying the lower vehicles in response to it, till perfection and harmony are attained. The passive looks to the without, and anthropomorphises the forces of Nature which form the environment into entities, Builders, Elementals, Devas, Lords of Karma, all of which are figured as interfering from outside, as building the body into which the soul is forced often against its will, as giving powers, as imposing limitations, as inflicting punishments or conferring rewards. Yet all these entities are said to act strictly in uniformity with the Good Law of absolutely just action and re-action on which the Universe is built; which, so far as Science can see, appears to be absolute for microcosm and macrocosm alike. But if all these entities by their joint action simply fulfil the Good Law, the necessity for conceiving them as separate or different from the Law seems to vanish; and with this disappearance goes the uncomfortable idea that a man is a pawn on a board, moved

and modified, cuffed and caressed, lured on and put off by innumerable Fairy God-mothers who may be neither all-good nor all-wise.

The anthropomorphic view is doubtless attractive, and it may well be necessary at certain stages of evolution. If our fate is in the hands of a conscious entity, only possibly conceived as a magnified-self, then there is always the subconscious notion that he may be in some way got at, propitiated, pleased, and that, therefore, he may let us down easy and not exact the uttermost farthing. Our idea of mercy is being let off something unpleasant which we deserve, a sort of discount for cash; while our idea of justice is something which will keep other people in order, and let us have our way.

But really, the writer conceives, Mercy and Justice are identical, mercy which is unjust is unmerciful, justice which is unmerciful is unjust, the golden mean which includes both is perfect impartial fairness all round, in point of fact the Good Law and nothing else.

For aught we know, the whole congeries of Builders, Elementals, Devas and others, may be nothing but streams of the One Energy personified by the thought of anthropomorphising seers. It is to be remembered that theoretically all these classes of entities are distinct from the Masters of Wisdom, who are *Men*.

#### QUESTION 20.

*With regard to the broad laws governing Reincarnation, how is it that when one meets an Indian ascetic, and finds that all his teachings fall into line with the purest Theosophy, and that his life is in the best sense holy, yet in this one question he is unhesitatingly at variance with our theosophical concepts? For he states positively that Reincarnation is practically immediate, or within a few hours, and that the problematic 1800 years spoken of is only a human method of calculation, nine hundred yogin breaths being equal to one hour. (1899.)*

C. W. L.—Immediate Reincarnation is certainly *not* the teaching of the holy men of India as a whole. The questioner is evidently speaking from personal experience as to the opinion of some individual ascetic, but further inquiry will probably satisfy him that his friend stands alone in this opinion, or, at any rate,

that it is not shared by the real philosophers and teachers of the East. It is quite true that many people in India would assign a much lower average to the Devachanic period than is given to it in theosophical literature, but I have never heard it put at much less than a century, except among the Burmese. I think many Indian teachers would give it as their belief that while the life in the heaven-world *ought* to be not only as long as we suppose but even much longer, yet in the present material age it is a good deal shorter, because men now are so entirely ensnared by the affairs of this world that they no longer fix their thoughts and hopes upon the higher life as they should.

After all, however, this is a matter not of opinion, but of fact. Fifteen hundred years was mentioned in the earlier theosophical teachings as a rough average for the man who lived to moderate old age, and as far as the recent researches touch the subject, they have all testified to the accuracy of this statement. In a list of sixteen successive incarnations of the same individual it was found that his average earth-life was forty-eight years and his average period out of incarnation 1265 years. This list, however, includes two lives in which the man dies almost in childhood—at the age of twelve, and has, therefore, only twenty-two and forty-one years of heaven-life respectively—the difference between these two results being apparently a question of development and education. On the other hand, a long life of eighty-five years under exceptionally good conditions produced in the same man a Devachanic period of no less than two thousand three hundred years. Other lines of lives which have been followed show a somewhat higher average, so that the trend of later observation has been distinctly to confirm the information given at the beginning. It may be taken as abundantly proved that the fifteen-hundred-year average holds good for the section of humanity which we have called the first-class Pitris, but, of course, that is after all only a very small section of mankind, and there is room for great divergence from its rules in the comparatively unexplored region which lies outside it.

It is obvious that less developed entities would be likely to have far less of the higher spiritual forces in action within them, and their stay in the heaven-world, therefore, could not but be much shorter. To some slight extent this shortening of the period between incarnations would be compensated by the increased length of the astral life, caused by uncontrolled desire

but, nevertheless, the lower classes of Pitris must undoubtedly return into earth-life much more rapidly than comparatively highly evolved beings would do. Although but little investigation has as yet been devoted to these problems, it is probable that the average given to us was not intended to apply to any but the highest class, from which all those who were keenly attracted to the Occult life would be likely to be drawn.

There is a certain amount of evidence from outside which tends to confirm this view, although, as it has not yet been sifted or specially examined, it is impossible to pronounce definitely upon its reliability. The widely-spread belief in India that incarnation takes place after an interval of a century or two, and the numerous stories (related on apparently good authority) which reach us from Burma and from some parts of America as to children who distinctly recollect a comparatively recent previous life, and have in some cases, it is said, been able to prove their recollection of it satisfactorily, are some of the items of this evidence.

So that while the questioner may set his mind entirely at rest as to the general accuracy of the teaching, he may also solace himself with the idea that there are probably a large number of variations from the rule given to us—quite enough, I should imagine, to account for the diversities of opinion which have puzzled him. Another vast question which is so far almost entirely uninvestigated, is that of the difference (if any) between the average incarnation-periods of man in the third, fourth, and fifth root-races.

#### QUESTION 21.

*How can we explain the first human birth, life, and death? The doctrine of Incarnation and Reincarnation does not seem to clear up the mystery of our first life, and puts the question further back without solving it. We had a first life as human beings. Why, then, in this first existence were our souls so different? Why did they experience joy and suffering equally mysterious, incomprehensible destiny, illness and physical death? The Christian myth offers us under the somewhat obscure form of the dogma of "Original Sin" a poetic explanation, which I should like dealt with from a theosophic point of view. (1902.)*

A. P. S.—The teaching that has been received with reference to

the beginnings of human life does indeed put the explanation so far back for most of us that it is difficult to realise the conditions existing when such life began. All who entered on the stage of this world's experience as Pitris of the first class were differentiated as human beings in the last Manvantara. The Pitris of the second class were already distinct reincarnating entities at the close of the Lunar Manvantara, and did not come into activity in this world till the second round, and had their first experience of this Manvantara on other planets. The third-class Pitris, though reckoned as having attained the human kingdom in the last Manvantara, were merged in the lower kingdoms again at the beginning of this one, and during the earlier rounds of this one great numbers of our present human family were not yet in existence as differentiated entities at all. So at once it is obvious that our "first life as human beings" was not a condition of uniformity for all. For some that first life has to be sought for in the record of worlds that have passed away for myriads of ages. For others it is a relatively recent achievement, great masses of the people around us having been born out of the animal kingdom only in this world period, and between those two extreme possibilities, lie an almost infinite variety of others. Leaving aside for the moment, however, the deeper complexities of the problem, it must be remembered that from the moment any new human being is born, so to speak, in the course of the vast evolutionary process, he begins to work with the opportunities of human existence according to his own sweet will. "Why," says the question before us, "were our souls so different?" It is not necessary to assume they were different in order to account for the difference of their development. They enter on the stage of evolution in presence of an infinite variety of external circumstance. Each one to begin with may be thought of as a colourless atom of the Logos' consciousness. In view of the ultimate motive of the whole undertaking it does not matter which of these atoms acquires a colour which renders it available for use in the eventual evolution of new Logoi. To the individuality which each in turn becomes, it matters everything no doubt, but as an individuality the choice rests with itself and can never be final as long as ignorance clouds the understanding. Why the present scheme of evolution is associated with suffering is a question to which no sensible student will attempt to give a reply. When he becomes competent to create a solar system himself he will be in time to consider



whether he can invent one in which suffering shall play no part. But, meanwhile, the moral to be derived from such inquiries as these is one which may be worth some emphasis. There are limits which it is undesirable for us to attempt to transcend in our study of Nature as carried on from this platform of physical consciousness. There is certainly something within which is Divine, but we shall not on that account be enabled to comprehend the operations of Divinity as a whole. We may be able to trace back our origins as far as the animal kingdom, but we shall lose our way if we try to go back much further, or rather if in attempting to go back further we aim at comprehending things in too much detail. The wealth of knowledge that has been accumulated by theosophical students within the last twenty years is enormous, but we have no perfect comprehension even of this planet on which we stand. And we know that our evolution, even in this one round, of this one Manvantara, of this one planetary scheme—itsself but a small portion of the solar system as a whole—is carried on during progress through several other worlds of which we know next to nothing. The physical eyesight may be blinded by excess of light, and in the same way the understanding may be hopelessly dazzled by the mystery of Divine beginnings. Nor to understand our place in Nature for practical purposes is it necessary to bewilder the mind by attempts to deal with the problem of Divine beginnings. Our first human life, though so recent for some members of the human family—recent as the age of planetary systems may be reckoned—is, as regards the older members, wrapped in unfathomable mystery. All we can say with assurance on the subject is that we are all products of the evolutionary system to which we are bound, with infinite possibilities of future development in front of us. If we have suffered and blundered through ignorance in the past, there is no reason why we should go on doing so in the future, now ignorance is gradually clearing away, and no trace of bygone suffering, or blundering, need cling to us for ever.

The only idea bearing on the difficulties stated which I should like to throw into the questioner's mind—in addition perhaps to what he may find in the familiar books—is this:—Humanity emerges in many different ways from the animal kingdom. At the beginnings of this world period it emerged from animal forms of a very low type and entered humanity in correspondingly ignoble forms. Let us not suppose that future humanity, emerging

from the relatively exalted animal forms of the present day, will ever have to pass through such humanity as the savage remnants of the third and early fourth races still on the earth represent. New humanity may be evolving from our present animal kingdom continually, but it will incarnate in a correspondingly respectable humanity on another globe in due time, or, in somewhat rare cases, among the advanced humanity of this world period when powerful Karmic attractions are operative. Some of our animals of the highest types are already reincarnating entities, and their first human lives will thus be already tinged with individual characteristics and even with actual Karma.

For the rest I think we may assign the doctrine of "original sin" to the company of such theological imaginings as are concerned with the core of the apple that stuck in Adam's throat, or the temperature of Satan's furnaces.

B. K.—In trying to suggest an answer to this question it seems necessary to make some general statements regarding the fundamental theosophical conceptions bearing on the problem and the terms used in dealing with it, in order that as little misunderstanding and confusion of thought as possible may arise.

First, then, what is the meaning of "we" or "I"? What am "I"? According to Theosophy "I" am "That": in other words "I," in ultimate analysis, am a "spark," a "portion," a "ray," a "centre"—no form can be used or invented that is wholly accurate and free from objection—of the very life and essence of the Logos, possessing in latency *all* the powers, possibilities, potentialities of the One Universal Life. In this respect "we" are not merely all equal, but we are all absolutely one, for each "centre," "spark" or "ray" has in it equally, and at once, all potentialities alike—but alike unmanifested, existent only as potentialities within the bosom of the Father, that is, within the highest plane or region of the Universe. And "manifestation" means the calling forth into actuality, the rendering effective, present, operative of *all* these potentialities in each and every plane or condition of the Universe, so that each centre ultimately becomes even as the Father, Master and Lord of all manifestation.

But looking at "manifestation" we see that it is essentially a process, an ordered coming forth, implicated with Time and Sequence. Hence—since the infinite fulness of the One Life can only be expressed by means of infinite variety and in

manifestation—it would seem obvious that the *order*, the sequence and succession, according to which the infinite series of latent potentialities inherent in each centre will be called forth and manifested into actuality, must needs be different—more or less—for each. Now this calling forth or manifestation of that which is latent in each centre, and the order and sequence in which it occurs, depends during the “downward arc,” as it is called, entirely upon the differing vehicles, the upadhis or bodies, with which the centre becomes clothed or enveloped. And it is not till the upward arc of evolution has advanced to some extent that conscious choice begins to play any conspicuous part in the process. Indeed, it is only, I think, when the centre appears as man, that is, obtains the human causal body as vehicle, that we can speak of *conscious* choice as in actual operation at all on the planes below the highest.

But one half at least of the whole cycle of evolution in our system has already been traversed when the causal body is formed and man becomes truly man—when in strictness the “centre,” the Divine Spirit or Spark which “I” ultimately am, obtains its first truly human birth. X

Now all this aelong process, up to that point, has been occupied in the slow preparation of and partial learning to manipulate the bodies we now use so easily though even still so imperfectly—the physical, astral, mental and causal—and their full mastery and development will occupy the remainder of the present cycle of evolution. But it is these bodies which in their varied building have determined and do still determine the sequence, the order, in which the powers of the centre, the Self in us, shall be called forth. And till the causal body was formed, these other bodies were built *for* us, by the working of the Logos and his agents, far more than they were built *by* us directly and immediately. In them are expressed partially a minor series out of the infinite possibilities which await realisation *in us*, but which the Logos, our Father, had already actualised ere he called this Universe into being from within himself. X

Our “first human birth,” therefore, is by no means the first putting forth, the first coming into manifestation of that Divine Spark which is our real Self. It but marks a certain definite and very important stage in the process—the point, namely, where the Self in us, the true “I,” *begins* to take into its own hands the further course of its unfoldment and to develop the power of

conscious choice. But in its long past of slow unfoldment in other forms, it has developed, actualised from within its boundless store, a certain definite series of powers and qualities, which distinguish it *in manifestation* from other similar Divine Sparks and give to it within the fields of manifestation, a specific, individual character of its own. Thus at any point of time, each centre in manifestation is distinguishable from all others, not in essence or in inmost nature, which in all alike is *That*, but in manifestation, in the actual, realised, developed and operative set of powers and potentialities which it has unfolded and actualised up to that moment. All powers and possibilities of the Infinite All lie latent within each alike, waiting their unfoldment. In the Eternal all are One, there is neither before nor after, neither Time, nor Change, nor Difference. But manifestation implies, nay, *is* all these, and thus long before the hour of our first "human birth" we have become different as manifested, that is finite and limited beings, clothed in partially developed vestures of matter, which, while they aid, nay bring about our unfoldment, also limit and shut us in.

And the problem of Justice? In the sum total, each and all must acquire all and every experience, and the balance swings true and unerring. Time matters not at all, for each centre of the Divine Life, ere it becomes "one with the Father," has passed through all places alike and has tasted in equal measure of every cup, has assimilated all experience that goes to make up the Universe of Manifestation.

## DIVISION V

### THE CHURCH FATHERS AND REINCARNATION

#### QUESTION 22.

*There are apparently no references to the doctrine of Reincarnation in the writings of the early Church Fathers: is this also the case with regard to the other early Christian Sects which were subsequently condemned as heretical? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—In the Gnostic Gospel *Pistis Sophia* frequent reference to the idea of rebirth is to be found. Thus Mary (p. 296) interprets a saying of Jesus as follows:

“O Master, thou has said unto us aforetime, ‘Agree with thine enemy whilst thou are in the way with him, lest at any time thine enemy deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison: thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.’

“Manifestly is thy word concerning this, ‘Every soul which shall come forth from the body, and shall go on its way with the counterfeit of the spirit, and which hath not found the mystery of breaking all the seals and all the bonds, that it may be set free from the counterfeit of the spirit which is bound unto it; well, then, that soul which has not found the mystery of light, and hath not found the mystery of detaching the counterfeit of the spirit which is bound to it within; if, then, that soul hath not found it, the counterfeit of the spirit bringeth that soul unto the virgin of light, and the virgin of light, the judge, handeth over that soul to one of her receivers, and her receiver casteth it into the spheres of the æons, and it is not set free from transmigrations into bodies, until it giveth signs of being in its last cycle.’”

The embryonic stages of Reincarnation and the workings of the karmic law are suggested in the following (p. 345):

“And the rulers give commandment to the workmen saying, ‘This is the type which ye shall set in the matter of the world. Set ye the compound of the power which is in the soul within all of them, that they may hold together, for it is their support, and outside the soul place the counterfeit of the spirit.’

“Following this plan the workmen of the rulers bring the power, the soul, and the counterfeit of the spirit, and pour them all three into the world passing through the world of the rulers of the midst.

“The rulers of the midst also inspect the counterfeit of the spirit and also the destiny. The latter, whose name is the destiny, leadeth on a man until it hath him killed by the death which is destined for him. This, the rulers of the great fate have bound to the soul. . . .

“All this I will tell unto you and the class of every soul, and the type whereby they come into bodies, either as men, or birds, or cattle, or wild beasts, or reptiles or any other species that existeth in the world.”

The method of the workmen is further explained in relation to Karmic compulsion (p. 346):

“Now, therefore, when the workmen of the rulers have cast one part into the woman and the other into the man, even though the pair be removed a great distance from one another, the workmen compel them secretly to be united together in the union of the world. . . . And forthwith the workmen of the rulers enter into her, to take up their abode in her.”

Then follows a description of the way in which the workmen impress the organism, and build the different members into the body.

Finally, the inviolability of the karmic law is most clearly set forth in the following remarkable passage (p. 350):

“Amen, I say unto you, every jot that is set down in the account of every man by the fate, be it every good or be it every evil, in a word every jot that hath been set down will be worked out.”

Many other passages could be adduced, for the whole of the mystic narrative turns on the two great facts of Karma and Reincarnation, but sufficient has been quoted to give the reader an idea of the unequivocal statements supplied to us by the teachers of the Gnosis. But Bhakti (devotion) gained the upper hand, and Gñana (gnôsis, wisdom) was condemned, and so the

Western world has had an unintelligent faith and a *credo quia absurdum*.

#### QUESTION 23.

*Question 22 states that "there are apparently no references to the doctrine of Reincarnation in the writings of the early Church Fathers": surely this is a very exaggerated statement? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—This ever-recurring question among theosophical students can only be settled by the production of evidence from the writings of the Fathers themselves. In order to show the state of affairs we will append two quotations, the first from the pen of an untrammelled inquirer who was remarkably free from prejudice for the time at which he wrote, and the second from the lectures of a cleric who by the very conditions of the lecture trust, had to defend certain dogmas. Beausobre and Burton were both without the faintest sympathy for the doctrine of Reincarnation, and, therefore, we cannot expect from them a really intelligent treatment of the subject itself, but they are useful to us in the present question, since the former distinctly asserts with regard to Origen that he was a Reincarnationist, while the latter quotes a number of passages to show that this was not the case.

In Beausobre's *Histoire Critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme* (Amsterdam, 1734), we read in volume ii., pp. 492 sqq., as follows:

"It is certain that Origen believed that souls animate several bodies successively, and that these transmigrations are regulated according to their merits or demerits. If we believe the anonymous author, of whom Photius has given an extract, the learned Origen must have stated that the soul of the Saviour was the same as the soul of Adam. He had apparently taken this idea from the Jews. However that may be, there is no doubt that he admitted the transmigration of souls. The only question to determine is whether rational souls could be so far debased as to pass into the bodies of animals. Saint Jerome bears witness that this error was to be found in the [Greek original of the] first book of Origen's *Principles*; but it is no longer to be found in the [Latin] translation which we possess, a fact which shows that it is one of the passages which the translator Ruffinus cut out. Saint Jerome is worthy of our credence. Origen, who enters largely

into philosophical questions in his works, supposed that it was possible for the souls of great sinners to be sent into the bodies of animals, there to expiate their crimes. I say that he believed that that was *possible*, for he does not affirm it as a dogma ; it is only a probable conjecture, as Saint Jerome agrees. All that can be said is that Origen did not believe that this opinion would in any way damage the foundation of the Faith.

“Several other Christian philosophers, who have not been treated with such severity as Origen, permitted themselves to be led astray into the error of the transmigration of souls. Nicephorus Gregoras was right in attributing it to Synesius. It is to be found in several passages of the works of this Father, and especially in the following prayer which he addresses to God : ‘Father, grant that my soul, mingling with the Light, may no more be plunged in the delusion of Earth.’ Let us add to Synesius another Christian philosopher [Chalcedius], of an earlier date, who gives his unqualified consent to the same error, when writing : ‘Souls who have failed to unite themselves with God, are compelled, by the law of destiny, to begin a new kind of life, entirely different from their former [existence], until they repent of their sins.’

“I should have imagined that this ‘new kind of life, entirely different to their former [existence],’ means that vicious souls pass into the bodies of animals, but that cannot be the idea of Chalcedius, for I have already remarked that he endeavours to give an allegorical interpretation of what Plato said on the subject, in order to relieve him of an opinion which has the appearance of too great absurdity.

“Thus then it was not only the Simonians, Basilidians, Valentinians, Marcionites, etc., and in general those who are called Gnostics, who abandoned themselves to the error of metempsychosis, but also Christian philosophers of great merit and high virtue, the error being exceedingly seductive on account of its antiquity and universality, and because of the principles of which it was believed to be the consequence.”

We thus see that in the case of Origen, Beausobre’s main evidence depends on a quotation of Jerome, which has been apparently removed from Origen’s *Principles* by the orthodoxy of Ruffinus, and in support of his several assertions he refers solely to Huetius (*Origeniana*, L. II. Quæst. vi. No. 17, p. 102).

For the rest of Beausobre’s quotations in support of his other statements I must refer the reader to his work.



Burton, in his Bampton Lectures, entitled *An Inquiry into the Heresies of the Apostolic Age* (Oxford, 1829), traverses the opinion of Beausobre, writing as follows on pp. 427, 428 :

“It has often been said that some Christian writers, and particularly Origen, believed in a transmigration of souls. Jerome asserted it of Origen ; and Huetius, Beausobre and others, have made the same statement. That Origen believed in the pre-existence of souls cannot be denied, and Gregory of Nyssa has shown that the two doctrines are connected together ; but I cannot help doubting whether the charge was not brought against Origen by inference and implication, rather than by positive proof. There is no passage in his existing writings which shows a belief in the transmigration of souls. On the contrary he seems to be decidedly opposed to it : he speaks of using the doctrines of Christianity ‘to heal those who are suffering from the foolish notion of the *metensomatosis*’ : he says of Celsus, ‘If he had been aware what awaits the soul in its future eternal existence, he would not have so violently attacked the notion of an immortal being coming into a mortal body ; not according to the *metensomatosis* of Plato, but by another and sublimer method.’ Speaking of those words in Matt. xi. 14 : ‘This is Elias, which was for to come,’ he observes, ‘From this passage, which stands almost alone, some persons have introduced a *metensomatosis*, as if Jesus himself had thus confirmed the notion : but, if this were true, we ought to find something like it in many passages of the prophets or evangelists.’ In another place he speaks of persons, ‘who are strangers to the doctrine of the church supposing that souls pass from human bodies to the bodies of dogs according to their different crimes.’ But the most remarkable passage is where he is again speaking of Elias, as mentioned in Matt. xvii. 10, and says, ‘In these words it appears to me that *Elias* does not mean the soul, lest I should fall into the doctrine of the *metensomatosis*, which is not held by the Church of God, nor handed down by the apostles, nor does it appear anywhere in the Scriptures.’ He then argues at considerable length against the notion ; and upon the whole I cannot but conclude that the charge which has been brought against Origen is entirely groundless. This was shown formerly by Pamphilus in his *Defence of Origen* (c. 10) ; and Huetius professes the same opinion in the work to which I have already referred (§ 19, etc.), though Beausobre quotes him as if he had charged Origen with agreeing with Pythagoras and Plato.”

For the references I must refer the student to Burton's notes.

We thus see that (a) Beausobre and Burton take a diametrically opposite view of the passages from Origen's works quoted by Huetius ; that (b) Beausobre bases himself upon a passage which he asserts has been in translation wilfully expunged from Origen's works ; that (c) Origen believed in pre-existence, but denied metempsychosis ; that (d) Burton skilfully confines his argument to Origen, and omits all reference to Synesius and Chalcidius, and with regard to Origen passes over in silence the charge of mutilation of the original made against Ruffinus.

With regard to Origen, therefore, the question resolves itself into (a) whether or not he held the idea of Reincarnation though denying the possibility of the degradation of the human soul to the animal kingdom ; (b) whether his idea of Reincarnation was that of renewed embodiment on earth in human form, or re-embodiment in some ascending scale of spheres. This question is still undecided, and will remain obscure until we can discover what difference, if any, Origen made between the terms "metempsychosis" and "metempsychosis."

In any case, students of Theosophy, from their fuller information on the subject, will be able to assign each scrap of information to its proper place in the psychological scheme.

The doctrine is that rebirth normally takes place here on earth. It is only when a soul is so irretrievably vicious that Reincarnation in human form is no longer possible, that it may pass back into an inferior kingdom ; though this is a very rare event fortunately, the terrible possibility has been exaggerated into a frequent occurrence by didactic moralists in India and Greece as an incentive to virtue and a deterrent from vice, just as the eternal hell doctrine has been used in Christianity. The idea of Reincarnation, not on earth, but in other spheres, is a dim echo of the planetary chain doctrine, and also of the passage of the soul from plane to plane in the *post-mortem* state.

It goes without saying that as the real facts were guarded with jealous secrecy in antiquity, the garbled versions of the doctrine and superstitious glosses upon it that were in public circulation have always to be received with the greatest possible caution. Christian apologists invariably use the term "metempsychosis" to mean the passage of the soul into the bodies of animals and nothing else, thus at the very outset exaggerating an exceedingly rare detail into the full sum and substance of the whole teaching.

## QUESTION 24.

*Where are the alleged passages bearing on Reincarnation to be found in the works of Origen and Synesius? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—Although, unfortunately, I have not the whole of Synesius' writings on my shelves, the following may be of service as a contribution to an answer.

Thomas Taylor, in his "Restoration of the Platonic Theology" (*Comment. of Proclus on the Elements of Euclid*, ii. 269, n.), tells us that Synesius "was a native of Cyrene in Africa; travelled into Egypt for improvement, and perfected his studies under the celebrated Hypatia—a woman no less eminent for her uncommon abilities, than remarkable for her tragical death. . . . Though Synesius was reluctantly consecrated Bishop of Ptolemais about the year 410, yet we may collect from his tenets that he was not a perfect convert to Christianity, and from his epistles that he lamented his episcopal station. For with respect to the former, he denied the immediate creation of the world, its final destruction, and the resurrection of the dead: and with regard to the latter, he frequently and earnestly begs to be discharged from his office, and declares that as he was by education a heathen, and by profession a philosopher, he had met with no success since he presumed to serve at the altar. Particularly in a letter to his friend Olympius (Epist. 95) he declares that if his duty as a bishop should be any hindrance to his philosophy, he would relinquish his diocese, abjure his orders, and remove into Greece."

In his book *On Dreams*, Synesius writes as follows:

"In what the disease of this spirit consists, by what means it languishes and is dulled, and how it becomes purified and defecated, and restored to its original simplicity and perfection, must be learned from the arcana of philosophy; from which being purified by the lustrations of mysteries it passes into a Divine condition of being. But it is requisite to banish all influxions externally, before the phantastic spirit can superinduce the divinity. And whoever preserves it pure by a life according to nature, will render it prompt for this most exalted employment. For this spirit understands the affection of the soul, and is not destitute of sympathy towards it, like its testaceous vestment the body, which has a condition opposite to the more excellent

affections of the soul. But the primary and proper vehicle of this phantastic spirit, when the soul is in a flourishing condition, is attenuated and ethereal; but when the soul is badly affected, then this vehicle is dulled, and becomes terrene. For this phantastic spirit is situated in the confines of the rational and brutal nature, is of an incorporeal and corporeal degree; and is the common boundary of both, and the medium which conjoins Divine natures with the lowest of all. On this account it is difficult to comprehend its nature by philosophy, for it collects that which accords with itself, as it were, from things separated by so great an interval from its own. But nature extends the latitude of a phantastic essence through many conditions of things, for it descends even to animals, to whom intellect is not present. In this case, however, it is no longer the vehicle of a diviner soul, but presides over its subject powers, becomes the reason of the animal with which it is connected, and is the occasion of its acting with much wisdom and propriety.

“ But this phantastic spirit may be even purified in brutes, so that something better may be induced; and all the genera of dæmons derive their essence from a life of this kind, for their whole essence is composed from the phantasy and from inward imaginations. . . . Hence this animal spirit, which Divine men have denominated the spiritual soul, becomes a god, and an omniform dæmon, and an image, in which the soul suffers the punishment of its guilt. And in conformity with this the oracles also compare the life of the soul in this animal spirit to the imaginations of dreams. Philosophy, too, agrees in asserting that preceding lives are certain preparations to those in a subsequent order, while the possession of the best habit in souls renders this spirit more adapted to elevation, and wipes away the profound stains of a baser affection. Hence by natural allurements, this spirit is either elevated on high, on account of its heat and dryness, which Plato signifies by the wings of the soul, and Heraclitus when he says, *that a dry soul is the wisest*; or becoming bulky and humid, it merges itself in the recesses of the earth by a natural gravity; and is thus concealed in darkness, and hurled into a subterranean region. For a place of this kind is peculiarly adapted to humid spirits; and the life there is unhappy, and obnoxious to punishment. It is, however, possible by labour and time, and a transition into other lives, for the imaginative soul when purified, to emerge from this dark abode, for it passes its course through

lives of a twofold nature, and alternately approaches to inferior and subordinate conditions of being.

“But the soul in its first descent derives this spirit from the planetary spheres, and entering this as a boat associates itself with the corporeal world, earnestly contending that it may either at the same time draw this spirit after it in its flight, or that they may not abide in conjunction. Indeed it is rarely, though possible to be accomplished, that the one deserts the other in descending to the earth, for it is unlawful not to believe in mysteries of known credibility and truth. But the soul’s regression will be base, if she neglects to restore that which is foreign from her nature, and leaves about the earth what she had received from on high, and this indeed one or two may obtain as a gift of Divinity and Initiation. For it is instituted by nature, that the soul, once seated in this phantastic spirit, should either follow, or draw, or be drawn, yet so as to remain copulated with this spirit, till it again ascends from whence it came. Hence, when on account of its depravity this spirit grows heavy, at the same time it draws down the soul, which had yielded to its gravitation. And the dread of this is what the oracles announce to our intellectual conceptions, when they advise: ‘Nor decline beneath into the obscure world, whose depth is always an unfaithful bottom, and an infernal darkness, squalid, rejoicing in shadows, and full of stupidity and folly.’ . . .

“No place would be left for the soul to take her flight from the dominion of matter, if in the present state she lived free from the incursions of evil, and hence it is proper to believe, that præfects of the infernal regions have invented vulgar prosperities as the snares of the soul. It may, therefore, be said that souls emigrating from hence drink of oblivion; but the cup of oblivion is extended to souls entering into the present life, by pleasure and delight. For when the soul descends spontaneously to its former life, with mercenary views, it receives servitude as the reward of its mercenary labours. But this is the design of descent, that the soul may accomplish a certain servitude to the nature of the Universe, prescribed by the laws of Adrastia, or inevitable fate.”

G.—I question very much whether any positive evidence can be obtained from Origen’s works showing that he held the doctrine of Reincarnation in the commonly accepted sense of the

word. That he regarded the pre-existence of the soul as a fact is well known, but it would appear from many passages that he conceived the soul as appearing for the first time on this earth, having, from the beginning of all things, passed through a series of states in super-earthly regions. The soul fell into matter, or was born in a physical body, for one of two reasons—first, because of its previous sinful actions, or second, because its presence was required for the aid of those who were lower in the scale of evolution, for Origen clearly recognised the growth and development of the soul. In *De Principiis*, Book III., chap. v., he compares the future of the soul with the past, and argues that as there is no finality there can have been no beginning.

“I am, indeed, of opinion that as the end and consummation of the saints will be in those [ages] which are not seen, and are eternal, we must conclude (as frequently pointed out in the preceding pages), from a contemplation of that very end, that rational creatures had also a similar beginning. And if they had a beginning such as the end for which they hope, they existed undoubtedly from the very beginning in those [ages] which are not seen and are eternal. And if this is so, then there has been a descent, from a higher to a lower condition, on the part not only of those souls who have deserved the change by the variety of their movements, but also on that of those who, in order to serve the whole world, were brought down from those higher and invisible spheres to these lower and visible ones, although against their will. ‘Because the creature was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but because of him who subjected the same in hope.’ . . . The hope indeed of freedom is entertained by the whole of creation—of being liberated from the corruption of slavery—when the sons of God, who either fell away or were scattered abroad, shall be gathered together into one, or when they shall have fulfilled their other duties in this world, which are known to God alone, the Disposer of all things.”

Origen goes on to remark “that it was owing to preceding cause, originating in free-will, that this variety of arrangement had been instituted by God.” The whole of the chapter from which these quotations have been taken deals with the subject.

Origen, in common with all Christian writers, objects persistently to the Greek conception of metempsychosis, but leaves it open to doubt whether the objection includes Reincarnation in human bodies or only the transmigration into animal forms.

In *Contra Celsum*, Book 1., chap. xx., he writes : "The Jew is, in the opinion of Celsus and those like him, deemed inferior to him who degrades the Divinity, not only to the level of rational and mortal animals, but even to that of irrational also!—a view which goes far beyond the mythical doctrine of transmigration, according to which the soul falls down from the summit of heaven and enters into the body of brute beasts, both tame and savage!"

In Book 1., chap. xxxiii., he discusses the birth of Jesus, defending the idea of immaculate conception, and at the same time introducing us to the doctrine of pre-existence.

"Now if a particular soul, for certain mysterious reasons, is not deserving of being placed in the body of a wholly irrational being, nor yet in that of one purely rational, but is clothed with a monstrous body, so that reason cannot discharge its functions in one so fashioned, which has the head disproportioned to the other parts, and altogether too short, and another receives such a body that the soul is a little more rational than the other; and another still more so, the nature of the body counteracting to a greater or less degree the reception of the reasoning principle; why should there not be also some soul which receives an altogether miraculous body, possessing some qualities common to those of other men, so that it may be able to pass through life with them, but possessing also some quality of superiority, so that the soul may be able to remain untainted by sin?"

The other references which may be given are as follows: *De Principiis*, Book III., chap. iii., giving reasons why a man is acted upon by good or bad spirits, "the grounds of which I suspect to be older than the bodily birth of the individual": *Contra Celsum*, Book 1., chap. xxxii., and Book IV., chap. xvii., of Christ and His Incarnation.

## DIVISION VI

### ANALOGIES TO REINCARNATION

#### QUESTION 25.

*Is there anything analogous to Reincarnation among beings who are not incarnated on this plane? (1895.)*

G. R. S. M.—I have always understood that "Reincarnation" was a universal process, or rather that the process of nature was a perpetual descent of spirit into matter and an ascent of spirit out of matter. That on all planes of manifestation this polarity existed, and that, therefore, on planes more subtle than the physical, there were processes analogous to, though naturally not identical with, Reincarnation. No doubt, however, other terms should be used for such processes, and the term Reincarnation retained for the process on this plane of manifestation or in this state of existence.

The symbol for manifested existence among the Buddhists was a wheel, and with the Greeks a circle; that is to say, that every "cycle of generation" was a line of successive existences, which recurred or entered into Self, life so limiting itself and confining itself in a "cycle" or "wheel of necessity." Among the Greeks Reincarnation was referred to as the "cycle of generation" and among the Buddhists as the Samsāra or "wheel of rebirth." Plato shows how the symbol of a circle fitly represents manifested existence, and how it is generated from the three primary ideas of "bound," "infinity" and "mixed." The "bound" is the central point or centripetal force; the "infinity" the circumference or centrifugal force; and the "mixed" is the product of the two forces, the manifold existence generated by them. Such, then, is the existence of every monad in the Universe, regarded as monad. But monads depend on other monads, and subordinates are ruled



by principals. Thus a planet is subordinate to its sun, and the reincarnating "soul" to its "parent mind." But only perfected existences (and by "perfected" is meant "self-existent") follow the perfect path of the circle. There are also imperfect existences, and these follow elliptical, parabolic, or hyperbolic paths, and may be compared to comets. Now comets are the kamic elementals of the kosmos. We may, therefore, suppose that the Reincarnation of an animal bears the same analogy to the Reincarnation of a human being as the comet to a planet. I do not mean to say that we should push the analogy into an identity, but that we may perhaps find some useful hints by comparing the two phenomena. The comet is said to be inchoate and nebulous; that is to say, not yet settled down into a respectable and responsible denizen of the celestial state—in other words, not entirely individualised. Its "seven skins" are not on it. The monad of an animal is nebulous and inchoate as compared with the more individualised monads of men. There is, therefore, far less direct connection between two of its successive appearances, than between two successive incarnations of a human being. Then, again, does an animal monad manifest a certain number of times in some particular species, say the feline family, and then pass into another species, or does it change about from species to species within certain limits? The question seems as difficult to answer as the question of racial Reincarnation in the human kingdom.

One thing, however, is certain, *viz.*; that the law of Karma obtains everywhere even to the minutest detail. It is a *law*, absolute and unerring, and the more we try to work it out in every phrase, the nearer we are to comprehending the reason of every phenomenon. The law of Karma never excuses itself, is never late or out of time, omits nothing. It is a grand thing to realise that there is reason in everything, that a reasonable and all-sufficient line of causation leads up to every result. We should, therefore, be in error if we allowed our limited ideas of justice, confined to the cycle of one short life, to seek exceptions to this unerring law. As Iamblichus says, men often accuse the justice of the Gods because their view is confined to the present life, but the Gods see all the lives of men and err not in their just decrees. No single individual who suffers death in a general calamity, such as a war or earthquake, could possibly have lost his life unless it had been so decreed by his past Karma. If the causes had not been set in motion for a loss of body at that particular time, no

catastrophe *could have the power* to number a particular individual among its victims. The individual would have what is called a "miraculous escape." This follows as surely from the main axiom that *the law of Karma has no exceptions*. Nevertheless, we have to seek some explanation for collective catastrophes, and we may perhaps find a useful analogy in the "lives" of the physical body which suffer together, and die together, when some part of the body is attacked by disease or is cut or bruised. For the earth also is an animal, and its "lives" war on each other and suffer death together, when disease arises or hurt is done to the body of their mother.

Why do hereditary diseases declare themselves in the lives of children at a certain age? So again with fevers, chills, etc. What is true of one body is true of another; what happens in a short period to the human frame occurs, or may occur, to the body of the earth, though, of course, on a much vaster scale, and in a more lengthy period. Perhaps this idea may aid a comprehension of national calamities, etc., for one should remember that even the greatest calamities of which we have historical record, are small finger aches for mother earth; mankind will have a different tale to tell when the whole of her body is convulsed in some great throe of anguish.

P.—As Reincarnation is but a particular application of the great law of cycles, it would seem that the Universe is pervaded, on all the outer planes, by processes similar to human Reincarnation, all springing from the same principle of cyclic progression. The mere fact of Reincarnation upon this earth leads to the conclusion that it is a phenomenal expression of phases of life in higher worlds.

C.—There are analogies to Reincarnation on every plane of nature. Reincarnation, strictly speaking, is the entry of the same spiritual entity into a series of bodies of flesh. But there is an analogy to the process wherever we have anything which is relatively permanent, expressing itself in a series of temporary forms or garments.

Thus, as Carlyle says, *religions* are the garments of *Religion*. The universal truth, which is beyond our perception, clothes itself in some particular form of teaching for each cycle and race. These different religions are the successive bodies which religion takes, and which it casts aside in turn when they become unsuited to its purpose.

Again, the spiritual entity, of which our earth is one of the bodies, has inhabited, and will inhabit, a series of other globes; and the souls of the atoms which form our bodies are continually building and destroying material expressions for themselves.

The life of a tree is relatively permanent as compared with the leaves which it puts forth year by year; and a river or a fountain is relatively permanent while there is constant change in the water of which it is composed.

A. M. G.—If an entity functions on any plane of nature, he requires a body or a vehicle corresponding to that plane, while the being himself belongs in his own proper nature to a higher plane. That is, in the case of man, the man as the Self does not belong to the physical plane on which his body is, nor to the psychic, on which is his soul body, nor to the spiritual, whereon the causal body exists. The Self acts in all these, and is limited by them, the range of action depending on the perfection of the instrument. But the instrument is not the worker. It is always a complex thing, which can consequently be disintegrated, and is disintegrated at the end of its cycle of existence, however long that may be, for we cannot realise a complex thing which is incapable of being divided. It can only be the Self, the conscious centre or unit working through the complex aggregate, which is indestructible. Thus from a body on any plane, physical, psychic or spiritual, the Self may be detached, and following out the analogy of nature, we must assume that if it is passing through an experience on a special plane it would pass from body to body as it does on earth, though the periods of incarnation and the laws governing it might be very different.

E. S.—The Universality of Reincarnation seems to me to be the fundamental idea underlying all theosophical teachings, properly so called. Yet it has been kept much in the background when not altogether ignored. The universality of the operation of "Karma," at least on external planes, is much insisted upon. But the "theosophical" idea of Karma is indissolubly knit to repeated appearances, successive, though not necessarily continuously successive, as in physical heredity, of a governing entity on a natural plane. May it be that Weissmann's views of heredity, preposterous as they seem from some points of view, owe their acceptance among some experts to a glimmering intuition of the persistence of the germ? And this notwithstanding that the hypothetical germ plasm of the physiologist is a very different concept

to the germ which determines the conflux of the Skandhas of past earth-lives when an individual is about to reincarnate.

The doctrine of Karma, in its cruder form, is harsh indeed. Parysatis condemns the slayer of her son on the battle-field to the punishment of "the boat," and the seventeen days of torture suffered by the victim exactly represent his *deserts*. The sufferings of the millions of French peasants before the great Revolution were their *deserts*.

The harrying of Northumbria by William, the devastation of the Palatinate by Louis, the persecution of Alva in the Netherlands, although in each case involving prolonged agonies to thousands, with little or no distinction to sex or age, are only specially familiar instances of great bodies of people promiscuously subjected to cruel wrong—which might be multiplied almost indefinitely from the annals of history, ancient or modern. It may be hard to say what any *individual* may have deserved, taking past lives into account; but surely, when vast masses are tortured, some incredulity as to their deserts having been given must be experienced. Further, a doctrine of Karma should apply not only to man, but to all animals, inclusive of the victims of the modern Continental vivisector.

Law there must be in spiritual as in natural things, though it is hard to trace, and the name given it, whether "Karma" or the "Divine Providence," does not help much—in exposition of the stupendous tragedy of life, when viewed on any great scale.

The mind wearies, like a bird with tired wing at sea, far from any shore, in contemplating the great mystery of Being.

I can only suppose that we are not so much men as we are apt to imagine ourselves to be—that the "I am I" is a fallacy; that the interval between us and lower animals is less than is usually believed. Thus, that our Karma is more or less an aggregate Karma, compounded of many elements, and that our consciousness is more of a common consciousness than an individual consciousness. Roughly speaking, we may call ourselves  $\frac{4}{7}$  men, and perhaps such animals as dogs, horses, etc.,  $\frac{4}{7}$  men. But I know this will not pass muster as orthodox Theosophy.

"Karma" involves repeated Reincarnations, and the aspects of these Reincarnations, especially as among the animals, or lower down still, greatly need exposition.

## DIVISION VII

### ANIMALS AND REINCARNATION

#### QUESTION 26.

*If there is no persistent individual consciousness in animals, how can one account for the statement in the Light of Asia that Buddha was able to remember his incarnation in a tiger's form? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—This incident probably occurs in the curious collection of folk-lore and moral fables called the Jātaka Tales or Birth Stories. The ordinary mortal is strongly tempted to believe that the collection is mainly composed of genuine pre-Buddhistic folk-lore and Buddhistic monkish academical exercises mingled with some slight tradition of the actual teaching of the Tathāgata. Such folk-lore tales are not the proper field for the exposition of subtle psychological mysteries, and, therefore, we should not look for more than a simple substructure of graphic ideas on which to hang moral precepts suited for the most part to the comprehension of children and rural audiences.

C. J.—We do not require the theory of a persistent individual consciousness in animals to account for the fact that the Buddha was able to remember what he did in a tiger's form. Strictly speaking it is inaccurate to imagine that the Buddha was the tiger, but rather that out of the monadic essence that was then evolving through the tiger's form the human being that was later to develop to a Buddha was individualised. In this lies the explanation. We are all familiar with the fact that it is possible for Adepts to trace all their past incarnations right back to the beginning when they became men; and though previous to that there was not what we can call an individual (*i.e.*, with the higher principles) to trace the line further back, yet an Adept's consciousness would find no difficulty in identifying itself with the con-

sciousness of the block of monadic essence out of which he became individualised. And though there is no persistent individual consciousness in animals, yet there *is* such a persistent consciousness in the animal monadic essence ; hence it follows that the Buddha was able to say that he remembered his incarnation in a tiger's form.

C. W. L.—First of all, the statement in question is merely a repetition of an exoteric legend, which may or may not have some foundation in fact. Supposing, however, for the sake of argument, that it really represents a saying of the BUDDHA, it must be remembered that in his case we are not dealing with what is ordinarily called an Adept, but with a Being whose powers are far higher even than theirs. It might well be possible, therefore, that he could look back and read the âkâshic record of a previous Manvantara, when that monadic essence which is now himself was part of a block of such essence ensouling the bodies of many tigers, of one of which the story may be true. Or again, the conditions of individualisation might possibly have been different in that long-past age, and the process of the subdivision of the monadic essence into masses might have been carried so far as to produce a definite reincarnating entity at an earlier stage of evolution than is now the case. But it is little use speculating upon the meaning of what may after all be merely a fairy tale.

#### QUESTION 27.

*In the Growth of the Soul, p. 64, "the immensely powerful argument" for individual Reincarnation is an expansion of the idea of the injustice involved if there is no Reincarnation, pp. 64-6. In what way is the general argument on these three pages inapplicable to animals? (1897.)*

A. P. S.—The reason why the argument in favour of individual Reincarnation in the case of human beings, advanced on p. 64 of *The Growth of the Soul*, does not apply to the case of animal life, will be found on p. 446 of the same book. The soul-consciousness gradually evolving through the animal kingdom is shared at each stage of the process by a considerable number of animals. "Each animal it (the common soul of that division of the animal kingdom) ensouls draws equally on the common stock of knowledge and experience ; one consciousness shares

the fresh experience of each. When one animal of a given family, for example, suffers, the common soul suffers. Just as, in the case of a human being, if the right hand is injured the *man* suffers, though his left hand or foot may not be suffering."

We are still far from understanding the whole subject thoroughly. Why it should be necessary that *any* suffering should be endured by consciousness at the early animal stage of its evolution, is one of many mysteries concerning the design of the cosmos, which we must be content to reserve for consideration until we are at least on the intellectual level of the Adepts. But there is nothing in the point raised that in the least degree impugns the coherence of the teaching we have already acquired, and are already able to understand. The passage I have quoted deals sufficiently with that. A brief *Transaction of the London Lodge*, issued in 1889, explained that point quite clearly, and then for the first time. Since then, though the phenomena of animal life and consciousness remain a vast congeries of intricate mysteries, they do not any longer constitute a stumbling-block in the way of our proper comprehension of the theosophical teaching which we have been able to acquire concerning human Reincarnation and Karma.

#### QUESTION 28.

*How are the terrible sufferings of some animals to be explained? Does Reincarnation occur in the animal kingdom, and if so, what is it that is reborn? (1896.)*

P. S.—The exceptional suffering to which animals are unfortunately sometimes subjected cannot be regarded as karmic or deserved by the particular creature afflicted, for Reincarnation in the animal kingdom does not exist in the sense of persistent, individual consciousness. Yet there is no injustice in the fact that animals do suffer grievously as the result of their contact with man. Let the whole animal kingdom be regarded as the manifestations of one great entity with many ramifying members and outlying limbs, the nervous centres in some parts of its widespread organism being much more sensitive than in others, and then let us draw an analogy between this entity and the body of a man. If the latter, through disease, carelessness, vice, or enmity, is afflicted by pain or injury in one of the numerous organs or

limbs of the body, we do not either think or speak of such an organ or limb as an individual worthy of compassion, as something apart from the whole, nor if it has through disease or injury to be removed altogether from the body do we take it as bearing Karma on its own account. The pain, discomfort, and loss are borne entirely by the entity, and do not affect the organ or limb as a separate centre of consciousness.

Thus it is with the suffering of animals. Up to a certain point of their evolution they are but expressions of one great entity, their pain, birth, life, and death are the experiences that slowly build up in the monadic essence of that entity a kind of specialisation that makes for more contracted and concentrated manifestation through more and more highly organised forms, till the limit of animal growth in that direction is attained. Then one by one the perfected creatures break away from their old kingdom and join the ranks of the one above.

In a wild state, animal suffering, in the true meaning of the word, is almost *nil*, and development is correspondingly slow, but as soon as any *rapport* with the human kingdom arises, pain increases enormously, as does also growth towards differentiation. Exceptional suffering, therefore, in animals, becomes a factor in their upward development, as does also exceptional happiness, both causes being due to the contact with humanity.

F. A.—We have been told that animals do not Reincarnate, *i.e.*, that there is no continuity of the individual consciousness of animals, but this statement must be received with some qualifications. All the higher animals, and especially those who come in contact with man, are, so to say, on the threshold of the human kingdom; they are awaiting the particular spark which shall draw them from their lower evolution to unite them with the overshadowing *Âtmâ*, so that henceforth they may become living souls.

In the wild state, animals may, and do, suffer to some extent, but it can hardly be said that one animal suffers much more than another. The law of their nature is death at some time, and it makes but very little difference whether a wild animal is killed by another animal, or whether it succumbs to death from natural causes. There is but little anticipation of death, and, as a rule, not much previous suffering. The question of injustice can hardly be said to apply, because the fate of all is similar.

With the animals who come into contact with man the case is



very different; there we find apparently distinct injustice. Man, to his shame, has caused the animal in many instances to suffer horrible tortures from his greed for gain, his desire to obtain through their suffering some benefit to himself, or through the brutality of his lower nature. On the other hand, we have animals loved and cared for and treated as the pets and companions of their masters. How are we to reconcile this apparent injustice with our knowledge that, as far as we have been able to learn, the laws of cause and effect are servants of strict and unerring justice? It is not so impossible as it appears at first sight.

The animal awaiting its human development is born again and again as the manifestation of the highest grade of the informing essence of the animal kingdom. It cannot be said that it reincarnates as an individual consciousness, but yet the consciousness which includes the whole of the manifestations of that plane of development cannot manifest in any lower plane, so that although there is no Reincarnation in the individual sense, there is in the collective sense, for each manifestation returns to the specialised grade the experience it acquires in each incarnation, which experience is drawn back again into manifestation as instinct. In these cases, all experience, whether of suffering or otherwise, develops the essence of which that animal is a manifestation, and the kingdom as a whole must be looked upon as the suffering and enjoying entity. There does not seem more injustice in this than in the fact that one personality has to suffer for the sins of a former personality, because in each case it is that which lies behind which is the informing intelligence. The method of development in this way will be extremely slow, but just as the *Manas* was quickened into activity in the human kingdom through the contact with a higher development, so it is possible for the animal to receive its human reincarnating qualification of *Egoship* through the contact with its human superior. It is this quickening which is the special result of the action of man on the higher animals. Take the animals of our civilised existence, the dogs, cats, horses, etc., which come more directly into contact with men. In some instances this contact results in the affections of the animals being cultivated and stimulated, and through this affection the animal receives the impulse which allows it to cross from the animal to the human kingdom. In other instances we find the contact with humanity has not led to such fortunate results on this plane. Ill-treatment and cruelty have been the only

gifts which it has received from the advanced kingdom, but who will say that the suffering incurred shall not have as potent an effect upon the development, and that in spite of the crimes of men, the victim shall have the measure of advance he is requiring?

What will be the difference when the two entities commence their human progress we do not know, but this at least is sure, in the one case the ties set up by the human being, who in justice and kindness has done his duty to the animal kingdom, will be very different to those set up in the other case. The one man will have a millstone of Karma to work off to free himself from the tie engendered by cruelty, while the other will have good influences that will be aids in his own upward path. It is probable that the debt of cruelty will have to be paid in service. Justice will therefore not be found wanting altogether, and Reincarnation in the animal kingdom, as elsewhere, is the rebirth of that which has passed through the previous grades of evolution.

I. P. H.—Firstly, by the fact that physical action produces physical results. Beasts have the moral sense undeveloped, or rudimentary; they *absorb* a little occasionally from man, as I think; but an animal can do physical actions, which produce karmic results physically. Herein motive does not come into account. Whether I cut off my hand from a good or a bad motive, the pain is the same. Let us keep clear mental divisions between the different kinds of Karma which may be generated. An animal is perfectly capable of making another animal suffer terribly; and they use their capabilities freely, and produce results. I should say that the monad of a beast, containing potential mind, does reincarnate; its nature is built to a certain extent, in the same way, and by the same methods, as that of a man.

#### QUESTION 29.

*If animals do not make good or evil Karma, what is the reason for the very varied degrees of happiness and misery experienced by them on earth? (1897.)*

E. S.—The treatment of the subject of Karma, whether human or sub-human, has always seemed to me to be the weak side of theosophical writings. Persistently, the old Jewish notion of material rewards for well-doing is presented. It seems to be forgotten that suffering is the condition of spiritual progress,

as truly as exercise is the condition of attaining physical strength.

As to the question, "What has one dog done to *merit* a life of luxury on the lap of an adoring mistress?"—the matter strikes me differently. To my mind a lady's pet dog is a most unfortunately placed animal, at least so far as upward progress goes. Who has not watched such a dog day by day, to see the qualities most admirable in dog-nature effaced, or replaced by utter egotism and love of ease? Even affection for his mistress dwindles in time to carelessness or indifference. If he be not called upon to do anything disagreeable to him, he may show a liking, but not comparable to that of a dog trained up to perform some duty, and to value the performance of it far before his comfort. The pet dog is *put back*, and in his next incarnation (assuming that such animals do reincarnate) must take a lower place and work laboriously up to the position from which he was degraded by the life assumed to be won by his past "merit"! Can it be that such degrading conditions can in any sense be considered as a reward for merit? Of course, the same reasoning applies equally to humans.

Going back, however, to the question, it is an undeniable fact that there is a vast amount of suffering among animals, especially among such as are in close contact with men. What does it mean? Looking at the matter for a moment as a question of Karma, and remembering that, with every new Manvantara, Egos who had arrived at the human stage in the previous Manvantara, and *failed* in various degrees and at various stages, have to begin their pilgrimage anew, perhaps from the lowest plane, and that as such reach the stage of higher (but still sub-human) animals, past Karma begins to tell, and to tell more and more with each development upwards; then, is this not on all fours with the ordinary doctrine of Karma, involving a system of reprisals from one earth-life to the next succeeding earth-life?

No! it may be said, the intervals are so different; in the latter case some 1500 years on the average, and in the other, almost countless millions of years.

But what matters the length of interval? If a man must reap to-day the fruits of seed sown 1500 years ago, of sowing which he has absolutely no cognisance, why should not an animal reaping what it sowed as a man millions of years in the depths of the past be considered as justly dealt with?

I cannot say that this view pleases me, or reconciles me to the existence of so much apparently undeserved suffering, but at least I think the argument is sound as between man and animals.

C. W. L.—I should say that the majority of the students of Theosophy have found the doctrine of Karma one of the most helpful and illuminative of its teachings. The notion that advancement and well-being are the results of well-doing is a true one, whether Jewish or not; but there should be no mistake as to exactly what is meant by the well-doing and the well-being respectively.

The object of the entire scheme is, so far as we are concerned, the Evolution of Humanity; and consequently the man who does best is he who does most to help forward the evolution of others as well as his own. The man who does this to the utmost extent of his power and opportunity in one life will certainly find himself in the next in possession of greater power and wider opportunities. These are not unlikely to be accompanied by worldly wealth and power, because the very possession of these usually gives the opportunity required, but they are by no means a necessary part of the Karma; and it is important for us to bear in mind that the result of usefulness is always the opportunity for further and wider usefulness, and we must not consider the occasional concomitants of that opportunity as themselves the "reward" of the work done in the last incarnation.

One instinctively shrinks from the use of such words as reward and punishment, because they seem to imply the existence somewhere in the background of an irresponsible being who deals out both at will. We shall get a truer idea of the way in which Karma works, if we think of it as a necessary readjustment of equilibrium disturbed by our action—as a kind of illustration of the law that action and reaction are always equal. It will also help us much in our thinking, if we try to take a broader view of it to regard it from the point of view of those who administer its laws rather than from our own.

Though the inevitable law *must* sooner or later bring to each man unerringly the result of his own work, there is no immediate hurry about it; in the counsels of the External there is always time enough, and the first object is the Evolution of Humanity. Therefore it is that one who shows himself a willing and useful instrument in forwarding that evolution always receives as his "reward" the opportunity of helping it still further, and thus in

doing good to others to do best of all for himself. Of course, if the thought of self-advancement were his *motive* for thus acting, the selfishness of the idea would vitiate the action and narrow its results; but if, forgetting himself altogether, he devotes his energies to the single aim of helping in the great work, the effect upon his own future will undoubtedly be as stated.

A definite protest ought once for all to be entered against the theory that suffering is the condition of spiritual progress. Exercise is the condition of attaining physical strength, but it need not be painful exercise; if a man is willing to take a walk every day there is no need to torture him on the treadmill in order to develop the muscles of his legs. For spiritual progress a man must develop virtue, unselfishness, helpfulness—that is to say, he must learn to move in harmony with the great cosmic law; and if he does this willingly there is no suffering for him but that which comes from sympathy with others. Granted that in this kali yuga most men refuse to do this, that when they set themselves in opposition to the great law, suffering invariably follows, and that the eventual result of many such experiences is to convince them that the path of wickedness and selfishness is also the path of folly; in *this* sense it is true that suffering conduces to progress in those particular cases. But because we wilfully elect to offend against the law, and thereby bring down suffering upon ourselves, we have surely no right so to blaspheme the great law of the Universe as to say that *it* has ordered matters so badly that without suffering no progress can be made. As a matter of fact, if man only will, he can make far more rapid progress without suffering at all.

Undoubtedly, as E. S. observes, the pet dog with the foolish mistress is most unfortunately placed as far as progress is concerned—almost as unfortunately as the sporting dog. In both these cases, man is criminally abusing his trust with regard to the animal kingdom, and is deliberately developing the lower, instead of the higher, instincts of the creatures committed to his care. Man's duty towards the dog is clearly to evolve in him devotion, affection, intelligence and usefulness, and to repress kindly but firmly every manifestation of the savage and cruel side of his nature, which a brutalised humanity has for ages so sedulously fostered.

But when it is suggested that a dog receives a certain incarnation as a "reward of merit," we ought to bear in mind that we are not as yet dealing with a separated individuality, and that therefore there is nothing to generate Karma in the ordinary sense of the

word—nothing either to merit or to receive a reward. When a particular block of that monadic essence which is evolving along the line of animal incarnation, which culminates in the dog, has reached a fairly high level, the separate animals which form its manifestation down here are brought into contact with man, in order that its evolution may receive the stimulus which that contact alone can supply. The block of essence ensouling that group of dogs has no Karma in the matter, other than that of having by process of time reached the level where such association is possible. When people ask what an individual dog can have done to merit a life of ease or the reverse, they are allowing themselves to be deceived by the *mâyâ* of mere outward appearances, and forgetting that there is no such thing as an individual dog except during the latter part of that final incarnation in which the definite breaking away of a fresh soul from the block has occurred.

Some of our friends do not seem to be able to realise that there may be such a thing as the commencement of an entirely new piece of Karma. When an injury is done by A to B, they always fall back upon the theory that at some previous time B must have injured A, and is now simply reaping what he has sown. Of course that may be so, but also, of course, such a chain of causation must begin somewhere, and it is quite as likely that this may be a spontaneous act of injustice on A's part for which Karma will assuredly have to repay him in the future, while B's undeserved suffering will also be made up to him in a future life.

In the case of the ill-treatment of an animal by a man this is certainly so; it cannot be the result of previous Karma on the part of the animal, because if there were an individuality capable of carrying over Karma, it could not have been again incarnated in animal form. But most emphatically there is Karma, and exceedingly heavy Karma, stored up for himself by the man who thus abuses the power to help which has been placed in his hands, and in many and many a life to come he will suffer the just reward of his abominable brutality. We may be sure also that the injustice which he has done to the block of monadic essence, of which the ensouling energy of the ill-used animal formed a part, will in some way or other be atoned for in the working of the vast economy of Nature, though in the present state of our knowledge we can only speculate as to how or where this is done.

The theory contained in the final paragraphs of the answer by

E. S. is an ingenious one, but though it might quite conceivably be true of life on some other system of worlds, it does not seem to apply to our own chain. The only case in our past evolution, in which entities already individualised and human passed again through the animal kingdom, was that of the third class of the Lunar Pitris, who in the first round had to work up from the elemental to the human kingdoms on each planet in turn, in order to prepare the forms for the lower classes of Pitris which followed them. At one other period of our evolution, there was a possibility of a relapse into the animal kingdom under very terrible conditions, but that applied in any case to a very small number of men only, and is now happily entirely a thing of the past.

If one takes the trouble necessary to obtain a complete grasp of such knowledge as is already available in theosophical literature on the subjects of Karma and of animal Reincarnation, the main principles upon which their laws work will, I think, be found clear and readily comprehensible. At the same time I most fully recognise how very small and general such knowledge is, and I realise that many cases are constantly occurring in which the details of the method in which the Karma works itself out are entirely beyond our ken; but we see enough to show us that what we have been taught as to the inevitability and the absolute justice of the great law is one of the fundamental truths of nature, and, secure in that certainty, we can afford to wait for the more detailed comprehension until we gain those higher faculties which alone will give us the power to see the working of the system as a whole.

## DIVISION VIII

### INSTINCT IN ANIMALS

#### QUESTION 30.

*To what principle in animals and birds do the higher forms of instinct belong, those which seem most like human intuition? Is the faculty which enables a skylark to sing an aspect of Kâma? (1892.)*

W. R. O.—To the monad ensouling them. This monad holds the experience of all degrees of differentiated life up to the point reached by the particular forms in which the higher phases of instinct are capable of expression. With regard to the singing of the skylark, which, according to the poets, is but “the overflowing of a joy intensified,” naturalists have said that it is caused from jealousy, and that one lark will sing against another from sunrise to sundown, though this does not explain why one lark should break the silence at the outset. I think we may conclude, however, that it is the natural expression of the soul of the cheerful creature, though whether it is confined to Kâma (the animal soul) alone, is doubtful. We have always to remember that every form of life, however humble, gains all its potentialities from the monad “which propels towards and forces evolution” (*Secret Doctrine*, ii. 109), and these potentialities of a creature find expression as much from internal as from external stimulus. This seems the more certainly true from a consideration of the strong similarity of results proceeding from the action of the instinctive faculty in the lower forms of life, and of the intuitive faculty in man. A comparison of these results points conclusively, I think, to the action of the monad equally in the Rûpa as in the Arûpa planes of existence, in which instinct seems to depend upon the responsiveness of the organism



to the monadic impulse, and intuition upon that of the Manasic vehicle to the same energy. The monad being universally one and indivisible, the difference of function denominated "instinct" and "intuition" is due merely to difference of instrument, the faculty in the one case being thereby related to the objective, phenomenal, and sensuous existence, and in the other to the subjective, noumenal, and spiritual.

## QUESTION 31.

*I have heard it asserted by a Vedāntin student that what we call instinct in animals is the action of *Buddhi* which supplies the place of reason, since animals are not possessed of *Manas*. Is this correct? If so by what means does *Buddhi* function? Is it not said that this power does not act in separation from *Manas*? The animal, nevertheless, knows its enemy more surely than the man knows his. (1903.)*

G. R. S. M.—I should say that the Vedāntin student referred to was a Westerner and a bold speculator. As far as my reading goes, the *Buddhi* of the Vedānta is never assigned to animals. It is the thing that the ordinary man is always being urged to cultivate. Doubtless *Buddhi* and all that transcends *Buddhi* is latent in the animal and in everything else besides, but it would be a "derangement of epitaphs" to assign the instinct of the animal to *Buddhi* in the technical sense in which this term is used in the Upanishads or Gītā. That there is a strange correspondence and parallelism between *Buddhi* and *Kāma* is true, but this is not the same as an identity. The animal feels a good many things that the non-savage man has long ceased to feel, but the knowledge of feeling and the knowledge of intellect are very different things; one is confused, chaotic and primitive, the other discriminating, ordering and evolved. As the mind evolves, and man rises through his ancient Self to higher things, he regains all the powers which are represented so crudely by the primitive feelings of the animal, but whereas he was as animal unconscious individually and mixed with the mass, now he is conscious and discriminating, he can choose and will. He is master and no longer slave. Still it would be confusing to say that instinct was a manifestation of *Buddhi*. Better to say that *Buddhi* and the rest are manifestations of the nature of the Self.

A. H. W.—The writer holds that “Buddhi” is essentially the tremendous stream of energy which represents the Logos in its locality on the Buddhic plane of space. Omnipresence, Omnipotence and Omniscience are there represented as the “Eternal Man.”

Thence the three waves of life pour on to the lower planes of space, and form first the atomic worlds, then the molecular worlds, and then the protoplasmic organisms, in order. The Rays of Life into which the third wave differentiates manifest their powers through the vehicles held together by the molecular attractions of the second wave, and the one Force playing through the sub-planes of matter beats upon those vehicles and awakes the powers of the indwelling Ray.

It is in this sense that Buddhi functions on the plane of instinct. It is the Great Creative Energy ever stimulating the astral vehicles in the direction of preserving the individual body, and of propagating the species. It stimulates the Ray which is playing through the permanent mental and astral atoms which form the focus of the group soul to which animals belong; and although there is little action on the mental plane, yet all animals, of the vertebrate type at least, have some little power of memory and anticipation, and therefore some little trace of a mental body.

The Life Ray passes from the permanent Buddhic atom to the permanent mental atom as the finest “thread of Fohat.” Thence it passes to the astral and physical permanent atoms, through which it vivifies the astral and physical bodies of the animal group. The experiences conserved in the astral group soul ever impel the forms to avoid enemies and seek friends, these severally being physical forms which past experience has shown to be painful or pleasant. A man’s friends and enemies are generally on an astro-mental plane, not on an astro-physical, the opportunities for error are hence infinitely greater and mistakes more often made. But that animals *know* their enemies more surely than a man knows his, the writer profoundly doubts; the cases do not appear to him to be in any way comparable.

S. C.—The Buddhi which functions through Manas is the intellectual discrimination between good and evil, a quality and an attainment of the individual man; and this should not be confused with the universal soul of Nature, which guides evolution in all the lower kingdoms. As *The Secret Doctrine* puts it, Buddhi is unconscious in the animal so far as this plane is concerned. An infant carried by his mother finds his way more surely from one place to another than an older child who is learning to guide his own steps.

## DIVISION IX

### CARNIVOROUS ANIMALS

#### QUESTION 32.

*Theosophical teachers state that the carnivorous animals arose from the artificial breeding by man of animals on the Atlantean Continent. How is this reconcilable with the fact that fossil Carnivora have been found in the Lower Eocene of North America—a period which must have antedated that of the civilisation of Atlantis? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—There are two points here to which exception may be taken. First, “theosophical teachers” have not, so far as I am aware, made the statement above attributed to them; and, secondly, what is called the Eocene period probably did *not* antedate that of the great civilisation of Atlantis. The dates assigned by geologists to their periods vary within very wide limits, so that it is scarcely possible for us to correlate them to the great facts of the world’s history; but if the questioner will look at the table of approximate times given at the end of the London Lodge Transaction on *The Lunar Pitris* he will see that the assumption which he makes is scarcely justified.

With regard to his other statement, it may be sufficient to quote from *The Ancient Wisdom*, p. 370, where Mrs. Besant writes: “Man, in the part he has played in helping to evolve animals . . . has strengthened instead of diminishing the predatory instincts of carnivorous animals; still, he did not implant those instincts, . . . and innumerable varieties of animals, with the evolution of which man has had directly nothing to do, prey upon each other.”

There were carnivorous creatures among the gigantic reptilia of the Lemurian period, and man was in no way directly engaged in their evolution; but it was in part his work to assist in the

development from those reptile forms of the mammalia which play so prominent a part in the world now. Here was his opportunity to improve the breeds, and to curb the undesirable qualities of the creatures that came under his hands; and it is because he failed to do all that he might have done in this direction, that he is to some extent responsible for much that has since gone wrong in the world. If he had done all his duty, it is quite conceivable that we might have had no carnivorous mammals, but for earlier and lower forms he is not directly responsible. Reference has been made to these facts on several occasions by various theosophical writers, but their statements have necessarily been less sweeping than that attributed to them in the question.

### QUESTION 33.

*Why are there so many wild animals in the world, living by killing other animals and often men? What purpose do they serve? Is humanity in any way responsible for their savage nature? (1897.)*

L. L.—We learn from theosophical literature that humanity is directly responsible for the ferocity of wild animals.

Man was intended to co-operate with the directors of the infant Races in the evolution of animal types by his care of the developing creatures, his attention to their breeding and training. But with man's increasing selfishness grew his neglect of his younger brothers. In the days of Atlantean degeneration men refused to further the evolution of animals on the lines laid down by the Manu of the Fourth Race. Not only did they omit to foster in the beasts faculties really useful to humanity and helpful to the animals themselves; they definitely encouraged impulses destructive to the creatures, and, in the end, inimical to man. By training animals to hunt for them, for example, men sowed the seed of those carnivorous instincts, which to-day are rampant in the animal world, and which, by karmic retribution, are now turned upon their authors.

Again, by their attitude towards animals, of tyranny, slaughter and destruction, men have bred in the creatures that should love them, such feelings of fear and hate, as naturally find expression in instinctive and fierce resistance. Thus, the purpose which wild animals were intended to serve has miscarried through the selfish-

ness and carelessness of man. The "wildness" was *not* designed. Yet we may hope that the pain and misery brought by man to animals may prove a gift not entirely baneful, after all. Keen emotion—painful as well as pleasurable—hastens the growth into self-consciousness; and the more strenuous the experiences, the fewer will be needed by the monadic essence climbing up to individualisation.

A. A. W.—There will be plenty of pundits to give the orthodox answer to this question, so I may perhaps be allowed to look at it from another side. When they tell us that it was *not* the intention of those Powers, whom we may for this purpose sum up as Nature, that there should be savage animals, and that it is indeed an earlier race of humanity which should have taught them better and did not, one can only bow to their knowledge. But I think of one thing we may be certain—that matters having thus gone wrong, Nature did not confine themselves (one must speak in the plural) to lamenting over the wickedness of Human Nature; we may be sure that the event was somehow worked into the scheme of development. In similar manner, we are told that the present mode of reproduction of the human species was not intended by Nature, but see how entirely the whole framework of human society is now settled on that basis! Speaking simply as a student, when I find that, from the lowest organisations to the highest, it is the rule that the higher actually feeds on the lower, I have so much faith in the Order of Things as to be certain, that this is *now* (whatever may have been intended at a previous time) the established order of evolution, and that the lower are, in some way which we shall learn by-and-bye, the better for being eaten. You may think that the existence of so many vegetarian animals is enough to upset my point; I think otherwise. You cannot in this way rule off animals from vegetables; one, as the other, is made up of lives; the life of the grass is the same life as that of the cattle which feed on it—if one is delayed in its progress by being prematurely killed, so is the other. There are vegetables which live on animals—what of them?

We should lose ourselves in mere speculation, if we were, at this stage, to ask what is the progress thus gained. It *may* be that the particles of the lower body are refined by transmission to the higher, and that this is the method by which the world, as a whole, rises in the scale. But to keep to what we know. If there is any real truth in this view, I shall be at once asked: "Does not this

make it a sort of duty for *us* to feed on the animals—to advance them in the scale as you say?” A friend with whom I was once talking on the matter replied promptly: “But we are not animals!”—and this might serve as an answer. But I am myself inclined to admit the charge, and, whilst fully allowing the many and serious arguments against flesh-eating from the moral and social point of view, to doubt whether it is not for us also the order of Nature. No more than the lion and the tiger are we provided with the requisite apparatus for eating grass “like the ox”; and as a matter of observation all the world over, the energy and power of a race is in proportion to the meat it eats. The *life* of the Human Race is not amongst the vegetarians, many as they are. The Buddhist reverence for life—human and animal—is beautiful in sentiment, but utterly against Nature, to whom it is obviously a matter of perfect indifference whether Egos are “in manifestation” or out of it. As we are told in Mr. Sinnett’s last paper on the “Beginnings of the Fifth Race,” it occurred to Nature that it would be a good thing to have a new sea in Asia; and with the calm philosophy of Krishna himself, she made it—drowning in the process three-parts of the wondrous new race of men as if they were flies! And in history the same thing presents itself—the *ruling* races of mankind have always been those to whom their own lives, and still more those of others, have been utterly indifferent. Do you say this is *wicked*? It may be so according to the morality of slaves and weaklings (to use F. Nietzsche’s forcible expression), but the strong Powers who rule the world do not judge by such rules. And is it not *our* faith that lives *are* of no consequence?

I should thus be inclined to say, in answer to the question, that the animals who live by killing others, do so because Nature has formed them for that purpose; and that it is the business of our “friends who know” to find out and tell us what good end they bring about by doing so. For good I am sure it is.

J. M.—A. A. W. answers the above question as a man with a heart and a conscience, but there is scarcely a single conclusion with which I can agree. I maintain that everything which has existence is a form of life; that life is uncreate, and contains within itself the inherent power to clothe itself in form, as is demonstrated by its self-reproductive power. Hence to talk about *maintaining* life is metaphysically absurd.

It is inferred that we may owe animals the duty of eating them,

to help forward their evolution. If this be true, the higher domesticated animals have no doubt a prior claim to our attention. A better claim still have our half-brothers the monkeys. If we would only eat them, the hope of raising them quickly into the human kingdom would stand some chance of being realised!

We are further told that the Buddhist reverence for life, human and animal, though beautiful in sentiment, is utterly against Nature. That *is* astounding. It means that Gautama Buddha was a messenger of the powers that work against Nature!

In support of the writer's views, we are referred to the action of the Lords of Karma in bringing about the natural crisis in which many millions of people are suddenly "hurried into eternity." The inference is, that as *They* can calmly do this, so *we* can calmly and innocently proceed with our butchering of animals! Are these parallel cases? No. The Lords of Karma are karmaless and impersonal. Man is not so. The Lords of Karma are bound by their office to bring about such "natural crises" upon such people as have merited them. Man is under no such obligation. Those who perish in a "natural crisis," generally speaking, merit such a death, but this cannot be said of the thousands of animals which die by the hand of man.

If it were not pathetic, it would be comical to read "that it is the business of our friends who know to find out and tell us what *good end*" is brought about by this destruction of life, when our "friends who know" have besought us for years to stop the practice on account of its *evil end*. When by our maltreatment of animals we are constantly generating in them feelings of hatred and revenge, how can we expect them to evolve any other than savage propensities to which, perhaps, future generations may point as being the expression of the law implanted in them by Nature—or the Great Powers—failing entirely to see that the Great Powers actually employed were the butchers and vivisectors of to-day!

Let us grant that it is fully in accord with Nature at present for the higher to feed on the lower. Let us suppose that a time arrives when the Great Powers think proper to institute a new order; what course would they pursue? "Men must be persuaded, not forced, to bring their lives and will into harmony with the Divine purpose" (*Transactions of the London Lodge*, No. 31, p. 11). To do this, then, great teachers must be sent. This fact alone, that Buddha came and taught such reverence for life,

human and animal, is a proof that the Great Powers wish to change the present order of things. I would apply to the animals what A. A. W. says about our "lost sisters": "If we will not put ourselves in their place by sympathy, there is no help for it, *we must be put there in actual life*; and a hard school that life may be."

E. W.—The main contention involved in A. A. W.'s reply is that it is in the existing order of things for the higher to subsist upon the lower, *ergo*, moral and social considerations notwithstanding, it may be "for us also the order of Nature" to be beasts of prey. Let us examine the argument. Certain man-made conditions were not in the original scheme of evolution. Agreed. The powers who are ever guiding the world towards the good have probably done the best that could be done to convert the evil into good. Again agreed. It is the rule for the higher to feed upon the lower, and eventually we shall learn in what way the lower are the better for the process. Here I must join issue. Looked at more closely the rule of life rather appears one of reciprocity. Broadly speaking "all flesh is grass," but if the animal kingdom depends as a whole upon the life of the vegetable kingdom, no less truly can it be said that the vegetable kingdom is fed and sustained by the animal kingdom. Surely no scientific truth is more widely attested than the fact that particles of matter are in a constant state of ebb and flow between the animal and the vegetable worlds. A. A. W. asks, what of the vegetables which live on animals? And we may add, what of the host of lower parasitic organisms which live on all the higher forms in *both* kingdoms? I think fuller consideration of these points would dispose entirely of the contention that "it *may* be that the particles of the lower body are refined by transmission to the higher, and that is the method by which the world, as a whole, rises in the scale," and that altogether apart from the further question as to, for instance, the nature of the "refinement" to be derived by the particles of, say, a Highland heifer from being devoured by a gin-sodden disease-eaten human being in Soho. But even if we grant a benefit to the *particles* of the lower body devoured by the higher, where is the benefit to the lower organism itself, the (it may be) developing ahankâra, whose chances of further experience are thus prematurely cut off? Surely this would be the antithesis of A. A. W.'s contention that the rule of life is for the higher to feed on the lower, since the cells of the



body would be benefiting from the destruction of the higher organism of which they formed only a part.

A. A. W. then proceeds to say that if there be truth in his suggestion, it might be our duty to eat animals and is "inclined to admit the charge." If so, it is clearly our bounden duty not to draw the line at vegetable-feeding beasts (some do not already), but forthwith to aid in the development of carrion crows, vultures, hyenas, dogs *et hoc genus omne*. Besides which, it would evidently become the correct thing for every pious and intellectual European to hasten the development of Bushmen and others in the same cannibalistic fashion, a process which for combined rapidity and economy might be recommended to the London Missionary Society. Such considerations soon show whither the argument would lead us.

The next contention, which I had hardly expected to recognise away from the platform of the very average debating society, may be dismissed in few words. It is true we have *not* the digestive apparatus of the ox, but equally truly we have *not* the digestive apparatus of the tiger. Our structural affinities lie nearest to the frugivorous ape, but is it not true that *we* have to let both "ape and tiger die"?

Yet again, the observation of A. A. W. seems at fault when he writes that "the energy and power of a race are in proportion to the meat it eats. The *life* of the human race is not among vegetarians." If the first proposition be true, it ("the *life*") must be among those cheerful specimens of the human race of whom De Windt has just brought home such horrible accounts.

They, the Tschuktchis, are, however, exactly what we should have expected them to be from their environment and their *exclusively* flesh diet.

The last point raised by A. A. W. is the indifference of Nature as to life or death. How often have we "who trusted God was love indeed" heard that "Nature red in tooth and claw, with ravine, shrieked against our creed"; but surely we have in the Theosophical Society passed out of the stage when it is necessary for us to justify our conduct by a reference to the cosmic process. Indeed this last argument seems, more than all, to show that A. A. W. does not mean us to take him seriously; he must be poking fun at us. We know that there is a dual aspect—creative and destructive—in cosmos; we know that the volcano and the earthquake, the glacier and the hurricane

are agents for the ultimate good as they work the present evil, but it is shame to us if we do not also know (since we have been so well and often taught it) that we have reached a point in evolution when we ought to form part of the force *consciously* working towards Divine Harmony and Union, and not part of the out-going and destructive energy. Huxley, the prophet of evolution, has shown us that the cosmic process is not compatible with ethical development, and is not the very *raison d'être* of the Theosophical Society that it should be, as it were, a milestone and finger-post on the path of development, showing us that we have passed the turning point, telling us that we are "going home," that we have rounded the furthest flag in the race of life, that our course must be altered, our sails reset to meet the altered condition of things which that fact implies?

If in our outward and downward course one law held good for us, as it may still hold good for those who are following in our track—if in our deepest depths we were compelled to eat of the husks with the swine, we may still realise that the old order has changed for us, that the swineherd's garment is to be cast off for the purple robe, and that "man having evolved to a stage at which the infliction of pain on others is against his evolution towards the Divine Love, we call that infliction of pain a 'crime.'"

G. G.—There is a statement made in A. A. W.'s answer which may have struck a few of us with something like dismay. The statement is, "The *life* of the human race is not amongst the vegetarians, many as they are. The Buddhist reverence for life—human and animal—is beautiful in sentiment, but utterly against Nature, to whom it is obviously a matter of perfect indifference whether the Egos are in manifestation or out of it."

Now, if the writer means by the *life* of the human race, the fighting capacity, the virility which forces a nation to the top when put to the test, he may some day find reason to change his present conviction. I am open to correction, but I think it will be found that the great majority of the lower classes in almost all countries live chiefly on what is practically a vegetable diet. I know that in the East of England amongst the agricultural class very little meat is eaten. In the towns it may be different, but are the better classes of individuals, physically or morally, found in the town or country? In Turkey, the Balkan States, India, China and Japan, meat is seldom eaten by the lower classes. Only lately, in the *Standard*, there appeared a paragraph alluding to the astonish-

ment of the Turkish doctors at the rapidity with which their patients recovered from wounds, and they attributed this to the men having lived chiefly on vegetable diet. It is generally recognised that the Turkish army provides fighting material as good as any there is, and it was so recognised many years before the present war. Nor will anybody who knows Japan question the hardy valour which lives in the equally hardy bodies of the inhabitants of those islands.

Now, who but the lower classes of a country win battles? Of course the mind to plan must be in the general, but the battle cannot be won—nor even fought—without the men.

It may be said that the standing armies are meat-fed men. This I think is open to question; there are some which are not, except in a very small degree—but however it may be, it does not appear to be a very strong argument, for the mass of the population is very soon drawn upon.

But does A. A. W. really mean by the *life* of the human race the capacity of one nation to trample on another? Surely there are signs of a time coming when nations warring against nations will be only a memory of the past. I have just read a book on the Polish Wars of the 17th century, and the contrast is most striking between the most awful horrors therein described and war as it is conducted to-day. Civilisation has civilised even war itself; will progress remain satisfied with this and not slay war?

If I have attributed a wrong meaning to A. A. W., I beg he will excuse me, but I can see no other.

There is one other point. A. A. W. asks a question, "Is it not our faith that lives are of no consequence?" Will he answer another? If our particular life is of no consequence when compared with our work, does that mean that the life of another is of no consequence? If you cannot give life, what right have you to take it away? It seems to me to be theft.

In conclusion, I should like to add that, amongst many things I have discovered the truth of, in theosophical writings, there is one that stands out conspicuously, and that is a statement in one of Mrs. Besant's books to the effect that it does not much matter *what* you give the body as long as you give it enough to maintain life.

A. P. S.—The letter signed "J. M." tempts me to follow up the question raised. I cordially approve of "A. A. W.'s" remarks, and I wish to explain why, because it is easy to misunderstand their drift.

Whenever we see any fact of stupendous magnitude operative throughout Nature, we may be sure that it fits into the design of things and is not a mere undesirable confusion introduced into the scheme by human wickedness or folly. The tendency of the more powerful animal life to prey on the less powerful is just such a stupendous fact, and personally I do not believe that the ferocity of wild beasts is the outcome of any failure on the part of man at an earlier stage of his progress to guide animal evolution aright. Nor do I think the slaughter of animals for food by man has been a piece of wickedness on his part at which Nature has looked on sorrowfully. And yet I fully sympathise with the Buddhist "reverence for life," and abhor the slaughter of animals for food, and believe that everyone who finds it compatible with the preservation of his health and capacity to discharge his duties in life, whatever they may be, to live on vegetable food, is setting a good example and foreshadowing the kind of life we shall all be leading eventually. How are these apparent contradictions to be reconciled?

By a proper appreciation, I think, of the difference between the downward and the upward arc of evolution. Theosophical students often forget that evolution does not proceed in a straight line from start to finish. With unity as its starting-point and an improved kind of unity as its goal, evolution begins by setting all its energies in motion to accomplish diversity. The whole first half of the Manvantara — the downward arc — is directed towards accomplishing diversity, towards bringing about the individualisation of consciousness, the sense of separateness which is destined eventually to be merged in something higher, but with which Nature—sensibly doing one thing at a time—concerns herself exclusively at first, and for a very long "first." Not merely up to the stage of human development—up to the half-way period of human development—the law of selfishness is in operation to accomplish Nature's purpose. On this earth in the Third Round, unselfishness, strange as the thought may appear to people who will only think, so to speak, in straight lines and not in cycles—was *not* a duty. Nobody had risen to the height of having any duty at all at that time. The struggle for self was innocent and instinctive, blindly accomplishing Nature's purpose. The animals preyed on one another, and unconsciously tended towards individualisation in that way.

But, it may be said, we have long passed the middle point of the whole process; we live now in the reign of duty. Quite so;

some of us do. But the momentum of the downward arc is very great, and moreover the middle period of evolution is not a fixed date for all alike. Human Egos are not all of the same age by a great deal. All animal life is still manifesting in forms belonging to the downward arc. A. A. W. puts the idea in a humorous way when he says the lower animals may be the better for being eaten, but none the less is it plainly true that the policy of Nature has been worked out through immeasurable æons in the past by the system that includes their being eaten.

Does that justify us Theosophists in shooting partridges or dining off roast mutton? My answer would be: we are in a transition period, when the relatively few of us, who understand the design of Nature on the upward arc, are in the midst of myriads whose lives are still based upon an ignorant misunderstanding of it. From some of the old habits we can decisively and at once extricate ourselves. We can say in the language of a poet, who was to that extent a Theosophist without knowing it;—we will never mix our pleasure or our pride with sorrow of the meanest thing that lives. We can abjure the old barbarisms of hunting, shooting, and fishing, as things which are necessarily loathsome to us when we have reached certain levels of thought. But we can recognise that multitudes of our contemporaries in time still take pleasure in these old-world pursuits, because they are still borne on by the momentum of the downward arc. And many among those of us who would like to have no touch at all with downward arc habits, may be incarnated in bodies still so saturated by heredity with downward arc habits, that the tiresome things would get out of order if not given some downward arc food. Therefore, it would be childish to make rigid rules for all, in the matter of food; worse than childish it seems to me to prescribe, as duties, for people merely beginning their interior theosophic culture, the habits that become matters of course for people far enough on to find it a duty to cultivate their psychic faculties, and invested with a physique which that kind of life suits. As a matter of fact, indeed, psychic faculties have not much to do with food (in my opinion); I have known them to get into very fine order on beef and claret, and to remain absolutely unresponsive to fifteen years of earnest vegetarianism and theosophical study. Of course, in reality, psychic faculties depend on the condition of the nerve centres of the etheric double, and their conditions—on the Karma of the last life. One could say a great deal more on fruitful ramifications of this

\* see foot note, page 87.

subject, but I have merely aimed at offering some defence of sound views incompletely developed in the recent answer of A. A. W.

A. A. W.—There are more serious matters concerned than our friends quite perceive.

In itself the question is simply one of proportion. Logically carried out, our friends' views work out into what I used to be taught as a child—that there were certain people in the East who walk about with cloths over their mouths lest they should inadvertently inhale an insect with their breath, and brooms in their hands to brush the places where they set their feet, lest they should tread on one. Illogically (but I fear, to us Westerns, more naturally) the same thing lands you in Dr. Anna Kingsford's position, to love animals and hate men.

It is true that it is our duty to do all we can to help on the evolution of mankind (I intentionally avoid the *negative* mode of expression); but the fact of the matter is that each one of us, every day of our lives, does and says (and still more emphatically leaves undone and unsaid) to his human neighbours things which are of vastly more consequence to that evolution than the premature death of all the animal kingdom together. This exaggerated sensitiveness to physical suffering and death is, *in us*, simply a product of our decaying Western civilisation—our degeneration, as Nordau would say; and is no wise justified or encouraged by anything the Lord Buddha taught his Indian herdsmen three thousand years ago. If our friends have made their own the teachings of only the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gîtâ, they will not be scandalised when I say that there are hundreds of things we can—and do—do to our fellowmen worse than to kill them! And this applies with added force to animals, who are not even individuals at all.

I am not aware of any actual *authority* for the assumption that the evolution of what has been called a "block" of animal essence is delayed or hindered by the death of any single one of the bodies through which it manifests.

Our friends are full of the most beautiful arguments to show that the Order of Things is wrong, and should be set right; my more humble task is to recognise what the Order actually *is*, and to find out what Nature means by it. I am inclined, for my part, to suspect that Nature knows what she is about better than I, or even they. But for this discussion the columns of the "Inquirer" are not the place. Perhaps some day *Lucifer* may permit me to have my say thereon at somewhat greater length.

## DIVISION X

### THE FUTURE OF ANIMALS

#### QUESTION 34.

*Is there any hope that there may be continuity of identical consciousness after death, in a state similar to the Devachanic, for the souls of those pet animals which have been closely in sympathetic and responsive contact with the souls of human beings in this life? And is there hope for such human souls that in Devachan they may renew their former loving converse with such animal souls? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—The questioner should remember that for those who grasp theosophical doctrine in its entirety the conditions of life after death are matters, not of hope at all, but of fact.

If the pet animal referred to has been individualised, as seems not improbable from what is said, then the identical consciousness will certainly continue permanently after death. There will be a happy astral life of considerable length, followed by a still happier period of what has sometimes been called “dozing consciousness,” which will last until in some future world the human form is assumed.

Every human soul will have in Devachan *everything* that is necessary to its perfect felicity, and if it has during earth-life had deep and true affection even for an animal, then assuredly that animal will be there among the images which the soul creates for itself (see Manual No. vi.). And the man who has so far evoked affection and intelligence in any animal as to individualise it, may also console himself with the reflection, that he has created a link with it which cannot be broken—a force which in some future age will bring his humble friend, once an animal, but now a human being, under his care and guidance once more.

## QUESTION 35.

*In the happy astral life of the individualised animal soul is there consciousness as of the spiritual presence of the human comrade formerly loved with such trust and devotion during the earth-life in which that friend and protector is still bodily left? Or if not present intercourse, at least memory of the past? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—This question seems to show some confusion of thought as to the qualities of the astral and mental planes respectively. During the astral life of the individualised animal, he will in all probability remain in the immediate neighbourhood of his earthly home, and in the closest touch with his friend and protector—able to see and enjoy the society of his friend in the flesh as fully as ever, though himself invisible to the latter. His memory of the past will, of course, be just as perfect as it was on earth.

In the long period of rest on the mental plane that follows this, he will be in a state analogous to that of a human being in Devachan, though at a somewhat lower level. He will create his own surroundings, even though he may be but drowsily conscious of them, and they will undoubtedly include the presence of his earth-friend in his very best and most sympathetic mood. It should be remembered that for *every* entity which comes into connection with it, whether only just entering upon human evolution or preparing to pass beyond it, Devachan means the highest bliss of which that entity is at its level capable.

## QUESTION 36.

*When an animal becomes so far individualised as to be ready to receive the Divine Spark, does it cease to incarnate and go into a state of rest till it reappears as a rudimentary man in some future age? If so, what is the advantage to the animal in hastening his evolution by domestication, if he is not going to assist his fellows in their evolution? (1899.)*

B. K.—When an animal receives the Divine Spark, it *ipso facto* ceases to be an animal in its inner nature, though, of course, the outer animal body may live on for some years, and in that case



we have a rudimentary human Ego working through a body of a non-human type. When that body dies, however, the now human Ego will not again incarnate in animal form, but if a suitably low and unevolved type of human body to meet its needs is available, it will forthwith incarnate therein, while if no such body is at the time available it will wait in a state of *quasi*-Devachanic rest till a suitable body offers itself. This is what is happening at the present time. There is no type of human form at present existing on our earth sufficiently rudimentary to afford a suitable vehicle for an Ego just individualised from the animal kingdom. Hence such Egos have to wait in a kind of Devachanic rest until a suitable body appears, either on the next globe of our chain, or in some subsequent cycle.

The advantage that the animal gains (at the present time) by domestication and consequent early individualisation is, that just as our own Egos "ripen," as it were, during our stay in Devachan and emerge stronger, more developed, with added qualities and powers ready for use in the new incarnation, so in a similar manner do these newly-individualised human Egos, which have just crossed over the boundary between the human and animal kingdoms, grow riper, fuller, and fit for a better human type, suitable to their more developed powers, through the long period of assimilation and inner growth, which they now have to pass through, before a suitable human body will be available for their use.

\*  
see page  
83.

The occult teachings relative to eating the flesh of animals and fish, must not be taken too much in a literal sense. It has reference to the inner life, and inculcates the idea that we must overcome the tendencies of the kamic nature, symbolized by the animal kingdom, the different members of which kingdom represent different phases of beastiality that man must conquer. Pythagoras and all great teachers recognized this, and so taught the initiates. He allowed his followers to eat flesh (that is, the muscles of the animal) but forbid them to eat the vital organs, as the heart, brain, etc., giving the initiates this to understand that they must conserve their vitality and not dissipate it. (over)

He did not confine his teachings to the animal kingdom but found examples in the vegetable world. He forbade them to eat beans but this was for another occult reason understood only by the initiates. It is generally understood by the learned that he referred to the Lotus. Sir Wm. Jones (and before him Archaic Botany) showed that the seeds of the Lotus contain - even before they germinate - perfectly formed leaves, the miniature shape of the fully-developed plant; nature thus giving us a specimen of the preformation of its productions, the seeds of all phanerogamous plants. (plants having visible reproductive organs) bearing proper flowers, containing an embryo plantlet

DIVISION XI  
KARMA AND SIN  
QUESTION 37.

We are told that the crime of murder committed is perhaps sometimes the out-gate of a long series of thoughts or tendencies in that direction, and that such acts are almost involuntary. Now where is the explanation for any other Kâmic images weakly indulged in in the weak cycles, and which may find an outlet in action, the agent discovering a violent distaste in the realisation, yet driving himself consciously to experience it in the concrete with a certain knowledge that the anticipated pleasure had its seat in the mind alone? Briefly put, may we not suppose that a wrong committed which brings no sort of pleasure in its commission is in itself half the debt paid for that act? (1900.)

A. A. W.—The querist has in his mind one of the commonest—yet deepest—mysteries of life; a case (like Sydney Carton, in the *Tale of Two Cities*) in which a man feels himself dodden down in a hopeless struggle with the monster he himself has made—into which, as G. R. S. M. has said, he has put so much of himself that there is not enough of him left even to resist the horror. If such a one believes in "Providence," many hard thoughts will arise in his mind; he will look back and see himself born with the fatal weakness—most likely inherited; he will remember the circumstances (which might well have been otherwise) which brought it out—the yielding, time after time, to the pleasure; and the sudden consciousness one terrible day that the pleasure was over, and the stern necessity left in its place—that he had by degrees shaped for himself an incubus he could no longer shake off, for whose pleasure he must go on doing the thing already formed." (Cross, *The<sup>88</sup> Heathen Religion* page 195. *Secret Doctrine* abridged edition page 46)

ing the whole plant in embryo, the interdiction to use was to teach that the whole must

not attempt to acquire too much at a time but to gradually learn what is to be sought for in the lore of the ages.

he had learnt to hate—and he will think, “Can there be a God who cares for us at all?”

What can we say to him? First, we can dignify his struggle. It is not, as he thinks, merely a shameful weakness, which puts him beneath the level of mankind; it is *his* form of the great fight which all have to wage, and which, in one shape or another, must last until we stand on the farther shore; nor is his true Self a hairsbreadth lowered by all the foulness through which the struggle may drag him. Who shall say how many lives back it first began—how often he has failed, incurring thereby the karmic penalties of temptation, hereditary and otherwise—or how many more bodies he must take, one after another, for the fight, before *his* Satan shall find his strength equal to his own, and, as in E. Carpenter’s apologue, say “I love thee,” and spread his wings and bear him to the joy above?

Better still—the very pain and shame of it make it more effective for our true welfare—we grow all the quicker for it. Not for us the pride of virtue, the peace of the soul; neither is there for us the dull repose of the self-satisfied, dreaming through life after life without taking a step on the way. And for us the advance lies here, that we have to meet the temptation, time after time, upon higher planes. I think the querist is mistaken in writing of a wrong which brings no sort of pleasure in its commission. What could make us commit it? I am speaking with very insufficient knowledge upon very abstruse matters; but I am inclined to say that when we find (as some of us do find) that instead of the temptation seeming to be more and more confined to the physical body by our efforts to gain self-control, the contrary seems to come about—that the infection seems to spread ever higher up, or (in the querist’s words) that the anticipated pleasure seems more and more to have its seat in the mind alone—that we should not be distressed or discouraged. I think (with all due humility) that it rather means that we have not been such total failures on the lower plane as we think, and are now trusted to undertake a higher trial.

Anyway, one thing is certain—that the main point is that nothing should distress or discourage us. As many lives—as many millions of years—as we need for victory we shall have—what else is time made for?

As regards karmic penalties—no doubt all our weaknesses and sufferings are such; and, as they are used, either pay off old debts

or make new ones : but after all the reign of Karma is a limited one, and these questions of the life of the higher Ego are rather beyond and above it. Dare I say it? Yes, I will—I think we do not deal generously enough with our Karma; we are meanly avaricious about it, as if it were money. It is of vast importance to the comfort of our physical selves—that is true; but we ourselves should grow better if we were as careless of one as the other. It is but a matter of the “opposites” which we have to transcend!

QUESTION 38.

*There is an idea continually repeated in theosophic teachings—that when suffering mental anguish or physical pain, we may take comfort from knowing that all evil is somehow or other deserved. To me it has ever seemed the reverse of comforting to suppose my sufferings deserved. The infliction of suffering seems a light thing compared with the infliction of a capacity for such sin or wickedness as might deserve such reprisal. Surely to be an innocent victim must be preferable beyond expression to being a guilty one? There is one great teacher who has been called “a man of sorrows”—had he also a past of evil lives, the remembrance of which was a comfort to him? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—Whether it is comforting or the reverse to know that one’s sufferings are deserved may be a matter of opinion, but that in no way alters the undoubted fact that, unless they had been so deserved, they could not possibly come to us. It is lamentable that students should adopt the unphilosophical and, indeed, childish attitude which leads them to assume that any idea which does not fall in with their particular sectarian preconceptions cannot possibly be true. Unintelligent people constantly say, “the theosophical teaching about Karma does not seem to me so comfortable as the Christian idea of forgiveness of sins,” or, “the theosophical Devachan does not seem so real and beautiful as the Christian heaven, and so I will not believe in it.” They evidently think, poor creatures, that their likes and dislikes are powerful enough to alter the Laws of the Universe, and that nothing of which they do not approve can possibly *be*, on any plane. We, however, are engaged in studying the facts of existence, which, after all, are not modified because Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So would rather believe them to be otherwise than they are.

Yet it does seem strange that our querist cannot see that if it were *possible* for him (or her) to be "an innocent victim," there would be no certainty of the operation of the great law of cause and effect anywhere in the Universe, which would be a far more terrible thing for us than having to work out the results of any amount of sin committed in former lives. Again, in the interests of correct thinking we must protest against the use of a term so misleading as "reprisal." It can never be too strongly emphasised that the law of Karma is not the vindictive vengeance of some angry deity, but simply an effect naturally and inevitably following upon its cause in obedience to the action of universal law.

Once more, what extraordinary looseness of thought is implied in the suggestion that the remembrance of a past of evil lives could be a comfort to anybody! Obviously one could never look back upon evil deeds except with regret: yet a man might well find it easier to bear pain or sorrow when he realised that he had (as we all must have) a certain debt outstanding for evil done, which would inevitably have to be paid some day, and that by his present suffering he was clearing this off, so that a freer and happier life might be his in the future.

With regard to the last paragraph of the question, if, as seems probable, the teacher referred to is the Christ, is it possible that the questioner is still ignorant that the Biblical criticism has long ago conclusively shown that the title "a man of sorrows," quoted from the writings attributed to Isaiah, was in no way connected with Christ, and could by no possibility have been intended for him? The point of this last part of the question is not clear, for it is, of course, obvious that any teacher, however high above us he may stand now, must at some period or other have risen from the depths like the rest of us, and must consequently have behind him many lives, which in the light of his present knowledge he would wish to have spent otherwise.

A. A. W.—I don't know if the querist is acquainted with a little piece of Adelaide Procter's, "A Comforter," which puts this feeling very daintily and truly:

If you break your plaything yourself, dear,  
 Don't you cry for it all the same?  
 I don't think it is such a comfort,  
 One has only oneself to blame.

It is quite true that "to be an innocent victim" is a very enjoyable feeling. To all women, I think, and to a good many men,

it is a pleasure beyond all actual enjoyments—so called. All lovers and husbands know well that, above and beyond the delight their womenkind find in self-sacrifice for them, the delicate fine flavour—the crown of it—is that it shall be something quite useless, nay, rather vexatious, to the beloved one! It is not only kittenish mischief mixing with the love in the child-heart; “*se poser en victime*” is a serious attraction, which does not pass with childhood. But if the questioner will ask himself why he prefers to be an innocent victim rather than a guilty one, he can hardly fail to see that it is because, in the first case, his satisfied vanity overflows the suffering, whilst in the latter the wound to his self-conceit is the cruellest pain of all. We *don't* say it *is* a comfort to have deserved suffering—it is not; but we *do* say that as he grows older he will know better. The rough knocking about we most of us get in life is mainly directed to knocking out of us this conceit—this pride of virtue, which suffers from our failures. I know we are used to protest that what hurts us is our sorrow for the sin; but this is our nineteenth century cant, the pretension to a height of virtue to which very few indeed of us have attained. When such as you and I have really come to the point of being sorry for our failures, purely because the world is the worse for them, without one thought of the suffering they may have brought upon ourselves—why, I think the Kali Yuga will be near its end!

The querist's difficulty is the old one; he does not understand that all evil is imperfection, and not theological “sin” at all. We all, without exception, have begun from the very beginning; we have learned by sensations, at first of the coarsest and most selfish nature, to use our powers. As these have developed we have become capable of acting from higher motives, of avoiding the more barbarous actions. There are many things we cannot do now, which a savage commits without the slightest rebuke from the conscience which, indeed, he does not yet possess. But, in like manner, we do things of which when our conscience is better instructed we shall be ashamed. In our degree (as the savage in his) we have to learn virtue by repeated failures. In our ignorance we run our heads against the “laws of nature” and hurt ourselves; as the infant does in learning to live on the physical plane. If the questioner will put quite out of his mind the idea of “sin or wickedness” which deserves “reprisal” he will understand the view we take of the case he adduces as a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*. Every Master has begun at the beginning, just like

ourselves ; and has blundered again and again. There is nothing outrageous in the suggestion that some of his lives may have been what we should call "evil" ones ; and we are told that even in his final life on earth, after ages of exaltation above average humanity, Gautama Buddha made mistakes which have taken much trouble to set right. But what has made Him a Master whilst we are yet what we are, may, I think, be fairly summed up in the words of an American politician, "I have made as many mistakes as anybody, but I never made the same mistake *twice* !"

## DIVISION XII

### “INTERFERING” WITH KARMA

#### QUESTION 39.

*Surely we must admit that in this life it is a fact that through self-sacrifice we do interfere with the justice of Karma. If a spendthrift gets his debts paid for him, is not that portion of his Karma removed?*

*Again, where Karma comes in the form of suffering caused to us by others—are these not fulfilling Law by causing the suffering, and yet incurring Karma for themselves? It is like “it must needs be that offences come, but woe to him by whom they come.” (1899.)*

A. A. W.—The distinction the querist misses is, that though in the supposed case we do interfere with the *action* of Karma, we do not (in his words) interfere with its *justice*. If we pay your spendthrift's debts, then of two things one happens—either his debt to Karma has been already exhausted, and you are the karmic agent to remove the infliction—no more; or else it has not, in which case you take away the means by which he was paying it, and the Lords of Karma will have to find a new infliction to replace that you have prematurely removed. You have not, in this last case, paid his debt to Karma, only that to his creditors, which is quite another thing, don't you see? And don't fancy you have helped him to cheat Karma; the debt must be paid,—here or hereafter. You have done a kind action and will have your karmic reward for that; but he stands just where he was—you have done nothing for him.

Similarly, we may put your second case even more forcibly. You may cause a man suffering, and thereby do him good—all the good possible to him—get his evil Karma fully cleared away,



and yet have no reward—rather incur a heavy, evil Karma of your own. You meant to hurt him and did hurt him, and that is all you are concerned with. You were the agent of Karma for his good, but Karma did not *make* you hurt him. If you had not done it, you would have saved your soul, and Karma would not have failed in its purpose by your default—it would have been done some other way, that is all. I don't see any puzzlement about all this—it seems to me quite clear, and quite just.

## QUESTION 40.

*all suffering karmic? If the purpose of suffering be the calling out from the Ego the capacity for mastery of the three worlds, it would appear that to conquer suffering would be a means of partially attaining that result; but then you interfere with Karma and push the suffering on to a future incarnation. Is it not better to remain passive and endure? But this is the attitude of despair, which cannot be a good habit of mind.*  
(1903.)

A. P. S.—Probably all suffering is karmic in the sense that it could not come about unless there were some karmic causes leading up to it somewhere in the background of the sufferer's former lives. But though not purposely engendered by higher powers with that end in view, it may become the agency of moral development when people bear it in a courageous spirit, not in "the attitude of despair" but with the idea that even suffering shall not destroy their conviction that on the whole the world must be governed by a just Providence, and that Evil is the anomalous condition of things—Good the condition towards which all things, even temporary evils, are tending. It is not necessary to assume that *per se* there is any purpose in suffering. Theoretically evolution might be worked out without it, but the conditions under which the authors of the system to which we belong have had to work, have been such that they have not been able to arrange things so that suffering shall be entirely excluded from the experience of mankind.

B. K.—The difficulties raised in this question are instances, I think, of that confusion of thought which is apt to result from the asking of questions without a clear conception of the standpoint

from which the question is put, or a definite recognition of the point of view from which an answer is given.

Thus the question : Is all suffering karmic? may be asked from the standpoint of the individual, or from the wider and more abstract point of view of Nature as a whole. And the answer must depend on the standpoint. In the case of the individual, one would first point out that there are several other points to be made clear before any definite answer is practicable. For instance, does the question refer to actual suffering felt as such, or does it refer to conditions and environment which to the mind of the questioner seem to involve suffering? *e.g.*, the conditions of life of an Esquimaux would seem to us to involve much suffering, but as a matter of fact it is very doubtful whether to a normal Esquimaux they bring anything like the same amount of felt suffering as ordinary middle-class life does to a European.

Now, as regards environment and conditions, these are certainly definitely in all cases the results of Karma: individual and collective. But how much actual suffering the individual will feel as the result thereof is not *primarily* a question of Karma as determining that environment, but involves also the karmic elements expressed in the character which the individual has built up for himself, and also—a most important factor—the way he uses his will, which is certainly free within limits, in relation to his own character as well as to his surroundings. Thus Karma may bring two Egos into almost identical circumstances and surroundings; but the one will suffer keenly thereunder, the other very little. Or again, under circumstances which press equally painfully on each of two Egos, the one may so use his own (limited) freewill upon his own mind and nature, that he will actually feel much less suffering than the other, who uses his will differently.

Taking now the other side of the problem, the broader, philosophical side, we should have to say that since suffering is certainly an effect, and every effect must have a cause, therefore all suffering must have a cause, which is the same as saying that all suffering is karmic, since Karma is simply the law of causation or sequence.

To pass now to the latter part of the question. To “conquer suffering” may be taken in either of two senses: (1) as meaning to render oneself insensitive, so hard and unresponsive that nothing is felt at all. And one school of asceticism, at least in

the East, works on these lines. But that means becoming dead to *all* feeling, joy or pain alike; and, indeed, if pushed to its logical conclusion, this view will lead to the effort to reach blank unconsciousness, when it is found that the old opposition of pain and pleasure re-appears again and again in ever subtler forms on each plane of consciousness. (2) Or again we can "conquer suffering" in the sense not of ceasing to feel it, but in the sense of growing strong and balanced enough to remain unswayed and unaffected by it. And that is the true way to "conquer suffering." It is not a merely passive attitude, a simple enduring of pain, but a gaining of such power over our consciousness, over our attention, over the mind, that we ourselves, the inner centre of consciousness which is ourselves, can remain perfectly calm, and do *perfectly* every duty, perform every operation of consciousness unaffected by the pain which may be raging in one or another of its vehicles.

Nor is this an attitude of despair. For we know that the suffering is only temporary; we can see and understand its beneficent purpose and we assimilate its message, accept the gift it brings us, with the same welcome readiness and alacrity with which we receive its opposite.

But all this means that we have "let go" of our personalities to a great extent, that we no longer identify "ourselves" with the separated consciousness which ever oscillates between the pairs of opposites, but are learning, however slowly, to live in the Eternal.

#### QUESTION 41.

*In the light of retributive Karma, how should one view the action of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in cases where the children are taken away from their parents? (1896.)*

A. B.—One of the first things the student should grasp as to Karma is that it is a Law of Nature, and that "a karmic result" is the outcome of *all* the forces which bring it about. Karma does not dictate a course of action to the Ego, but marks out the conditions under which he must act; anything he *can* do is within his Karma, and he may modify by fresh outpourings of energy any result which is not at the stage of complete ripeness. The person who steps in and saves a child from torture is as much an agent of

Karma as is the parent who ill-uses it, and the very fact of the successful interference shows that that particular "retributive Karma" is exhausted. As Karma delivered the child to the tormentor, so does Karma set him free, and one way or another must be found through which that law can work on the physical plane. We need no more concern ourselves with the result of our action on "retributive Karma" than we need trouble ourselves as to the effect on "the law of gravitation" of our catching a cup as it is falling off a table. If we are able to catch it we may do so fearlessly; there is no danger that our interference will disturb the equilibrium of the Universe.

C. W. L.—This question raises a point upon which there seems to be much misapprehension. Nothing could be more wildly absurd than the idea that anything we can do can prevent the working out of Karma. If a child is born under circumstances which lead to its being cruelly treated, no doubt such treatment is in accordance with its Karma; but if kindly intervention delivers it from the demons in human form who torment it, then that intervention also is in accordance with its Karma. If it were not, then the well-intentioned effort to rescue it would fail, as we know it sometimes does. Our obvious duty is to do all the good we can, and to render all the help within our power in every direction; and we need have no haunting fear that in doing so we are interfering with the work of the great karmic deities, who are assuredly perfectly capable of managing their business with absolute exactitude without help from us.

#### QUESTION 42.

*If the better housing, etc., of our poorest working classes would attract more highly evolved Egos to incarnate in our large towns, what would become of the less advanced souls? Charity is, I believe, better organised on the Continent, but this nation is reputed to be specially sympathetic towards the poor and suffering, which is a quality they may stand in need of, even more than of the mere fact of charitable relief. Should we not, therefore, hesitate before we furnish conditions which may drive souls into an environment in which they may be less helpfully and sympathetically dealt with? (1903.)*

B K.—The clue to the difficulty which seems to exercise the

questioner's mind may perhaps be found—as indeed also the solution of numerous other social and political problems—in a consideration of the bearing on individual life of “collective Karma.” It is quite true that of the actual method and mode of working of karmic law we know little or nothing; and hence to seek for the solution of a problem in the still more recondite conception of “collective” Karma, may seem a vain attempt to explain *ignotum per ignotius*. But our teachers have not infrequently spoken of collective Karma, and so we are justified in believing that the term corresponds to some actual reality, and that the sense of the words used in some measure conveys a notion, however dim and imperfect, of what is intended. It may, therefore, be useful to attempt—at least speculatively—to work out the notion a little and to endeavour to see its bearing upon the life around us.

If we compare two well-marked and clearly localised civilisations—for example Imperial Rome under the early Cæsars and London at the present day—we shall obviously find a number of points of resemblance and an equal or greater number of points of contrast. Taking thus the general environment only, and putting aside all those questions of relative, social, pecuniary or civil status which belong more particularly to the narrower environment of any particular Ego, we shall readily see that all the Egos taking birth in Rome, say between 50 and 100 years A.D., will come under the influence of one type of general environment, while those born in London between 1850 and 1900 A.D. would find themselves subjected to general environmental influences in some respects resembling, but in other respects widely differing, from those of Imperial Rome. And we may roughly class these differences under the two heads of difference in external, material surroundings and difference in the prevailing feeling or “spirit” of the age. As a simple illustration of each class, consider the multiplicity of hospitals, asylums, and similar institutions intended to alleviate human suffering which existed in London during the last half-century, as contrasted with the almost complete absence of such in Imperial Rome, illustrating the contrast on the material side; while on the more subjective or inner side we might compare the sympathetic feeling, to which reference is made in the question, which has called these institutions into existence with the spirit in Imperial Rome which found expression in the gladiatorial shows of the Coliseum.

Now this general environment, whether material or subjective, is obviously not the direct outcome of the Karma of any single individual, nor indeed *immediately* the outcome even of the present action of those Egos who are born into it. Clearly we are here in presence of the working of the law of collective Karma. It is quite true that it is the individual Karma of a given Ego which brings him to birth in that environment, and under the sweep of that special phase of collective Karma. But it seems to me that we can here trace two distinct karmic factors: one which brings a given Ego to birth in association with a number of others, at such and such a time and place; the second which determines the depth of colouring, so to speak, both on the material and the subjective sides, of the environment into which those associated Egos are born.

For instance—to elaborate the above illustration—we can see that both on the material and the subjective sides, in respect of indifference to human suffering and its alleviation or infliction, there has been a marked change from the time of Imperial Rome to our own day. But this implies that the collective Karma, in that special direction, has been largely lightened; and if we look ahead instead of behind us, we may, I think, infer, that when the karmic wheel has again revolved, the progress in this same direction will be still greater.

If now we generalise these inferences, it appears that what may be called philanthropic effort operates not only on the Karma of the individuals concerned, but that it also tends, as it were, to lessen the total momentum of the forces at work to produce suffering. The effect of this would be that while all the differences of individual Karma would still have their full operation and manifestation, the *average* weight of suffering would be diminished for all Egos alike.

To deal now directly with the question as put, I should incline to say that our efforts to provide better housing, etc., for the poor would not result in attracting a different class or level of Egos into incarnation, but in the improvement of the general average environment into which are born, all those Egos whose collective karmic ties unite them with our own nation or race. For we must remember that it is the ties existing between the Egos and groups of Egos from the past which link them into those larger collections called nations and races, so that the effect of a general all-round raising and improvement of enviroing conditions will

operate to assist and hasten their evolution, rather than to cause them to be born elsewhere.

As far as I can see, it is largely by this all-round improvement that the growth of the less developed is aided, and it is in this direction, it would seem, that, in the words of *Light on the Path*, we are one and all called upon to strive "to lighten the heavy Karma of the world."

## DIVISION XIII

### KARMA AND THE ATLANTEANS

#### QUESTION 43.

*It is said that tendencies in one life become intensified in the next. If this is so, what happened when the millions of Atlantean Egos, who had been addicted to black magic and the grossest sensual practices, reincarnated? (1897.)*

A. P. S.—This is a pretty problem which has occurred to other inquirers before now. The tendency of the Atlantean black magician undoubtedly lurks in his Karma, but owing to the sudden and complete extinction of the physical plane knowledge on the subject when the whole Continent was finally destroyed, the entities in question have no means of recovering the lost arts by means of which their tendencies might have been translated into action. This view of the matter has, to begin with, the advantage of justifying the tremendous destruction of life which took place at the submergence of Poseidonis. Without that, the human family would have continued under the influence of the “downward tendency,” and the fifth race would have been infected with the diseases of its old predecessor. As regards the individual entities, the tendency, during the growth of the fifth race, has a chance of wearing off under the influence of new tendencies. Our evolution is the product of the aggregate tendencies in our nature. These do not all press in the same direction, but the predominant tendencies sweep away the others, some suffering attending the process when good ones sweep away the evil, so that the karmic law is justified even if the evil tendency never again comes into manifestation.

The Atlantean black magician problem has ramifications, of course, on each side, so to speak, of this explanation. A good deal of mischievous sorcery and witchcraft in the Middle Ages



might probably be traced to Atlantean tendencies, manifesting themselves in spite of the impediments put in their way by the general ignorance of the world at large in reference to Occult arts. That ignorance, however, prevented the general diffusion of black magic in the intellectual classes, who are now turning their attention to other matters. Then it is possible that the aptitudes for magic arts that may be thought of as lurking in the Karma of a good many people at the present day—a bequest from the Atlantean period—may not be so much extinguished by their incarnations in the fifth race, as ennobled and dignified by the acquisition of new motives as their spiritual evolution advances. In this way it is conceivable that some entities who shared the destruction of Poseidonis in a moral condition which would then have rendered their free development a source of danger to themselves and others, may by the time they recover, in new incarnations, touch on the physical plane with the arts they have lost, be especially well qualified to exercise Occult power in the service of true progress.

## DIVISION XIV

### THE KARMA OF RACES

#### QUESTION 44.

*When uncivilised people suffer great wrongs from stronger races—as was, for instance, the case in Hayti, when the natives were enslaved and then extirpated by cruel oppression—are we to understand that such sufferings are karmic, consequent on former wrong-doing by such races? (1901.)*

A. A. W.—It does not seem, at first sight, quite easy to give a simple answer to this question.

It may be said that everything is a great deal more complicated than we have any idea of, and that a *simple* explanation *must* be wrong. Modern Christianity and modern science have both demoralised us in this respect; science is slowly recovering from the illusion that a “few simple principles,” as Austin said, will give all we need, and Christianity will have to follow, or give up the game altogether.

For my own part, I think the key to the difficulty put by the querent lies in the statement by Mrs. Besant that the undeveloped mind requires only *sensations*—no matter whether of pleasure or pain, so long as they are *strong* enough to touch and stir the blunt and horny perceptions. In the ordinary sense these Indians had not *deserved* their fate, because to have incurred such karmic penalty by their own evil doing was not possible for them—they were not developed enough to sin in such a way. But they were, as I take it, children in the lowest class, and of the two—pain and pleasure—pain is far the most effective stimulus to progress, and the most appropriate to the lower state. For us, it is a shame if we have to be taught by pain; we ought to be awake enough to learn without by this time; but for such as these, and the count-

less victims of the great Eastern conquerors, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, etc., agony and death were, I think, the spur to progress which would bring them back to their next life better provided, more alive and intelligent than if they had lived out a long life, but little above that of the beasts that perish.

Of Karma, or right or wrong, is not here the question at all at this stage, as I look at it. It is a good thing for them that their souls should be stirred up—even by pain—and that their forms should perish to make way for others more adapted for the life of the intellect. I am inclined to carry this view far, even in answer to many of the difficulties of our own day, as to the condition of the lowest classes in our great towns, etc. There are a vast number of personalities amongst us who are not yet beyond these most elementary lessons, and these must have the bodies and the circumstances in which to receive them. If there were not, such bodies could not be there, we may be certain.

When we are quite clear that the object of the Universe is *not* that everybody shall be happy and comfortable, but that everyone shall be stirred up to *advance*, we shall not be so horrified at the whip and spur. As I say, the shame *to us* is that even *we* can't do without them !

## DIVISION XV

### POSTPONEMENT OF KARMA

#### QUESTION 45.

*Can one leave behind some disagreeable Karma, such as drunkenness, murder, etc., for several incarnations, and follow a line of elevating thought and work, and then, perhaps, in a life that is reasonably perfect, be either a drunkard or a murderer, or is it true that what is no temptation in this life we may consider as being really overcome? (1900.)*

A. P. S.—In regard to the working of Karma, there is practically no authoritative teaching in possession of theosophical students beyond that general view of the subject embodied in the earliest books. One can see that good reasons may justify the reverse of the high Occult authorities in this matter. Exact knowledge as to how the law works in the details of physical life would suggest selfish efforts to secure agreeable conditions, rather than the nobler striving for spiritual growth that should engage the attention of candidates for Occult teaching. All such questions, therefore, as the one before us, may be best discussed from the point of view of pure reason, rather than from that of any fragmentary information received. As a question thus appealing to general intelligence, the problem put forward is well worth attention.

First, however, there is a strange confusion of ideas in the phrase, "disagreeable Karma such as drunkenness, murder, etc." Do not let us lose sight of the enormous gulf that separates bad habits of a self-regarding nature from crimes that involve other persons in suffering. Drunkenness is so bad a habit, and so apt to give rise to acts which cause suffering to others, that one does not want to apologise for it exactly. And, of course, it cannot but act as a terrible impediment to spiritual progress. But its Karma

tending to its extinction as a habit in physical incarnation, is not likely to be very terrible, and still less likely to be long postponed. The Karma of the kind liable to long postponement is evidently that which can only be worked out with reference to some particular person. For such arrangements Nature must wait till both persons are in incarnation together. There might, for example, be a murder that would be of so simple a character karmically, that it would be disposed of by an inversion of the parts played in another life. The victim in the one case might be the murderer in the second act of the drama, and the first murderer the victim. But that would be rather an elementary case, though it suggests the possibility that a person with the Karma of a committed murder hanging over him might meanwhile live a "reasonably perfect" life.

Dividing the more or less evil tendencies of a nature into those which merely provoke bad habits of a self-regarding kind, and those (much worse) tendencies which cause suffering to others, the first will obviously be operative life after life until they are overcome, and when no temptation in that direction is felt any more they may be regarded as overcome. The Karma, however, of specifically evil deeds affecting others may be held over perhaps for many lives until the conditions arise in which it can be accurately worked out.

J. M.—A. P. S. makes statements which seem to me to require further elucidation.

He says: "The Karma of the kind liable to long postponement is evidently that which can only be worked out with reference to some particular person. For such arrangements Nature must wait till both parties are in incarnation together. There might . . . be a murder that would be . . . disposed of by an inversion of the parts played in another life. The victim in the one case might be the murderer in the second act of the drama, and the first murderer the victim."

This seems to me equal to saying that two wrongs might make one right.

My own idea is, that, instead of being indebted to each other, we are karmically indebted *only to the Law*. This is the reason why we are not allowed to take the law into our own hands, but must bring the offending party before the impartial judge.

Being debtors only to the "Law" we may regard the Lords of Karma as receiving officers. If A does wrong to B, They set it

down in A's ledger, as a debt due from him to Them; in B's book They set it down as so much due from Them to him. If C comes along and does B a kind action, They credit C with having paid that amount to Them, and credit Themselves as having paid it to B. But surely it would have been all the same to B if that same action had been done to E or F. As long as B is wanting help and gets it, it is of no consequence to him whether the Lords of Karma send it through a man, a woman, a child, or a dog.

This view of the subject enables me, when I recognise my debt, to begin *at once* to pay it off. Perhaps, for instance, I did not show due respect to my father. Have I to wait 150 or more years before I can pay that debt off? Decidedly not. Recognising it as a debt due to "fatherhood" rather than to a "father," I begin at once to pay special deference, respect and attention to every old man (or woman) I come in contact with. Under this system, then, I can make infinitely greater progress than under the "inversion" system, and for that reason it is the more cheerful, and therefore the more likely to be true.

The same holds good with respect to any man I meet in the street, who appeals to me for help. Regarding it as a call from the Lords of Karma, I tender the help asked for, without inquiring or caring whether I am personally indebted to that man or not.

Says the *Gîtâ*: "Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou offerest . . . offer it as unto Me."

A. P. S.—There is a feeling here with which I sympathise, but J. M. has not quite correctly appreciated my point. The murder karmically dealt with by an inversion of the parts was described in my former note as a very elementary case, and was merely imagined to show how sometimes Karma might be held over. In such a case the two wrongs would *not* have made a right. The penalty of the first murderer would have been incurred, but the second would get into trouble later on. The bad Karma in such a case could only be extinguished if the original victim, having the opportunity of vengeance, returned good for evil (however unconsciously). Then the first evil doer would still have to incur suffering, but this necessity accomplished, the whole transaction (or account) would be closed.

Often, no doubt, the relations of the good or evil doer are with the Law generally, rather than with individuals, but the evident tendency of the Law is to maintain the individual relationship in the working out of Karma as long as that is reasonably possible.

In the case of the bad son whose repentance leads him to develop respect for age, etc., that is so much fresh good Karma engendered. If in another life he meets the father to whom he behaved badly, the subsequently acquired habit will naturally lead to specially amiable behaviour, and so the old bad Karma is individually adjusted in the most satisfactory way. Should it never have been repented of, it might have led—as in the rough case I imagined—to an inversion of the parts, and then the oscillation of suffering would have gone on for a bit longer.

## DIVISION XVI

### QUICKENING OF KARMA.

#### QUESTION 46

*Since the quickening of Karma in the life of a disciple cannot but affect near relatives, how can it be right to call down suffering upon one's self which may cause suffering to others? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—It might perhaps be suggested to the questioner that the aspirant does *not* “call down suffering upon himself.” All that he does is to take his own evolution earnestly in hand, and to endeavour as rapidly as may be to eradicate the evil and develop the good within himself in order that he may become ever a more and more perfect living channel of the Divine Love. True, such action will assuredly attract the attention of the great Lords of Karma, and while their response will be to give him greater opportunity, it may (and often does) also involve a considerable increase of suffering in various ways.

But if we think carefully, we shall see that this is exactly what might be expected. All of us have more or less of evil Karma behind us, and until that is disposed of it will be a perpetual hindrance to us in our higher work. One of the earliest steps in the direction of serious progress is, therefore, the working out of whatever of this evil still remains to us, and so the first response of the Great Ones to our upward striving is frequently to give us the opportunity of paying off a little more of this debt (since we have now made ourselves strong enough to do so) in order that it may be cleared out of the way of our future work.

The manner in which this debt shall be paid is a matter which is entirely in their hands, and not in ours; surely we can trust them to manage it without inflicting additional suffering upon others—unless, of course, those others have also some outstanding



karmic debt which can be discharged in this way. In any case the great karmic Deities cannot act otherwise than with absolute justice to every person concerned, whether directly or remotely ; and all such questions as imply a doubt of that fundamental fact show a strange lack of comprehension of their nature and their powers.

## DIVISION XVII

### KARMA AND LIBERATION

#### QUESTION 47.

*What kind of Karma should be generated by a man, if he aspires to the attainment of Mukti? (1898).*

A. A. W.—Although the particular question asked would be sufficiently answered by referring the querist to almost any page of almost any book on the subject of Theosophy, the question of Mukti—the Deliverance—is one which is so apart from the ordinary European ideas that it will repay a somewhat more detailed consideration. The assumption that at death every good person is taken from everything which has made life dear to him, and set down in some heaven of abstract nature to find his happiness in what is called the Vision of God, is demanded by every form of Christianity, but is one which the public opinion of all Christian people unani- mously repudiates. “Enlightened” Christians speak contemptu- ously of the “golden streets,” the “harps and crowns” of the New Testament heaven, and would have us think they are not sufficiently spiritual for them. If they dared confess the truth they would say plainly they are not sufficiently carnal for them! In America people are more outspoken; and a “Scientific Demonstration of a Future Life” is not complete without a chapter to show that that future life will not be worth living without marrying and giving in marriage, schools, museums, lectures and all the paraphernalia of the Spiritualists’ “Sommerland.”

Do we Theosophists despise this? By no means—it is quite natural at this particular stage of development. But it shows forcibly how true it is that every “good Karma” (if one *must* use that very objectionable phrase) holds back—binds—one who desires

liberation. These souls have done good and been happy on this physical plane; they have (probably) made little or no Karma which binds them to come back to earth to *suffer*. And yet, just as certainly as if they had, they *must* come back, because all their wishes, desires and hopes are set upon things purely of the earth—earthly. It has been forcibly said that as long as earth has *anything* which can attract you, you must come back to it. And the *evil* of coming back, for however good a purpose, is, of course, the danger of it; to make *only* good Karma is a task even more difficult than that which the aspirant to Deliverance sets before himself—to make none at all.

It would be easy to moralise over this—to bid everyone ask himself whether in actual fact the prospect of Deliverance from every tie to earth—from all that he has loved and enjoyed here, the giving up of every hope of future happiness, as *we* call happiness, is *really* desired by him. For most of us such a future presents itself as colder and less desirable than the Christian heaven itself. It is well that it should do so; for we have no business in Nirvāna as long as the world has anything to teach us. We are here to learn our lessons—to make ourselves *worth* reuniting with the All; and for most of us the only way is the steady persistence, life after life, as of successive days of school, until all is learnt; and not to hanker after holidays which will only leave us far behind our fellows in the race. At present earth has much which is delightful—needful for our experience; let us honestly confess it, only lifting our hearts in rare hours of contemplation to the time when the power within us shall grow strong enough to break through all which holds us back, and we shall pass triumphant to the new life of the new world which awaits us. Do you think you will stop to count up how many earth-lives have gone to gain you the power, when the Golden Gates once open for you?

#### QUESTION 48.

*Why cannot Karma generated in one life be worked out wholly in that life? or in other words, why do not effects immediately follow causes instead of waiting for several lives? (1898.)*

A. A. W.—The foundation of the difficulty the querist finds, in the vast space of time Karma may require for its complete working

out, is the very common misconception of Karma as a system of rewards and punishments. Few who are or have been Christians can ever entirely get over the habit of mind which looks for an external Judge, who punishes crime and rewards virtue; and if you tell them there is none such, they feel as if all the sanctions of morality were being destroyed. The conception that the effects of every action, good or bad, radiate through the Universe as part of the vast system of causation which is Karma, and return as reflected vibrations to the point whence they started, and to the person who sent them out—blessings as well as curses “coming home to roost”—is not at first easy to grasp. Unprejudiced observation shows, that the facts of the world *are* so that a man suffers often for his good actions, and makes a profit by evil ones; but we have been so long used, in the interests of what we call our morality, to force our observation and even our very senses to lie to us, habitually and at last unconsciously, that to be obliged to admit the unquestionable fact that the world is *not* governed by our moral laws (as we call them—apparently because they *don't* rule), is a very unpleasant cold water “douche,” and raises much outcry. The real difficulty is to say how Karma (thus defined) can ever come to an end except with the Universe we have by our act disturbed, at what point the vibrations are so faint as to be practically lost; for it is evident that, *theoretically*, the Universe, as the sum of all actions which have ever taken place, can never cease to be affected to *some* extent by it. If we keep in mind that not only our *circumstances*, but a very considerable part of our *character*, is the Karmic result of our previous actions, we may find the matter easier. The natural weakness which makes it so specially hard to refrain from some injurious indulgence may very well have taken its rise many lives ago, and been pampered by indulgence since. As we come to understand the harm of it, we shall work against it; but every one of us must be familiar with cases in which one life has not been sufficient to gain freedom, however desperate the struggle may have been. The vulgar religion regards such souls as “lost” for ever by reason of their failure; the Wisdom knows that every such effort will have its reward in new strength for the next battle and that “no soul which holds *one* right desire goeth the road of loss.” Talk of “comfort!” What comfort has popular religion to offer for ourselves and our beloved ones equal to the certainty that Karma has *not* to be exhausted in the one life, but that each one will have as many new chances as he needs—

that the world will endure for him until, at last, he *does* stand victor in the fight?

As long as our life lies in the pleasures of this lower world, over which Karma rules, so long, by the nature of things, must we be subject to its great Law. But all the time we have a life which is beyond "the opposites"—to which the pleasure and pain of the karmic evolution are equally unknown: the life of the spirit. When a man's higher Ego gains full control over the lower self—when nothing which Karma can bring has power to gladden him, and nothing which Karma takes away can grieve him—

Then sorrow ends, for life and death have ceased.

What is there in all the three worlds which *could* bring it to an end before this point of deliverance is reached?

## DIVISION XVIII

### KARMA AND HEREDITY

#### QUESTION 49.

*Are qualities, such as physical appearance and minor personal characteristics, which do not impress themselves on the causal body, transmitted from life to life? (1896.)*

B. K.—I believe it to be the fact, that peculiarities of physical appearance and minor personal characteristics do sometimes reappear in subsequent lives. But they can hardly be said to be “transmitted” from life to life. It would rather seem as if, where such peculiarities were the expression of something in the Ego, they would be reproduced, more or less definitely, by the Lipika in their successive designs for the Ego’s new physical bodies, until such time as the Karma connected with them was exhausted. It has, I think, been observed that a certain general resemblance in face and feature can be traced in successive births, unless the growth of the Ego has been so rapid, that the vehicle it merits in its new birth no longer resembles the one which suited it in the last.

C. W. L.—Physical appearance and personal characteristics could not be said to be transmitted from life to life, precisely because, as the questioner remarks, they do not impress themselves upon the causal body. But we have to remember, that the personality is after all an expression, even though it may be a very imperfect one, of the permanent individuality, and the physical body in turn is an expression upon this plane of the personality within it; so that although it would be a mistake to say that physical characteristics were transmitted, the virtues or defects in the Ego which give rise to them, undoubtedly do pass over from life to life, and consequently it is by no means unlikely that in

many cases the physical body of one life might bear a fairly close resemblance to that of the last, allowing, of course, for the probable difference of race and physical heredity.

QUESTION 50.

*Can the ordinary view of heredity, which regards bodily and other qualities as dependent on the parents, be reconciled with the conception of Karma? (1896.)*

B. K.—I see no reason why we should not regard the parents as, at second hand, the agents of the Lipika. The Mahārājahs form the model for the future body of an Ego according to the “idea” thereof given to them by the Lipika, and also select the race, nation, family and parent, which will supply the nearest available conditions for the working out of the Karma allotted for that life. The law of heredity (which is a phrase summing up in reality an extremely complex nexus of causes on the three lower planes) simply denotes the mechanism by which the needful conditions are provided for the working out of the Ego’s Karma. But it must be remembered that a quite considerable number of “small” things (things which do not seriously affect the Ego’s life) are incidental rather than consequent on the individual Karma of the Ego. Thus colour of hair and eyes, mannerisms, little tricks and habits, complexion and so on, when they do not play any marked part in the subsequent life of the Ego, are often rather merely incidental results of race, nationality and family, which accrue to the Ego as a consequent of his being born in that family and of those special parents, than direct consequences of particular actions or tendencies of his own; also it must be remembered that the degree of development of the Ego itself is important. A baby Ego, *i.e.*, one of the undeveloped majority of our present mankind, is on its own plane so vague and uncharacterised that it is almost indistinguishable from hundreds of others, and scores of suitable bodies can be found at any time, any one of which would equally suit the needs and Karma of such an Ego, because neither the Ego nor its Karma is specialised or individualised to any marked degree. But the higher the development of the Ego, the more both itself and its Karma become specialised, and consequently the more restricted becomes the possible field of selection, wherein

to find a suitable birth ; and, of course, in such a case, it is the great and important lines of its Karma which have to be provided for, those which will really mould and influence the life and shape its destinies. Hence in such a case there may be, and often are, not a few "incidental" elements in the make up of the body, which have no direct relation to that particular Ego or its Karma. The total Karma of an Ego may be divided into two main lines: (a) that which is embodied in the Ego itself, constituting its individual character, tendencies, faculties, etc., in short the actual nature and character of the Ego itself; (b) that which is dealt with by the Lipika and their agents, and which determines the circumstances and surroundings of the birth and the model of the body. The first of these shows itself in the moulding work of the Ego itself, and that becomes more apparent naturally as the child grows, and the astral body develops. It is the Lipika and their agents who build the house, using the parents as instruments. The Ego only arranges the furniture and (in the case of a highly-developed Ego) sometimes adds to or alters the building.

#### QUESTION 51.

*How can moral heredity—the heredity of character with all its peculiarities, often manifest among members of a family even when education in common has been lacking—harmonise with the theory of reincarnation, which attributes a different origin to every member of a family? (1900.)*

A. A. W.—In answering this question we must first put aside the needless introduction of "education." The querist's point is the peculiarities of the body and mind we bring with us into the world ; what modifications may be made in them afterwards have nothing to do with reincarnation or with heredity. Now what are the observed facts as to this last? In any fairly large family, born of parents who have themselves a tolerably distinguishable individuality, we shall most likely find the children differing much one from the other. Some (usually the daughters) as is said, "take after" the father ; others (most frequently the sons) take after the mother ; others again will more or less faithfully reproduce the traits of a more remote ancestor, of which, very possibly, the actual father or mother may show nothing. Besides this, there is



often traceable a classification of another kind—that the vital energy and the peculiar habits and tastes of the child seem to come rather from the father, whilst the character of the mind is the mother's—thus suggesting the explanation of the well-known fact that great men have usually had remarkable mothers, and, almost never, remarkable sons.

But still more noticeable than this heredity is the strange capriciousness with which it seems to act. I think I may venture to say that in the majority of cases it *don't* act—that the children might, as far as we can see, have just as well have been produced by any other pair as by their actual parents. The supporters of the various physical theories of heredity are accustomed by way of explaining this to assume that they reproduce earlier and unknown ancestors. This sounds well enough, but it must not be forgotten that it is a pure assumption, and neither an explanation nor a confirmation of the theory.

The theosophical view is (see *Man and His Bodies*) that the reign of heredity from the physical parents extends to the physical and etheric bodies only. "The etheric double" (in Mrs. Besant's words) "is built after the mould given by the Lords of Karma, and is not brought with him by the Ego, but awaits him with the physical body formed upon it." The parents of the child are chosen for him by the Lords of Karma, precisely in order that the law of heredity may furnish a portion of the influences by which the body is to be formed for him. I say a portion only; for no two Egos can require precisely the same body, and hence what seems the caprice by which the law acts. There is an actual, living will which chooses what portion of the ancestral characteristics shall in this particular case be reproduced, and how these shall be modified to make the fit dwelling for the Ego which is to inhabit that body.

The next point to be made clear is, that the result of this action—the physical and etheric body and brain, with all their hereditary peculiarities—is only, when complete, an *instrument* for the thought and action of the Ego itself, which comes down into it, clad in its mental and desire bodies, to do what it can with it in the physical world. Nor is it even the instrument of its own choice. At best a sheath in which the Ego is hidden from view, it is frequently a dark and noisome prison by which its action is prevented—a foul and shameful mask which utterly misrepresents to the world the pure spirit behind it. It is true it is

always the fate which the Ego has made for itself in past lives, and which *must* be lived through ; but it is often a hard fate, for all that.

With this explanation, it will, I think, be easy to see, that if two Egos have much in common and have possibly passed one or more than one previous life together, there is nothing more likely from the theosophical point of view than that their very similar organisation and closely resembling Karma should bring them into incarnation together as members of the same family, and even as twins ; nor could the very close correspondence sometimes found in the lives of twins be any difficulty. At the same time the marked *differences* also not unfrequently noticed are equally easy of explanation. The karmic body is, in mathematical language, the “resultant” of many different forces ; and two very different Egos may have incurred karmic rewards and penalties, which may work out in similar bodies set in the same family circle. But the lives will *not* correspond ; you may have the “Fleur de Marie” in the vilest surroundings, or the “black sheep” in the holiest and purest. Our claim as regards these matters is—against the ordinary religious views—Law, not capricious Grace ; whilst where the ordinary scientific man says Blind Law—Chance—we say Intelligent Law, working out consciously the purpose of the Universe.

## DIVISION XIX

### KARMA AND "UNDESERVED" EXPERIENCES

#### QUESTION 52.

*It is said that an accident cannot occur. In what sense is this meant, and why should an accident be impossible? (1896.)*

G.—We are confronted with two conceptions of Karma, according to one of which every event happening to a person is directly due to his own past, and could be predicted from a complete knowledge of it alone. According to the other, while the man builds his character and also regulates to some extent the circumstances of his life, every incident in that life does not depend directly on his own past. In the former conception, an accident in any sense of the word is impossible; in the latter one may use the term for those events which are not due to the man's own individual past.

The former view is a mechanical one, and requires machinery of an inconceivably complicated order. The second is more elastic. For the one to be possible, every detail in the lives of each individual would have to be rigidly regulated, so that the "Karma" of the one should not interfere with that of the others. Freedom in any sense of the word would be impossible. The second scheme would allow for "accidents," using that term in the ordinary and only possible manner, the law of Karma being a perpetual adjuster or compensator.

There is a view which looks upon an accident as a violation of law, but this is straining the term altogether out of its right meaning. If a slate falls from the roof of a house, and kills a man who is passing, that is an accident. Each incident in itself, the fall of the slate or the passing by of the man, could not be properly so called, but the coincidence of the two forms the

accident. Of course, a being with absolute knowledge might have known the exact point in time at which the slate would fall and the man would pass, but that would not alter the case. If, however, an intelligence deliberately interfered with, or so regulated the ordinary process, that the slate and the man should meet, it could no longer be called an accident. It may be a question as to whether this is or is not the real process, but it is only by such a conception that one can really work out the idea of a rigid Karma, which makes every event happening to a man the exact equivalent of his own past actions. This would bring us to a strange conception of the world and its government. The world as it is seems quite complicated enough for our comprehension, without multiplying its puzzles. Not holding that view, it seems to me that we can reasonably speak of an "accident," in spite of the possibility of its being foreseen by beings with extended range of vision and wider knowledge than we possess.

#### QUESTION 53.

*Is all wrong we are suffering from others in all cases the effect and consequence of our own Karma, i.e., is it always caused by ourselves in a former or present life, or is it possible that sometimes we are not the cause? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—Assuredly nothing can happen to a man which is not in his Karma, but it seems probable that many people who glibly use that expression have not quite understood how very far reaching it is.

Every man, in the course of his long development through the ages, has accumulated a vast store of Karma, all of which must faithfully and exactly work itself out before he will be finally free. As soon as the man begins to understand life at all, it is towards that final liberation that all his efforts are directed, and the great Lords of Karma are more than willing to give him whatever assistance those efforts deserve. But such assistance usually presents itself in a form which only the man who is thoroughly in earnest is able to appreciate, for it consists in increasing the amount of evil Karma to be worked off in the present life, in order to leave him freer in the future.

Of course, in the interests of evolution, the object is to work off the vast karmic store as soon as may be, but since it is usually

far too great and complex to be exhausted in any one life, it has to be taken in instalments, and when a man descends into any particular incarnation, such portion of it is selected, as he might reasonably be supposed to be able to dispose of during that birth.

To the ordinary man that small fragment of Karma appears as his *kismet*—the fate from which he cannot escape, however much he may try. The more advanced Ego accepts it with gratitude and devotes himself intelligently to the attempt—not to escape it, but—so to work it out as to make it of the greatest possible use to his development.

This portion of Karma is to some extent indicated by the conditions under which a man is born, and much of it can therefore be foreseen by astrologers, palmists and others, who from their various points of view make a study of the indications of those conditions. Yet it is by no means always possible accurately to predict the whole course of life : for any man of strong will is constantly setting up new causes and generating fresh Karma, which may considerably modify the action of the old.

In addition to this, it seems certain that modifications are occasionally brought about or permitted by the karmic deities themselves, as for example in the case above-mentioned of the extra mass of evil Karma which may be apportioned to a man in recognition of his earnest desire to have it at once and get it out of the way of his future progress, and also sometimes in the case of what we call accidents.

Most assuredly no man could be killed in, let us say, a railway accident or a shipwreck, unless there were somewhere in the vast store of his entire Karma a portion which could be worked off by such a death. But if we attempt for a moment to realise what a large and varied selection of evil Karma most of us have made in the course of the ages, we shall see that in the case of any ordinary man it would be exceedingly unlikely, that among such an assortment there should be nothing which could express itself in that form.

If such a portion were found, then it is quite possible that the man might be allowed to perish in the accident, and so dispose of that portion, even though it might not have formed part of the plan originally made for this particular incarnation. If no such portion existed, he could not so perish, but would furnish one more of those instances of miraculous escape of which one so frequently reads.

One can readily imagine, that under such circumstances a man's life would often have to be saved, not because of any virtue of his own, but on account of the effect of his death upon others dependent on him, lest suffering not adjudged by *their* past Karma should thus fall upon them.

Undoubtedly, therefore, we may say in reply to this question that every wrong which we suffer is entirely the effect and consequence of our own action at some period or other of the long life story which lies behind us; for if it were otherwise, it simply could not happen to us.

It must not be supposed that in all such cases we have on some previous occasion done an exactly similar wrong to the very same person who now treats us so cruelly. Certainly where a person has very largely influenced the life of a friend or an enemy by his action, definite blocks of Karma are thus carried over from one time of meeting to another, perhaps thousands of years later, and definitely worked out between those who originally participated in the actions which caused them. But there is also a kind of general store of Karma, so that we are able to repay help given to us long ago by those far greater than ourselves, by in turn helping those who are below us, and thus in the end the Great Law is vindicated, and eternal justice is done to all.

S. S.—May I ask the favour of a few words from C. W. L. to clear up a matter that has been a great puzzle to me? He has assured us above that “every wrong which we suffer is entirely the effect and consequence of our own action at some period or other of the long life-story which lies behind us; for, if it were otherwise it simply could not happen to us,” and it has troubled me considerably to find that, in one case at least, he admits the possibility of our suffering undeservedly. See answer to Question 29, where, speaking of an injury done by A to B, he says: “This may be a spontaneous act of injustice on A's part, for which Karma will assuredly have to repay him in the future, while B's *undeserved* suffering will also be made up to him in a future life.” Now, I can easily see how A's action may, on his part, be the commencement of new Karma, but I fail to see how that action can affect B, unless in response to B's own doings somewhere in the past, and, accordingly, I should esteem it a very great favour if C. W. L. would kindly explain the apparent contradiction (1902).

C. W. L.—I am quite prepared to adhere to the statement

which is quoted from the VĀHAN, that every wrong which we suffer is entirely the effect and consequence of our own action at some period or other of the long life-story which lies behind us. At the same time, it does seem to me that there must be a commencement to each chain of karmic causation. It is easy enough to see how at our present stage of development that may be ; because, although someone whom I have never met before may do me an injury which I have not merited by any action in connection with *him*, yet it is perfectly certain that somewhere in my past Karma there will be actions for which this will be a fitting result.

A fresh complication is, however, introduced when we go back to the very beginning of human life. If we picture to ourselves two primitive men, each just born out of the animal kingdom into humanity, we seem hardly justified in saying that they can have anything like what we mean now by individual Karma behind them, excepting, perhaps, whatever they may have made during the latter part of their last animal life, after the moment of individualisation ; yet, if one of those strikes the other down in battle there is an apparent injustice done to the one who is injured. It is, however, probable that the will to injure his enemy was present in the mind of the man who is slain, and it may be possible to regard what befalls him as the Karma of that murderous desire.

We know so very little on this great subject as yet, that it is impossible to say, from the evidence at our command, whether we are justified in ascribing anything that we should call Karma to the group-soul which stands behind a certain number of animals. If upon further examination we find that we are justified in supposing the existence of this animal Karma, then that would clear up many difficulties for us, or at any rate it would shift them further back.

If the questioner will examine the context of the second passage quoted from the VĀHAN, he will see that it was in relation to the subject of the suffering of animals that the example which he gives was adduced. The attempt there was to explain that when a man was guilty of cruelty towards an animal, he undoubtedly set up for himself evil Karma of a most pronounced character. If we are unable to conceive of the animal as sufficiently responsible to have done anything which could merit this suffering, then there appears, from our point of view, to be a temporary injustice done to the group-soul which animates that creature ; and if such be the case,

then most assuredly the law of justice demands that the group-soul shall somehow be compensated in the future. It was as an illustration of this supposed case that the sentence under consideration was written, and it is only with regard to life at that very undeveloped level that such an argument could ever be used. The fact is, that we do not yet know enough of the obscure conditions of these lower states of life, to be able to give a complete and satisfactorily rendered answer to some of the questions connected with them. In the case in question, the endeavour was to state, as clearly as possible, what little we do know, in order to remove some difficulties which had been raised by a correspondent, but we should certainly never pretend that the question was as yet thoroughly disposed of. More advanced knowledge will certainly shed light upon this, among many other subjects; but, meantime, our inability to see the whole of its action must not be allowed to blind us to the absolute certainty which we gain in other ways, that this law of eternal justice cannot be contravened, and that it is invariably in operation, however difficult it may be for us to discern its work in certain conditions. Even were it not an intellectual necessity, an integral part of our teaching, we have had in our own investigations a sufficient number of cases to make us absolutely certain of the existence of this great law of Karma, and it is only because we are as yet ignorant of some of the factors which enter into these cases of animal evolution, that we are unable to see how the law applies in some few instances.

Assuredly as we progress the Divine Light will illumine for us many corners that as yet remain in shadow, and we shall gradually but surely grow towards a perfect knowledge of the Divine truth, which even now is enfolding us, guarding and guiding us. All those who have had the privilege of studying these subjects under the guidance and with the help of the great Masters of Wisdom are so fully persuaded of this, that even where at present they do not see fully, they are more than willing and ready to trust to that great Power of which as yet only dim glimpses can be vouchsafed to human eye. In the meantime it is hoped that these few points which have been offered for the questioner's consideration, may help somewhat to guide his feet in the right direction, even though at this early stage enough may not be said to constitute an entirely satisfactory reply. (1902.)



## QUESTION 54.

*Why does a good man have to suffer physical misery by mistaken action done from a good motive? For instance: I desire to make some children happy by taking them on a picnic. I take them and there is a serious accident. Physical misery is the result where happiness was intended. Should I have to suffer in a future incarnation for this? If so, why? (See Ancient Wisdom, p. 338.) (1902.)*

B. K.—Whether the good man in the cited case would have to suffer or not must, it seems to me, depend on whether or not he was in any way a contributor, through negligence or ignorance, to the bringing about of the accident.

If we suppose that he was in no way contributory to the accident and had taken all proper care and precaution, then he is in no sense the *cause* of the accident and its results cannot affect his *future* Karma, though since he will inevitably suffer, mentally at the least, in the present under the shock, it follows that he is thereby, in the fact of his own present suffering, working off some *past* Karma.

If, on the other hand, the good man was guilty of what the law would call “contributory negligence”—as, for instance, by neglecting to take due precautions, or make proper inquiries—then to that extent he will be generating or creating fresh Karma, and will have to pay his debt in suffering, either in this life or the future.

The whole question turns upon whether the suffering is *caused* by the “good man”—whether through ignorance or carelessness, or whether he has no share in its causing, but only is drawn into connection with it by his own past Karma, simply as an instrument.

A better illustration, perhaps, may be found in “unwise” charity. Suppose by unwisdom in charity we weaken the character, or destroy the self-reliance of the people we desire to help. It is our own lack of wisdom which is the *cause* of harm to others, our yielding to an emotional *impulse* of charitable feeling without proper thought, or with inadequate knowledge as to *how* we can really help those who excite our pity. The motive is all right, but our action is not wisely taken. The results of our

unwisdom return to us in the shape of suffering in order that we may learn to be wise, in order to teach us to act only after consideration and thought, and with due regard to all the circumstances. We thus develop the power of *really* doing good and not harm ; and this is the *only* way in which we can learn this great lesson, and gain that true wisdom which alone is of lasting and permanent value.

## DIVISION XX

### KARMA AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS

#### QUESTION 55.

*Is Karma transferable from one person to another? Is not the transferability of Karma the esoteric truth underlying the Christian doctrine of vicarious atonement? (1899.)*

A. A. W.—The querist has not thoroughly grasped the idea of what Karma really is. The Christian idea of “punishment for sin,” which is what the querist has in his mind, has no place whatever in the Wisdom. The words in Book vi. of *The Light of Asia* will at once answer his question :

—all the sum of ended life—  
The *Karma*—all that total of a soul  
Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,  
The “Self” it wove—with woof of viewless time,  
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts—  
The outcome of him on the Universe—

“Karma” is in truth himself—his personal identity: what he has made himself. So completely is this the case, that Southern Buddhism has no other word to express what it is which passes from one life to another. Judge then whether Karma is “transferable from one person to another!” No one can eat your food for you—nor live your life for you—nor bear your Karma for you, without simply annihilating you.

But it is true that a portion of that Karma may be to endure a certain suffering. We may have made others suffer, and this may recoil upon ourselves. Can anyone bear it for us? Let me answer the question by two others. First, is it possible that anyone *can*, by any exercise of freewill, bring upon himself a suffering which is not due to his *own* Karma? Second, is it

possible that anyone whose Karma requires him to suffer, can by any action of another be relieved from it? To say yes to either of these questions is to assume a breach of the highest Law of the Universe—a miracle; and the Wisdom knows no miracle. Of course (on the physical plane) one man may submit himself to a punishment destined for another; that may satisfy human justice, but never the Law. Whatever comes of it is a matter of the sufferer's own Karma and no one else's; it is, and can be, no satisfaction of the original karmic debt, which still remains to be paid, to the utmost farthing, by the soul which incurred it. "Vicarious atonement" is unlikely, unreasonable, unmoral, to the esoteric philosopher; to the ancient Wisdom it is absolutely impossible, to God or man. Nor is there anything in the recorded words of the Christ which clashes with this view. He, like every other Adept in similar circumstances, came to "save the world" by the preaching of the Law. By His Divine power He "forgave sin" by the very fact that He gave strength to "go and sin no more." There is no other test, no other manifestation of a Saviour's power than this; a God from whom virtue does not flow forth to strengthen and enlighten His disciples to rise above sin in *this* life can make no atonement for sin in any other, though His blood were shed daily on millions of altars all the world over. This is distinctly laid down in numberless passages of the New Testament, wherein it is said in so many words that one truly "forgiven," *can* sin no more; for if this be so, "forgiveness" must be something different indeed from the mere release from punishment, which is all the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement contemplates. It is to the esoteric doctrine we must go to learn the true Christian teaching—not *vice versa*; and this is a truth seriously to be laid to heart by all.

O. C.—If it be permitted to vary the wording of this question and eliminate the word Karma, it is possible that not only shall we be able to approach nearer to the idea in the mind of the questioner, but at any rate we shall escape from the confusion caused by the employment of half-understood terms, and profitless discussions arising therefrom.

The idea, put broadly, seems to be, "Is it possible to fulfil the injunction, Bear ye one another's burdens, or is this precept based on a misunderstanding of the Law?"

If it be granted that there is such a possibility, then, "does not that idea form the basis of the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement?"

Now if we take the most rigid view of the law of cause and effect, and say that nothing befalls any individual except precisely that for which he is personally responsible—then seemingly the possibility of “bearing another’s burden” is eliminated, but unfortunately for this cut-and-dried theory, the facts seem to be otherwise: certainly it is not so on the physical plane, and there does not seem any reason to presume that the same rule does not hold good on other planes of being—also there is an instinct deep down in the human heart which loudly proclaims the possibility, an instinct which lies at the root of all altruistic effort and endeavour, and which may safely be counted on to resist any purely intellectual attacks from without.

May it not be that our way of regarding all things from the unreal standpoint, from below, introduces an element of falsity into all our speculations, when dealing with the operations of the Law in its innermost workings?

Theoretically we admit in our philosophy as lying at the back of all things, this conception of Unity, of the Monad, call it what you will, but in our thinking we are very apt to lose sight of this side of things. If we pause and consider, we at once recognise that we cannot in reality separate ourselves off from others, let our dividing walls be built never so solidly, no man liveth and no man dieth to himself, in every thought and act we are either adding to or diminishing the burden of our neighbour.

If this be the actual fact with all of us, surely something analogous but on a far grander scale may be possible, with absolute directness, for those who, having consciously become one with the many, act as the saviours of the race themselves bearing much of that burden of darkness and of suffering—“vicariously,” if looked at from below, but as one with others, as regarded from above—which would otherwise delay and hamper the progress of humanity.

Who shall limit the possibilities which lie before one who has attained this level?—certainly we cannot.

The inner spiritual life of Christianity has centred round this idea of vicarious atonement for centuries—may it not be possible that there is more in this doctrine than some may think—that it has not all sprung from the base desire to palm off the payment of our just debts on another—but that, materialised and debased as the conception has become, it does in reality enshrine a very vital esoteric truth?

In *The Voice of the Silence*, we catch the faint echo of the same idea, where towards the close of the portion called "The Seven Portals," we read of the Guardian Wall "built by the hands of many Masters of Compassion . . . shielding mankind from still greater misery and sorrow." And again we seem to catch a fainter echo, coming down to us from still loftier heights, where we read in *The Secret Doctrine* (vol. i. p. 228) of that Great One, named the Silent Watcher, or the Great Sacrifice and his self-imposed task.

S. M. S.—The gradually widening knowledge which comes with the passage of time should teach us at least one important lesson—to be very careful in the use of the word impossible. It is so easy to reject theories and statements, and to stamp them as altogether false, so far more difficult to clear our minds from prejudice and from our own misconceptions of the meaning certain words and phrases, which do not appeal to us, may bear to another. And yet, after all, we are only like children, and need to be led on step by step. A child plays with its box of bricks, and we also build our toy houses. The child's ideas are very elementary, and the defects of his building are obvious; but if an impatient person comes along, and pulls down the whole structure, the result will be bitter grief and disappointment, and even if the destroyer build up in the place of the original building one which is perfect in every detail, the child will take no interest in it, because he cannot see its beauty, and because it is not his own.

So it is with children of a larger growth. To those in advance of us, the structures which we build must appear lop-sided and top-heavy, and altogether out of proportion; but they are at least our own, they do represent our ideas at each particular stage of our growth, and if they be condemned or destroyed before we have realised their imperfections, or found a temporary shelter, we shall be left destitute and homeless.

It will be clear to all of us that so long as a man is satisfied with his own particular form of faith, he will not need help from us, who have had opportunities of gaining wider views. But as soon as he begins to realise its inadequacy, and to feel that it cannot give him all he wants, then is the time that we, as Theosophists, ought to be able to step in and help him. We shall only help him, however, in so far as we are able to see things from his point of view, and therefore to judge exactly how much and in what way his bricks may be improved in quality. It does not, it

cannot, help a man to tell him that his house is built upon the sand, and therefore utterly worthless, and that there is no foundation for the beliefs which he has held most sacred ; and, moreover, it is unlikely that any conception which has influenced large numbers of people and has been by them held in the utmost reverence, should have no foundation of truth.

The question of the doctrine of the Atonement is one of those which are continually recurring, and its origin has of late been most beautifully and convincingly traced back for us to the eternal sacrifice of the Logos. But in addition to this highest conception of all, there would seem to be a special sense in which the Atonement is true, a sense, moreover, in which it is connected, in some way beyond our understanding, with vicarious suffering. It may be that the Saviours of the world do, for a special purpose and for a certain time, take upon themselves definite limitations of consciousness ; and that He whom we call the Christ thus "led by the Spirit into the wilderness," as it is so suggestively written, stood—not between an avenging God and His erring creatures—but between mankind and those opposing forces, those powers of darkness, so often spoken of, and symbolised under various names by various peoples.

If there be any hint of truth in this idea, then surely even a faint realisation of all that it involves would make clear many things now obscure, and would put a world of meaning into passages in the Gospel story which are now too lightly cast aside because the words are taken literally. Taken so, it is true that they appear blasphemous and terrible, and sometimes even childish ; but read symbolically, though of necessity imperfectly, they shed a flood of light upon that wondrous chain of sacrifice, in which any one of us, even here, might become a tiny link, if only we could understand.

And, through all, the eternal truth remains, that what to the lower consciousness seems to be darkness, to the eyes of the spirit is dazzling light ; what to the perishing form is a cry of anguish and desolation, is to the life, the Divine life which is *our* life, an ever completer and more glorious song of triumph.

A. A. W.—In reading the answers given by O. C. and S. M. S. to this question, it strikes me that it would be useful to add a few words to mine. It is beyond all question that, in the sense in which I was using the words, no one *can* bear another's burden. Our friend, O. C., is thinking of the old saying of the "few strong

hands which hold back the burden of the world's Karma"—quite another matter from the individual Karma to which the question refers. What we *can* do for another is to help *him* to bear it—a much better service than would be the taking from him of the appointed means for his advance. Such is our weakness, that time after time the burden laid upon us seems greater than we can bear. I well remember once quoting to an intimate friend the grim old legal directions for pressing a refractory prisoner to death, "that there shall be laid upon him as great a weight of iron as he can bear, *and more,*" as an exact description of my feelings at the time. I did not in so many words ask for help, but I spoke to one who could give it, and the help came not as removal of the burden, but as new life infused into the fainting soul to endure. I was able to stand up as a man instead of being crushed under it as the hapless and helpless prisoner of whom I spoke. There is *no* other kind of help that a self-respecting soul can receive without humiliation and shame.

Our friends seem to think of suffering as the one thing to be dreaded—the horror to be escaped at all hazards—that the one service a friend, a God, can render them is to save them pain. Not so; the "saviours of the race" of whom O. C. speaks, have no more in common with the popular Christian "Saviour" who "saves" his followers from the fire than they have with the Christian "God" who desires to cast them into it. *Both* are matters of this world of illusion, and of this world only; the true Saviours see with other eyes, live in higher worlds, and think quite other thoughts of the souls whose life they watch.

Our business in the world, our one means of growing beyond the world, is steadfast, manly endurance; our path is, and must be, a "path of woe" as completely as it is, if rightly borne, also a path of true and perfect peace. He would be no benefactor, but an enemy, who would deprive us of a single one of the sorrows which are to form our future bliss; and, if we understood our own interests, we should regard a suggestion that a friend should "bear our burden" as an insult—an insinuation that we were too soft, too childish, too cowardly to fight in the ranks with our brothers—not fit to be trusted with a sword. But every kind word and encouragement, every thought of help for those we see in trouble around us, is, in truth, something far better than making "vicarious atonement" for them; it is real help and strength for them; and, many lives hence, we may meet with those (perchance



then far beyond ourselves) who still remember with gratitude that when their strength was exhausted and courage failing them a cheering look or word of ours refreshed their fainting spirits to continue the fight to victory. In the Egyptian desert, Christians knew this well, though it is now nearly forgotten. An old man's novice was long troubled with temptation, and his master said to him, "Shall I pray God to take away this temptation from thee?" and he answered, "No, Father; it is a hard struggle, but I see that I gain by it—only pray that I may have strength to endure." And the old man said solemnly, "Now know I that thou hast made much progress, and art far beyond me."

#### QUESTION 56.

*We know that by the Law of Karma we suffer for our sins, in order that our characters may be gradually perfected thereby. Is the case of an Adept who has already attained perfection, and who may endure suffering for the sake of humanity, an exception to this Law? For instance, Christ, who was at least a Master, and some consider an Incarnation, endured agony for the race, such that even he prayed to be spared it, yet he could not in any sense have deserved it. In what way is this vicarious suffering consistent with the Law? (1898.)*

A. A. W.—I think, as I have said here before, that the querist would see things more clearly if he would avoid not only the *word*, but the *thought* of sin in discussing questions of Karma. In simple fact, we know nothing of the kind. There is *no* power which makes us suffer for our sins, in order to perfect our characters. It cannot be sufficiently insisted on, that the Law of Karma is no "Divine Providence" to take charge of our characters and save us the trouble of attending to them, for this point is the key to our whole ethical system.

In the course of the gradual development of our mental powers we come, one by one, upon certain Laws of Nature, as we call them. We soon find that however often, and with whatever motive, we touch fire, it will burn us. In the querist's words, to touch fire is a sin against it, and the penalty inevitably follows. As we grow up, we find out more and higher cases in which transgression is followed, accurately and invariably, by certain uniform results, on which we may always safely calculate. These

laws, as we call them, are in one sense our limitations ; but in another and more important one, our means of action—of advance. We say there is a law that water tends to find its level ; and just *because* it does so, we can dam it up, and make it rise into our houses, and turn our mills, and carry our ships. It will do all that for us, simply because it cannot run up hill. Now the Law of Karma is only the information that this uniformity of result of action runs into every detail of the Universe, physical, mental and spiritual ; that the world is moving forwards, and that *every* action which sets itself against that movement must, by iron necessity, bring us pain. The developing of our character is, and must be, our own work. We do something, and suffer for it ; we draw back, and do it no more. This is the first step in the formation of character ; and from this we move forwards, learning to subordinate first the physical comfort to the mental advance, and next that to our spiritual life. The share in our progress, which our faith in Karma claims, is simply that we are finding out on ever new and higher planes that “God is not mocked,” that “whatsoever a man soweth, *that* he shall reap” —a consolation in times of trouble, that no faintest effort for good but shall have its full reward, or rather (to speak more correctly) its due effect of help in our struggle ; but also a stern warning, that if we live idly, and sow no good seed, there is no man or God who can bring for us a harvest out of our wasted life.

But there is no necessity that our perfection of character should be gained by suffering. There is no virtue in suffering. On the lower planes of life it is necessary, because sensation is so clumsy and blunt that nothing less can be felt ; but *we* should be beyond that by this time. The great ones who have suffered for humanity have done so in their lower nature only—all the while remaining in their true selves in the bliss of the Godhead. This is the Christian doctrine concerning the death of Christ, and a truth beyond all question. But, as to this, it is not seemly to “darken sanctities with”—commonplace, where Mrs. Besant has recently spoken so fully and so beautifully in her late lectures on Esoteric Christianity. In these the querist will find, I think, the satisfaction he desires upon the latter part of his query.

## QUESTION 57.

*Is there any forgiveness of sins? One man forgives an injury done him by a fellow creature, and surely what is recognised as virtuous and noble in an individual may be looked for as a law in the Universe. It seems reasonable or right that a man should suffer present pain for past injuries inflicted on others, but after he has learned the lesson of harmlessness, surely there is no need for further suffering. May not any balance of evil Karma which stands against him be regarded in such a case as "forgiven"?* (1899.)

S. M. S.—The difficulty that is sometimes felt regarding the possibility of the forgiveness of sins is partly due, I think, to the idea which those who use the word often have in their minds. It is connected usually with the conception of punishment or retaliation in some form, inflicted either by the person who has been injured or by one in the position of monitor or teacher. In the case of a child, if it transgresses, it is threatened with punishment of some definite kind; if it is "forgiven," it means that it is let off the threatened punishment. In the case of a grown person, however, the punishment takes the form of injured or aggrieved feeling, with, perhaps, a definite wish for revenge in some degree on the part of the person directly or indirectly affected by the transgression. If he be "forgiven," it will mean that, nominally at least, the offence is no longer felt, that the injured person is no longer aggrieved. This, put very crudely, is, I think, the idea that most people have when they talk of forgiveness.

In this sense the power to forgive is certainly a noble quality in man; but the Law which guides the Universe is infinitely nobler than man, and knows not forgiveness because it knows not that which alone makes forgiveness possible. "It knows not wrath nor pardon"; if it were capable of either, it would no longer be absolutely just, absolutely invariable, and therefore in every circumstance absolutely to be trusted. If we injure a person, or transgress in any way, we oppose ourselves to the Law; we break it. In the pain that follows, either quickly, or it may be long-delayed, lies our only hope; for it is only by repeated blows and buffets—the natural results of our mistakes—that in the course of long ages we gain a knowledge of the existence of the law and, later, a knowledge of its workings. There is no other road to wisdom, no

other means by which progress can be made ; and progress which ends in wisdom is the object of evolution.

But as soon as a man has gained some faint idea of the existence of the Law as something stronger than himself, a great step has been made ; and when, after a long time and much experience, he learns that it is better he should not oppose it, but should work with it rather than against it, his attitude towards any suffering that may hereafter come to him will be of a very different nature from his former one. While in earlier lives he met it with rebellion—adding thereby much to its bitterness—calmness, endurance and patience will now seem to him to be ideals worth striving after. As he goes on, he will look with more and more indifference upon the circumstances and events of his outer life, as they affect his own happiness, and will turn his attention more and more earnestly towards the training and perfecting of his own character. Then he will presently realise, very dimly at first, that there is that in him which is one with the Law ; and at this stage suffering, as we know it, will no longer exist for him.

The whole idea of punishment for sin is man-made, and, carried to its extreme point, leads to the most terrible blasphemy. The process of human evolution is the gaining of wisdom, and we might just as well say that a child who is learning to walk is punished by his many falls, as say that a man is being punished when he reaps the result of his ignorance and his mistakes. If he could be shielded from these results, it is not possible that he should grow strong, and after all strength is what, in our best moments at least, we each of us desire to gain.

Can we imagine, then, that a man who is approaching the goal of human evolution, supposing that he still have any bad Karma to work out—can we imagine that he should wish that Karma “forgiven” him? He will rather desire to pay every debt to the uttermost farthing, caring only, that, at whatever cost, he be moulded into a more and more perfect instrument of the Divine.

But even before this point of suffering, of which there are so many phases, becomes incomprehensible to us ; suffice it to remember that pain of every kind, and at whatever stage we may meet it, may be made a means of purification, becoming infinitely more so as we use it consciously as such. Furthermore, we suffer only because we are unable to see that which lies on the other side. For if, having conquered all the earlier stages of growth, it were possible to live, as it were, always in the light, it would not

be true as we some of us believe it to be, that the "kingdom of heaven" must be taken by violence.

A. A. W.—Let me first congratulate our querist that it has occurred to him to raise the question. Is there any forgiveness of sins? This alone is a great advance; if he will proceed to ask himself the next—"Are there any sins to forgive?" he will be on the right track to find an answer to both. The conception of "sin" belongs to the degraded idea of God which we find widely spread in what 19th century science calls early society. This looks upon the Deity as a limited being raised above men by superior power, but in all respects "of like passions" with the men He rules. He is limited in the extent of his rule; to take the most familiar example of the "tribal god," as such a being is often designated, He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob *only*, a "jealous God"—"visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children," and the like. "Sins" against such a god are transgressions of his arbitrary commands; and as these may be imposed without reason, so "sins" against them may be "forgiven," for the immutable laws of the Universe are in no way concerned. For such a god to forgive would be, as our querist rightly judges, as virtuous and noble as for a man to do so; though the admission makes "root and branch" work with all modern theologies.

But when you come to speak of Karma, the case is otherwise. We do not expect the "Laws of Nature" to forgive. A man falls into the fire or under the wheels of a waggon. He has "learnt his lesson," as the querist puts it, in half a second, and this completely. No further suffering could make him understand more fully his transgression, but neither prayer nor repentance will prevent his scorched body or shattered limbs from reminding him of it, possibly to the last day of his life. Knowing this, we do not habitually speak of "sins" against these laws, and we Theosophists would avoid much confusion if we would altogether drop the word, along with those other much misleading expressions "good" and "evil Karma." The essence of our doctrine of Karma is that all which happens to us, good and evil alike, is the unavoidable result of the causes we have set in motion. If suffering comes to us as one of these results, we must bear it. It is not a punishment for our sin to be forgiven by a God who ordered it, nor is it even, as the query suggests, an arrangement of some Divine Providence to teach us the lesson of harmlessness. But, on the other hand, it is not any blind, unintelligible, iron fate,

such as the Greeks imagined it. It is in truth part of that regularity of Nature on which we depend for our lives and all we enjoy. Summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, come duly in their order to maintain our physical life—the summer is not “good,” nor the winter “evil,” but both needful in their time. And so on that higher plane of Nature where Karma rules. If we sow evil seed, and fear its harvest, our salvation is not to ask forgiveness, but to do better hereafter, assured that, in the Lord Buddha’s words,

If we should labour rightly, rooting these  
And planting wholesome seedlings where they grew,  
Fruitful and fair and clean the ground shall be,  
And rich the harvest due.

There is yet another view of the law of Karma which shows even more clearly the impossibility, and still more the undesirableness, of the “forgiveness of sin.” If we consider it as the readjustment of the harmony of the Universe, broken by the selfish action we call sin—the method, sole and sufficient, whereby it is provided that the “Law of Love shall rule all in all before the Kalpas end,” we shall see that to require “forgiveness” is to ask that the harmony may not be restored, because the process hurts us. It is itself a sin, possibly worse than the original. This readjustment is not made, in actual life, by such crude methods as we sometimes fancy. In a story told in one of Lafcadio Hearn’s books, an old woman whose house is entered by burglars, and her cash taken, consoles herself that in some previous life she must have robbed the burglar of the same sum. A truer conception is, that those who have sinned and suffered in one life will be brought together in another in such relationship as shall draw forth the love, which shall truly and really compensate for the evil passions the sin provoked. For as “hatred ceases not by hatred,” even so it ceases not by mere suffering. The reasonable thing is not, as our querist says, “that a man should suffer present pain for past injuries inflicted on others,” but that he shall learn, by means of suffering, if nothing else will teach him, to make compensation to them by love. This, and no other, is the teaching the law of Karma provides for him—repeated over and over again till he does learn it. And so for the modern idea of the “forgiveness of sins” we substitute the original and true words of the Creed (*vid.* “the Christian Creed,” *Theosophical*

*Review*, xxi. 495), "I believe in the emancipation from sins, and the life of the coming age."

## QUESTION 58.

*The devout Christian gets comfort from the idea that he is personally watched over and guided by God. The usual idea of Karma withdraws this support, and many feel on losing faith in a personal deity that they are too weak to stand alone, and are liable to despair. What consolation can Theosophy afford such people? (1897.)*

A. A. W.—The querist has raised a very wide subject, on which much may be and should be said. The cry of the man in the Bible, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I left!" is one we cannot but sympathise with most deeply. It is quite true that many *are* thus too weak to stand alone; it is no use to tell them that they *must* learn to stand alone, and the sooner they begin the better. But what is not so generally recognised is, that it is their religion that has *made* them thus, as it were, bedridden and helpless. To the majority of those around us, religion has never been anything but a comfortable cushion to sleep on. Every attempt of the Higher Ego to rouse them to action has been at once put down as "self-righteousness"; every fear of consequences checked as "want of reliance on the merits of the Redeemer"; the "Sacrifice of the Cross" has been made, instead of an encouragement to them to take up *their* cross as He bade them, a mere opiate to lull them asleep in the belief that by it they are "saved." And when Theosophy comes with the cry which Religion ought to have uttered, "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead!" they naturally find it hard to be disturbed in their peaceful slumbers. What can we say to them? If any one is foolish enough to look back over his life, and seriously believe it could not have been much better watched over and guided than it has been, or weak enough to have been bullied into admitting that it is his own sins which have done all the mischief, or soft enough to imagine that all which has gone wrong can be set right by some mystic "washing in the blood of Jesus," as the phrase goes; what *is* there in Theosophy which can make him so perfectly comfortable? For my part, I don't know what consolation, to use the querist's words, Theosophy *can* afford such people.

It is a *man's* religion, and does not deal in soothing powders and lollypops. I have been used to say that I would never try to interfere with these simple folk who were thus happy in their childish way; but I am not quite sure if this is right. For after all, we too look forward to a judgment to come; and we must not blink the truth, that to pass at that judgment it cannot be enough that we have lived lives of happiness, or even of goodness. The question then will be, and can only be, "Are we alive, awake, enough to pass onwards?" It is a wide gulf which only strong souls can spring over; and, alas, even a long life as a devout Christian (except in rare instances), leaves the soul weaker than it began, not stronger. I am afraid our duty is to try to wake these good souls, even though we make them unhappy; to tell them, with all loving sympathy, that their limbs are numbed with long lying, and that they will have a long and hard time before they are able to stand alone with any comfort; that there is no help for it, and that we will do all we can to make the suffering endurable. But it is an almost hopeless task, for the consolations which Theosophy *has* to give, are just what they have been trained all their lives to look upon as "the devices of Satan." The real hope, to be, some time in the course of ages, *worth* God's taking to Himself, is something every devout Christian would repudiate with horror.

It is, however, quite true that those who embrace the hopes of the Theosophist with full belief may often find it hard for a long time to change their habit of thought, so many years accustomed at every lifting of the heart to say affectionately "My God!" and that the attempt to do so is a trouble, not entirely unlike despair. Well why should we make it? H. Heine has a story of a Paris Socialist of the '48 who said to him, "Oh, no, we don't want to abolish property; we only want to give it a new definition!" This, too, is all we need for our purpose. We have been used to look up to the Logos, the manifestation of the ever invisible, infinite God, and to call Him Jesus Christ. All that Theosophy asks of us is to understand that other nations have other names for Him—that we must not limit Him to the existence of the man who bore that name in Syria two thousand years ago. He said to His disciples, "Before Abraham was, I am," and we do not rightly worship Him unless we know Him to be also the Indian Krishna and many another name beside. But our "personal God" He remains still, unchanged. He spoke to us of His and our



Father in Heaven ; and our Father in Heaven, our Higher Self, still remains for our love and worship as before. Not a thought or dream of His watchful care and love for us, His lower selves, can be overdrawn. The old puzzle of Christianity, how He could need us and what good we could do Him, has its solution in the new doctrine ; for we are in truth a part of Him—He needs the experience we bring back from our earth lives to Him, and He is incomplete, till at the end of the Manvantara the sparks are all reunited to the Flame. For angels we have the vast company of those who stand above us though below the Divine level, all occupied in our service, in helping us on our upward way. I do not understand how anyone who realises all this can feel that he is standing alone or be tempted to despair. If such there be, the only explanation that I can suggest is that he has not yet got rid of the fatal poison of the Christian doctrine of Grace, and cannot understand how he can live unless there be some “personal God” to love him undeservedly, to give him powers he has not merited, and rewards he has not earned—one whom he may thank as Dr. Watts, “that I have food while others starve, Or beg from door to door.” And for him, I repeat, Theosophy has no consolation, only stern warning and rebuke.

#### QUESTION 59.

*We read in “Spiritual Darkness” that disciples having no more Karma of their own, bear a part of the heavy Karma of the world. Does this mean that through those disciples part of our Karma is taken away? (1900.)*

J. van M.—At the first glance the sentence that one might be able “to bear a part of the heavy Karma of the world,” seems to contain a statement contradicting the strict and rigorous justice of Karmic law.

The solution of the problem seems to me as follows :

If the evolution of the soul is the purpose of life, and if this evolution is effected by experience, then the whole Universe may be compared to a vast school, in which an unending series of classes—each varying in degree of perfection of teaching, teacher and pupils alike, but all resembling each other closely in the nature and essence of the instruction imparted.

If now one of the pupils should assimilate all the teaching

... .. THE VĪHAN

... .. before its end, the ... .. for the lower and ... .. as for instance would be the ... .. This would constitute a real ... .. with respect to their ... .. but an alleviation that ... .. Karma of any pupil ... .. and capacities. Every ... .. and earnestly to the difficult ... .. in this direction ... .. But on the other hand, the ... .. and to devote more time ... .. presenting truth ... .. as soon as any other ... .. he ... .. was possible before ... .. of that truth by the

... .. may be applied to the ... .. explanation of the ... .. *omnis*

... .. of mathe- ... .. the following formula, that

... .. (three-dimensional) ... .. sometime to ... .. Q. E. D.

... .. it opens up ... .. and the "forgive- ... .. the evolution of the ... .. mind and heart ... .. where all ... .. The ... .. are a pair of ... .. : one only ... .. One is ortho- ... .. we believe in ... .. But in the ... .. are they so ... .. are they not two faces

of a single truth? The many think the Truth is manifested in one way only, and can never learn the great kosmic lesson, that She is manifest in *all* ways, and yet never really seen. Truth is the something else than what we can grasp, the beyond, the goal, the ever-desirable. The wise man will find "Karma" in "vicarious atonement," and "vicarious atonement" in "Karma," good in evil, and evil in good, light in darkness, and darkness in light. "Not this; not this" will be his eternal cry as he seeks for God. And if this be so, is it not foolish to think when we are looking at a problem simply from another standpoint that we have solved it? It is true that we have seen more of it from *outside*; but to solve it we must consciously become it. And in this becoming, and in this alone, will the spirit of its being illumine us; and that Light is in life alone and not in the creeds, "theosophic" or otherwise.

## DIVISION XXI

### KARMA AND SELFISHNESS

#### QUESTION 60.

*How is a selfish man punished in his next life? Is he drawn by affinity into the society of selfish people? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—We are not in a position to furnish information about the working out of Karma with the wealth of detail to be found in some Oriental books, which specify exactly what sin a man must commit in order to insure his being born next time blind of the right eye or crippled in the left leg.

I do not even think myself that the arrangements work in that inelastic way at all, and should rather suppose that though the same sin, committed under the same circumstances by two exactly similar people, would probably result in the same *amount* of suffering, yet the *kind* of suffering might be almost infinitely varied. I feel also that we shall do better to avoid the idea or even the very name of punishment, and invariably substitute for it the thought of effect following inevitably from cause by the working of natural laws.

With regard to the probable effect of selfishness, one might perhaps speculate somewhat in this way. Selfishness is primarily a mental attitude or condition, so its immediate result must be looked for on the mental plane. It is undoubtedly an intensification of the lower personality at the expense of the individuality, and one of its results would therefore certainly be the accentuation of that lower personality, so that selfishness would tend to reproduce itself in aggravated form, and to grow steadily stronger.

Thus more and more of the higher would be lost in each life through entanglement with the lower, and persistence in this sin would be a fatal bar to progress. For we must remember that

Nature's severest penalty is always deprivation of the opportunity for progress, just as her highest reward is the offering of such an opportunity.

So that here we have already a glimpse of the way in which selfishness might itself bring about its own worst result, in so hardening the man as to make him insensible to all good influences, and to render his further progress impossible until he had conquered it. Of course there would also be the Karma on the physical plane of all the unjust or unkind *acts* which the man's selfishness might lead him to commit ; but the worst penalty that those could bring upon him would be trivial and evanescent beside the effect upon his own mental condition.

It is possible that one result might sometimes be, as suggested, that he would be drawn by affinity into the society of selfish people, and so, through suffering from this vice in others, learn how heinous it was in himself ; but it seems probable that the resources of the law are endless, and that we should be quite mistaken in imagining it as cramped down to the line of action on which we in our ignorance think it ought to be administered.

#### QUESTION 61.

*If favourable circumstances depend on the happiness we have conferred on others in past lives, how is it that there seems to be no order in common life, good people suffering on the whole as much as, and perhaps even more than, evil and selfish people? Surely they must as a rule have been the means of spreading more happiness than the selfish ones, and if so, our conditions do not appear to depend on our actions in past lives. (1898.)*

A. A. W.—The key to this difficulty lies in the fact that Karma is a much wider system of retribution than the mere repaying goodness in one life by happiness in the next. We shall never understand the seriousness of our own lives until we realise that we are now laying down the cause, whose results, for good and for evil, may take many subsequent lives to exhaust. And it would be a serious mistake to suppose that the causes which have such far-reaching results are necessarily what *we* are used to consider as *great* acts of virtue or of vice. A single thought sent out in solitude to do mischief on the higher planes, may bring back more evil Karma for us when, as curses will do, it "comes

home to roost," than our most brilliant good deeds can counter-balance. Not only what we have *done* to others, but what we have *wished* to do is all laid up in store for us hereafter. So that it is by no means easy to know who *deserves* to suffer in this life. If we could look back into our past lives we should understand it better, but even then the complication would be hard to unravel. For the due consequences of our acts may be long delayed by other more pressing requirements, or hastened by the occurrence of convenient opportunities ; or, as we are told is the case with those who enter on the Path, may be intentionally heaped up all at once, to be the sooner exhausted. Then there are the results of family, national and race Karma to be reckoned with ; so that, on the whole, we shall find it best to take the comfort of knowing that all evil is, somehow or other, deserved, and in truth a means of good to those who suffer, without troubling our limited intelligence as to the details.

But it must not be forgotten that the Law of Karma exists, like everything else, not for human pleasure, but to aid in the task of raising mortals to the Gods. To the Lords of Karma, who have the settling of our fates, our happiness or suffering is a matter of as total indifference as it must, sooner or later, come to be to ourselves ; and when we see a good man suffering, we must feel that in all probability his suffering is the best reward of his virtue, and is leading him on the upward path far more quickly than the enervating sunshine of worldly prosperity could do. There are but few who are beyond the actual need of such a spur ; for most of us the true view of suffering should be that of the saint of old who used yearly at a certain season to have a serious illness. One year his sickness did not come ; whereupon he wept and lamented, saying, "The Lord is angry with me, for this year He has not visited me."

## DIVISION XXII

### KARMA AND DREAMS

#### QUESTION 62.

*Do actions performed in dreams affect the Karma of the individual on the physical plane? (1895.)*

G. R. S. M.—That which we usually call “dreamland” is distinctly a plane of result, and no karmic causes can be started in such a state. Ordinary dreams are a mere regrouping of memories. With regard to so-called visions, which are not regroupings of memories, they are presumably karmic. All astral experiences, during the sleep of the body, undoubtedly affect the Karma of the individual, and react on all planes.

C. W. L.—The answer to this question depends entirely upon the sense attached to the word “dream.” If it be intended to include under this head real astral experiences, in which the more developed Ego in his astral vehicle wanders away from the spot where his physical body is sleeping, and performs actions of various kinds—speaks with his friends, for example, and gives them advice or assistance—then assuredly the reply must be in the affirmative, for the individual is making Karma for himself during the whole of his conscious existence either on the physical or astral planes, and is rightly held responsible for whatever he does with definite will and intention. But if the use of the word “dream” is restricted to the dramas constructed by the ordinary undeveloped Ego, and the pictures called up before his physical and etheric brain, of course no Karma can be generated, for no real action takes place. The whole subject of dreams is an interesting one, but space forbids its full discussion here; an article in the current number of *Lucifer* goes into the matter at

somewhat greater length, and to that those who wish for further information are referred.

A. B.—The answer must depend on the meanings connoted by the words “action” and “dream.” If the “action” be a mere mental image floating through the gross and etheric brains, then the only effect can be a deepening of some thought-channel already in existence, thus rendering it a little easier than it was before for the thought of the Ego to crystallise into action on the physical plane. His Karma would thus be very slightly affected indirectly, rather than directly. Similarly if the Ego contemplate its own thought forms, or any impressions made upon its (karmic) astral body, it is by such contemplation rendering these forms more likely to recur and to pass into the stage of action on the physical plane. The effect produced by real action on the astral plane while the lower bodies are sleeping—and this may be meant by the questioner—is direct, and certainly forms a karmic cause. For the individual may then affect-for good or evil the lives of others, and he is more actively and more powerfully at work on the astral plane than he is when he is working on the physical plane, weighted with and hampered by his bodies. If he be not sufficiently developed to be aware in his waking physical consciousness of the work he does on the astral plane, and if he bring back only confused remembrances of it, he would certainly imagine that his actions were performed in dreams of a very vivid nature.

#### QUESTION 63.

*Can the dream-life be controlled? If so, what is the best method to pursue beyond the practice of ordinary concentration and meditation? (1895.)*

C. W. L.—When a man is sufficiently developed to function consciously in an astral vehicle away from his physical body, his control over his actions will be just as complete as it is down here; but if, as seems probable, the dream-life of the entirely undeveloped person is meant in this question, the answer is that it can *indirectly* be controlled to a very considerable extent, though the dreamer cannot change the course of his dream while it is going on. If a man's thoughts be pure and high while waking, his dreams will be pure and good also; and a specially important



point is that his last thought as he sinks to sleep should be a noble and elevating one, since that strikes the keynote which largely determines the nature of the melodies to follow. An evil or impure thought draws round the thinker evil and impure influences—attracts to him all the gross and loathsome creatures who come near him; these will in turn react upon his mind and his kâmic body, and disturb his rest by awakening all kinds of low and earthly desires. If, on the other hand, a man enters the portals of sleep with his mind fixed upon high and holy things, he thereby draws round him the elementals created by like thought in others; his rest is peaceful, his mind open to impressions from above and closed to those from below, for he has set it working in the right direction.

A. B.—The dream-life can best be controlled by means adopted during the waking life, for when a man has developed his consciousness sufficiently for it to control the dream-life from outside, he will cease to dream, having no longer time to waste in such trivialities. One cannot write an essay in answer to a question, so it can only be here stated that dreams arise in the gross (physical) brain, the etheric (Linga Sharîra) brain, and the astral (kâmic) brain. They may arise from any of these:—(i) repeating automatically vibrations previously set up, or (ii) from impressions made from without, thought and desire-forms (generated by others) floating through them, or (iii) from impressions made on them by the Ego to which they belong. Now Cause I. may be controlled by a deliberate choice of the thoughts permitted to come into waking consciousness; but this would not prevent the automatic repetition of vibrations originally set up by beautiful or hideous sights and sounds coming casually from without; nor would it prevent jumbles of incongruities caused by physiological irregularities. Cause II. may be controlled by so training the waking consciousness to admit only pure thoughts, that all good ones will be automatically absorbed and all evil ones will be automatically repelled; thus the dreams from the stream of thought-forms would be of a pure type. Cause III. is obviously under the control of the Ego, and the fuller its consciousness the better will be the impressions it throws down. Another method of controlling Cause II., not so efficacious as the one given, but still not to be neglected, is the purification of the lower bodies, so that the particles which readily vibrate to the grosser impulses may be absent. Lastly, striking the keynote of a pure and lofty thought

as the bodies are composed to sleep will do much to guard them from evil impacts. An effort of the will may, of course, shut out Cause II. completely by making an auric shell round the bodies, and this elementary act of "magic" might well be performed by all Theosophists.

## DIVISION XXIII

### KARMA AND FREE-WILL

#### QUESTION 64.

*What relation does free-will bear to a man's Karma ? (1898.)*

A. A. W.—It is well enough known that in the great controversy as to Free-will the theosophical doctrine agrees with *both* parties. To have developed a Will which shall be *free*, that is, shall be determined wholly or chiefly from the interior, and not by the surrounding circumstances, is by no means a matter of course at our present stage, and (as Mr. Leadbeater says) very few people have anything worth calling a Will at all. As long as this is the case they simply live blindly amongst the karmic effects of their actions, which to them are no more than blind chance. Karma to them is not a matter of reward or punishment, but merely the result of causes they have set in motion; as a child might open an animal's cage, all unknowing whether the creature were a toy to play with or a tiger to devour him. But as the personality comes more and more under the influence of the Higher Ego, which in itself is free in the fullest sense, living as it does on a plane, where what we down here call motives and circumstances, do not exist at all; it comes to understand what it is doing, and is able to mould its Karma according to its Free-will. We are told that in proportion as a soul develops it becomes less and less possible to predict its actions. For the common herd the law of averages will seldom fail to guide our expectations aright; the Adept knows what he is doing, and is thus able to free himself completely from all Karma, good and bad alike. For we must never forget that, after all, the great Law of Karma, and everything with which it deals, are but a portion of the great Illusion—the

Mâyâ which defends our weak eyes from the overpowering radiance of the Divine glory.

G. R. S. M.—See the quotation from *The Book of the Laws of Countries* in the March number of *The Theosophical Review* (pp. 13-16), art. "Bardaisan the Gnostic."

Bardaisan makes Free-will, Fate, and Nature the three great factors of the karmic law, all three being ultimately in the hand of God. Each reacts on each, none is absolute. Nature has to do with body, Fate or Fortune with soul, and Free-will with spirit. None of them is absolute ; the absolute being in God alone.

#### QUESTION 65.

*Every cause has an effect just as every effect has a cause. Consider the case of an old man. At twenty-five he was the complex resultant of a vast number of causes. This resultant now becomes a set of causes the exact effects of which are theoretically knowable. After twenty-five he cannot be master of his destiny since that destiny is predetermined, and, by a simple extension of the premises, he is never master of his destiny. There is apparently a fallacy somewhere, but it is a little difficult to see where. Can any suggestion be made? (1902.)*

A. H. W.—A fundamental axiom of the Esoteric Philosophy states that "The principle which gives life dwells in us and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent." This is the One Free-Will, and man attains free-will when he has disciplined his emotions and desires into harmony with It. It dwells within him, and is directed to the sole end of evolving him into a centre of consciousness, energy and existence, like unto Itself. The great scheme of evolution is imperfect, truly, at present, but the Eternally Beneficent Will works ever by making the best of every detail as it evolves. So a man in whom It dwells, evolves most quickly by making the best of the details of his destiny, as they arrive. When he has brought himself to accept his destiny, to welcome it and make the best of it, he has harmonised his personal will with the Great Will within and without. Free from attraction and repulsion, free from anger, envy and desire, that man becomes a Witness of the Great Creation, a player of the Great Game.

Hence, the writer thinks, the fallacy suggested in the question lies in forgetting, that though a man has fixed his destiny in the

past, yet he is still free to make the best or the worst of it now. He cannot avoid it, but he can modify the mental attitude with which he meets it. A Master does what he wills, a slave does what he must; *will* your destiny, and you become its master; quarrel with it, and you stay its slave.

G. R. S. M.—This is the old squirrel-cage problem of free-will and determinism. There is no solution as long as you make one or other of the “pair” absolute. If you refuse to do so, you discount their values and look for a solution to that of which they are both the appearances, to that where time is not and when cause and effect cease. This is out of the field of practical politics, no doubt the questioner will say, but that is just what it is not, for it is one of the elementary fallacies concerning the Self to exclude it from any thing.

S. C.—Yes, there is a fallacy, because a man is something more than a set of causes and effects; he is these, *plus* a free-will of his own, which ceaselessly modifies them. The causes and effects form a system which seems complete in itself, yet it is not so; the life behind acts through the causes and effects, and enables them to continue in operation. If it should cease, they also would cease instantly. The existence of free-will and its work in modifying conditions at any moment cannot be logically proved. It is an ultimate fact of consciousness, and belongs to the region of metaphysics. But logic comes to our aid in reminding us that the absence of free-will involves the absence of moral responsibility in human beings, and although such absence has sometimes been propounded as a theory, it may be doubted whether any man ever lived who really believed in it.

## DIVISION XXIV

### FREE-WILL

#### QUESTION 66.

*How can you reconcile prevision with free-will? (1901.)*

G. R. S. M.—If it be true, as has been asserted by all mystical philosophers, that there is a state of consciousness in which the three modes of time—past, present, and future—are simultaneous, and that there is also a state of consciousness where here and there and elsewhere are identical in space, then it is very evident that the ideas of succession in time and extension in space vary according to the intensity of consciousness of any entity—that is, of any will.

The problem of free-will and determinism is usually discussed simply from this standpoint of normal consciousness; but immediately we extend our consciousness in time or space, at once the sharp opposition of free-will and necessity assumes fainter outlines. As consciousness extends it becomes evident that the hard and solid earth shakes itself free from the bonds of its solidity, that past and present and future things refuse to be determined as they were previously by the barriers of the physical time instrument; as consciousness expands Nature gains freedom instead of having stronger shackles forged for it.

Along this line of thought, it may be seen that prevision, or seeing the future in the present, is really a greater freedom of the will; although apparently, as far as the happening in matter is concerned, it is a proof of a greater determinism. But this apparently increased determinism is a fallacy due to our translating the true nature of the intensified consciousness back into terms of ordinary past-present-future time and three-dimensional space.

The "fourth dimension" so-called is not a state of matter of three-dimensional properties *plus* some other property of a like nature; it is a state of matter quite other than any matter we can measure by height and breadth and depth. So likewise the corresponding phase of time is not an "eternal now"—the eternising of one phase of physical time; but a state which is neither past nor future, *nor yet present*.

Now if such states of consciousness are possible for the human will, it is evident that the ordinary determining factors that are brought forward in the usual arguments and classed as "necessity," are in reality phantasmal shadows and no true shackles of the will.

It must, however, be understood that the "will" here stands for the ground of a man's being, and not the false will which is desire, and which is determined because it seeks after the three-dimensional shadow that dances on the triple screen of time.

A.—By recognising that there is no conflict. Taking the meaning of "free-will" to be: "the faculty of choosing, from among several, one course of action, and carrying out the choice," we have only to exercise this faculty of a few times in order to know that we have it. When an omniscient being has foreknowledge of the choice, the choice still is a choice. It is not the omniscient being making the choice, he is only knowing that the choice will be made. He is the knower, not the chooser. Choices can be made in certain circumstances, and they will be in accordance with the nature of the chooser; his choice is part cause of the event; the circumstances are the other cause. The nature of the individual being what it is, and the circumstances being as they are, these facts do not take away the choosing faculty from the individual.

#### QUESTION 67.

*As my very clearest and highest conception of God as the Almighty, all-pervading, first cause and only source of all, is always met with the assertion that man has "free" will, I ask: On what plane does man's will start?*

*I am aware that the solution must be found in the consideration that man as a part of God must partake of His free-will, must even be the representer in some way of this will, but I do not know how to express this.*

*Free-will in the common sense would place man outside God. I think it is the term "free" that bewilders. (1903.)*

A. A. W.—Our querist has hold of the right idea, that man's free-will must, somehow or other, be God's free-will, to be possible at all. His difficulty lies here—that he has not made his own the theosophical doctrine of the double mind: the Buddhi-Manas, whereby the higher powers communicate with him, and the Kâma-Manas, whereby the attractions of the physical world play upon him. It is a fundamental defect of the older presentation of the doctrine of the Seven Principles that it takes no account of this division, the most important of all. The physical body, the desire body which feels the impression made on the physical senses by the objects around it, and the Kâma-Manas—the portion of the true Mind which is put down into these lower vehicles to gain experience by them, which thinks and reasons over the perceptions given it, form together a whole, as to which the word "free-will" is altogether inappropriate. If you go no further than this (and modern psychology goes no further than this) there can be no such thing as free-will. An action of this determined by anything but motives ultimately of the physical plane, is impossible; for Kâma-Manas *knows* nothing but what the senses give it.

But, to the Theosophist, all this is not the Man at all. It is only, so to speak, a reflection of the real Monad, Âtmâ-Buddhi and the Higher Manas, whereby the spark of what the querist would call God is individualised—one man separated (for the time) from his fellows. And the lower self which is incapable of free-will is only the true Man's means of learning from the world and of acting upon it. Now this Higher Man is free in the fullest sense—the attractions of the physical world have for him no meaning whatever—he does not need to *resist* them; for him they have no existence. He knows only the needs of the true soul; and when he succeeds in impressing His will on the lower self, this is quite regardless of this lower self's pleasure or pain.

The point of this view is that we no longer regard free-will as an innate power or a "gift" received from outside. It has to be *developed*, life after life, by the continued efforts of the Higher Ego to rule the lower. As Mr. Leadbeater very rightly says, the majority of mankind have as yet developed almost no will at all.

A good example was given in a question in the VĀHAN a few



months back, where the querist described himself as having been driven, as it seemed to him, by a force outside himself to save the life of a person he particularly hated, and who fully reciprocated the feeling. I then replied to him that that action, which seemed to him against his will, was very probably the only time in his life he had ever exercised his *real* will at all.

The querist will, accordingly, find that we Theosophists do *not* meet him with the assertion that man *has* free-will. On the contrary, I would say that this is the goal of his evolution. His will *becomes* free in proportion as he succeeds in making his lower mind and body obedient to the Higher Ego which transmits to him the Divine Will; entirely regardless of the "motives" with which modern science concerns itself. And when this freedom—from the wants and desires of his lower self—is complete, his reunion with God is accomplished, and his long pilgrimage ended. Of the bearing of this doctrine on theology this is not the place to speak; we will only fully agree with the querist that free-will in the common sense *would* place man outside God, which is impossible. But when our will is finally one with God's will we shall then, and only then, realise fully that "His service is perfect freedom."

S. C.—Yes. "Free-will in the common sense would place man outside God." Free-will in the common sense is obsessed with the idea of separation. But what is it to be free? Is it not to be ourselves, to fulfil our own nature? And what are we? We are God. "Thou art That," as the Upanishads put it. Free-will is the opportunity to do that which is for our own interest. What kind of actions are for our own interest? Precisely those which are for the interest of others. The true purpose of life is neither to grasp nor to give, but to do that which is for the benefit of all. So long as this is not seen, we are in the position of the kitten that pursues its own tail, or of the infant that benevolently offers a biscuit to its foot. Actions which are performed with the idea of giving in the background of the mind prevent a man from learning the true nature of free-will.

Free-will in man starts from the time when he becomes a man, and no longer a mere animal; but the whole of the human stage of evolution is required for him to learn what his freedom means. It is not learnt by argument, but by experience and action, and it is almost impossible to put forward any theory on the subject which is not misleading from some point of view.

A. H. W.—The writer thinks that “free-will” starts from the plane of Eternal Ego, the man for whom the hour never strikes, who lives in the Eternal now and the Everlasting here, beyond the time and place of the three worlds. When the conscious “I” in a man ceases to identity itself with the personality and realises itself as the Eternal man, the reincarnating pilgrim, he attains the point of view whence the things-that-are are seen as they really are, he begins to grasp the great scheme of evolution, and to understand the way to help it on. So “free-will” comes to him, the will to help the world, and to be perfect. He begins to be free to inhibit his personality from responding to the stimuli of the three worlds by which it is conditioned. Physics, physiology, and psychology all unite in demonstrating that in their realms—the three worlds—there is no room for either free-will, immortality, or the God of theology. Here causes and effects run in a continuous stream, and the personality is absolutely conditioned by its environment. There seems no getting away from that. Free-will appears to be the power of self-restraint, “the Self neither acts nor causes to act, nature however energiseth.” Free-will thus restrains all actions which the experience of the lower worlds prompts, except those which harmonise with personal perfection and the evolution of the race; these are not restrained, hence the individual “becomes a mere force for good in the world.”

Free-will is generally supposed to be the power of doing as you like; this is the personal illusion, it is really yielding to the strongest impulse of personal thought, emotion or desire, it is being goaded by the outer worlds—necessity. Really there is one Free-will in the Universe which causes all things, it wells up within a man through his Ego, and beats upon his personality from without in the guise of experience. The force within we call “free-will,” the force without we call necessity. When a man is harmonised the inner energy controls his personality and reproduces itself harmonically in his lower vehicles; in this way they are brought into harmony with the outer energy, which is identical with the inner, and so the individual is at peace with his environment, whatever it is, and recognises the Eternal Beneficence beneath the storm and stress of the great process of evolution.

In this way it seems possible to reconcile the finding of science with mystic religion. There is no free-will in the three worlds and the vehicles conditioned by them. The personality is not immortal, for it has to be eliminated, only the memory of it

remains. The God of popular theology, extra-cosmic and anthropomorphic, becomes the Immanent One, That of which the totality of things is the Manifestation. So it is said: "The principle which gives life dwells within us and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard nor seen nor smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception."

That perception is the one thing needful, the pearl of great price; to buy it a man must go and sell all that he has, all his prejudices, powers, preconceptions, personal loves and hates, the whole personal illusion in fact, for "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

## DIVISION XXV

### PRAYER TO GOD

#### QUESTION 68.

*A person who has been brought up in the orthodox Protestant Christian Church, but who three years ago became a theosophical student and believer, has to struggle against and to overcome serious temptation. When a Christian he used to pray much, and, being a firm believer in the Gospels, he found strength and help.*

*Being now convinced of the absolute error of the Christian Church teachings, he misses the personal God to pray to, misses the help, and wants to know how Theosophy can help him. As he has been trying to concentrate his will against that temptation and has found that in himself he has no strength, he is getting more and more disgusted at himself, discouraged, and losing confidence of any good being in him.*

*Who will be so kind as to enlighten him? (1901.)*

A. A. W.—This difficulty is one which is not confined to those who have lost confidence in the ordinary Christian teaching. The querist assures us that in prayer to Jesus Christ he, in old times, found strength and help. There are many devout Christians who cannot say so much for themselves. In my experience (and this has been a wide one) the discouragement which the querist describes is a very common one amongst intelligent Christians. They, too, pray much; they, too, find they have no strength in themselves; but neither prayer nor concentration brings them the power to get rid of their incubus, and they come at last to despair, not only of themselves, but of their religion. When the Wisdom is presented to them, its charm—the hope it holds out—is not of any deliverance from error in Christian *teaching*, but the much

more practical one of deliverance from actual *sin*. With St. Paul, their cry is, "The things I *would* not, these I do." It is a question of action, not of belief.

Now if I were dealing with the querist in private conversation, instead of in print, I should say to him that if he really did find in his Christianity the means of vanquishing his tempter, he had suffered a great misfortune in allowing himself to be drawn away from it; that he had unhappily gained freedom before he was ready for it; and I should do my best to show him the higher and deeper meanings of the Christian faith, unknown to its professional defenders, which might enable him to return, for the time, to his abandoned creed. But (I hope he will pardon my incredulity!) I do not believe that this is what he means; and, at all events, my answer will be more useful to my readers if I take it that his complaint is that of so many of us, that our better knowledge of the Truth does not bring us the strength against temptation we hoped to obtain from it. But the fault is not in the Wisdom.

Modern Christianity regards human life as a competitive examination. If at its close we can show so many years clear of the transgression of a certain limited number of rules laid down by theologians as expressing the arbitrary Will of a God, to be read in a collection of books, not *very* old books, known as the Bible, we "*pass*" into an eternal Heaven. If we have not this record to show, we fail, and suffer for ever in Hell for our failure. Further, the popular view is that a blotted record may be cleansed, and our "*passing*" secured by a process called "Faith in the atonement made by the blood of Jesus"; and this without any improvement in our character or habits. Now, as I have so often said here and elsewhere, this is not a view which can possibly commend itself to the conscience of an enlightened man or woman of the twentieth century; and the profession of it by such an one is as much an act of "blind faith," of "subjection of the intellect," as anything ever required by the grossest superstition of the dark ages. A conscientious Christian of the present day cannot be satisfied with any "taking hold of the merits of Christ"—he is not satisfied with some ideal purity to be received in another world; Religion is to him vain if it cannot purify him and strengthen him for his actual struggle with his known vices; and when he finds it cannot do that he despairs. For there are but a few years left him to obtain the victory, and each of these years will see him

weaker, not stronger, in body and soul alike, until death ends all, and "after that the judgment."

Now, the essence of the querist's trouble is that he is bringing this view over into his new life. He has learned the Christian error, but he has not attained the truth of the Wisdom. He must learn that he—his Higher Ego, his true Self—lives even now, in the Eternal, not in the temporal. It is perfectly possible—nay, even probable, that his struggle with the tempter may last, not one life only, but many lives; for when that is ended he will be more than man. He has—it may be in this life, or it may have begun thousands of years ago—shaped for himself a tempting devil; and year after year he has put more and more of his life into the elemental he has formed, until it is far stronger than himself. That life should have gone to rule the beast, but instead of that he has spent his whole strength in feeding and cherishing it till he is its slave instead of its master. Now what the querist, as a student of the Wisdom has to do, is to realise that this is so, and yet *not* to despair. He is "disgusted at himself and losing confidence of any good being in him." That simply means that he does not yet realise that the beast is *not* "him." There *is* no good in the animal nature; that is not under the sway of motives and considerations at all—morality is a word of no meaning to it. And he has let his mind, which knows right and wrong, become the slave of this soul-less monster; a horrible degradation, but still only an extreme case of the condition of every soul imprisoned in the flesh. His struggle is no exceptional one; it is the same fight which, on a higher plane, the highest saint has to wage. And it is just the one thing for which he came into the world, his means of growth upwards. He is yet a child, and his disgust with himself is simply that he cannot yet do a strong man's task. His defence against despair is that he is quite certain to grow stronger, life after life, till he does gain his victory. He himself, in his true Self, is the Warrior of *Light on the Path*, who cannot (with exceptions which do not practically concern him) finally be defeated. His one duty is to keep up the struggle, undismayed by his defeats however many; every effort will come back to him as renewed strength hereafter. It is, even, not wise to wish for the shortening of the struggle—to desire immediate victory, even were it possible; far less to be impatient because we see no prospect of it in this short life. For it is the efforts we make in this struggle which form our treasure for the hereafter; our claim

for further advance is that we have greatly dared and nobly fought; the physical-plane result of our fight means nothing for the soul.

It is true there have been (and are) abundance of holy souls in all religions who have passed through our stage of the fight and now hardly feel the temptations which are too much for us; but this is not because they *believe* this or that. It is that they are before us in the scale of evolution. Such chosen souls have been in previous lives as we are now; and as they are now, so shall we be in our turn. As is said of the Christ in the New Testament, they are the "first fruits" of the human race, and pledges of the time when we too shall "tread Satan under our feet."

For practical assistance refer to Mrs. Besant's papers "On Some Difficulties of the Religious Life," pp. 260 and 308 in Vol. xxiv. of the *Theosophical Review*. May I venture to add a reference to one of my own, Vol. xxiii., p. 531, where I have spoken on this matter at greater length than is allowable here?

## DIVISION XXVI

### PERSONAL QUESTIONS

#### QUESTION 69.

*"I have been very ill and suffering, and as I lay in my bed enduring pain, I thought the theosophical dogma of Reincarnation a horrible one, and I did long for a religion teaching utter annihilation, extinction. To cease to be seemed to me the one and only thing to be desired. One night, in which I was rather light-headed, I found myself, first in heaven (the old-fashioned theological heaven), very cold, very white and green, all icicles and ice, and very, very cold; the angels half clad and shivering! Then I was in hell, where it was warm and close, and very black and dirty; the devils sitting round a stove (in the cinders)—it was all most vivid. I wished to stay in neither place, nor did I wish to come here again." (Extract from private letter.) (1898.)*

A. A. W.—Of course you are very tired of the sick body, and the worried mind which bothers you, and you don't like the chilly heaven nor the dirty hell any better; that is all quite natural. Well, our doctrine goes with you so far; all that you are so tired of will be annihilated, never fear. It is hard to realise that all that will resolve into the elements, and yet that you will be left alive, very much alive, and all the worry gone with the brain you have left behind you; and it is especially hard in sickness. Then you will have your rest, a good long rest. If you don't fancy the popular Christian heaven (I don't) you can make yourself one which does please you, and find the company you like. *To wish is to have* in the world where thought is the only reality.

And you will stay in heaven just as long as you want to stay. Don't fancy any capricious power will turn you out and shut the



door upon you against your will. But if there is any seed of immortality in you, there will come a time when you are tired of that too! You will have studied over this past life till you have learned all it has to teach, and begin to feel there are possibilities within your soul of something more and better than the mere "golden streets" and "mansions" which any Heaven can give—to take your own image, you will begin to feel it chilly there, and long for the warm earth-life once more. It is on earth, not in Heaven, that the fight goes on which gains us immortality; and when you feel you cannot keep out of it any longer—that you must snatch up another body and mind to "have another go at it" (to use a vulgar but expressive phrase), then, and not before, will the time come to return.

But you will not come back to the "*misère*" which has so wearied you in your present life. Whilst you have been resting, the world will have moved on—the new race of men developed. The new body will not only be fresh, young and strong, but of far finer material, and with far more delicate senses; the new brain alive through and through to the promptings of the higher soul. You will understand then what a pity it would have been to have missed the glory and the power of the new life, the company of the new men around you, and the new and vigorous growth upwards which comes of it all.

Annihilation is possible—in a sense—but most undesirable. There are plenty of people about us who have contrived to put out the spark of the Divine life in them, and for whom (sorrowful thought!) the popular Christian Heaven, or whatever corresponding place of enjoyment the enlightened followers of the Higher Criticism may invent for themselves, is completely sufficing. If this be so; if they have not one single desire to aid in the growth of humanity into Divinity—if they have not one single aspiration for such growth in themselves, but are perfectly satisfied with their selfish bliss; what can come of them, but that, as the life they have brought with them from this world slowly fades out, they themselves shall slowly fade with it into a blank unconsciousness which is annihilation for the almost countless æons of this human period—their place lost, their chance ended! But, as long as we have our hope left of something better to come of us hereafter, I think we can hardly, even in time of sickness or suffering, seriously desire this!

## QUESTION 70.

*I wish to ask if you will tell me the cause of great depression that attacks me frequently? It is not noticed by others; I pass for being always in good spirits. Is this Karma from a past life? Is it possible to get rid of this depression? (1902.)*

A. B. C.—It is impossible to give definite answers to purely personal questions without knowing the circumstances of the particular case, and those who send such queries to the VĀHAN must fain be content with the same kind of vague generalities as the people who send medical questions to the inquiry columns of a weekly newspaper, *e.g.*, the questioner may be suffering from disease of the liver, or perhaps some other unsuspected bodily organ. On the other hand, his astral body may transmit melancholy impressions received on the astral plane, without any particulars as to the cause thereof, and goodness knows there must be horrors enough on that plane in the neighbourhood of this seething mass of cruelty and corruption which we call a civilised community. Yet again, the querent may have reason, as most of us have, for being very dissatisfied with his conscious efforts at self-improvement, and his disapproving Ego may endeavour to impress his physical consciousness. Well, the cure would depend upon the cause. In the first possibility it might be a blue pill, or a changed diet, or the stopping of a gas escape, or more fresh air, or a score of other things on the purely physical plane which react prejudicially on the consciousness. In the second possibility a resolute attitude of real sympathy and helpfulness and a constant remembrance that "God's in His heaven, all's well with the world" might work a cure. Lastly, if the cause be as last suggested, the recollection that all onward progress is made up of ebbs and flows, that we cannot advance by leaps and bounds, or grow, like mushrooms, in a single night, but must "make haste slowly," and take the seasons of light and joy, of darkness and gloom, with equal equanimity when they come, as come they must, might be the most helpful medicine. On this the questioner might see Mrs. Besant's *Some Difficulties of the Inner Life*.

E. L.—The depression which the questioner is subject to may arise from one or more causes, or several operating together. To gain the *true* vision of its source would be only possible for one who could see the inner life and read the past. It is sometimes

the result of a burden of *unremembered* wrong-doing—that is to say, wrong-doing which is on the verge of being expiated, or *is* being so, partly in the very depression felt—a burden which is really remembered in the *Higher Self*, but is not clearly recognised in the present life, through the media of *this* physical brain. Or the person may be extremely sensitive to thought-waves of this description coming from others. His surroundings may have something to do with it. Ill-health again is another cause. But is he quite correct in terming it “depression”? There comes to earnest-minded people at a certain stage of evolution a sensation of great loneliness, a hunger which nothing hitherto known or found can satisfy. Such may chafe under this sense of gloom, and imagine that, by filling the void with some old delight, they will escape. But if it is the voice of the awaking soul which calls, then I can wish nothing better for such than that it should continue to pierce into the everyday consciousness. If it is merely a passing emotion it will be satisfied—for the time being—or drowned in the next wave of an opposite nature which rushes over the life. It is said that those who seek the heights are very lonely. But it is only that emptiness which can be filled with the Greatest and Best. Again, when we come into contact with some life greater than our own, it seems to me that this sense of depression may be more felt, and that we should rather rejoice that we are able to sense it than strive to avoid it. There is always a world burden which the servants of the Good Law are seeking to bear. It may be that we can in this way play our little part and let some cloud of the darkness rest on us who are growing stronger. If we drive it away, it may fall on those weaker, who would be almost overwhelmed by it. It is true that we are not to indulge in pessimism of a morbid nature, nor brood over our personal grievances. We have to distinguish between these two very different causes.

Whichever of the above sources may account for the depression spoken of, the safe and wise plan is to meet it with strength, confidence and patience, believing that it is in the dark that we gain our truest strength, and that whether it be the smaller or Greater Shadow that falls on us, it must alternate with the Light.

A. H. W.—On reading the exhaustive replies to this question it strikes the writer that in the very wealth of suggestions may lie more puzzlement than help. He believes that it is much more likely that the cause of the depression is physical rather than astral,

mental, or moral. Everyone who is ill experiences more or less depression. Has the questioner performed the Yoga that is pain-destroying with respect to his physical vehicle? Are there no little excesses which might account for his condition? It must be remembered that *too little* is just as much excess as *too much*, and that the perfect way lies along the razor-edge between, just as much in the case of the physical manifestation of the Self as in any other.

The futile asceticisms of centuries have at least served to demonstrate that if you want a sane mind free from depression, you *must* have a healthy brain. Do you obey the gospel of physiological righteousness? Have you attained the perfect harmony in action which that gospel inculcates? When you have done this, it is a hundred to one that your depression will cease to exist. It *may* be the Karma of a past life, but it is much more likely to be the ignorance of the present. Nature does not often wait so long to chastise him who is so foolish as to flout her, for as a man sows from day to day so must he also reap. Unless you have been laboriously trained for the work, you will *not* be your best adviser and physician, *because you cannot know*. Your best chance is to consult a common-sense doctor and do as he tells you.

#### QUESTION 71.

*I find all my efforts at leading the higher life—and they have been earnest and long-continued—made vain by an evil habit, contracted many years ago, and from which, do what I will, I cannot free myself. I am married and have had children, but they have all died; I had not the needful life to transmit to them. Since I have set myself on the Path, and done my best to sow good seed, I find this “giant weed,” instead of diminishing, growing stronger and stronger. In every other respect I seem to myself to have gained a certain amount of freedom; I can go on my way careless of pleasure or pain, but here I am helpless. I know well the ruin of body and soul it brings—all the wreck I have to expect in the remaining years of my life for myself and my family alike, but all considerations are useless to give me the victory. Is there no help for me? I have not yet lost all hope, but each failure weakens my confidence and brings me nearer to the abyss. For if I lose that, what is left for me? (1901.)*

A. A. W.—All these “crazes”—the drink craze, the opium craze, and the many more of the kind—have, I believe, a single cause, and that essentially a physical one. They are all illegitimate ways of obtaining relief from a condition of congestion of the capillaries of the brain and its consequent malnutrition. The drink-craving, the commonest of all, has most evidently this foundation, as the recognised working of alcohol is the very relaxation of the capillaries of which I speak. For the time, the circulation in the brain is restored to its normal condition by it, or even enhanced; and unless you can furnish the drunkard with some better means of attaining the same result, you cannot cure him. When a man, as is said, “takes to drink,” it is almost invariably, as doctors have long recognised, not the cause but a symptom of something wrong with the brain; and this is, I believe, where the mischief lies. In this connection Dr. Haig’s book on “Uric Acid” will be found most interesting as suggesting a new cause for the sluggishness of circulation to which I refer, as well as a promising mode of treatment.

We have then in such a case as the querist lays before us a physical body in which (most probably by inheritance) the life force is scanty and the blood-circulation defective. It is on such an organisation that the temptation fastens; no one in perfect health can understand the fascination of the evil habit, and this is quite natural—how should he? And the vanity of attempting to cure it by exhortations or denunciations is equally clear; for to be able to prevent the body’s indulgence in what it finds not only pleasurable but actually profitable for the time, simply because of future evil consequences, implies a power of the mind over the body which is not to be expected at this stage of development. Now it is quite conceivable that one who finds himself in this melancholy condition may resolve to take it as his life’s work, or the work of many lives, to conquer this by his own strength, and deny himself all assistance from outside. He must come to this sooner or later; he cannot pass forwards by any power but that of his own soul. But one who has undertaken duties to others, is (as it seems to me) bound to do everything in his power to gain relief at once, to enable him to fulfil these duties. To him I would say: It is your duty not only to strive for deliverance by meditation and prayer, but to use all the physical means which medical science can afford. It is (as I have said) mainly a physical matter; and, as you would call in the doctor if

you were prevented from work by a broken arm or leg, so you should do now. Of course it would be much grander and more dignified to do it all alone, but you can't, and there is an end! And the doctor can do much for you; far more than the preacher.

Each failure should not weaken our confidence. Every effort, even though it ends in failure on this plane, brings us new strength for next time. We must believe in ourselves—that the Divine spark, which is our life, can never be destroyed or defeated; our victory is certain, however long it may be delayed. But when the questioner tells us that this struggle seems to him to be the last—that he has conquered pleasure and pain save only this one weakness, I feel inclined to say something for which I can produce no authority but which seems to me to be true. I think he may very probably be correct. In all histories of initiations, this is always the very last trial. Even on Dante's Mount of Purgatory, which is the parable of Initiation most familiar to many of us, the fire which burns out this human weakness is the entrance porch to the Paradise. Only when he thinks all is done, he will find that it is only the entrance to new trials on a higher plane; it is probably well for us that we have no idea, no dream, of the purity we must attain before the gates actually open to us.

May I turn round from the stage, and for a moment address the audience? If every one of my readers would add to their daily devotions a thought—a prayer, if they prefer the word—for the two or three who have asked our help, and the many thousands who need it for the same reason, they would do more for the world's welfare than they have any idea of. For of all shapes of the world's sorrow, this is perhaps the most common; the most hopeless, if treated only on the World-plane, and at the same time the one in which a thought of encouragement, a breath of free air above the mists of the soul, has most power to help. What such work needs is not exhortation or warning—that you cannot give—but spiritual strength, which is just what your loving interest is able to draw for them from the Sun of righteousness.

## QUESTION 72.

*A person I am acquainted with has the highest aspirations and best desires to live a pure and noble life, and to be thorough in his daily work, but has a very weak will. Time after time he tells me he has formed resolutions to live purely and start a new life, and shortly after has fallen. He is beginning to think that it is no use trying only to fail, and asks for advice. What is the best method by which such a person can strengthen a weak will? (1896.)*

A. A. W.—It may perhaps be a comfort to your friend to know that his case is pretty nearly the universal one. All who have had anything to do with the true “cure of souls”—the most divine of all human occupations—know that it is chiefly a matter of *degree*. But few of the souls now in manifestation have been so extraordinarily diligent in past lives as to have brought to this one a will “strong” in the sense in which Occultists use the word, and even the highest of these have had to begin from the beginning just like ourselves, and have had life after life to struggle, and at times been tempted like us to despair. For immediate use the lesson of an old Egyptian story will do well enough. “A young brother came to an elder, saying, ‘Father, I have fallen!’ ‘Very well, my son; get up again!’ And the next day, and the next, and day after day he came again, and the father never ceased to say, ‘Get up again,’ until the young man grew weary and said, ‘Father, how long is this to go on?’ And the old man answered solemnly, ‘Until death comes and finds you standing—or fallen!’” But the esoteric doctrine has something better still to teach. It is *not* true (believe me!) that God waits as it were to trap you at the hour of death—that is a devil’s work, not a God’s! To train, to strengthen your weak will is a work of many lives, and the many lives in which to do it will not fail you—it is just for *that* that the worlds were made and the almost countless centuries of the Manvantara roll on their way! From all time the great souls of the earth have known and taught that “No soul that holds one right desire goeth the road of loss.” Do not be impatient; your efforts may not bring you in this life the feeling of virtue triumphant which would make you happy and proud of yourself—it is often better they should not; but not one moment’s resistance will fail to return to you in

your next birth as new *power* for the great "fight between the living and the dead." Only do not waste time in regret, still less worse than waste it in despair. If so much time has been ill-used, it is only the more needful *at once*, without stopping to look back, to push forward. Spite of all falls, you *can* make the progress permitted you by the Karma of your past lives if you only keep your steady resolution. Take St. Francis de Sales' lesson. You perhaps think (he says) virtue is to be had ready made, and that you have only to put it on like a top-coat! Not so; you have to make it yourself, stitch by stitch; and you may be very glad if you get your garment ready to put on five minutes before you die.

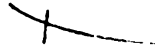
But in speaking of strong will, the word is often misunderstood. A person whose kâmic nature is strong and unregulated by his higher self—who, as is said, knows what he wants and means to have it, is often called a man of strong will. An Occultist would say he had developed no *will* at all, spite of the intense determination to have his own way, which even we are apt to look longingly at, as the gift to be desired. As we have been lately reminded, desire only becomes will when turned upwards instead of downwards, and this radical change is not to be effected by a single pull at the reins or a shift of the rudder. Nor is a strong will a "gift" to be obtained by any (relatively) short course of training, as might be the opening of the astral vision or the like. The *only* way to reach it is patiently to take up, one by one, our multitudinous desires, and turn them in the right direction; and when they break away, time after time, still patiently (like Bruce's spider) to recommence. At first glance this looks a mere provocation to despair, but it is not so. You say your friend has the highest aspirations and best desires to live a pure and noble life—very well, each of these aspirations *is* an exercise of will, and the more he makes, and the more desperate energy he puts into them, the more the true will grows. The temptation to despair comes from this—that he cannot yet make his *physical* organisation obey his will, but this is a matter of practice. Look at a child learning to write, trying to make an O, say. He *knows* what he wants to do; his *will* to do it is strong enough, but the stiff muscles have not yet learnt to obey his will and it goes tremulous and blotted, till he, in his small way, often despairs like his elders. If your friend will believe me, who have cried over *my* copy book as much as most grown-up children, his trouble is no more than



this. The teacher does not spend time in counting up the wriggles and the blots, knowing that time and patient repetition will, sooner or later, make the little hand a fit tool for the work. This is the meaning of that much abused passage in *Light on the Path*, which is most wholesome doctrine for those who *have* high aspirations and good desires. Such an one *may* "wait with patience the time when the temptation shall no longer affect him," because he knows that his stumbles are stumbles in running, and that in spite of them he is making progress towards his goal. They are matters of sorrow, of shame, but they are not fatal, unless he sits down by the wayside to regret and to despair.

As long as we are, in any sense, human, we cannot escape something of this feeling. We must be high up indeed on the Path before we cease to feel the inadequacy of our power to express our good will, our longing for service. All that we do must still be less than what we *would* do. Perhaps Robert Browning's deepest insight is in the two lines :

. . . Dimly I discern  
Infinite passion, and the pain  
Of finite hearts that yearn.



## DIVISION XXVII

### STAGES OF PROGRESS

#### QUESTION 73.

*Is it supposed to be a fact that persons of great powers of mind, perhaps also combined with elevated thought and goodness of heart, must have experienced countless incarnations before arriving at that excellent state? If so, how is another fact accounted for, viz., that together with those high qualities the same men not seldom possess, in one or another form, deep baseness of soul? What could be the original state of such Egos; and by what process have they developed so curiously? What will be their future course of progression or retrogression? (1898.)*

B. K.—All high development along any line is the fruit of long effort and many births; but it is not an absolute fact that people “of elevated thought and goodness of heart” do possess “deep baseness of soul.” People of great intellectual or artistic development may, of course, though exceptionally, be very undeveloped morally, and so exhibit “baseness of soul”—or what the world considers as such—but to imagine that a person of really high moral development should do so is absurd, simply because it is self-contradictory. For if a man is highly developed morally, he cannot *ipso facto* act otherwise than nobly, because just in so far as he does act ignobly, just so far, and in such respect is his moral development imperfect.

As to the latter part of the question, since in the long run “all souls develop all powers,” each must make up and develop whatever is lacking in his perfect full divinity—but that is in “infinite” time. Speaking finitely, a man may go a very long way along one line—say the intellectual—but remain very backward on another—say the artistic or moral. But the conditions

of human evolution are such that the tendency is always towards equilibrium, and the law of pain may almost be said to ensure by its action a fairly rounded and harmonious growth for the individual human soul, by the time the seven rounds of his pilgrimage are completed.

## QUESTION 74.

*In the case of very prominent public men, great conquerors and so on, are such individuals traced back to other characters occupying corresponding positions of power and influence in the past, or is it possible for an Ego, hitherto working in an unobtrusive fashion, suddenly to spring up into fame and power? (1898.)*

E. G.—Great faculty in any department of life is always a matter of growth, and presupposes attention directed thereto through a series of lives. A “prominent” public man would hardly begin by being prominent, but would gradually work his way into the position. “Aspirations and desires,” we are told, “become capacities; repeated thoughts, tendencies; and wills to perform, actions,” but in the earthly lives between those of devachanic assimilation, the physical body would need training and scope for action along the lines on which the Ego was advancing. In order, for instance, to possess the powers of organisation, foresight and endurance required by a great general, there would have to be opportunities on the physical plane for the exercise and gradual externalisation of such powers. But the training, I suppose, might take place in a relatively unobtrusive fashion.

So also with great philosophers, great artists, etc. But here again, as the evolution of faculty proceeded, a certain amount of self-expression, it seems to me, would always make itself felt in various lines, and make itself felt in ever-widening circles in proportion to the growing power within.

A. A. W.—When we fully realise the principle that powers in one life are the results of efforts in previous ones, we shall at once see that it is nearly certain that any one who displays extraordinary talent, or, as we call it, genius, must be the temporary manifestation of a soul who has worked at his subject for many lives, though possibly this may be the first time he has brought it to such a pitch as to “spring up into fame and power.” A great mathematician, who sees at a glance what an ordinary man would take volumes of calculation to prove—a Mozart who

can play before he can speak—a poet who “lisp in numbers for the numbers came,” are all results of labour spent, very possibly for many thousand years, upon their various arts. The same must be the case with a man like Napoleon, who had a true *genius* for the art of war. But there are many prominent public men, and even great conquerors, of whom we need not think so highly; who owe their position more to outward circumstance than to inward power. It would, for example, not be hard to recognise Napoleon as a reincarnation of Julius Cæsar, if we were so informed, but that Cæsar should have become the Duke of Wellington (who was *only* a great general, and *not* a great man), would not be so easy to believe. The subject (like all which depend upon the workings of Karma), is of almost inconceivable complexity. We all know that there are “spirits” who are in the habit of assuring all their friends that they have been very remarkable personages in past times, Buddha, Socrates, Plato, St John the Evangelist, Cæsar—or at least George Washington or Ben. Franklin—but we don’t take these *very* seriously. I fancy one rule might be laid down which would put aside a good many such identifications—once a great man, always a great man. I must explain, however. To take an old example, Bacon *may* have been forced by his evil Karma to return as a mere money-lender; but if such were the case, we should expect him to be a very remarkable money-lender—a kind of Ralph Nickleby at the least; whatever his circumstances, the innate power and energy of the Ego *must*, one would say, somehow shine out. He might be a *wicked* man, a miserable man, but never, surely, an insignificant one.

#### QUESTION 75.

*Since we believe Theosophy to be the highest good, how is the fact to be explained that we see around us many highly-developed persons, of greater intelligence or greater devotion than the average members of our Society, who yet seem entirely incapable of appreciating its teachings? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—It seems to me that the answer to this question is to be found in the necessity for a balanced development. The perfect man—the Adept, as we call him—is essentially the well-balanced man. He has all the magnificent intellect of the scientific man, and all the heart-whole devotion of the best type

of religious man, but both of them raised to an infinitely higher power; and he has also the discrimination which enables him to direct both of them aright.

But we down here, who are as yet so far from being Adepts, are mostly very unequally developed, and though none of these qualifications is so strong in us as it should be, we shall generally find that one of them has grown somewhat in advance of the others. It is almost inevitable that this should be so, and though this inequality is in many ways dangerous, it is at any rate better to have one quality in excess of the rest, than to have developed none at all, which is the position of the vast majority of mankind.

The really religious man, whose noble devotion leads him to live a life of beautiful unselfishness, has developed within himself a splendid and most necessary quality; and if not in this life, then in some life to come, he will certainly learn where that devotion is really due, and how the wonderful force which it generates can best be applied. Meantime as far as that quality goes he is an example for us, and we may learn from him.

Equally necessary factors are the keen intellect and the unwearied perseverance of the man of science, and equally worthy of our imitation; and assuredly he will one day learn in what direction powers so transcendent can most profitably and usefully be employed. It must never for a moment be supposed that either of these men is wasting time in following out his particular line of development, one-sided though it may be; for all these faculties have to be evolved, and if we have them at present only in a lesser degree, most certainly we shall some day have to spend time in acquiring them.

Still, though we may be behind many in both these respects, we have yet learned one thing, for lack of which both the religious man and the scientific man progress less definitely than they might. We have learned something of the grand old wisdom-religion, of the reality which lies behind all outer manifestation; and so marvellous is the result of this knowledge, that it enables us not only to use our forces to the best advantage, but also in many cases to grasp at once the real meaning of much in the studies both of science and of religion which still remains dark even to such men as those of whom we have been speaking. And this wisdom they on their part will one day have to acquire.

Another way of putting the same idea is to say that a person's

power of assimilating Theosophy depends upon his acquaintance with it or ignorance of it in his last incarnation. If he has studied along these lines before, his higher self—his true Ego—has already built these truths into himself to a greater or less extent ; and though he may not always be able to impress them definitely on the personality without assistance, when they *are* presented to that personality he can at least give that definite certainty that these things are so, which we call an intuitional grasp of Theosophy.

On the other hand, if a man has not yet met with the facts underlying life, but has spent several lives mainly in developing one of the other sides of his character, Theosophy awakens at first no special response in him, and is very likely to be hastily rejected as seeming to disagree with what is the dominant factor in his life. Inequality of development is the key to this mystery, as it is to so many others in the world around us.

#### QUESTION 76.

*Can we judge if a soul is undeveloped as a whole by its conduct in this incarnation? Is murder, or any so-called heinous crime, proof positive of an undeveloped soul? (1900.)*

A. A. W.—Let me rather suggest to the querist not to be so curious as to the “development” of the souls he may meet. And this, not only on the general principle all great Teachers have laid down that we should judge no one but ourselves ; his question betrays that he has not grasped the true meaning of “development,” with which the popular standards of virtue and crime have but little to do. The crudity of the popular Christian view, that every man, whatever his state of development, is virtuous if he refrains from certain actions which are baptized as (in our querist’s words) “heinous crimes,” and is wicked if he does not refrain from them, must be quite laid aside in considering things from the standpoint of the Wisdom. It is not the action, but the attitude of the mind towards it, which marks the doer’s spiritual condition. A familiar example is that of the Australian savage who killed and ate his wife, and to all remonstrances that this action was “bad,” replied cheerfully, “No, no ; she is very good !” Here everyone, I think, will see that the mark of the man’s savagery—of his undeveloped soul—is, not at all that he killed his wife (many

highly "developed" men have done that); not even that he ate her—that is a matter of taste only; but precisely in *this*—that having done so he had no feeling about it except that she was good to eat; that he had killed and eaten as a lion or tiger might have done, and that all the vast array of thoughts and feelings which such an act would call up in the minds of a civilised man simply did not exist for him—had yet to be developed. If the querist will follow up this suggestion as to what development really means, he will see that whilst a mentally and spiritually developed man could not have murdered in the way the savage did, without feeling or conscience being stirred to action, nevertheless his development gives not the slightest security against his committing murder in his own way. Had David been a savage he would not have wanted to kill Uriah—true; but having done it, he would have had no remorse of conscience for it—it was just his "development" which drove him to murder to conceal a fault of which the savage would have had no consciousness. Our answer to the question then, is that it is not at all the theological *heinousness* of the crime which marks it as done by one not far from the brute; there are virtues as well as vices which belong to the undeveloped stages. Many well-meaning souls are now even going about doing good, trampling as with iron-shod hoofs over the tenderest sensibilities of the unfortunate objects of their charity, more distinctly marked as "undeveloped souls" by their utter want of feeling and sympathy with those they desire to relieve than if they were to commit every crime in the Decalogue. We develop, first brain, then mind; and lastly, spirit. When we come to this last we are safe; but, till then, the assistance which morality obtains from development of intellect only, will go no further than the enlightened selfishness expressed in the immortal Yankee saying: "Honesty is the best policy—I know it, for I've tried both!"

#### QUESTION 77.

*If, as Theosophy teaches, man is an emanation from the Divine, how comes it to pass that he has to evolve upwards from a quite low form of life—why is he not at once made like his Creator, on the principle that like begets like? It seems a somewhat clumsy method of creation, apart from the above objection, that man should have to go through so much suffering and distress in order to achieve what an all-powerful and all-good Logos might*

*have done at once with one stroke of his will-power. I should like this question answered (if it can be answered), and please do not cover it up with "words, words, words." (1899.)*

C. W. L.—I do not know that we are in a position to criticise the method of creation and decide whether it is clumsy or otherwise, or whether it could not have been done in some other and much easier way. We are concerned only with the *facts* of evolution, and why the Logos who has charge of it chose to act in this way or in that is certainly not our business.

Yet there seems little difficulty in at least indicating the lines along which the answer to this question may be found. It is quite true that man is an emanation from the substance of the Divine, but it must be remembered that the substance when it issues forth is undifferentiated, and from our point of view, unconscious; that is to say, it has within it rather the potentiality of consciousness than anything to which we are in the habit of applying that term.

In its descent into matter it is simply gathering round it the matter of the different planes through which it passes, and it is not until, having reached the lowest point of its evolution in the mineral kingdom, it turns upwards and begins its return to the level whence it came, that it commences to develop what we call consciousness at all. It is for that reason that man begins first of all to develop his consciousness on the physical plane, and it is only after fully attaining that, that he begins to be conscious upon the astral and mental planes in turn.

No doubt God might have made man perfect and obedient to the law by one act of His will, but is it not obvious that such a man would have been a mere automaton, that the will working in him would have been God's will, not his own? What the Logos desired was to call into existence from His own substance those who should be like unto Him in power and glory, absolutely free to choose and yet absolutely certain also to choose the right and not the wrong, because in addition to perfect power they would have perfect knowledge and perfect love.

It is not easy to imagine any other way in which this result could be achieved but that which has been adopted—the plan of leaving man free, and therefore capable of making mistakes. From those mistakes he learns and gains experience, and although in such a scheme as this it is inevitable that there should be evil, and therefore sorrow and suffering, yet when the part these play as



factors in man's evolution is properly understood, I think we shall attain a truer view of them than is expressed in the question under consideration. Most emphatically it is true that, however dark the clouds may look from below, those clouds are by their very nature transient, and above and behind them all the mighty Sun, which will at last dissipate them, is always shining, so that the old saying is justified, that *all* things, even the most unlikely looking, are in reality working together for good.

This much at least all who have made any real progress in theosophical study *know* for themselves as an absolute certainty, and while they cannot hope to prove it to those who have not as yet had their experience, at least they can bear testimony to it with no uncertain voice, and that testimony is surely not without its value for souls who are still struggling towards the light.

A. A. W.—Our friend is mistaken if he imagines that anything we Theosophists can say on the matter *can* be more than mere words to him, unless he himself can altogether change the point of view from which he looks. Simply to give the Almighty All-wise Creator postulated in modern Christian theology a new *name*, and call him an “all-powerful and all-good Logos,” brings Him not a hair's-breadth nearer to us. It is just the assumption that this world, as it actually exists around us, was made by such a Creator, entirely free to arrange all things according to His fancy, which forms the logical difficulty which all thoughtful persons feel—the riddle for which we *must* have an answer, and the answer to which *that* Christianity cannot furnish us. The querist is right—we ought to be ashamed that we have so long permitted ourselves to be hindered by kaleidoscopic rearrangements, one after another, of such *words* as the “inscrutable counsels of the Almighty,” and the like—from recognising the actual, evident, undeniable facts of the case.

When our doctrine lays down as its fundamental, primary principle that the Universe as we now see it is *not* the work of a Creator possessed of all power and responsible to no one for his use of it—*not* the mere fancy of a dreaming God; but that, on the contrary, its Builders, vast as may be the wisdom and power of some of them as compared with our own, are yet limited by a Law which stands in *its* turn above them, by conditions which may be clear to them but which cannot be fully understood by us until we rise to their level—then the *pressure* of the difficulty is already lifted away. Science can have nothing to say against this

view, and theology *would* not have, had it not needlessly hampered itself with pure assumptions—had it not wilfully closed its eyes to the one book of Nature in which we *may* find some explanation of our life, and of the nature of which we ourselves form, so far, the larger and most important portion.

Thus our first step is that it is quite possible that the Logos of our system simply *could not* make gods of us (in the querist's words) "with one stroke of His will power." Next we ask "Is this *probable?*" Let us see what Nature suggests. I have already spoken of an indefinite number of Builders, instead of the one Creator, and this thought needs expansion.

When the Logos of our system (only one, be it remembered, out of countless multitudes ever evolving from the Causeless Cause by its Law of Nature), first came forth from the Unknowable, all that was to come lay folded in His Mind. The very laws of Nature (as we call them) and the nature which obeys these laws are but expressions of what, for want of other language, we must call His Will; though we may be quite certain that even there we should find nothing like *arbitrary* power. The higher we ascend, the more freedom—but *also* the more clearly and inevitably the Eternal Law beyond. Now our doctrine is, that to carry out this Divine idea into the actual world around us, a whole hierarchy of beings came into existence; from the Seven Spirits before the Throne down to the smallest nature-spirit whose tiny share in the great work is to form and tint the rose petal or scollop the oak-leaf. And why?

The answer is given in the old Indian books, thus:—He resolved "I will multiply." This, and no less, is the meaning of the Universe. It does not exist merely that men and women like you and I should strut their little hour of sixty or seventy years on this poor stage and be happy or miserable. Mineral, vegetable, animal, man, angel, deva, or whatever names you may invent for the countless steps above us—*all* are in the Divine Mind but the degrees whereby may at last result Gods like Himself, to be in their turn Logoi of new Universes in the day when "He shall return to him that sent Him, bringing His sheaves with Him."

Do you say you don't like this slow progress—that you think it hard that you are not made a God at a stroke, without pain or trouble? Surely everyone must see how childish such impatience would be. Whatever may be the case in other Universes, science

is entirely one with us that slow—almost inconveniently slow—progress is the law—the higher law—of ours. No one, now, would venture to reproduce the crude theory of a hundred years ago, that God created the earth, with all its unmistakable traces of past millenniums, fossils and all, “at once with one stroke of His will power”; nor to set a positive limit, even counted in millions of years, to the time taken for the preparation of the world for human habitation. And yet *this* is one of the shortest and least important periods with which the history of the Universe is concerned. True, science has not yet extended its conception to the formation of man himself, and “scientific” men will still speak as if, after the long ages which have gone to the making of man’s body and brain, the man himself were but a sudden chance-formed result of the juxtaposition of the atoms therein; but this cannot last. It is but a fresh shape of the old theological folly, a survival which should have been cast off long before this. If ages have gone to the making of man’s *body*, how many must have gone to make *him*?

Another suggestion from science may perhaps help to reconcile our querist to the fact that he is still “a little lower than the angels.” I have said that the Logos resolved to multiply; now one thing science shows is, that the more complicated the organism the slower and more painful the process of its multiplication. The microbe multiplies as you watch it on the field of the microscope—each new division at once perfect and complete. But when human beings take the same resolution, there are long, tedious and painful processes to be endured; growth, education, and the like, mean long years and continual risks; and at best, nigh half the life of the new creature is past, before he stands the complete and perfect reproduction of his parent. Is there, then, anything unreasonable if we suggest, that to make a Master there *must* surely go a long series of lives and harder labour, greater risks of failure still; and that to make a Logos, nothing less than the whole long pilgrimage of the Manvantara with all its trials and troubles, its failures and successes from life to life can possibly avail? Or are *these*, to our querist, still words—words only?

M. L.—The answers do not seem quite to explain the problem, which is, I believe, a difficulty to several students. It has been a difficulty to me, and I have spent many hours in trying to work it out. Those who have gone very far ahead may not be able so readily to see the difficulties in such a subject as those

still stumbling on away back ; they know and see too well, they are sure.

In the first answer it is said, "We are concerned only with the facts of evolution, and why the Logos who has charge of it chose to act in this way or in that, is certainly not our business.

But since the aim of evolution is union with the Logos, the merging of our wills in His, it is necessary first of all to realise Him as truly all-wise, all-good, omnipotent. Unless we can realise the Logos as perfect wisdom, love and beauty, we cannot have that overwhelming desire for union which will swamp all other desires and lead to the goal. Therefore I would suggest we are *not* "concerned *only* with the facts of evolution," and it *is* our business to try to know "why the Logos, who has charge of it, chose to act in this way or in that."

Some minds may be able perhaps to receive the statement "God is good" as axiomatic, and conclude that our evolution is conducted in the best possible way because it is arranged by God. Others, more spiritually developed perhaps, have so firm an inner conviction or knowledge of the absolute rightness of this evolution and of the perfectness of the Logos, that they cannot see the difficulty of those not so far advanced.

I venture to give the following ideas, which came to me while reflecting on the subject.

If our human evolution could have been perfected without such suffering, if it had been possible for creatures to have been made perfect at once by one stroke of the will-power of the Logos, then our evolution must be regarded as a failure in respect to its working, though not in its fulfilment—a failure in wisdom and love, since love and wisdom could ordain no unnecessary suffering or delay ; then God is not the perfect being represented, union with Him is not so desirable, and the only reasons for striving to work in with the laws of Nature—His will—would be : expediency, our own well-being, the service of our fellows, who with us are the victims of a badly-arranged scheme, or to help the Logos to retrieve His failure !

But the Logos is Himself the life of His creatures ; the consciousness in all things is contained in His consciousness ; the suffering and pain do not go on apart from Him but in Him. Could He then ordain unnecessary pain or delay ?

We can conceive the idea that such a Being as a perfectly wise, beneficent, powerful Deity exists. Can the creature conceive

anything greater than is his Creator, in whose aura he lives, of whose essence he is built, in whose life he lives ?

There may be many orders of beings besides the human order, each taking its place in the great scheme, and the methods of evolution for these may be varied according to their functions.

The human order has its place and function, for which probably it can only be fitted by the slow and painful process of evolution to which it is subjected. By its means we attain perfection—Divinity according to our own efforts. Could this be ours in any other way if bestowed by one stroke of the will-power of the Logos? Would not the latter method produce only puppets?

It is conceivable that there may be other systems whose law of evolution and whose law of good may be very different from ours; still, whatever they may be, if such is the will of the Logoi of these systems, they must be the supreme good of the creatures evolved.

Whatever be the will of the Logos of our system, we, the creatures evolved by His out-breathed essence, can have no greater good. There is nothing else for us, it is our life, our being, ourselves.

But what we need is the inner conviction gained by spiritual growth.

## DIVISION XXVIII

### PRACTICAL ETHICS

#### QUESTION 78.

*In "The Theosophy of the Upanishads" it is stated on p. 80 that —"Selfishness, self-assertion, whether of bitterness or of self-righteousness, is a greater violation of law than of drunkenness or evil-living." This is repeated on p. 195. Kindly explain this statement. (1896.)*

B. K.—All evil and all suffering are ultimately due to selfishness and ignorance; all violation or breach of law, on whatever plane, in whatever way, results in suffering and pain. In relation to this phenomenal world and to our limited human consciousness, however, there must always be a sort of scale or standard according to which men estimate and value good and evil in terms of happiness or suffering to the individual or to the race. On the basis of this conception we are in the habit of speaking of greater and lesser sins, of serious and venial offences. The only measure by which we can mete out a moral scale to correspond to these expressions will be defined in terms of happiness and suffering from the worldly, or in terms of the furthering or hindering of evolution from the theosophical standpoint. On these lines we should call an action (of the mind, heart, or body) whose effects were far-reaching and prolonged suffering or serious hindrance to the onward course of evolution a "greater sin" than one whose consequences in these respects were smaller and more restricted. Now the higher the plane on which any action occurs, the greater the dynamic effect of the energy liberated and the larger and more far-reaching the effects that will ensue from it. Hence a sin of the mind or heart must be considered as a much "greater" sin than one of the body, and that not only because its direct efforts

are more far-reaching, but also because such a sin will generally become the prolific parent of manifold sins both on the physical as well as on higher and subtler planes. These, I think, are the grounds upon which the statements in the question are based ; for careful analysis will show that selfishness is the parent both of evil-living and drunkenness. For what does a drunkard or sensualist seek in those vices ? The gratification of self—of his own desire for sensation—regardless of the harm done to others in the gratification. And such special forms of selfishness as “self-assertion whether of bitterness or of self-righteousness,” show in the man the presence of the root of evil—selfishness—which unless eradicated will most surely work out in manifold forms of evil, far-reaching and terrible in their consequences in proportion to the stage of development at which the Ego has arrived ; for it is not the mere outward, physical action which is the most dynamic, but the inner subtler force impelling to action, and sure sooner or later to express itself in many physical actions, which is the really important factor to be considered.

A. B.—An evil quality is a far more serious matter than an evil action, for it has the reproductive power, whereas the action is but a single outer result of the inner defect in the nature, the manifestation of the inner wrong. Selfishness is a relatively permanent set of the character, and may show itself in hundreds of ways ; it is a root, sending up a stem which gives forth many branches, while the act of drunkenness is a single branch. To correct actions only is like cutting off the tops of weeds ; nothing is extirpated and the work is endless. Therefore, every wise gardener pulls up the root, and then the stem and branches wither and no more are produced. So every wise moralist aims at removing the underground root of vicious practices, sure that the practices will disappear when the fault in the mind is eradicated. Selfishness is the root of all evil, and is therefore the worst of faults ; it is putting the little self up as an object of worship instead of the Great Self, and the whole character is by this set in the wrong direction and is developing along the wrong line. It is the opposition of the separated human will to the cosmic Will, and this ramifies ceaselessly and is an unending source of wrong-thinking and wrong-doing. It is further the more dangerous because the less obvious ; no one can defend drunkenness or evil living—they are open, palpable, naked sins. But selfishness can cloak itself in many respectable garments, and can even pretend to be

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...the preceding answer, the  
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...that good

...evolved  
...with the eyes  
...the whole of life  
...Thence things in  
...of the person-  
...The interests  
...different, if not  
...the evolved man has gained  
...the real from the false, for  
...voices of illusion."  
...he knows that the eternal  
...and that suffering  
...inharmoni-  
...whether it be  
...Soul, he cannot  
...and realises  
...a dishonour-  
...of things and he  
...point of view is the  
...in their  
...the Soul in  
...of the trans-  
...more than man."



For these reasons it is impossible that to an evolved man a lie could ever appear either advisable or necessary.

No amount of lying can *really* save a friend from dishonour, because if he has done a dishonourable act he is dishonoured; lies can only save him from exposure—till he is found out. Sooner or later he must suffer the consequences of his act. To try to cover it up with lies, is really to push him down the broad road; while to insist upon the truth is possibly to drive him to make the *amende honorable* and so retrieve his position. Which is the most “unselfish,” to yield weakly to personal affection, and by lying sink your friend deeper in the mire of deceit: or to endure, if necessary, his reproaches and cries of anguish, and drag him out in spite of himself?

The “principle” of doing evil that good may come is self-condemned. “Good” is all that makes for the evolution of the Ego, “evil” is all that hinders it. When taking a light into a room makes it dark, and lighting a fire makes it cold, then, and not till then, will an evil cause produce a good effect. If it were right to lie in defence of a friend, it would be equally right to lie in defence of a stranger or an enemy; the incident of personal friendship does not affect the question. An attempt to speak the impersonal truth is always sure to upset someone’s personal preconceptions. But if we dally with the deadly illusion that evil can directly produce good, the question will soon arise as to whether it can ever, under any circumstances, be right to try to speak the truth. Then the blind will be left to lead the blind and both will fall into the ditch.

Those who dare to take the two-edged sword of Occultism in their hand, must expect to find that, sooner or later, it will cut their own prejudices and preconceptions up by the roots. Indeed if it did not do so, what would be the good of it?

#### QUESTION 80.

*Does Theosophy teach that you cannot judge an Occultist by the ordinary standards of right and wrong, because what appears direct falsehood to others may be recognised by him as the highest good? When a Theosophist believes himself to be under the guidance of a Master, should he be ready (when occasion arises) to tell what strikes him as a direct falsehood, on the*

*ground that good and evil are merely relative terms? Or, must he ever refuse to believe that any command of dubious morality can proceed from a pure source? (1896.)*

A. B.—Speaking generally, Occult morality is far more exacting than “ordinary morality,” and the Occultist not only tries to fulfil the duties laid down by every noble ethical code, but recognises claims of duty to which the ordinary moralist would be blind. But the questioner speaks of “what appears direct falsehood to others”; the Occultist is concerned with what is, not what appears to be, true, and others, judging by limited and imperfect power of observation, might easily in complicated cases be deceived as to his actions. He sees the whole where they see only a part, and his true answer might appear to them to be a lie. The point is that he must speak and act truth, no matter what may be the appearance presented, though he will try to avoid misconception wherever possible, in order not to confuse the ignorant. No Occultist of the Right Hand Path could “recognise the highest good” in what was really a falsehood, for all that is false is poisonous, and corrupts everything into which it is thrown. No Theosophist should, under any circumstances, tell what appears to him to be a direct falsehood; he may feel perfectly certain that no White Master would direct him to tell a lie, or what appears to him to be a lie, and that if he imagines such a command to come from his “guide,” either he is deluded by a false appearance, or his “guide” belongs to the ranks of the black or grey. Apart from the question of morality, it is peculiarly expedient for the Occultist, be he white or black, to practise truth so far as he himself is concerned, however he may try (if he belong to the dark school) to make other people practise deceit. For it is of vital importance on the astral plane to escape glamour and to pierce through deceptive appearances, and this is only possible for those in whose nature there is no taint of falsehood. Truthfulness alone is not an entire protection against deception, but the man who is not truthful is certain to be deceived. It is scarcely necessary to add that no one who believes in Karma can commit the absurdity of “doing evil that good may come.” As well sow thistles that wheat may come. The morality in the one case is as ludicrous as the agriculture would be in the other.

## QUESTION 81.

*Is a feeling of indifference to the results of our actions possible to us, where others may suffer through our mistakes? (1896.)*

A. B.—“Indifference to the results of actions” is a technical phrase, describing a certain attitude of mind ; an attitude which differs considerably from what would be ordinarily regarded as “indifference” to consequences. It does not imply that the consequences of an action are left out of account in choosing a course of conduct, nor that they are disregarded afterwards as a lesson from which experience for future guidance may be gathered. The nature of the indifference will be best understood by studying the attitude of a mind that would be described by the phrase in question. When an action has to be performed, a man who is indifferent to results will use his best powers to see clearly the whole bearing of the proposed act and to choose the most effective methods of performing it. At this stage he will very carefully consider the results that will be caused by his action, and will endeavour to avoid doing a thing detrimental to the welfare of others. But he will entirely eliminate personal bias, not concerning himself with the question whether the result of the action, its “fruit,” will be to himself pleasurable or painful ; he directs his efforts to bring about the best, and disregards the effect of that best on his own separated self. The effect of this first indifference is to remove from his motive any personal desire as regards the result, and this leaves him to act impersonally, with vision cleared from that most disturbing medium, the personality, which distorts all objects seen through it. A careful consideration of the results of the action on others will be an element in his decision, and will be the more correct just because of his indifference to their pleasurable or painful effects upon himself. Having decided what ought to be done, he performs the action as a duty, his effort being directed to the perfect accomplishment of that duty, as part of the service he owes to humanity, to the law, to God—however he may phrase his idea of the whole, of that greater Self to which he gives his allegiance. Thus acting, he leaves the result to the law, content with whatever it may be ; if success comes, well and good—he has wrought with knowledge as well as with good intent, and his service is taken up by the law and worked into the general evolution. If failure comes, well and good also—he learns his error by

experience, and the law has destroyed that which was out of harmony, ill-adapted to bring about the good he willed to achieve. Here, again, indifference conduces to the general good, for had he desired a particular result, say a success, that desire would have tended to bring it about, and if his judgment were faulty his success would be injurious. His indifference leaves the law to work unfettered, and his simple will to serve, acting on the higher plane, throws a force on the side of the law. Otherwise put, his will to serve runs in perfect harmony with the Divine will which "makes for righteousness" and introduces no disturbing element to bring about a disastrous success. The attitude of mind then is that of indifference to the results as they affect the separated self of the agent, the doing of the action because it ought to be done, and the contented leaving of the action to work out according to the Law. None can suffer involuntarily from the action of another unless such suffering is within his own Karma, *i.e.*, comes to him from causes set going by himself. We suffer from ourselves, not from others, although others may be the external channels *through* which that suffering comes to us.

#### QUESTION 82.

*Why does Patañjali make such a point of the virtue of non-receiving, putting it on a par with truthfulness, chastity, etc. (Aph. 30)? Swāmi Vivekānanda in his Commentary says, "Whosoever receives gifts, his mind is acted on by the mind of the giver and becomes degenerated" (Raja Yoga, p. 177). Surely some of the greatest teachers of the past set the example of the contrary by supporting life entirely upon what the charity of their disciples bestowed on them. (1897.)*

P. S.—In one version of Patañjali's Aphorisms "non-receiving" is rendered "non-coveting." Neither expression can be taken quite in the usual acceptation of the words. "Non-coveting" in this connection does not mean so much the absence of yearning for objects possessed by others as an attitude of mind that desires nothing that the physical plane can give. "Non-receiving," I think, should be regarded in the same broad way. It is not that non-receiving is an abstract virtue, put on a par with truthfulness, honesty, chastity, etc., as practicable in everyday life; but in reference to the training and coercion of the mind by the

soul on the particular lines here laid down, *any* action or desire hinders that process and has therefore to be got rid of.

It should always be borne in mind that these rules of Patañjali are presented to students as a means to a definite metaphysical condition. The efforts made by the student carry with them just as certain results in strengthening, developing and improving the will power, as the practice of physical athletics improves, strengthens and develops the muscles of those who follow firmly the prescribed rules given by the masters skilled in those pursuits.

The object or motive with which the practice is undertaken is the really vital factor in the spiritual growth of the Ego of the disciple.

The man who sets himself to follow these rules—a case not infrequent in India—purely and simply for the purpose of freeing himself from the bonds of physical existence, and with no thought or desire outside of that intention, adheres steadily and consistently to the literal teaching of the Aphorisms. He isolates himself from all touch with his fellow-men both in thought and action. He must not harm them or mix himself up with their affairs in any way or karma will necessarily draw him back to life ; for the same reason he must not help them or sympathise with them, or even love them ; he must as far as possible put them out of his mind, and become detached from every earthly thought or care, and devote himself utterly and absolutely to this isolating process with his will firmly set against the soul's return to physical life. It is obvious, that with this end in view, the disciple may not receive from another any more than give to another, as such action would carry with it karma and re-birth. The result of this purely selfish growth is the drawing up of the consciousness on to the arūpa level of Devachan, and as there has been no karma either good or bad generated, and as the free-will of the Ego has been turned entirely to the desire for rest in its own being, that rest is attained and persists for long periods of time.

The same course of training, taken by a disciple whose ideals, in the words of Krishna, "are those of wisdom of all wisdoms, uttermost, the which possessing, all my saints have passed to perfectness," leads, as all students of Theosophy know, to very different results. And in the practice of these Aphorisms, and others of a like nature, unselfishness in thought, life, and works on all planes of nature is the most essential attribute to the attainment of "perfectness." The mere faculty of disregarding all the

desires, needs, sensations, passions of the body, is by no means the spirit of the teaching of Patañjali's system, though by following his methods literally the man who wishes to free himself for æons of time from the necessity of re-birth can certainly do so, if he cuts himself off from every avenue that leads to any karmic results on either astral, physical or devachanic planes.

J. C. C.—In the original the word for “non-receiving” is “a-parigraha.” Dr Ballantyne translates it by “non-coveting,” which is more correct and nearer the original idea than “non-receiving,” though neither of them half expresses the idea of Patañjali.

The word “parigraha” comes from the root “grah” or “grabh” with the prefix “pari.” The simple root means to grasp, to lay hold of. The prefix emphasises the signification and “parigrah” means to grasp completely “on all sides” and to have a firm grip of. Therefore “parigraha” means “a firm grip,” “a covetous and greedy grasp.”

This refers to an internal process far more than to a physical one; perhaps entirely to the former, the physical being only its outward expression.

Now this grasping greediness of the mind binds the man very strongly to the objects of greed, not in any figurative sense, but most literally. For all our desires and covetings, though invisible to the dull physical eye, act as strong and tangible cords to tie us down to the objects we seek. Here the student may be referred to an illustrated article of Mrs Besant, entitled “Thought-forms,” in *Lucifer*, Sept., 1896. There he will find how our coveting, greed and ambition shape themselves in hook-like forms, which are attached to what we lust after. Of course all this is known to every student of Hindu philosophy who understands his subject well.

The effect of all such desires is to keep the mind, and through it the soul, chained to the mire of the earth. The soul of a greedy person cannot rise above the physical, and can know nothing as to what happens in the transcendental world.

The Yogin seeks to accomplish detachment from lower objects. He must soar far, far beyond the dust of the earth, if he is to know the truths of the transcendental. Therefore it is that he must get rid of all greediness, which spreads like a snare round the things of the senses and keeps the soul from flying (comp. γράφος, a fishing net, connected with Sans. grah, grabh). Unless one removes this grasping tendency at the outset of Yoga practice,

it is absolutely useless to take further steps. Therefore Patañjali demands it of the candidate as one of the most necessary fundamental qualifications for Yoga, as necessary as universal kindness, truthfulness and so on.

There is also some truth in the remark of Swāmi Vivekānanda, quoted by the questioner. But that is by no means the principal reason why Patañjali demanded "a-parigraha" or "non-receiving," "non-coveting," and "freedom from grasping greed."

I do not think there is any harm in receiving gifts from those who give them, not because they expect any reward either here or hereafter, but *only* for the sake of giving and helping the aspirant; that is to say, to use the technical phrase, whose gift is "nishkāma" or desireless. Such givers, when they give anything to the aspirant, do not exercise any undue influence on the mind of the receiver.

But when the gift comes from one who seeks reward in the giving—in the shape of something here or in the world to come—such a gift proves a hindrance to the aspiring soul. The gift received establishes a connection between the giver and the receiver. The gift brings with it the demanding thoughts of the giver, and they hover round the aspirant distracting and compelling his mind whenever they can. Therefore it is that our law-givers laid down distinct and minute rules to guide the student in his accepting gifts. He is to accept gifts when they come from persons of a certain nature or natures and not from others. It was for this reason also that Chaitanya, the great Vaishnava teacher, who was an embodiment of love itself, said: "Food, eaten of the worldly, defiles the mind" (*Vishayira anna khele dushta haya mana*).

But, as I say, this is not the main reason why Patañjali prescribes "a-parigraha" as one of the fundamental qualifications for Yoga. It is intended to set the soul free, and that this is so will be evident if we consider the result of "freedom from grasping greediness," as given by Patañjali himself.

He says: "When freedom from grasping greediness (a-parigraha, 'non-coveting,' 'non-receiving') is established, there arises the knowledge of the state of affairs in (former) incarnations" (II. 39).

That is to say, this virtue enables one to remember the past incarnations in every detail.

How? To understand that, we must remember that the soul, the real man, never forgets anything. It is the physical consciousness which does not include the past, because the present physical

body has nothing to do with the past bodies, beyond the fact that its genesis, as an effect, has been partly determined by the previous body, or bodies, as the cause. Memory depends on the association, and therefore to remember the past, we must be conscious in that part of our nature which links the present with the past ; in other words, we must have, even on the physical plane, the full consciousness of the soul. To possess that, we must transfer the centre, or seat of our normal consciousness, from the physical body to the region of the soul. Now this can be done only when our consciousness does not cling to anything lower, which, acting, as a heavy load, keeps the soul from soaring. As soon as that "clinging" or "grasping" is completely cut loose, the soul rises to the higher worlds, its own true home, the man retaining his full consciousness throughout. And there, having an unbroken link, an association with the past, it remembers it in all its details. Thus it is that "a-parigraha" is absolutely necessary for the would-be Yogin.

But all these rules are meant for the aspirant. The perfect Master is beyond all influences that may come from outside and can dominate them. Therefore, he can, if necessary to help the world or to do any other work which he sees fit, receive gifts from anybody, and live anywhere, and identify himself with anything. But as the aspirant has not reached such a level, it is not wise for him to try to imitate the Master in everything.

### QUESTION 83.

*In Light on the Path, the socialist and reformer are alike condemned for trying by sheer force to re-arrange circumstances which arise out of the forces of human nature itself. The book goes on to say that the disciple recognises that the very thought of individual rights is only the outcome of the snake of self, etc. Surely the material side of life needs its teachers as well as the mental, ethical, spiritual, etc. If this be granted, are socialists and reformers kicking against the pricks? Further, must not a disciple of necessity be a socialist, to avoid the thought of individual rights and the snake of self? (1891.)*

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stances which (in our view) are contrary to those forces, and prevent their free action.

But there are two ways of arriving at Socialism, and the distinction which M. C. really has in her mind in this passage is as important now as ever. You may come to it as an assertion of the Rights of Man, or as a definition of the Duty of Society. The more noisy preachers of Socialism take it from the former side, as the extreme point of what is usually known as Radicalism. This draws with it the whole of what M. C. condemns. Each individual of the lower classes has a "right" to be fed and clothed and lodged—a "right" to have his children taught free—a "right" to spend his earnings in getting drunk if he pleases, and so forth; whilst for the higher classes we have the "right" to make money without scruple out of the weakness and foolishness of others, and the "right" to squander the living of thousands of their fellow-men in riotous living or capricious founding of colleges and the like to their own honour and glory. These "rights" must be fought for, for you cannot expect those who suffer from them tamely to acquiesce; and every re-arrangement of Society founded upon *this* view, though dignified with the title of Socialism, must be in fact a system imposed by force—*brute* force in the fullest sense of the term, for every nobler instinct of humanity will rebel against it.

But the thoughtful and intelligent Socialists—those in whose brains lie the seeds of the actual future—take it from the other side, the side which appeals to the Theosophist. To them, as to us, the idea of individual "rights" is an anachronism, a "survival" of an outworn system. It is the fault of the organisation of society if a man has occasion to think of his "rights" at all. It is Society's business that everything should be arranged that he should be free to develop his Higher Ego—to become as much wiser and nobler as it lies in him to be: everything else is simply means to this end. This is Society's duty to the individual—this and nothing less; and when this is done, all is done. It involves constant interference with the lower desires of the individual, for the benefit of his own and others' higher soul; and it is not possible unless by such an arrangement as shall satisfy everyone of ordinary intelligence that the government, whatever it may be, has the wisdom to know, better than he does, how to carry this intention into effect. The first is a system of mutual hatred—everyone defending his rights against everyone else; the second is arranged

for the express purpose of developing mutual love, and must die if it fails of its object.

To the extent of this broad general statement, I think all Theosophists are socialists; but in trying to work out any system there must be room for endless differences of opinion. The reason why I myself should hesitate to say that even a "disciple" (and you must remember that this class is a strictly limited one) must "of necessity be a socialist" is a very simple one. Up to the present time, human development has proceeded on individualist lines. Progress has been made, so far, solely by emphasising individuality, and the time when society in general can move forwards purely by losing the individual in the common life is certainly not come at present. A *premature* Socialism would be a disastrous failure, even more disastrous than to continue for some time longer as we are. It is, so far, perfectly open to everyone to judge either that the time has not yet come, or that it is much nearer than more timid souls can believe; but in either case he must learn to bear patiently with those who are, as yet, forced by their retarded development to learn by degrees the unselfish love, through the lower struggle for the "meat that perisheth." Whether any modification of the present "struggle for life" *short* of Socialism can be of any permanent benefit is a question on which much will be said, and countless experiments tried for a long while to come; but it seems to me hardly possible that a disciple should not find his best hope and comfort in the vision of a future when mankind shall no longer need the harsh lessons of competitive struggle, but shall be fit and worthy to "live as the angels."

#### QUESTION 84.

*One often reads in theosophic books that the only way to gain real progress for ourselves is to work for others. Now I have done this for a long time and am haunted by the feeling that if I had spent the time in training and exercising my own powers instead of pouring out my energies on others on this lower plane, I should by this time have been able much more efficaciously to do good to them, as well as have stood much higher on the Path than I do. Is this only an illusion? I should be grateful for some explanation of the matter. (1901.)*

G. R. S. M.—We sympathise with our questioner's difficulty,

but do not think he need feel discouraged. He is evidently learning the lesson of discrimination in working for others, and has certainly started on right lines. He has discovered that "work for others" is not the same for all if there is to be progress. The first step on the path, it is true, is open to all men in one way or another; it consists of alleviating the physical distress of our fellows. This is a vast and most necessary sphere of work for others, but it is not the only sphere; it is the simplest kind of work, work which the least skilled workman can in some measure perform. But it is speedily apparent, even to the least skilful worker, that "man shall not live by bread alone," and thereafter he begins to perceive, though at first dimly, higher spheres of usefulness and work. But to accomplish this he must first of all make himself more fit to help. If this is his motive, the time he devotes to improving himself and fitting himself "to help and teach others," is time given not really to himself but to his fellows. By the help of this training and by his growth in understanding the nature of man and his needs, he perceives that much he has previously attempted, though it has been good for him in that it has developed the unselfish side of his nature, and, therefore, made for *his* progress, has really not benefited others so much as he imagined. They wanted, and they want, something more than bread, for they are men, not animals merely.

What we want in this world is not an infinite number of charitable institutions — for the more of these we create, the more we need; but an explanation of life—instruction on the nature and purpose of life and man, a science of the soul. The more hospitals we build, the more we want; disease is not thereby lessened. The more workhouses we construct, the more we increase pauperism. The more churches we build, the less people attend them.

With these facts staring us in the face it is time we turned our attention to some other kind of work for the benefit of our fellows. And if we members of the Theosophical Society ask ourselves the question why we have sought refuge in its ranks, most of us will answer: Because we found in it a nucleus whence light was thrown on these dark problems of life. Our work, then, is to let that light increase; and as the light radiates from within, our best means of allowing it to work on other minds is by purifying our own. This is the first lesson of wisdom; it teaches us that *we* can do nothing for others; all we can do is to minimise our



own imperfections, so that the Light of the Self may stream forth in greater power. This is true progress.

## QUESTION 85.

*I am by no means convinced (but quite the contrary) of the equality of men, either mentally or physically. And this being so, I cannot accede to the first "Object" of the Society. I believe in rank, station and caste—in the English sense; and can only affirm a very attenuated "brotherhood" with a South Sea Islander, for example. Can you give any explanation of this Object? (1901.)*

A. A. W.—I, for my part, am in entire sympathy with the querist's objection to admit the "brotherhood" of savage races, in the sense in which he seems to use the word. But this is not our doctrine. Brotherhood is *not* equality, either in a single family or the great World-Family to which we all belong.

"Brothers" we all are, in the sense that the same spark or Divinity dwells in all;—in the lowest savage as in the highest races, and that this must, sooner or later, be so developed that all may reach the goal of their evolution; but the differences between the advanced and the belated ones in this development are such as the usual and obvious distinction between *elder* and *younger* brothers is hardly strong enough to express.

In our view, the savage is a *baby* brother; and the word carries with it the whole of our relationship to him and the statement of our duties towards him; by no manner of means to treat him as *now* our equal; but also to remember that he is not a lower animal to be exterminated, but a human being—a child, needing our duteous care as he learns to walk. We must not expect any sudden spring forward to our own position, but patiently watch and guide his tottering feet in one small step after another. It is here that both "missionary enterprise" and secular attempts at civilisation fail; they insist on treating him as a "brother" in the wrong sense, and expect by some process of "enlightenment" to make a twentieth century Englishman out of him—as foolish as to think of "teaching" a three-year-old child to do a labourer's day's work. He can only *grow*, and that slowly (as in all works of Nature) by many repeated lives, in which he will no longer be a savage, to the point we have already attained.

The same principle is applicable to the ignorant and degraded classes of our own nation. I cannot myself see anything unreasonable or objectionable in such a statement of "Brotherhood." On the contrary, it seems to me to express and harmonise the actual facts of Nature as no other view does ; and that it would, alone, be sufficient to commend our doctrines to an unprejudiced and enlightened mind.

QUESTION 86.

*How may I learn to apply the theosophical teachings to everyday life in detail? The great majority cannot devote their lives to Theosophy. They are here to work and fight and love, and keep the business side of the world moving. Therefore they can but master the general principles and try to apply them.*

*Do you think a complete abnegation of self and earthly things is to be desired or aimed at for the rank and file? Is it practicable? (1901.)*

A. P. S.—The question is admirably answered by the questioner himself. The majority can but master general principles and try to apply them. One might add they cannot do better. But if they really master general principles they do, perhaps, more than they think. Firstly, if those principles govern their action in this life they are making very good Karma, which will tell in more ways than one next time. And secondly, they will find, as a consequence of such mastery, that the after "death" conditions of life are enormously improved as compared to what they would have been otherwise. The astral world, if they linger there for any time worth speaking of, will be happy and useful instead of bewildered and comfortless, and their Devachanic period will be enriched in many ways that will conduce to the spiritual progress of the Ego. Anyone who masters general principles in this life will be pretty certain to do a good deal more in the next, even if the greater part of his energies, this time, may be spent upon the reasonable pursuit of legitimate objects of worldly ambition. The abnegation of self is undeniably a very fine ideal, and for that matter its attainment in the highest degree is entirely compatible with work, fight and love, especially with the last-named occupation.

G. R. S. M.—When a similar question was put to one of the Wise Ones of the earth, it is reported that He answered : "Sell

all that thou hast and give to the poor and come and follow me." In this case the young man had great possessions, and the Master was there before him in a physical body. The choice for him was to become a disciple and servant of the Master in a distinct and special task at a certain time. Now if everybody were foolishly to apply this saying to himself, there would be an end of society, and therewith of the man-process on this earth, for all would become wandering ascetics. Such a pronouncement interpreted universally would mean that the Christ was of opinion that the whole world process was a failure. It is evident, therefore, that unto another He would have said otherwise, and so unto each according to his spiritual need. It follows, therefore, that no answer can be given to our question unless the whole of our querent's life and circumstances is known.

I suppose that it is "desirable" that the rank and file should be "Christ," but it is at present entirely outside the sphere of the practical; the following of the Christ and the "imitation" is to be interpreted spiritually and not literally; and a man who spends his life wisely distributing a large fortune to deserving objects is in all probability a more self-denying follower of the Christ than one who gives it away in a lump and becomes a recluse. Everyone has his own task or duty to perform, and it has been wisely said that the doing of one's own duty or natural task—one's Dharma—though indifferently, is better than doing that of another with great success. So long as we try to squeeze all men into the same mould, so long will there issue forth cripples; and any system of theology which outrages nature is doomed to eventual disappearance among the unfit. Theosophy does *not* desire to make all men lank ascetics or perpetual praying-machines, but active helpers in the heart of life, glad citizens of a beautiful estate.

## DIVISION XXIX

### DESTRUCTION OF ANIMAL LIFE

#### QUESTION 87.

*Might I ask through the VĀHAN what is the attitude of Theosophy towards forms of life that are considered by us disagreeable or harmful—such for instance as vermin and poisonous or savage creatures? Does the teaching require of us an acceptance of the discomforts or dangers as karma—or does it give us any advice with regard to remedying these manifestations; and also how might we answer the objections raised by the anti-vegetarian that by not using animals, etc., for food they would so over-run the world as to make it uninhabitable for man? (1901.)*

M. P.—The “teachings” of Theosophy do not, as far as I am aware, lay down stringent rules as to our attitude towards vermin and such like pests, their toleration or extermination being left to the individual conscience. All of us—who are trying to be Theosophists—would, I take it rather:

Kill not for Pity's sake, and lest we stay  
The meanest thing upon its upward way.

But, alas! in this complicated, civilised life of ours we are sometimes forced to choose the lesser of two evils. I *need* not kill for food; I *need* not kill for sport; I *need* not (by deputy) “tear plumes from living and dead bodies” for the adornment of my own body; if my house is isolated I *can* keep mice and blackbeetles at bay; but in our towns, where people in clean houses and people in dirty houses congregate side by side, unless I resort to destruction, cockroaches and mice would conquer me, and so I take the karma of keeping my house free.

By “poisonous or savage creatures,” I presume snakes and wild

animals are meant. But these creatures do not, as a rule, seek out man to injure him ; they know their enemy and avoid his atmosphere. It is civilised man alone who kills and wounds for "sport."

As for that ancient argument, apparently still in use, that "by not using animals for food they would over-run the world," the increase of domestic animals is strictly regulated by demand ; they do not increase *ad lib.* Animals are not allowed to breed unless the breeder foresees a distinct profit from the transaction.

In a state of Nature amongst wild creatures, the increase or extinction of species is determined by the food supply, and the survival of the fittest seems, up to now, to have kept things evenly balanced.

A. A. W.—What is the attitude of *Theosophy* towards this question no one will venture to say ; and even an individual Theosophist who dares to express his own personal view does so at a certain amount of risk. One thing may be safely laid down ; that the teaching does not require an acceptance of any discomforts or dangers whatever as Karma, provided we can lawfully escape them. It can never be our Karma to endure what we ourselves can remedy ; the doctrine is a consolation for unavoidable evils, not an excuse for mere inaction. But what means of escape *are* lawful is a thorny question, on which (as far as I know) the "teachings" leave us to our own decision. Some, as the Jains of India, think no means of escape are lawful. In the course of my religious life I have had to associate with certain holy brethren who held this doctrine. Whether they were holier in this life or higher up in the next for it I cannot say ; but I can testify that their neighbourhood was exceedingly disagreeable and provocative of "sins of the tongue" to others—myself by no means excepted !

I think that those who do not go this full length will find it hard to justify the drawing of the line anywhere short of admitting that the lives of our inferiors—those below us in evolution—are in our hands ; to be disposed of, not capriciously but conscientiously, as the best interests of the advancing race may require. To those who fear that to admit this would seem to encourage wanton cruelty and destruction I would say that the "teachings" are never weary of assuring us that such things bring their own penalty, and that we never need fear they will go unpunished, even if human justice should fail. As an instance, one might take the case of the man-eating tiger, or the venomous snakes in India.

They are not sinners—they are following their nature—but that nature in the present state of things brings them into play as a force working in *the wrong direction*, interfering with the development of beings higher than themselves, and they not only *may* but *must* be prevented from hindering—even at the cost of taking their lives if nothing short of this will avail. The slaying of animals for food, or using them for study of medicine, etc., falls under the same rule. I entirely decline to admit to the vegetarian that I have no *right* to use animal food, provided it be necessary or useful to do so; but I am fully open to be convinced that it is *not* necessary or useful, if he brings arguments which approve themselves to my reason. It is a question, not of sentiment, but of fact.

I may add that it is beyond question that this is the way in which the Powers above deal with *us*. In the working out of the plans of Those who deal with *our* evolution human beings are slain and “vivisected” without scruple, and by thousands at a time. In all cases, whether of men or animals, this is but a destruction and recreation of forms; and those who may reasonably enough dispute the wisdom of some of our dealings with the lower creation have happily no cause to fear the consequences of anything done to us by Those above us, who see the end.

## DIVISION XXX

### INCURABLE DISEASE, TORTURE, AND DEFORMITY

#### QUESTION 88.

1. *If an animal—say a dog or a horse—is badly wounded, or incurably diseased, and suffering pain for which there is no remedy, is it right to kill it and thus put an end to its suffering?*
2. *If a human being is suffering from an incurable disease, rendering him a burden on his friends and relations, and requiring laborious and disagreeable nursing, would he be justified in committing suicide so as to put an end to the distress of those around him?*
3. *If a child is born with repulsive deformities of a kind that could obviously never be remedied, would a medical attendant be justified (with the consent of the parents) in destroying it, and should the law be so altered as to provide sanction for such a course? (1900.)*

A. P. S.—My own beliefs oblige me to answer “yes” to all three questions in this group. No doubt the general results of theosophic study lead us to respect life in a greater degree than was usual with our ancestors. In an increasing degree we shrink from putting criminals to death, and humane feeling now forbids this except in extreme cases. People outside the circle of theosophic influence continue to kill some birds and animals for sport, but that habit, the bequest of a barbarous age, will probably be discontinued under the simple influence of humane feeling, even before the theosophic motive for regarding it with loathing is generally appreciated. But all movements of thought carrying us away from primitive error are liable to hurry their exponents, for a time, into some fanatical excess, and respect

for life even may be exaggerated till it becomes absurd or even mischievous. Nature herself exhibits no respect for life. The scheme of evolution provides for its wholesale destruction at every point of the compass; at every moment of the clock. When it suits an emergency, human creatures, as well as the animals around them, are swept off the face of the earth by millions. But human governments would not be justified in imitating such proceedings. We do not know enough to feel justified in destroying a race outright merely because it is ignoble and degraded. On the other hand, we do feel justified in taking individual lives, when atrocious crimes have disgraced them—and if some theosophical writers disapprove of capital punishment even in such cases, that is merely on the selfish ground that the criminal may be more dangerous on the astral plane than in prison. The question is one that might be debated on its own merits; but those now before us are simpler. The consciousness of the suffering animal can only be released by its death. It is inconceivable that the volume of spiritual energy to which it belongs can be prejudiced by the suppression of the one unfortunate manifestation. The action of the person who destroys it is—by the hypothesis—purely benevolent, and it would be childish to imagine bad karma attaching to any such action.

The problem of the human being releasing himself from suffering by suicide is more intricate. Such suffering could hardly be otherwise than karmic. To evade it might be, for the person chiefly concerned, to involve its recurrence in another life. But when the motive has honest reference to the comfort of others it seems fantastic to suppose that any evil consequences of a persistent nature could attach to an act that would be practically one of self-sacrifice. It is quite possible that on the astral plane, a person escaping in the manner supposed from a sick bed of suffering, would find that he was merely exchanging one disagreeable condition for another. The self-sacrifice might *not* turn out an immediate translation to bliss; but that is merely equivalent to saying that it would be in reality, as well as in intention, an act of self-sacrifice. Astral plane conditions are so varied and our information about them so imperfect as yet, that few of us can feel any assurance about the course of events after death where the circumstances are abnormal. But meanwhile it seems to me that any answer to the question under notice



would be founded on superstition, and not on reason or common-sense, if it forbade euthanasia under the conditions imagined.

And what excuse could we have for being accessories after the fact in an accident of Nature that has given rise to a human monstrosity?—a creature condemned from the outset of its existence to be a perennial spring of misery for itself and others. Will it be argued that the deformed organism fitted into the scheme of karma and was designed as a penal incarnation for some grievously erring Ego? The argument is one which, carried to its logical conclusions, would forbid us to attempt a remedy for any state of suffering that might be developed. If a man has a wen on his head it must not be removed because it may be a karmic infliction! If a child has bow legs they must not be straightened because the Ego might have been required by Nature to express itself in that fashion! As the human race grows in wisdom and capacity it will more and more be trusted by Nature to set right her occasional unavoidable accidents, and an Ego caught for a moment in a deformed incarnation would stand deeply indebted to the kind friends who turned its back from that miserable path of distress—much more deeply indebted indeed than the curable cripple, whose bodily vehicle should be successfully repaired by the same intelligent lieutenants of Providence.

A. M. F. C.—1. If in every earth-life we reap what we have sown, neither more nor less, is it a rational act to cut short such a life with the idea of saving others from distress?

2. Is any "accident of Nature" outside the Law of Karma? May not human alleviation of human ills be part of karmic law? But can we ordinarily know enough to dare to cut short the *human* earth-life even of a deformed infant?

I ask the questions very humbly, because in my work I have fought for the "No" to those very questions to which A. P. S. answers "Yes." I remember a case where a child, on being roused from a swoon at a critical moment during a dangerous sickness, cried and reproached us for "bringing her back." An old friend of mine, a man of genius, but poor and without near relatives, and dying of an agonising malady, begged and entreated for opium to end his torture. In these and other like cases, I never had a doubt that our duty was to insist on each earth-life running out its whole length without shortening, either by doing or leaving undone. The apparent cruelty of forcing people to live with incurable diseases, and the miseries that often come to them-

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 selves and others through the prolonging of their lives, often at the cost of immense labour and expense, has often made me feel as if I had done evil rather than good ; but I had no doubt that suicide—expect to escape dishonour, in the case of an otherwise defenceless woman—was always a crime against the Law—the Natural Law. But if it is lawful to commit suicide under certain circumstances, it cannot be a duty to prevent it in others, or to force remedies on them, under those same circumstances.

It is a common belief amongst the lower classes that seven months' babies need not be kept alive. This belief I have condemned and fought as I would the will to murder. Yet these fragile, abnormal infants are almost certain to grow up diseased and burdensome to themselves and others. Often I have fought for the prolonging of human life, without one single reason except the belief that it was a universal law to preserve such life whenever any responsibility rested on me. But if, in any case, it is lawful (in the highest sense) to take life, then where should the line be drawn ? If at absolute monstrosities, not wholly human, I think the line would be distinct enough.

A. P. S.—I should like to say a few words in reply to A. M. F. C. The points on which A. M. F. C. expressly differs from me, relate, firstly, to the question whether it could be right to give an overdose of opium to a person dying of an agonising malady. That question, let me point out, differs from the one which I answered in the affirmative. My problem was whether a person in the position to act for himself, would be justified in putting an end to his own life if he knew that his disease was incurable, and a cause of protracted suffering to others around him. I think my affirmative answer can be supported on the principle which is held sufficient for some geometrical proofs, the *reductio ad absurdum*. Suppose the man is not mistaken ; suppose he could know that some karmic penalty would attach to his act, and suppose him to say, "I would rather bear that karmic penalty than let my friends suffer any longer," is it conceivable that such an act of self-sacrifice could really be held blameworthy in the sight of exalted intelligence ? It may reasonably be asked whether such conditions are ever likely to arise : that is beside the question. I want simply to show that even some doctrines connected with the taking of life which do apply to the vast majority of cases that arise, may themselves be worshipped too unintelligently, that even in this domain of thought there can hardly be rules to which

there is no exception. The problem raised by your correspondent is itself an interesting one, though differing from that with which I was concerned. It seems to me to come on to rather more debatable ground, but granting that no mistake is made in the conditions, I lean to think that the friend administering the overdose might conceivably come into the category of those who, for the sake of another, are willing to run a personal risk, and in that way would approximate in its nature pretty closely to the simpler case with which I was dealing.

But this problem in either of its aspects lies almost outside the region of practical politics. The question whether it is right to destroy grievously deformed infants, is one with which we are much more likely to have personal concern, and the idea I maintained, that in some cases such destruction would be quite justifiable—apt I know to shock long-established feeling and to conflict with some of the formal conceptions that have been developed with reference to the Law of Karma—is nevertheless one which can be brought to the test of the *reductio ad absurdum* like the problem before discussed. Can anyone in his senses pretend to think that, in some rare and distressing case, in which a woman gives birth to a creature which is not in any outward sense a human being, but simply a horrible monstrosity, such as we know have occasionally come into the world by an “accident of nature”—as I should be inclined to say—can anyone pretend to think that the duty of those around is to make all efforts in their power to preserve this wretched life and rear this hideous being to be a curse to all with whom it may have to do? Such a pretence would be a still more extravagant act of fanaticism than that of which we hear amongst the Indian fakirs, who will not move a step without sweeping the ground lest they unconsciously destroy some form of life. That, at all events, is a harmless folly. The act of preserving a monstrosity would be in its real nature, if properly understood, a crime against the community. For the rest, the question simply is one of drawing the line. What accident or deformity shall be held to constitute monstrosity of the kind which ought to be suppressed? It is quite outside the purpose with which I write to attempt to draw such a line. I am simply endeavouring to guard theosophic thinkers from a misdirected excess of veneration for a principle which, of course, in the vast majority of cases, is perfectly sound—the principle of allowing karma to take its course in regard to the form assigned

by nature for any given entity. But it is a part of the whole scheme of evolution that, in its later chapters, the human beings who are its product, as they advance in wisdom and spiritual trustworthiness, shall help nature to accomplish her higher purposes. There are many tasks which at the outset of her great evolutionary undertaking she has to leave imperfectly fulfilled. As more and more of her human children attain to years of discretion, in which they can render her assistance, so these tasks become more and more satisfactorily fulfilled; and surely when the discretion has been sufficiently attained, one of the tasks to be performed will be the correction of accidental "errors and omissions" which may enter even into the mighty balance-sheet of human merit and mistake. This last idea is one which it is impossible to elaborate within the limits of such a letter as I am now writing, but it is one to which profound students of the Karmic Law must sooner or later turn their earnest attention.

A. H. W.—The writer does not wonder that A. M. F. C. is not quite satisfied. It is one thing to lay down the law in the abstract, and another to be confronted with the awful problem of carrying it out in practice. The original question is divided into three parts:

- (1) Is it right to kill a suffering animal?
- (2) Is it right to commit suicide to relieve others' distress?
- (3) Is it right to kill a child born with repulsive deformities?

The answer to these problems, the writer thinks, is essentially one, and it depends on another question: "What is the object of physical incarnation?" As far as the writer can understand the teachings of theosophy, the object of life is to evolve new centres of consciousness in the Universal Mind. "The One willed to multiply," and the whole Universe and all in it is the expression of that Will. If this is so, then the object of personal existence, either animal or human, is the evolution of the individual Ego, the conscious centre; potential in the animal, actual in the man. The only thing which can cause the evolution of the Ego is experience, whether pleasant or painful is immaterial from this point of view. "It sounds brutal to say so, but our feelings don't matter," we have heard Mrs Besant say. Experience, then, is the one thing needful, and experience is gained through the physical body. If therefore we kill an animal which is suffering, we rob it of experience, and so retard the evolution

of its consciousness. This will be a "hard saying" to those who are "frightened at the sight of the hot tears of pain, and deafened by the cries of distress," but if the evolution of consciousness is the object of life, it is true. If the enjoyment of physical pleasure and the avoidance of physical pain is the object of life, it is not true.

The same principle applies to the question of suicide; the incidental sufferings of the person involved, and of those karmically bound to him, are beside the point. Suicide is shirking experience; it is also futile, since it only postpones the evil day for everyone concerned. The great law cannot be got behind or evaded, or run away from; the conservation of energy rules on all planes, and action and re-action are everywhere equal and opposite. The uttermost farthing must be paid, just as water must find its level. There is no room for "accidents," since there cannot be effects without causes. Either the universe is a coherent evolution, with cause and effect running straight on from first to last, or it is a fortuitous concatenation of atoms; that it can be partly one and partly the other is inconceivable.

Take the last question about the deformed infant. Would A. P. S. be prepared to strangle one with his own fingers? Would he further be prepared to state the *actual* cause of death on the certificate? Or would he put his name to a lie? These are some of the details which would confront a would-be "intelligent lieutenant of Providence" in cases of life and death.

If the object of life then is the evolution of consciousness, the writer joins A. M. F. C. in answering "No" to the last two questions. Brought to the test of practice, in the case of the animal, he would probably swerve from the straight line of abstract duty; but he would do it with his eyes open, and recognise that the selfish desire to escape the sight of its sufferings was his real motive. He entirely believes that the alleviation of human ills is part of karmic law; what else than this is it to "help to lift the heavy karma of the world"? There is no labour too great, no patience too inexhaustible to lavish on such work. But the line must be drawn at murder and suicide. Who are we to dare to put a term to human life? It is our duty to preserve it as long as we can, painlessly if possible; to turn round and end it prematurely is to undertake the "dharma of another"—the hangman—"and the dharma of another is full of danger." Even in the case of a woman's suicide to escape dishonour, the law

must hold; for what is even this from the point of view of the immortal Ego? Such a calamity would inevitably be a karmic debt, not to be escaped. "To gain knowledge we must have gone through *all* places, foul and clean alike." Again, it is obvious that a "monstrous" incarnation must be directly karmic; could such a tremendous experience be an accident, unless every experience is the result of pure chance? The Ego involved would only have to go through the same experience again if its physical life were destroyed. Happily such incarnations seldom last long; and it would seem wisest to allow the distorting energies to exhaust themselves, lest a second incarnation be spoilt.

How can we tell what experiences an Ego has to go through? Would it not have been a mistake to have destroyed Byron, or the armless artist of Brussels? It is the writer's conviction, for the above reasons, that A. M. F. C. is perfectly right in striving to save life under all circumstances, regardless of the desires of the patient, or the miseries, labours, and expenses of his friends. These painful experiences are inevitable, and must be faced with fortitude; if evaded now they will only return later, since "no efforts, whether in right or wrong direction, can vanish from the world of causes."

E. S.—These questions are of wider scope than appears at first sight. "Suicide" is a word applicable in its strict sense to the act of any man who voluntarily sacrifices his life for others, of which history, ancient and modern, furnishes sufficient examples, from the (possibly mythical, but still typical) case of Curtius down to the self-sacrifice of a miner to save his mates in a mining disaster. Such acts have generally been regarded as acts of heroism, but if A. M. F. C.'s conclusions are to be admitted, must be regarded as violations of the "Law." Moreover, we must change our ideals, and deeds hitherto held up for admiration by some of our best writers must be reprobated. Thus, the author of *Jackanapes* set a bad ideal in making her hero say, "Leave you, to save my skin! No! not to save my soul!" and even in a recent number of the *Theosophical Review*, "Michael Wood" gives an immoral (?) lesson in his story of the Water Gates, and the "suicide" of the Prince to save his country. Ruskin has even gone so far as to call "grand" the Captain of the "London" electing to go down with his ship, instead of saving himself, a case in which there was not even any justification of saving others thereby, but only a possibly mistaken sense of honour. George Macdonald, who is

certainly a writer of pure and lofty mind, in one of his faery tales, says that when a country cannot find a man willing to give his life for her, it is time for her to suffer. Such are examples of the trend of opinion among our best and wisest.

According to A. H. W. it is an unjustifiable interference with the "Law of Karma" to kill either man or animal, under *any* circumstances. The argument, or position rather, if true, applies *equally* to a noxious insect, a dangerous reptile or animal, and to a man, although he would perhaps admit that there might be degrees of turpitude in the several cases. Then we must have no soldiers, no navy, no defences that might endanger life to an aggressor. It might be said that if England adopted these views, it would not be long before some foreign nation took us in charge, and conscripted our men to fight their own battles. But it may be held, we have only to do what is right (absolutely right, irrespective of circumstances) and having nothing to do with results. Good; but before doing what must necessarily bring disaster, let us at least be sure that we are acting in obedience to Divine Law; and not merely to a, possibly erroneous, conception of that Law.

To examine the premises taken, and to follow them to the conclusion, would be an undertaking not less onerous than a corresponding examination of, say, Calvinistic teaching. Certainly it is no proof of error that the conclusions arrived at by A. H. W. are opposed to popular opinion; or to material interests. But, although a critical examination cannot be made in little space, it may be permitted to suggest that *possibly* we do not know *quite* all about "karma" and its working. And in view of the truly diabolical cruelty exercised by man on man—as for instance to allude only to the doings of the Spanish Inquisition, established under Ferdinand and Isabella, during some centuries—it may even, perhaps, occur to some as just possible, that even the Universe is not perfect, and that the wisdom regulating it is not *absolute*, though far greater than it is possible for any of us even approximately to realise.

Be this as it may, such questions as those referred to, need to be dealt with somewhat at least in conformity to what is practical, in the existing condition of society. Otherwise, they are purely academical, as to which volumes might be written to the benefit of no one.

I should like to make a remark or two on the quotation made

by A. H. W. from Mrs Besant, that "our feelings don't matter." The context to this statement is not given. Standing by itself, it must be regarded as meant in reference to the illimitable future; that no happening in time can matter in respect to Eternity, except in so far as the infinite future is thereby modified. Mrs Besant's record does not permit us to believe that she can view with indifference either human or any other suffering. The expression is a grand and elevating one, and such as, realised by a martyr at the stake, might enable him to triumph over, and even to exult in his present torments. But the expression cannot have been intended to encourage indifference to suffering, to weaken the hands of such helpers as would strive to mitigate remediable pains. Hence it is out of place in its present connection.

M. E. G.—I would like to draw attention to one or two views of the subject, which have not yet been touched upon. Firstly, with regard to: Is it right to kill a suffering animal? To me it seems that a decided yes or no cannot satisfactorily cover the whole ground included in this question—that modifications must arise. For example: Surely some distinction would be drawn between the moth burnt in the candle, fluttering in physical agony on the table, and the dog or horse, the friend and comrade of years, in whom we have watched the dawning intelligence, and noted the upward climb. The first would only be a setting free of the life essence to evolve perchance in new and happier form, the second *might* be the retardation for untold millenniums of an individual soul. We do not hesitate to annihilate by thousands lice and such like vermin, the carriers of disease and the direct outcome of dirt, but it is a very different matter to take upon ourselves the limitation of a line of experience, which is within measurable distance of self-consciousness.

The second point, whether suicide is right in order to relieve the distress of others, suggests at once the counter question "Does suicide save the situation?" According to A. P. S. man has reached the point in evolution when, to put it plainly, "he may have a finger in the pie." But has he? For the sake of argument let us grant him the right to interfere on the physical plane. He looks round, he considers that with his ripe judgment he may make some improvements, and so he acts. But what is the immediate result of his action? What about the planes he cannot see; the forces let loose in the astral world; the disturbance set agoing in the mental world? Even on the physical plane, the



combination will have to be worked through, some time, in some future life. Would it not be better to wait patiently till the outward body perisheth, and the inward man, renewing day by day, shineth with a lustre that the eyes of those around must be blind indeed not to see? It seems to me, that not until a man can consciously function in the three worlds is he in a position to remedy "Nature's mistakes," and when that moment of wider consciousness arrives, is it not as workers together *with* Him and not in re-arranging His work, that we shall be employed?

Of the third question I will not speak. Both A. M. F. C. and A. H. W. have fully dealt with the subject, and the conclusions, if I understand aright, follow the lines indicated above.

D. G.—As the discussion of the morality of sacrificing another's life to save him from pain is being continued, I trust you will allow me to add my quota. I knew, a good many years ago, an Englishman in India who told me that his wife once gave birth to a living child, whose jaws, nose and temple had failed to meet in the front of the face from chin to top of head. It was a case of hare-lip in excess. The babe could not have suckled and must have died of starvation. The father, with the knowledge of the doctor, put the babe into a bucket of water, and advertised in the "Domestic Occurrences" the birth of a child "still-born." In this, in my humble opinion, he acted wisely. Such things, fortunately, happen very rarely. But I can conceive of no case of malformation, such as want of a limb or limbs, or no severity of disease, which would warrant the medical man to consent to the life being taken.

I think we shall be helped if we look at the question from the theosophical standpoint. The soul is the Master, the Lord of that bundle of minute living cells each with its own separate soul and body, life which in their aggregate is called the body—"my body"—and from the moment of conception, this body is being watched over by the Lord, who is in due course to inhabit it. As my body grows, my mind has, during this or future lives, to grasp the fact that "my body is mine, but it is not I myself." The recognition of this fact, that my fleshly body is dominated by my spiritual entity, is the first step in the reception into the heart of the Wisdom-Religion of "conversion" so-called in the New Testament, of being "twice-born" as taught in the Vedānta of the Sanskrit scriptures. My spiritual Lord enters my body for the purpose of gaining experience on the physical plane. Yes, and much more. He, knowing in past lives the sin and misery that reigned here,

temporary, no doubt, but none the less real for all that, is sent by the Supreme as a Christ to bear the trouble and shame of my upbringing, to witness the miserably foolish way in which time after time I, refusing to think, fall into errors of diet and drink, of sexual and other unwise indulgences of many kinds. He bears with my folly, puts heart into me again and again, and helps me to recover from sicknesses which are the karma, the plain result of my foolish ignorance. It is not the medicine which cures, but the warmth, the perspiration, the necessary partial or total abstinence from food, the excretions of uric acid through the skin in the form of eruptions, boils, and infectious diseases, and, above all, the visible presence of a kind-hearted doctor and sympathetic nurse, which are my real medicine.

So after accident or sickness of the most wasting and wearisome kind, my Lord, who has watched over me and carefully tended me during the long preparation of childhood and youth or maidenhood will not leave me in my manhood or womanhood. He will not leave me during sickness, nor after a so-called fatal dose of poison, nor the bite of a poisonous snake, if I am willing to stay on, to bear the intense pain of corrosive arsenic, or the heavy sleep supervening upon snake poison, chloral or opium. If we have learned to look to Him, the poison or the uric acid will work off painfully or painlessly, we shall be taught to sleep through the collapse stage of cholera and the intense headache of plague. The inflammation of the mucous membrane will cease, the weakness change to strength, and we shall recover. It is most common for people to die from the bite of harmless snakes, of hydrophobia from the bite of dogs free from rabies, and the heart of a Hindoo plague patient often ceases to beat as soon as he realises that he is in a cot in a plague hospital. It is fear that kills; fear is the cause of severe sickness in the large majority of instances. We take chills because we fear to expose ourselves to the chilly air, we die because we fear death. As St. Paul says, "fear hath torment," but he adds, "perfect love casteth out fear." Love, reverence and devotion to my Lord within, who is for me the Angel Messenger of the Supreme, sent to me for my salvation from physical and moral disease. The knowledge which grows with our spiritual growth of the immanence of the Indweller gives the meaning of the Lord Christ's saying, "the kingdom of God is within you." And then when we learn to look to Him for wisdom, He teaches us to avoid, to abstain from harmful foods and

practices, and so keep body and mind in health, until in old age, or even in middle age, when no more useful experience is obtainable for us or Him in this incarnation, *and we are ready to go*, He gives us a painless passing away, free from disease.

It is such experience that we have to look forward to hopefully in the future. The work of the fifth race is to prepare the merging into the sixth. It has already begun. The four last verses of St. Mark's gospel are true. The Christian Scientists have grasped their truth as the foundation of their medical practice in the cure of physical and moral disease. They have learned as a principal part of their teaching that "Pain has no reality, there is no such thing as pain." This fact makes cure from accident and disease so wonderfully rapid, as in many cases to bear the appearance of miracle. I am not connected with them, but have read their books. I have recovered from a bad railway accident, and know that their above-quoted formula is true. All disease, all pain is caused by *want of willingness* to ask *within* for wisdom and strength. The suggestion in thought to myself immediately after my accident on recovering consciousness was, "Is it possible that for me pain does not exist?" The answer came instantaneously in absolute cessation of pain.

A. M. F. C.—May I thank A. P. S., and very specially A. H. W., for the attention and trouble they have given to my difficulty in seeing all round the subject of suicide and the taking of life?

In reply to E. S. I must disclaim any idea of controversy in the VÂHAN, and call attention to the fact that the "taking," not the "giving," of one's life is the subject under discussion; I think none of us who discuss these questions are likely to criticise acts of devotion to duty, involving death, or of giving one's life for the saving of another's. I may remark, too, that anyone who thought he knew all about the Law would not need to ask others what they knew of it, in order to compare notes! And why assert a fact so obvious as the imperfection of the government of the Universe judged by the conduct of man? The cattle market in this cathedral town is sufficient evidence of that fact, without going some centuries back to Spain—or even less than a century, to Ireland.

It was from A. P. S. long ago in an Italian village, that I learnt my first lessons in Esoteric Buddhism. His opinions on any subject must have weight with me. Yet, having read all that has been written in this discussion, I am convinced that it is better

not to take one's own life under *any* circumstances, because even the trouble one might wish to save one's friends is probably part of their karma, and will only be put off: and any such violent and ignorant action, intended to end trouble, is just as likely to prolong it.

And I withdraw my one former exception, and hold that it is better to suffer any dishonour than to cut one's life short in order to escape it. Life is so hard and death so full of interest and possibilities, that heroism and duty seem to be on the side of the resolution to live.

## DIVISION XXXI

### RESPONSIBILITY AND THE VEHICLES

#### QUESTION 89.

*Are the activities of his vehicles the thinker's answer to impacts, and is he responsible for the attitude of his vehicles towards impacts, or have these vehicles each a will of their own which is responsible to the thinker for the vehicle's condition, whether gross or fine? (1901.)*

G. R. S. M.—I can do no better than refer to the answer of a young Christian Theosophist who wrote eighteen centuries ago on the very same subject. We have still extant some fragments of a remarkable treatise written by Isidorus, son of Basilides, under the title *On an Appended Soul*. The theory of the appendages of the soul deals more particularly with the desire-nature or "body of the passions"; but the idea underlying it may be extended to include the full scope of the above question.

Clement of Alexandria tells us that the thinkers among whom Basilides was held in the greatest honour, were accustomed to give the name of appendages (or accretions) to the passions. "These essences, they say, have a certain substantial existence, and are attached to the rational soul, owing to a certain turmoil and primitive confusion." In other words, the passionate nature is a living entity or organism, or rather a congeries of entities, a protean animal essence—the so-called astral vehicle.

On this important subject and the question of moral responsibility, Isidorus wrote as follows: "Were I to persuade anyone that the real soul is not a unit, but that the passions of the wicked are occasioned by the compulsion of the appended natures, no common excuse then would the worthless of mankind have for saying, 'I was compelled, I was carried away, I did it without

wishing to do so, I acted unwillingly'; whereas it was the man himself who led his desire towards evil, and refused to do battle with the constraints of the appendages. Our duty is to show ourselves rulers over the inferior creation within us, gaining the mastery by means of our rational principle."

The main idea in the above is that every human entity is a small world in himself; he has so much of the great world entrusted to him, so that he may be schooled in ruling, and win his way to still vaster realms of conquest and ever greater responsibilities. The task is one of self-conquest. He is responsible for his world, for the "lower creation" entrusted to him; he must "set his house in order," or be content with chaos. It is no good his trying to shirk the task by fixing the responsibility on the shoulders of the "creatures" entrusted to his care; if he does so, it is they who will become the masters of his realm, and dethrone him from his high estate, so that he no longer will be the viceroy of the King but the slave of His servants.

B. K.—I am disposed to think that, *in a certain sense*, each of the thinker's vehicles has a "will of its own." Not of course a centralised, self-conscious will, such as we know in ourselves, and therefore habitually associate with the term "will," but a directive and purposive energy more or less conscious, though not self-conscious. This "will" of the vehicles seems to me to manifest itself most prominently as the self-preservative instinct, which, for instance, will cause the physical body to endeavour to save itself from injury, even against the conscious, deliberate effort of the thinker's will, or will sometimes assert itself in the demand for food or the satisfaction of other bodily needs in spite of his endeavours to control and subdue it. It is St. Paul's "Law of the members," which wages war against the over-ruling "law of the spirit." And thus one part of the task comprised in the thinker's own evolution is the learning how to guide and control this "self-will" of his vehicles, and the acquiring of the power to enforce obedience upon them.

Since, however, these vehicles exist only because of the thinker, and for his use and service, and their "self-will" is but, at bottom, the synthesis of the natural tendencies and modes of action proper to such a composite and built-up structure as are these vehicles, it seems obvious that the ultimate responsibility must rest with the thinker himself. For it must be remembered that when such a vehicle finally breaks up, there is *not* left any surviving "central"

consciousness or "will," such as belongs to the thinker when he has cast off his vehicles. So when we speak of the "self-will" of a vehicle, that must not be taken to imply more than the fact, observable and demonstrable in every department of life, that any composite living structure—and for all I know, any so-called inorganic structure also—*acts as a unit* and exhibits tendencies and modes of action which certainly do not belong to the elements of which it is built up when studied separately and apart.

I am quite aware that, in connection with this view of the matter, there arise very grave *philosophical* difficulties, to which, so far, I know of no perfectly satisfactory solution. But I believe these difficulties arise mainly from the fact that in speaking or writing about such matters one is compelled to envisage them from outside, while if looked at really from within these difficulties would be recognised as due merely to the limitations of our present mental powers and faculties. At any rate there can, I think, be no doubt that our various vehicles, especially our physical bodies, *do* actually and frequently display a "will of their own," which it costs us—the thinkers using those vehicles—many a struggle and much long-continued effort to overcome.

I cannot see how the idea of *responsibility* can accurately be applied at all to a vehicle—even when it has a "will of its own." For the idea of responsibility can only apply where there is *choice*, self-conscious and deliberate *choice*, and that as we have seen is not the case with our self-willed vehicles. They are, of course, subject to the law of cause and effect or karma *in its widest sense*, but merely in the same way as is an atom of oxygen which severs its union with hydrogen in water in order to unite with an atom of potassium which happens to be thrown into the water of which it formed part.

The domain of responsibility is that of moral choice; and such choice implies self-conscious determination, which belongs to the nature of the thinker alone, and accrues to him even only by slow degrees as his unfoldment advances.

There remains one more point, more or less raised in the question. We must clearly distinguish between the spontaneous activities of a vehicle in response to impacts from without, and those activities which the thinker sets going in the vehicle as *his* response to the impacts which the activity of the vehicle makes upon him. For—and this seems a very important point which we are often apt to lose sight of—for the *only* knowledge which the

thinker *can* have of the outside world is precisely and exactly the *effect which the outside world produces upon his vehicles* and nothing more. Hence every limitation in the response of a vehicle to the world around it, every imperfection or distortion in its answer to external impacts, and only too often a large proportion of the spontaneous motions of his vehicles themselves, all these affect, distort, limit and colour the knowledge which the thinker obtains of the external world. Hence the enormous importance to his own growth and progress of systematic, careful and persevering purification and training of his vehicles. Each has its own line of evolution to follow, the life of the vehicles and the elements which compose them has one line, the thinker himself has a very different, in some aspects almost antagonistically opposite line which the Law lays down for his following. The Riddle of Life in one of its manifold aspects meets us here, and the finding of a harmonious solution is one of the most difficult tasks that man has to accomplish.



## DIVISION XXXII

### DECISION OF PURPOSE

#### QUESTION 90.

*If a man pursues riches or any other selfish end, and thus develops purpose and strength of character, how would this be turned to an unselfish end in another life? Would it be through satiety, or would not the giving way to desire in one life only tend to increase desire in another? (1900.)*

A. A. W.—This query touches a point of real difficulty. When I first came upon it in M. C.'s *Blossom and Fruit*, it troubled me for long. She says of her hero: "Had he but found strength enough to decide positively for ill, he would have laid the foundations of such power as would have enabled him later on to choose positively for good in another earthly life." It seemed to me that he would only have been the more likely to choose wrong again. I think I see the answer, but put forward the view with some hesitation.

It seems to me that we must go back to the doctrine which in a sadly materialised form is known amongst our Christian brethren as conversion. In the life of the great souls, such, for example, as Buddha or St Francis, we do find a change of the whole view of the world taking place suddenly and completely. The young Siddhartha goes forth from his luxurious palace into the streets of the city. There, for the first time in his life, he meets Death, and it becomes but a question of days how long he can restrain himself from retiring to the jungle, a half-naked ascetic, to seek the true Life. Il Francese, as his youthful companions have nicknamed him in true Italian fashion, comes from their revels one dark midnight, and the stars of Heaven look down upon him the old question, "What shall it profit a man?" Forthwith, like St

Paul, he is "obedient to the heavenly vision," and the sun of next midday beholds him a stranger to parents and friends, clad in a single garment given him in charity, depending joyously like the birds on the Providence of God for food and shelter, retired to the woods to seek the Eternal Wisdom. In both cases you may call it satiety if you please; but millions of men have suffered more from satiety than they, and instead of becoming saints have slowly rotted to death in hopeless *ennui*. Nay, if satiety would do it, should not we ourselves be saints now? What is the difference?

I do not see that any answer can be given to the question except that these had (in our querist's words) previously developed the purpose and strength of character which enabled them to make this sudden change, and that we have not. That we, seeing the true end of life as well as they, lie helplessly bemoaning ourselves for life after life, is (if we think steadily of it) a matter, not of morality, but purely of resolution—of power. There is no "grace of God" or any assistance of "convictions" that can help a man forward on the road who cannot stand on his feet. We must be *strong*, before we can, to any good purpose, even choose the good.

From this consideration it will be seen that the popular view of the necessity of a sensible conversion is mistaken because it assumes in all mankind a strength and power to choose, which as yet but few of us possess; but has its truth in connection with just such characters as our question refers to. It is quite true that the natural tendency of such a life would be to make each next one worse than the last till we come to the level where, as a Master has said, it were better for them that they had never been born at all; but, for all that, strength is strength. The keen eye for his own interest—the immitigable resolution to attain it at all cost or hazard, once turned from self to the higher goal the Path sets before us, are the most precious qualifications a man can possess, and may fairly be expected to set him forward far more quickly than weaklings like ourselves. In this way the old popular saying is justified, "The greater the sinner, the greater the saint." But, the proportion of great sinners who make great saints is but a very small one, and he would be a very rash man who should advise men (as Luther did) to sin vigorously, that grace may abound.

## DIVISION XXXIII

### CONCENTRATION

#### QUESTION 91.

*What is the best method of cultivating the power of concentration? (1900.)*

A. A. W.—St Francis of Sales, in one of his Conferences, says that to the question then before him the only answer he can make is that which is made by those who say that to arrive at a certain place we must go on putting one foot before the other until we get there. It is absolutely incredible, until we come to make the experiment, how little power the ordinary person has to keep his thoughts fixed, even for a few moments, upon any subject. We are used to this with young children; we understand that the infant attention is easily exhausted, and we do our best by choice of interesting subject and by frequent change of occupation slowly to strengthen its power. Well, we are grown up; but in most of us the attention is but very little beyond the childish state, and must be treated now as it was in our youth. It is not the special kind of exercise which is of importance; whatever method we take up, the essence of it lies in the habituation of our wandering mind to think of *everything* with its full, undivided attention, and not to pass from the immediate subject of its thought until that is exhausted. What H. P. B. used to call “visualising” an object is thus a valuable exercise, not so much because the power is useful as that it provides a way of concentrating the mind very completely, and often for some considerable time, and that any relaxation is instantly recognised. We tell the children “Give the *whole* of your mind to what you are doing!” and this is the rule for the man’s concentration as for the child’s, and should be carried out in every action of our daily life, and not only in set exercises. It

would be a very interesting and valuable contribution to our knowledge if those of our friends who have attained some success would tell us what they have found most useful in their own case: I strongly suspect that each must find his own method. When we enter upon active work it is absolutely necessary, as in the Arabian Nights' tale of the singing tree and the golden water, that no kind of distraction should, for an instant even, draw our mind away from what we are doing—and this under penalties as serious as those which befell the young Princes in the story. But this is not a work of one life or of two: the highest of the Christian mystics assure us that even when their Higher Ego was absorbed in God, their lower mind was wandering hither and thither in its childish way still. What we have to attain to is that the wandering brain shall have no power to disturb the deep *heart's* attention to our higher duties which is the one essential qualification for our passing onwards.

## QUESTION 92.

*In Thought Power, its Control and Culture, p. 3, Mrs Besant says: "When the Self is still, then is manifested the aspect of Knowledge."*

*How can Knowledge be a state of passivity? Do not self-conscious beings (as distinguished from animals) definitely put forth their energy in order to know? (1903.)*

S. C.—We are not obliged to accept statements which do not help us, or which confuse our minds instead of enlightening them. But there is no assertion that knowledge is a state of passivity. Being still is not the same as being in a state of passivity. The eyes perceive an object best when they are quite still, not when they are restlessly moving about, and the same is true of the mind. In every act of knowing we have the knower, and the known; if the knower must hold himself at rest in order to know, it is still he, and not the known, who accomplishes the work in hand. The knower builds up images of the known within himself, and this act is knowledge.

Activity of mind is a necessary condition of knowledge at the human stage of development. There is an earlier stage of consciousness, less active in its nature, which can hardly be called knowledge. There is also a later stage, of which we know so little,

that we are hardly able to say whether it is active or passive or both. The state of mind, for example, of any great artist engaged in creative work, appears to be at the same time active and passive. Inspiration and genius have a passive side as well as an active, and it would almost appear that a great genius is passive in so far as he is a knower, and only becomes active when he communicates his knowledge to others.

## QUESTION 93.

*Could a detailed explanation be given as to what is meant by mastery over thought as spoken of in The Voice of the Silence?*

*In the ideal condition when thought is perfectly controlled, how does the process work from moment to moment? Is the idea of control constantly present in the mind?*

*It would be interesting to have a vivid picture of the mental life for one day of a man who had attained perfection in thought-control.*

*The psychology books say that voluntary attention can only be maintained for a few seconds at a time, and must then be renewed.*

*Is this condition transcended on the path at an early stage, and is the initiate then able to generate voluntary control for indefinite periods of time? (1903.)*

S. C.—We must first consider the meaning of the expression “voluntary attention.” There are three stages in the acquirement of concentration, involuntary attention, voluntary attention, and contemplation proper, which partakes of the nature of both. In the first the mind follows desire, in the second it fights desire, in the third the mind and the desire nature are unified by a higher force. Ordinary psychology books, such as those of Professor James, deal with the two first stages only. The third stage belongs rather to the superhuman than the human stage of development.

Voluntary attention means attention sustained in opposition to the forces of the desire nature, which tend to draw the mind from the point in question, so that renewed efforts of will are needed at short intervals, each separate will effort being overpowered by the opposing forces in a few seconds. Involuntary attention, on the other hand, is that which is directly prompted by the desire nature; there is, therefore, no conflict, and it may be sustained for

long intervals without any conscious effort of will. Involuntary attention is attention to that in which we are deeply interested, and has no direct connection with mind control, but the power of involuntary concentration is a necessary preliminary to voluntary concentration. In the early stages of development in the individual and in the race, even the faculty of involuntary concentration is lacking. We daily see instances of this, e.g., the preference of uneducated people for an entertainment of the music-hall type, where there is constant variety, to any drama where there is an unbroken thread of interest from beginning to end. It may be observed in passing that an important element in the education of children is the direct training of the faculty of involuntary attention, and that the ease or difficulty of inducing a child to take a sustained interest in any subject, is an important clue to the stage of development of the Ego from an intellectual point of view.

With regard to voluntary concentration, it cannot be practised with any success, until *some* power of involuntary concentration has been already gained, and it is even then a sufficiently difficult undertaking to tax human powers to their utmost. This being the case, it is generally best to make use of involuntary concentration so far as it will go, and to do this we must arouse in ourselves and others the kind of interest and stimulus which is the basis of this kind of work. This prepares the way for voluntary concentration, which comes in by degrees; our most fascinating subjects of study do not always appear equally attractive. The necessity of the voluntary stage is clearly recognised by Professor James; he says that the bringing back the mind over and over again to an unattractive subject lies at the root of the development of will and character.

Just as long practice in involuntary attention, our first stage, is necessary before the practice of voluntary attention, our second stage, can be even attempted, so there must be steady and continued practice of voluntary concentration before contemplation, the third stage, can be in any degree understood. It is, therefore, a subject difficult to treat from our ordinary human ignorant point of view; but reasoning from analogy, it would seem that there must be a kind of concentration which is at the same time voluntary and involuntary; voluntary in the sense that it is started and maintained by that which is inmost in the man; involuntary in the sense that the desire nature is in perfect harmony with the endeavour

made. In this condition a man may "grow as the flower grows, unconsciously." Like the flower he is unconscious of growth, but, unlike the flower, he is vividly conscious of what he means to do.

"Is the idea of control constantly present in the mind?" If one may venture to speculate, it would probably not be exactly the idea of control that would be constantly present, but a firm and definite purpose, which would drive away, by means of its own inherent energy, anything not in harmony with itself. The word control suggests conflict, and the nature being harmonised, there is no conflict. In contemplation proper, the earnest involuntary attention of childhood to a fascinating idea is combined with the fully developed purpose of maturity, and we must conclude that in the ideal condition, when thought is perfectly controlled, this balance between the voluntary and involuntary is sustained without any interval through every moment of life. This is a condition which is superhuman rather than human.

At the stage of development when a man has not yet passed the threshold between the human and the divine, but *has* developed the definite purpose of passing this threshold, steady practice in both voluntary and involuntary concentration aids his work. He has to acquire the power, if not already acquired, of long sustained attention to that which interests him, and also the power of bringing back his mind, time after time, to an unattractive subject. Many means are suggested for acquiring these powers, but probably each man has to acquire them in his own way. They are the key on the intellectual side to his further development, as devotion is the key on the moral side. It is not possible for him, however, to control his thought without any break, and this point has not been made sufficiently clear in theosophical literature. Injunctions thrown out broadcast, to know what we are thinking at every moment of the day, are likely to mislead the ignorant, and to lead either to undue discouragement or to a complete misapprehension of the meaning of thought control. For example, confusion sometimes arises between involuntary attention and contemplation rightly so called; yet the difference is sufficiently obvious to anyone who takes the trouble to analyse mental states. In the former the incentive comes from without, in the latter from within.

## QUESTION 94.

*Might a thought of evil directed against an individual become an elemental working harm to that person, quite beyond the knowledge and control of its originator and also against his desire? (1900.)*

A. H. W.—The writer understands that the power for good or ill of an artificial elemental depends on the amount of conscious intention which animates it. A thought of evil directed against a person will reach its mark, and take effect, if there is a corresponding evil quality in the thought-sphere of that person. Such a thought, sent out in ignorance of these possibilities, though evil has no conscious intention of actually injuring, consequently it will be proportionately feeble, and easily neutralised. Such a thought, again, unless constantly repeated, would rapidly exhaust any force it could exert, and cannot be supposed to work continuous harm.

On the other hand, a thought of evil deliberately forged by anyone who understands, and winged by the force of a developed will, is dangerous in proportion to the knowledge and power of its creator. It is just the difference between a bullet from an old blunderbuss let off by an agitated amateur, and a lyddite shell scientifically placed by a trained gunner.

We may, the writer thinks, comfort ourselves that the evil thoughts we set going in ignorance, are, by that very ignorance, deprived of much power to hurt, or much energy to endure. For us to create such thoughts now, when we do understand, even a little, would undoubtedly lead to injury both to others and to ourselves; for action and re-action are equal and opposite, and curses in deed and in truth *do* sooner or later come home to roost.

A comparatively feeble thought might precipitate a man into a crime, if it reached him at a time when a large force of a like nature had been accumulated beforehand, just as the last straw breaks the camel's back. But no more responsibility for the crime would attach to the generator of the thought in question, than would have been his had his "straw" been any other than the last.

The only way for an ordinary man to create a really active elemental seems to be by constantly reiterated thinking, and deliberate willing. A Welsh friend tells the writer that his countrymen, when they have an enemy, which seems to be very often,



keep a pile of stones by the garden path, and, whenever they pass, they throw on another stone and curse their foe. Thus the reiterated and systematised hate is believed to do real vengeance. When the enemy becomes seriously annoying they "read the psalm against him." This consists in sending for the Family Bible, standing up and reading *at* the person, aloud, with fell intent, the awful psalm about "May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow." When this was done in a certain case by an educated man, against a bad tenant, my scientific friend says—with a shudder—"The father died of pneumonia, the mother went blind, and the son was drowned at sea, *before the year was out!*"

One can easily imagine that either by the reiteration marked by the heap of stones, or the reiteration marked by the verses of the psalm, an elemental of some force might be piled up. The first case would resemble the stream of small bullets spouted from a Maxim, the second the scattering missiles discharged from a shrapnel shell; in both cases some of the shots would probably get home.

## DIVISION XXXIV

### THOUGHT FORMS

#### QUESTION 95.

- (a) *It is stated that a thought-form when once created is a real living entity, no longer under the control of its creator, but living out its own life ; is such an entity a self-conscious sentient being, capable of experiencing pleasure and pain ?*
- (b) *Is the character created by an author such a thought-form, and is this the explanation of the statement made by some novelists that their characters, when once created, insist upon working out their own life-story, irrespective of the will of the writer ? Is such an entity consciously passing through the pleasure or pain which the author finds himself compelled to describe ? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—(a) A thought-form is a living entity, but is certainly not self-conscious, nor in any way capable of experiencing pleasure or pain. Its ensouling principle is capable of action in one direction only ; it is a kind of living Leyden jar, existing only for the purpose of discharging itself, and always seizing the first opportunity of doing so. Only instead of passively waiting for this opportunity it goes about seeking for it. But it is no more (and no less) self-conscious than is the electricity in the jar, and has no more pleasure in being discharged, or pain in not being discharged, than the electricity has. The questioner has perhaps not fully realised that we are dealing with a form built up of elemental essence, which is at a stage of evolution even earlier than the mineral kingdom.

Of course this applies merely to ordinary thought-forms made by ordinary people, and not to entities specially created by the magical arts of powerful Occultists, such as the mysterious creatures mentioned in *The Secret Doctrine* as belonging to the "Lords of

the dark face" in Atlantis, or the terrible tribal gods who were kept alive through many ages by blood-sacrifices. These latter entities, at any rate, seem undoubtedly self-conscious, and capable of experiencing some kind of pleasure; but their case is an entirely different one, and factors enter into their composition with which we are not concerned just now.

(b) The character created by a novelist may no doubt be considered as a thought-form, though of a somewhat different type from those we have just mentioned. But it cannot possibly be supposed to rejoice or to suffer, or to have any will of its own apart from the impulse which its creator may have put into it. If authors find themselves carried away as described, it would more probably be the result of an attempt to inspire or guide them made by some outside intelligence—most likely some other author, recently departed and now on the astral plane, who when he sees a story in the making cannot resist taking hold of it and trying to work it out in his way. It seems certain from observation that a good deal of poetry and a good deal of music comes through from another plane in this kind of way: so why not occasionally the plot of a story?

#### QUESTION 96.

*The number of Lucifer for September, 1896, contains an article on "Thought-forms," by Mrs Besant. We find there that the thought assumes certain characteristic forms and colours, which, however, are not comprehensible for an uninitiate. The question arises how the existence of such forms is compatible with the transference of most definite and explicit thoughts from one person to another. How can any man read out of such forms what the originating person has to say? (1902.)*

B. K.—It will, I think, make the answer to this question more easily intelligible if we consider it in the first place as applying only to the forms on the mental plane itself, or more accurately to the forms which are perceived on the four lower or rūpa subdivisions of the mental plane, since on the three higher, or arūpa, levels, there is nothing perceptible which our consciousness would recognise as "forms," but only flashes, radiations, streams of light, colour and sound in which the abstract ideation that alone has place in those lofty regions embodies itself.

Confining our attention then to the rûpa levels, we must first recall—what we have been repeatedly told—that the essential nature of the *matter* of those levels is such that *all* its vibrations or motions *are by their very nature thought* (including thought's higher emotional correlations) when considered subjectively, that is as regards the consciousness side of the ever indissoluble union of Life and Form. To elaborate a little this conception, in the hope of making it more easily grasped, the simple fact is that on the mental plane, in the mind-world, any and every motion of its matter, any and every vibration or quiver therein, which looked at objectively would be perceived as colour, sound, etc., *is* actually thought, and the activity we call thinking, when considered from the side of consciousness, or subjectivity. All these motions, these vibrations, then, seen as colour, heard as sound and so on, are *in themselves* thoughts, which is a very different thing from their being simply symbols or expressions of thoughts, like words, pictures, music, and so forth, down here, in regard to which we normally have to get at the thought represented by them through a process of inference, analogy or association.

Now let us try to follow out what happens, supposing we ourselves were functioning in fully awakened consciousness on the mental plane. We should see a form radiant with colour, hear a note, a chord, a strain of music proceeding from that form. These vibrations (objectively perceived as form, colour, sound) would reproduce their like in our own mind-bodies. But to the Self, functioning in the mind-body, *all* the motions, vibrations, etc., of the mind-body, appear at once in their own subjective nature, *as thoughts*. They are immediately and directly perceived as thoughts. Thus that which to the Self looking outwards *through* the mind-body appears as form, colour, etc., when reproduced (through sympathetic vibration) *in* the mind-body, presents itself at once in the consciousness of the Self, in its own subjective nature, *as a thought*. We do not infer from seeing such and such a form and colour, from hearing such and such sounds, that these represent or embody such and such a thought. But the form, colour, etc., reproducing itself in vibrations of the mind-body *is* a thought in the consciousness of the Self functioning in that body.

Hence no "learning" of the meaning of the forms, colours, sounds, is necessary on that plane. In the consciousness of the Self, awakened to full awareness on that plane, they are thoughts at once and immediately, and this meaning and significance are

instantly realised. It is only down here, on the physical plane, that form and thought appear separate, and we imagine that we need to learn the meanings of form, colour, sound, etc. On the mental plane, the meaning, the thought, is one and inseparable with the form, colour, sound, and the knowing Self knows both aspects, the outer of form, colour, etc., and the inner of thought and meaning at once, completely and perfectly.

If so far I have succeeded in making this fundamental point understood, it will not be difficult to follow out what happens lower down, on the astral plane. Here, on the astral plane, the forms which are thoughts in the mental world have clothed themselves in an outer garment of denser matter, and have accordingly been more or less limited and modified by the inherent peculiarities and limitations belonging to all astral matter. These peculiarities and limitations, it must be remembered, are what distinguishes and differentiates astral matter from mind-stuff, or matter of the mental plane.

Now, suppose ourselves to be functioning with full waking consciousness in our astral bodies, in the astral world, but not to be able to function consciously in our mental bodies, and, therefore, not in the mental world.

As before, we perceive a form, radiating colour and sound, a form built of astral matter and clothing a thought—a thought that in the mental world, could we consciously function in it, would be to us form, colour, sound, also. Again, this vibrating form evokes corresponding, sympathetic vibrations in our astral bodies, and equally does the thought it embodies arouse vibrations in our mental bodies. In so far as these vibrations in our mental bodies are strong, complete and accurate, and in so far as they again can call up corresponding vibrations in our astral bodies, the Self functioning in the astral body is conscious of the thought which is embodied in the astral form we perceive. But so far as any element in this process is imperfect or wanting, in so far shall we fail to be conscious of, to perceive, the thought which is embodied in the astral form.

But since all vibration or motion of astral matter *is* feeling, emotion, or desire—let us use the one word feeling to cover all these—on the side of consciousness, the Self functioning in the astral body will perceive, will be conscious of, the vibrations set up by the outer form perceived, *as feeling*, immediately and directly, not by inference or association, but because, for the Self,

emotion, vibration, in the astral body *is* feeling. Thus supposing the astral body to be fully developed, and perfectly responsive to the impinging vibrations coming from the form seen, the Self will be conscious of all the emotion or feeling correlates, accompaniments, or expressions of the thought which is embodied in that form, directly, immediately, and fully. But the Self would not be conscious of the thought embodied in the form, except in so far as (1) the Self's mental body adequately responded to the vibrations of the thought within that form, and further (2) its astral body could also respond to, and reproduce, these same vibrations.

It may help the student in working out these ideas further to be reminded that the clue as to reproduction of (say) vibrations belonging to the mental world, in the astral or physical bodies, is to be found in the "correspondence" between the planes and sub-planes. In other words, the matter of any sub-plane corresponds in its essential keynote, or rate of vibration, to one or other of the great planes. Thus, for instance, it is the "liquid," the second sub-plane of physical matter which in its fundamental note or rate of vibration answers or corresponds to that of the astral plane; and it is, therefore, the matter of this sub-plane which specially can reproduce astral vibrations, and, therefore, present to the consciousness of the Self functioning in the physical body the feelings, etc., which really belong to the astral world, and so enable the Self when so functioning to "feel," which obviously it could not do when limited by the physical body, unless that body could reproduce in a measure the special characteristics of that order of vibration which is the objective aspect or side of what in consciousness is "feeling."

Of course, this "correspondence," or agreement in the rate of vibration, extends to far more than the sub-planes; it reaches even into the ultimate atoms, with their spirals and spirillæ, and here, too, lies the clue to the problem of the "bringing through" into the waking, physical consciousness of those experiences on other planes of being, with all their knowledge and illumination, which are of such interest to many.

M. A. S.—In B. K.'s interesting answer, it is said that "the Self would not be conscious of the thought embodied in the form, except in so far as the Self's mental body adequately responded to the vibrations of the thought within that form, and further its astral body could also respond to and reproduce these same

vibrations." How is this assertion to be reconciled with that of the Christian Scientists, who say that by holding a sick person in your thought as being perfectly well, you absolutely *create* health in the body of your sick friend, even at a distance? Does the thought rise in the sick friend's mind as if created by himself, or is he aware of its coming in upon him from some outside source? If his physical body pictures forth pain and disease, how could his mental body adequately respond to the vibrations of the thought-form of his healer? Would it not on the contrary oppose those vibrations?

B. K.—Assuming for the nonce the truth of the claims put forward by the Christian Scientists—a matter about which very divergent opinions may be held—the answer to these questions would, I think, be somewhat as follows. You “hold the person in your mind as being perfectly well”—in other words you create in your own mind body an image of the person in health and vitalise that image very intensely by your concentrated attention and thought. That image, *eo ipso*, radiates outwards a stream of vibrations which impinge upon the mind body of the person thought of—since your thought is directed to him or her—and these vibrations tend by their very nature to set up similar vibrations in the mind body on which they are focussed, thereby “creating” in the mind body of the recipient an image of his own physical body in a *healthy* condition, which further may also be additionally vitalised and strengthened by the thought of the person himself. Such an image in the mind body, coupled with the thought of the physical, will, of course, tend to “induce” or “create” a corresponding image in his astral body, and thence to react on the physical—which will thereby be harmonised or healed, *providing* the “obstacles,” or the resistance encountered by the vibrations in passing from the mental to the physical plane, are not *too great* to be overcome by the energy available.

The recipient may be aware of the action taking place, or not. In the latter case, if he should notice the thought forming in his own mind, he would take it to be his own spontaneous activity; in the former, he would recognise the action of another mind on his own. Whether he could thus recognise it or not, would depend very largely on the extent to which he was in the habit of observing and controlling his own mind, and upon the degree to which he had learnt to dis-

criminate between thoughts coming to him from outside and thoughts arising within himself.

There would, of course, be a certain amount—which might be great or small—of “resistance” in his own mind, due to its want of accord with the vibrations impinging upon it, and it would depend on the strength and intensity, as well as upon the steadiness and persistence of the impinging vibrations, whether or not they were strong enough to overbear this resistance, and shape the matter of his mind body into accord with themselves. In the one case the “healing” might succeed, in the other it would fail.

So far we have been considering purely mental action; but, as a matter of fact, in most cases of successful “healing,” a number of other factors come in, which, in the majority of instances, play an even more important part in the final result than the purely *mental* action under discussion. It would lead us too far to consider these in any detail; but, perhaps, it may be useful just to mention some of the more important factors just alluded to: first karma: both the karma of the sick person and the karmic relation to him of the healer; second, the type in nature to which each belongs; third, the extent to which forces other than mental are unconsciously set in motion by the healer. Under this last head fall factors of great importance, both on the astral and on the *physical* planes, among which the life-energy or *prāna* of the healer occupies a specially important place.

In conclusion, it might be well for students of the many and varied modes of “healing,” now so much in vogue, if they would remember that both nature and man are highly complex in constitution and that throughout, in every detail, one is working in a realm of law where knowledge is power and ignorance is dangerous, where motive plays indeed its own proper part *in its own sphere*, but *never* averts or cancels the inevitable suffering which results from ignorance, nor prevents the forces set in motion from producing each its own appropriate result, whether for good or evil, according to the inexorable and un-failing laws which are the expression of the changeless, undeviating, never-faltering Will of the Logos, the Great Father of all, in Whom we live and move and have our being.



## DIVISION XXXV

### THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION

#### QUESTION 97.

*It is a matter of daily experience that in order to get rid of something that is on the mind we have to give it utterance. Set down in a letter, or composed in an article, or communicated to a friend, the thing is done with and we are tormented no more. It seems that the act of giving it utterance ought to intensify the problem, the mood, the disturbing thought, whereas experience shows that utterance relieves it, exhausts it. Now, what is the exact psychological process that we have gone through? Is it true to say that before we can conquer a mood, a passion, a distraction, a worry, we must first express it in speech or writing, or art or action? How does the translation of thought into action exhaust the thought? Is it for a time only, in accordance with the law of alternation? (1902.)*

A. A. W.—The querist's experience has the support of Goethe, who tells us in his autobiography that his writing of *Werther* had just this very purpose—to have done with certain thoughts which, once written down, troubled him no more. Nevertheless, I think he is too hasty in generalising from his own experience. Others (of whom I myself am one) find that, for them, the act of giving utterance to a feeling *does*, as he says, intensify the mood and does *not* relieve it. I fancy the distinction of the two classes lies in the amount of creative energy belonging to them. A man who is full to overflowing of this creative power, as was Goethe, must from time to time relieve the tension by a discharge. It is not, as I take it, a question of conquering passions or worries at all, but simply the "relieving the necessities of nature" on the mental plane. And this done, naturally what he has said or written has

no longer a personal interest to him—I do not suppose Goethe ever read a line of *Werther* after the proof sheets were out of his hands. But to say that, by writing it down, he had conquered his personal Wertherism would, I think, be wholly unjustified. He had created, and was, for the time, at ease; the next time the need took him he would probably create something quite different; but I do not see that, in the moralist's sense, he had conquered anything. In the other class, the man is not full of creative energy—his nature is to be silent; he has to task himself to laboriously drag something out of his mind to communicate to others; and this action, equally naturally, intensifies the feeling within himself. I think this is much the commoner case. I am accustomed to say that I can endure anything, provided only that I can keep it to myself; and I find that to formulate it in words, even to the most sympathetic listener, is a very distinct and serious weakening of my power of resistance. And the world is full of preachers and teachers whose only ground for their energetic convictions is that they have preached and taught them so long that they have been conquered by them. Instead of "exhausting the thought by expression," they have become its slaves.

B. K.—The question raised is a very interesting one, and it would be exceedingly useful to know what the higher clairvoyance could tell us on the subject. Meanwhile, lacking such direct information and express observation, it may be useful to state some ideas that present themselves on the subject; reminding the reader, however, that it is speculative and not matter of knowledge. First, then, I incline to think that the "torment" we mentally experience from some insistent thought, or mood, or problem, is essentially analogous to what happens when some small sore place or some itching spot obtrudes itself upon our consciousness, as at times it can do, so intensely that even a severe acute pain seems preferable. In that case we have physically some comparatively trifling disturbance in the physical harmony on the one side, while mentally we have the attention attracted to and focussed upon the disturbance in an exaggerated manner. To me it seems that the principal feature in what happens is the fixation of the attention, which seems to be perpetually drawn back to the tender spot, and the reason why so trifling a physical disturbance comes so entirely to fill our consciousness seems to me to lie just in this involuntary fixation of the attention, *i.e.*, this focussing of the consciousness upon it. If then we can divert the

attention, the disturbance drops back to its proper, natural level of intensity and we forget it more or less completely. Now I have often found it possible to do this by taking up a book which attracts and interests me. At first, I find my attention recalled to the tender spot a few times, but eventually as the attention, the consciousness, is swept along in the direction of the fresh interest by its natural attraction, the tender spot is forgotten for the time, and finally, when one lays down the book it has ceased to be prominently noticeable, owing I believe to two reasons: (a) the attention has been removed from it and directed into another channel, and (b) the attention has also to some extent been "dispersed," more or less, instead of remaining focussed and concentrated upon the one thing.

Now, when the tormenting object is a mental or emotional one, an idea, problem or mood, I believe it is exactly like a small—or large—sore place, which, as it were, checks and interrupts the flow of consciousness, and so gradually—in the absence of any other equally strong and vivid competing interest—focusses the attention more and more exclusively upon itself. Now if in any way we can restore the normal flow of consciousness and unfocus the attention from that tormenting object, it will sink back into the general level and cease to plague us. Now in the effort to express it in speech or writing, I think we succeed in doing so because our attention is partly (at first) turned to the speaking or writing needed and thus becomes in part detached from the tormenting idea or mood. Then, gradually, as the concentration of attention is relaxed, consciousness resumes its flow, we attend still more to the words, etc., we are using, to the person we are talking or writing to, to the question whether we have made ourselves clearly understood, and so on, till by degrees consciousness is flowing normally, our attention having become detached from the tormenting idea and scattered in various directions.

We might have brought about the same result—I have often done so—by taking up a book that interests us, by entering into an interesting conversation, by engaging in some occupation that attracts us. How far these or any other method will be permanently successful will, it seems to me—as in the analogous physical case—depend in part upon the intensity of the disturbance, and in part on our own power to control the attention.

I do not know whether "action" exhausts "thought" in a strict dynamical sense. Action does certainly involve the expenditure of

some at least of the energy embodied in the thought: but what may be the quantitative relation involved I have no idea. But at any rate the energy embodied in any given thought is clearly finite, and unless renewed (from whatever source) must be capable of complete expenditure and, therefore, of exhaustion, though I much doubt whether such expenditure of energy as is involved in speaking or writing can be considered adequate to the exhaustion of the thought-energy concerned. Rather I am inclined to think that the turning away of the attention is the essential factor, and that "action" comes in mainly as a means of diverting and scattering the attention.

## DIVISION XXXVI

### THOUGHT COALESCING WITH AN ELEMENTAL

#### QUESTION 98.

*What is meant by the phrase, "thought coalescing with an elemental"?* (1896.)

B. K.—When a thought is said to "coalesce with an elemental," the phrase may mean either of two things: (a) the formation *de novo* of a "thought-form" either in *rûpa-mânasic*, or in astral matter; or (b) more strictly, the coalescence of a fresh thought, just generated in someone's mind, with an already existing thought-form created either by the same or another person. I am using the term "thought-form," in its generalised sense, to include (1) a thought clothed primarily in *mânasic* matter which may or may not have further encased itself in *astral* matter; and (2) an emotion or feeling which may be either *mânasic plus astral* or else purely astral in character.

Taking these various cases *seriatim*, we can say:

(a) The thought is *always* the ensouling principle. It clothes itself in the appropriate kinds of elemental essence belonging to the *mânasic* plane as its primary expression, and may then further clothe itself in corresponding orders of astral elemental essence in addition. In the first case we have a thought-form on the *mânasic*, in the second one on the astral plane. The thought is the soul, the elemental essence the body. Such thought-forms whether on the *mânasic* or astral planes are sometimes called "artificial elementals," *e.g.*, in Mr. Leadbeater's *Astral Plane*.

This would also apply to the form created by an emotion or feeling, the emotion would be the soul, the clothing of elemental essence the body.

The process here described may be spoken of as "thought

coalescing with an elemental," though perhaps the use of the word "an" is liable to mislead, in spite of the fact that each of the two thousand and odd kinds of elemental essence in each kingdom has a definite unity of its own, and so might be called "an" elemental. But the expression describes still more accurately the second case, which we will now consider.

(b) In this case the process we have just been considering has already taken place. The artificial elemental has already been formed, built up as to its body of perhaps many different kinds of essence, corresponding to the often extremely complex system of vibrations which are the objective expression of motive, and all the complex elements of thought, intention and feeling which entered into the original impulse which gave it birth. Now a thought or feeling arises in someone's mind, the essential chord of which is composed of the same fundamental vibrations as those which have already called into existence this thought form. The latter is at once attracted—by the law of sympathetic vibration—to the new centre, the new thought-vibrations strengthen and reinforce the corresponding vibrations in the old "artificial elemental," and in actual fact we have a thought "coalescing with an elemental."

#### QUESTION 99.

*When a thought "coalesces with an elemental," is the thought the ensouling principle, and the "elemental essence" the substance, or is the elemental analogous to the soul, and the "thought-form" to the body? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—To speak of a thought as coalescing with an elemental when referring to the formation of a new thought-form, as this question apparently does, is perhaps more a poetic conception than a scientific description of what really occurs. It should be clearly understood that until what is here called coalescence takes place there is no such thing as an elemental. There is a vast sea of living elemental essence of many and various kinds, but nothing like an individual existence until the action of thought upon that sea separates a small portion from the rest and gives it a distinct, though temporary, life of its own. Mrs Besant, in an article in the September *Lucifer*, has given a definition of a thought-form which will afford a satisfactory answer to the question:

"A thought-form, then, is a shape caused by the vibrations set

up in the mental body by the activity of the Ego, clothed in the elemental essence of the mental plane, and possessing an independent life of its own with freedom of motion, but its consciousness being limited to the thought of which its essence, or informing soul, consists. It may or may not have—but generally has—an additional coating of astral elemental essence. Elemental essence is a name used to cover a vast variety of combinations, respectively, of mental and of astral matters, ensouled by *Atmā-Buddhi*—technically called the monad—in its evolution *downwards*. So the thought-form is a shape whose *body* is of elemental essence and whose *soul* is a thought."

There is indeed a case in which the expression "coalescence" may not be entirely inappropriate; and that is when a new thought is sent out to strengthen an artificial elemental which already exists. Even then, however, it would be more accurate to speak of the new stream of thought as poured into and strengthening the elemental than as coalescing with it. But in every possible case the thought is the ensouling principle of the temporary entity, and the elemental essence the body.

#### QUESTION 100.

*Does a human thought create an artificial elemental every time the said thought is emitted, or must there also—in order to create an artificial elemental—be added to it a distinct entity belonging to the plane to which the thought-form belongs? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—There is no distinct entity in the matter until the thought has called it into existence. Before that we have simply the vast sea of elemental essence out of which the thought draws to itself a temporary vesture each time it is emitted. In the case, however, of a thought which is constantly recurring, each new emission may simply go to strengthen the form already existing, instead of creating a new form every time. This subject has been dealt with before in these pages; and in any case it is explained carefully, and in detail, in Mrs. Besant's article on "Thought-Forms," and in Manuals v. and vi., to which the questioner is referred for fuller information.

## DIVISION XXXVII

### THOUGHT AND THE BRAIN

#### QUESTION 101.

*What part does the physical brain take in the process of abstract thinking? If some people can think and work on other planes without their body, why do most people need a physical brain to think with? (1897.)*

B. K.—Let us first recall to mind some of the facts about man. Taking the average human being of to-day, we know that in him the highest level of activity—and that in most cases a mere flutter, scarce deserving the name of activity—is the causal body. Within that there is indeed the Ray, the spark derived from the third outpouring of the divine life; but in the majority this is so latent as yet, so nearly a mere potentiality of the distant future, that it has no practical bearing upon the question in hand. The causal body then is the highest seat of activity in man at present. And what is the history of this causal body; whence has it come, of what is it formed? The causal body is the ultimate product of the second life wave, of that portion of the divine life, that we call the monadic essence, which pouring outwards plane after plane is the form en-souler in all the kingdoms. Pouring downwards this life at last becomes the monadic essence of the mineral kingdom on the physical plane. In that condition, its activity affects *only* the matter of the physical plane, and expresses itself *only* as change of arrangement among physical particles. Here is the turning point. In the next stage, still on the physical plane, the vegetable kingdom, this monadic essence has not only rendered the physical particles more ductile and plastic to its sway, but its activity has begun to affect in a small degree the grosser kinds of astral matter, and so doing, the essence becomes able to express



the first faint beginnings of a new range of those "potentialities" which are latent within it, *viz.*, those of sensation. For in the higher levels of the vegetable kingdom, we find the evolving essence unfolding the power of sensation; as for instance in the sensitive plant. In the animal kingdom the evolving essence affects, by its activity, the matter of the astral plane to a far greater extent, and sensation of all kinds becomes the characteristic feature of all animal life. And just as in the topmost levels of the vegetable world, the evolving essence beginning to affect astral matter, foreshadows the life of sensation, so in the higher kinds of animals the monadic essence begins to affect the matter of the mental or mānasic plane, and the first faint dawn of mental activity or thought begins to show itself. Finally, a stage higher, the evolving essence attracts to itself the Ray of the third great Life Wave, of which it now becomes the vehicle, gathering round itself the matter of the third arūpa level of the mānasic plane to form the causal body of man.

But it must be remembered that all these four stages of mineral, vegetable, animal, and man belong, properly speaking, to the *physical plane*; and though, step by step, the activity of the unfolding essence affects the matter of higher planes, yet the whole series belongs, strictly speaking, to the evolution of the monadic essence *upon the physical plane*. That is to say, the physical plane is, so to speak, the primary theatre or field of display upon which the evolving essence is unfolding and expressing its latent capacities. For it is obvious that when we speak of the animal as exhibiting the life of sensation, and man the life of the mind, we mean that the life of sensation or mind is *being expressed* through gross matter and upon the *physical plane*, and that we are not speaking of the life of sensation or mind as it is in *itself*, on its own plane, and expressed through its own specially appropriate kind of matter.

To find that, we should have, it seems probable, to look on to the evolution upon globes F and G, the astral and devachanic globes of our chain. On the former of these, the basis of evolution being the astral plane, and the lowest body an astral body, we should have the life of sensation, pure and simple, as the medium through which the evolving essence was learning to express its gradually unfolding potentialities; and similarly for the mental life on the devachanic globe G.

We see then that the meaning of evolution upon a physical globe,

like our earth, is that the evolving essence is there learning to express more and more of its inherent, though latent, capabilities by means of, and through, *physical* matter, arranged in an appropriate manner to form nervous system, brain, etc.

Hence the answer to the question is this. The physical brain takes no part in thinking *at all*, whether abstract or not. It is the evolving essence which "thinks," *i.e.*, which, unfolding its power of acting upon mânasic matter, sets up therein that activity which *is* thought. But the law of physical evolution is, that the unfolding essence must ever strive to express itself through and in physical matter. Hence, under its impulsion, the brain—a special arrangement of specially selected physical particles—is formed as the instrument through which its mânasic activity or mental life can find expression on this plane.

It is not that people "need a physical brain" to think with, for truly they could think much better without it, as in fact they do in devachan. But what we call the "waking life," which we make our standard, is a state of things determined by the condition that all the consciousness within it must be expressed *through* physical matter. Hence whatever we may think or feel on other planes, can only be known to us in waking life in so far as we can express it *through physical matter*. So that the question is not "Why do we need a physical brain to think with?" since the tacit assumption that the question is asked from, and in reference to, the waking state, involves the assumption that a *physical* instrument or brain is needed; but is really: "Why do not our brains enable us to remember other states? *i.e.*, Why do not our brains express more and better than as a matter of fact they actually do?"

Hence the question is no general, but a particular, one, having a different answer in each individual case, and is really like asking why one is not a born musician, and must be answered in a similar manner.

## DIVISION XXXVIII

### THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE

#### QUESTION 102.

*In a case of thought transference, what is the actual process? Is it one of vibration, or do real thought images pass from one to the other? Has physical space any influence? (1896.)*

A. P. S.—We can easily formulate a reply which goes some little way in interpreting what takes place. The astral vehicle of consciousness in every man has faculties more or less developed, which apprehend the thought images engendered by the working of the inner astral consciousness of another person, as readily as the physical eyesight would apprehend the movements of another person's arm close by. That this faculty of apprehension or perception has to do with vibration of some medium in nature, probably in this case the astral light or that specialised Akasha which belongs to our planet, is tolerably obvious by virtue of all analogies. A body at a little distance on the physical plane does not project itself to the eye which sees it; it projects vibrations along the intervening ethereal medium. So in all probability with the thought image in the astral medium. Then again, obviously, physical space has nothing to do with the matter, unless there are regions of space lying outside those, which are filled with the astral medium of which we are thinking. Whether that is so, or not is another story, but having said this much, what have we really said towards the elucidation of the fundamental problem of consciousness—involved no less in cases of thought transference, than in those which have to do with the perceptions of the physical body by means of ethereal vibrations? Why one set of vibrations should give us an impression of St. Paul's Cathedral, and another set of vibrations that of a printed page, remains a mystery of conscious-

ness, in the region of those enigmas which may explain themselves for us perhaps, when our comprehension shall come to embrace all the phenomena of this planetary chain, but that looks at any rate as though it were in the nature of those reserved till we approximate at all events to those levels of evolution.

C. W. L.—The actual process in the case of thought-transference appears to be largely analogous to that of ordinary physical vision—that is to say, it partakes of the character of the projection of a ray of light rather than of the shooting of an arrow. What actually passes would be not the image itself, but the vibrations which the consciousness translates into the image, just as is the case with physical sight. Distance would make no difference whatever, in the case of the intentional projection of a thought by one who knows how to send it to another who is capable of receiving it; but the ordinary unintentional thought-transference would be likely to take place only when the persons concerned were in fairly close propinquity, because in this case the thought is not definitely concentrated in one particular direction at all, but simply radiates forth all round, and would consequently probably not be strong enough to produce an impression by the time it had travelled any considerable distance. Of course, the case of a person who projects an artificial elemental in his own form, which appears to his friend and speaks his message, is again an entirely different one, and would hardly come under the heading of mere ordinary thought-transference.

## DIVISION XXXIX

### SUGGESTION

#### QUESTION 103.

*Is it justifiable according to theosophic teaching to use the hypnotic method of "suggestion" for the cure of drunkenness, kleptomania, etc.? Is it not better in the one long life of the Soul, for a man, apparently "incurable" of his passions, appetites, or dishonest proclivities, to sink lower and lower (notwithstanding all possible help of a moral nature rendered by friends in a normal way), and, then, when much bitter experience has at length stimulated the enfeebled will to a healthier activity, to build up a strong virtuous character, capable of resisting temptation, than to temporarily (?) overcome a vice or grow a virtue on the "suggestion" of another? (1899.)*

G. R. S. M.—It seems to me that the whole problem revolves on the point of a man's *asking* for help. If we turn to the life of any Master—no matter how imperfectly the incidents of his earth sojourn may be recorded—we find that help was given only when asked. It was never forced upon the unwilling. The very appeal for help shows that the man is no longer desiring the delights of matter. He would, if he could, free himself from the monster he has allowed to master him. He is, however, too feeble to do it of himself, for he has put too much of himself into the monster. He wants a breathing space in the life and death struggle, and if you can give it, why should you refuse? He is a comrade in arms struck down by the enemy with a victorious foe choking the life out of him. Should you not raise him up upon his feet again, if you can? Doubtless he would be a stronger fighter if he could shake off his enemy unaided, but

he is overpowered and the life is nearly out of him, and he has only breath enough to cry for help.

If, on the other hand, help were forced upon the world, if it were ordained that all should be made perfect by *force*, then we should be slaves and automata. We should *fear* God and not love Him. To ask is to desire, and to desire is the beginning of love. And Love is the fulfilling of the Law. And if the Law is fulfilled, the Law will aid, and the aid that comes to the repentant drunkard may have to come sometimes by "suggestion."

On the other hand, we should be very careful in the choice of a physician to aid us in moral sickness. If an operation is to be performed on the physical body, it is absolutely necessary that every appliance and instrument and the hands of the surgeon should be scrupulously clean, otherwise the patient may find himself in worse case than before the operation. Much more, then, should it be required that a mental and moral operation should be performed with "clean hands"; otherwise, a man while aiding to drive out drunkenness, may "suggest" something that is worse.

It may, of course, be argued that the cleanliness of the channel through whom help comes is a matter of indifference, just as in the Roman Catholic Church it is argued that the sacraments are of full effect if the recipients are sincere, even though the priest may be a sink of immorality and foresworn. But the analogy of the surgeon seems to teach us another lesson.

We cannot, however, help sympathising largely with the point of view of the questioner; we cannot doubt that the most noble view is that each man should win his own freedom, but equally sure is it that the Self lives by giving, and that we are bound to give if we can. Still, perhaps, there is no real contradiction; we want to do the right thing either way; if we fall short we would try to perfect ourselves without begging from any or troubling anyone with our insufficiency, but if anyone ask for a cup of water and we have it to give, we hasten to give it. Thus either way we try to live as to the Law.

#### QUESTION 104.

*To what extent is one justified in using exterior aid to reach interior results? I find myself somewhat lacking in executive ability, and an acquaintance claims to be able to reverse this state*

*through a species of hypnotism—"psychitism," I think he calls it—by which he claims to have helped others in various ways. Would it be wise for me to let him make the attempt, or should I strive to overcome the difficulty solely through my own powers? (1902.)*

B. K.—This is really not a question of "justification"—which implies a moral element, I think—but one of expediency, and the answer must, therefore, depend upon the view one takes as to the results and consequences which are likely to ensue, according as one or the other of the lines of conduct stated in the question is adopted.

Suppose, first, the questioner resorts to the aid of the "psychitism" he speaks of—which seems to denote some method or variety of what essentially is best described as "suggestion," whether imposed with or without the help of the hypnotic trance.

If the attempt fails, he will be no better, and he *may*, not improbably, find himself worse off than before, because "hypnotism" and "suggestion" are exceedingly subtle and dangerous tools to use, and, as with the use of violent poisons in medicine, are apt to do irreparable harm in the hands of the ignorant or partially instructed; while I should be myself inclined to regard all operators outside the very small number of trained Occultists as belonging to one or other of these classes.

If, on the other hand, the attempt succeeds, what is the actual state of the case? Two answers seem to me possible. First, let us suppose that the man himself, the real Ego underlying the personality, has acquired in the past and therefore now possesses "executive ability," but is hindered from manifesting that ability by reason of some defect in the personality, in the brain, for instance, through which it has to work in this incarnation. Such limitations are, of course, very familiar to every student, and we know that they are always the outcome and expression of some karma generated in the past. Now we must remember that the presence of all such limitations has been determined by a Wisdom infinitely greater and more wisely loving than our utmost imagination can realise, and that they have been imposed on the Ego by that Wisdom for the furtherance of the Ego's own evolution, either through the struggle to overcome them, or when this is actually impossible, to teach the Ego a lesson imperatively needed. From this point of view, what must be the result of removing such

a karmic limitation by an *external* agency? Obviously, it seems to me, first to deprive the Ego of the opportunity or the lesson that the wisdom of karma has set him to learn; secondly, and very probably, to “throw back” the karmic energy at work and store it up for future working out, at some time inevitably *less* favourable than the present. In both events, therefore, it would seem that the true interests of the Ego, the *real* man, are sacrificed to the passing, momentary interests and gratifications of its personality—the instrument which it is using for its evolution in this present life. And this sacrificing of the permanent to the impermanent, of the eternal to the fleeting, is directly opposed to every principle and law of true spiritual life and progress.

It may be objected that the case we are considering is strictly analogous to the removal of some outer physical defect—say a squint, or other congenital deformity—by surgical interference; and that if, as is held to be the case, such surgical interference is right and proper in those cases, then the use of “suggestion” or “psycitism” is equally admissible in this case, since it similarly acts by removing an obstruction, only in this case an obstruction in the brain or nervous system. This objection possesses a certain plausibility, but it seems to me that there are two considerations which invalidate it. First, while we *know* for certain, that *every* human Ego has long ago passed through the stage of fully acquiring and developing the powers involved in normal vision and other purely physical functions and activities, and, therefore, cannot stand in need of developing them now, we do *not* know by any means that this is the case with mental and moral powers, with executive ability for instance. Hence while by removing a squint we cannot possibly be depriving the Ego of a needed opportunity for growth, we *may* be doing so in the case in which the Ego has *not* developed the inner executive power—a case which we shall consider in more detail presently; while should the Ego be already possessed of that power in a great or less degree, then by removing the “obstruction” to its manifestation by external means we shall certainly be depriving that Ego of the growth which it would surely gain by overcoming the obstruction *from within*. Secondly, we must remember that while a surgeon knows thoroughly the physico-mechanical structure of the organism with which he deals, and can therefore judge with knowledge and almost certainty the results and effects which his interference will produce—though cases do occur in which all his science proves



at fault—this is *not* the case when we try to operate on the far more delicate and complex mechanism of character, mental or moral. No one but a trained oculist would dream of attempting to operate for cataract on such a delicate organ as the eye, and yet quite ignorant people are more than ready to attempt the far more delicate and difficult operation involved in removing such an “obstruction” as we are now considering. Truly do “fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

Let us now consider the second alternative, when the Ego itself has *not* acquired or developed the power in question. In such a case, the attempt to engraft the power on the personality by suggestion or “psychitism” would almost certainly fail, while the result of making the attempt would very probably be to disorder and derange, to a greater or less extent, the exceedingly delicate mechanism through which the Ego expresses itself on the physical plane, and thereby sow the seeds of much future trouble later on. And even if some effect in the direction aimed at were produced, this would inevitably be of a merely temporary character, analogous to the momentary strength called out in the body by the use of stimulants. For the powers of the Ego are *only* called forth by effort and by use ; we possess in very deed only what we have acquired and developed through *our own* efforts, and therefore the Ego, our real self, would be no gainer by the momentary artificial stimulation which alone “suggestion,” “psychitism” and the like can produce. And the inevitable reaction which would certainly follow, as it does on the use of physical stimulus, would certainly do harm, possibly serious and prolonged injury, to say nothing of the loss to the Ego caused by his failure to make the inner effort required of him to develop from within himself the power and ability which he desires.

For all these reasons, which could be much further elaborated, I should answer the question with an emphatic negative.

## DIVISION XL

### SYMBOLISM

#### QUESTION 105.

*Can any interpretation be suggested of the myth of Medusa's head, which turned all who looked at it into stone? Was it a metal disc or other object used for hypnotic purposes? (1899.)*

I. H.—I would suggest that Medusa's head might typify occult knowledge. Medusa is conquered by Perseus, the Divine Principle; her head becomes one of the weapons of Athene, the goddess of Wisdom, and is employed to destroy the evil sea-monster, the enemy of Andromeda, who is the human soul.

#### QUESTION 106.

*Why should a cow be regarded in the old religions as a sacred animal? (1900.)*

I. H.—The cow typified the nutrient side of nature; that is to say the form side, which protects the life as a centre which is being evolved within it. The cow was an emblem of Isis, the great mother whence all forms proceeded. Isis and Osiris represented form and life, matter and force; hence Osiris was typified as a bull, Isis as a cow. The animals were sacred because they were used in order to picture in a concrete form the abstract truths of those higher regions to which the majority of worshippers were unable to rise.

#### QUESTION 107.

*If the Book of Job is an allegory, what clue is there to its meaning? (1895.)*

C.—The clue to its meaning is to be found in the sixth verse of

Chapter i., where it is stated that Satan appeared among the Sons of God. The book is a symbolical description of the trials of the candidate for initiation, and it is only because Satan appears among the Sons of God that initiation is possible. The training of the candidate is a series of experiences, whereby he learns "to refuse the evil, and to choose the good." This subject is treated in detail in the second volume of *The Secret Doctrine*.

## QUESTION 108.

*Why did initiation into the Mysteries usually take place in a cave or subterranean building? (1898.)*

A. A. W.—The natural answer to this question would be, "Get yourself initiated, and you will know why. You can't expect the initiates to tell you before!" However, in this case, it is not hard for one of the profane to find a plausible explanation.

Whatever may have been the details of the Mysteries, we know well enough their main intention. The idea of immortality has been of late years so painfully *vulgarised* in every sense, that the one heart's desire of every right-thinking man has come to be by every possible means to escape it, as usually conceived. It has grown almost impossible for us to understand the moral elevation it conveyed to the ancient Greek, when he received it as the crown of Initiation. Some of us have allowed ourselves to speak as if the chief glory of the Mysteries was the revelation that the earth moves round the sun, or the like; of *one* thing we may be quite sure, that it was not for mere scraps of *knowledge* that the candidates went down to the temple of the Great Mother. But to take a gay, cheertul, life-enjoying Greek and open his eyes to the existence of the world around him and within him in comparison with which his sunny, brilliant earth-life was but as darkness—the earth-damps of the tomb; *that* indeed was something worth the pains! It must all be done by symbol-representation; the active, stirring Greek was no Hindu metaphysician; and how could it be better done than by bringing him, physically, into the subterranean darkness which was henceforth to image to him his old life of ignorance? The aspirant must be *tried*—the phantom terrors of the darkness were not all imaginary, the mere stage thunder and colophonium the modern critics deem them; many a man was kindly turned back before he came to the point where failure meant destruction

—unavoidable and terrible. But for those who succeeded, there was the Manifestation—the momentary glimpse, never to be forgotten, of the Higher world where there is no more division of souls—where Death is not conquered but vanishes away—the sight and companionship of the true God—the Ineffable Glory! What wonder that those who enjoyed it were henceforth new men, even though that one brief vision recurred no more? And how *could* that reality fail to be mixed up with the one thing in all physical nature which answers to it—the glory of the first rays of the rising Sun as they waked to the new life the entranced Aspirant, his trials ended; even as Dante, after his long and terrible night in Hell, came forth through the narrow hollow of the rock to the open sea-shore and the blue boundless Heaven, and the cloudless glory of the first rays of the rising Sun trembled along the ripples of the windless ocean to his feet. And to this soundless music the words are those of Seboua, “You have been into a darkness deeper than that of night, and you will see a brighter Sun—even than this!”

## DIVISION XLI

### SPEAKING WITH TONGUES

#### QUESTION 109.

*What is the meaning of the word "tongue" in 1 Corinth. xiv. 2 : "For he that speaketh in a tongue, speaketh not unto men but unto God" ? Again, in xiii. 8 : "Whether there be tongues they shall fail" ? Are "tongues" in the latter verse the same as "the tongue" in the former ? (1898.)*

G. R. S. M.—This raises the whole question of *glōssolalia* or "speaking with a tongue," on which there have been such interminable controversies. Students who are interested in the subject may be referred to Plumptre's article, "Gift of Tongues," in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, and as the last contribution to the subject, to the chapter on "The Gift of Tongues" in Wright's *Some New Testament Problems* (London, 1898); from these as a beginning they can follow up the subject from the references.

The chief N. T. passages are the second synoptic xvi. 17; *Acts*, ii. 1-13, x. 46, xix. 6; *1 Cor.*, xii., xiii., xiv. These, however, must be taken in the reversed order, for the Pauline document is, of course, by far the earliest, and it alone is of any real historical value. The *Acts* accounts of this glossolaly are later than the canonical gospels (somewhere in the first quarter of the second century), and were compiled to give the sanction of a dramatic origin to one of the commonest enthusiastic phenomena of the time. The verse in the second synoptic comes in the appendix, which is unanimously rejected as being of far later date.

That the "gift of tongues" was the commonest of phenomena, in the outer communities in which Paul found a hearing, is indubitable; that he himself had this "gift" more than any of them is his own claim; that he thought but little of it is also

clear from his exhortations ; and that he had never heard of the dramatic incident of Pentecost as related in the Acts-document of some hundred years later, is as evident as that he knew nothing of the sayings and doings of the Jesus of the synoptics.

What then was the "speaking with a tongue" to which Paul refers? It was apparently an *undisciplined* enthusiasm, whereby the speaker was thrown into a violent ecstatic state which the mind could not control, so that no one could understand the meaning of the words and cries which he uttered. The induction of this state of psychic enthusiasm was the opening of the door to an infinite series of phenomena with which all students of Occultism are familiar in their experience and researches.

One of the greatest points of interest, in tracing the evolution of popular Christianity, is to notice how practices which could only be practised with safety under guidance and strict discipline, as was the case in the inner schools of prophetic training, were indulged in without restriction by the outer undisciplined communities which took their rise outside even the lay degrees of these regular orders. Paul himself was evidently an independent spirit outside these circles of training, and had at first himself passed through all the stages of unbalanced psychic enthusiasm, but experience had subsequently taught him the uselessness of much of it, and he had finally learnt to value one single word of wisdom above all the words of countless "tongues." As the outer churches grew, they gradually eliminated this undisciplined psychism from their ranks, and the days of the "prophets" became numbered, and prophecy was not only discouraged, but even as early as the beginning of the third century was condemned. The old practices of enthusiasm were afterwards kept up in bodies outside the area of the General Church, as, for instance, the great movement of Montanus, of which Tertullian was so devoted an adherent. Nevertheless, Christendom was never without its prophecy and glossolaly, and it continues to our own day, but always outside the area of orthodoxy. Just as the original schools of trained mystics must have regarded with disapproval the excesses of ignorant psychism in the popular communities, so did the out-growth of those popular communities, the General Church, when it had organised itself, not only suppress this psychism, but condemn it as being of the Devil.

But no anathemas were strong enough to crush out the inevitable consequences of religious enthusiasm working on psychic

natures. The phenomena are as old as the world, and such sensitives as they occur through, under the careful training of experienced teachers, can be safely piloted through the manifold illusions that surround them on their first contacts with psychic life. When, however, indulged in by untrained and ignorant folk, or even by people who in other respects have a sound judgment, they lead to the most disastrous results, for the ignorant person almost invariably thinks he is filled with the "Spirit of God." The phenomenon of glossolaly in Christian circles can be studied in the early Montanist communities, and in those allied to them, in the subsequent centuries; in the Mendicant orders of the thirteenth century; in the prophesyings of the sixteenth century in England; in the early history of the disciples of George Fox; among the Jansenists in France; and in the revivals under Wesley and Whitfield. The history of the French Protestants of the eighteenth century presents us with valuable data, especially that of the Cevennois in 1686 and 1700. Finally, the so-called Unknown Tongues, a term derived from an interpolation in the Revised Version, first manifested themselves in the West of Scotland and then in London, in the Caledonian Church in Regent Square, a movement which was subsequently organised by the genius of Irving and others, and is now generally known as the Irvingite Church.

The phenomena in question were all indubitably of precisely the same nature as that of the glossolaly of the so-called Primitive Church. Mostly the "speaking" is entirely incomprehensible, and occasionally someone in psychic rapport with the speaker "interprets," that is to say, gives some more or less sensible explanation of the outburst; sometimes the "prophet" speaks a foreign language of which he has no knowledge in his normal consciousness, a familiar enough phenomenon in "spiritualistic" circles. But even a mere list of all the permutations, combinations and possibilities of such psychism would fill up all our space. We should not, however, omit from our list of glossolalists a mention of the Shaker communities.

It is thus evident that the answer to the question of our inquirer is simply, Yes.

## QUESTION 110.

*Was the consciousness of the Apostles supposed to have been raised to the arūpa levels of the mind when they suddenly knew all languages after the Initiation of Pentecost? (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—If the Apostles, as a sober fact, actually did on a definite occasion “know *all* languages,” then *we* must suppose that their consciousness was raised to at least what have been called the “formless” levels of the mind—but which, as explained, are formless only to the consciousness below such levels. The believers in the actual historicity of the account in the *Acts*, however, supposed and suppose that this was a direct manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, which Spirit they further identify absolutely with God Himself. The question of the validity of the account as historical is entirely apart from the question of the possibility of such a happening. In my opinion, the account of the “tongues of fire” is a glorified description of some happening in the inner circles set forth with highly dramatic embellishments; but whether or not it refers to a particular Initiation I am unable to say. Criticism connects the tradition with the common phenomenon among the outer untrained communities of “speaking with tongues,” but is exceedingly puzzled to account for the fact that the “languages” in the later *Acts* account are said to have been understood, whereas in the far earlier Pauline account the “tongues” required interpretation, and Paul himself evidently thought but little of such manifestations.

That on the mind plane difference of language is no bar to communication is amply confirmed by the testimony of a number of our students; it is not so, however, on the so-called “astral plane,” where difference of language is almost as great a bar to satisfactory conversation as here.

But the *Acts* account presents to us a series of difficulties, for it purports to describe what took place entirely on the physical plane. The questions that theologians ask themselves are therefore exceedingly puzzling. They would like to be informed, for instance, whether the Apostles spoke each in his own language, and the various hearers heard their words each in his own tongue; or whether the power in the words was so great, that the hearers felt their force, and translated it each in his own words; or whether the Apostles spoke in an “unknown tongue” and the



hearers heard each in his own language, etc. Personally, though we deem it highly unphilosophical and absolutely unscientific to deny the possibility of such things happening, we reserve to ourselves the right of doubting the historicity of any particular account, especially when it emanates from a literary workshop, whose labourers had not the faintest notion of the sense of history, and who eagerly believed anything that enhanced the "supernaturalness" of their faith.

The modern Irvingites, who still "speak with tongues," are certainly not understood by the modern Elamites, Parthians, Medes and dwellers in Mesopotamia; like the members of the early communities among whom Paul carried on his propaganda, they require an interpreter—that is to say, some one who feels the inspiration but retains sufficient control of himself (generally herself) to express himself rationally.

## DIVISION XLII

### THE DATE OF JESUS

#### QUESTION III.

*We are told that Jesus was born in Palestine B.C. 105, and that the Christ continued to visit His disciples in the astral body for something over fifty years after the physical body was destroyed. This being so, must we place the epistles of Paul at an earlier date than is usually assigned to them? If not, how are we to understand 1 Cor. xv. 6, 8? The "greater part" of those who had seen the Master could not have remained for eighty years after the time that His presence had been withdrawn. (1899.)*

G. R. S. M.—The point raised in this query is of the greatest interest and importance, and opens up a host of questions, at only one or two of which we can glance in these columns. In the first place we are confronted with the crucial problem: What was the story of Jesus known to Paul? The answer to this problem is perhaps the very starting-point of verifiable history in the whole area of Christian origins. The Letters of Paul (some ten at any rate of them) are the earliest authentic documents of general Christendom. And if this be so, they are of the very first importance, as showing how the nascent religion towards the middle of the first century presented itself to the mind of a man of intelligence, who became perhaps the most ardent propagandist the Faith has ever possessed. The more carefully we study the letters of Saul of Tarsus the more clearly the question forces itself upon us: Did this man know the now familiar story of the four later canonical Gospels; had he made it part of himself; had he got the great Sayings by heart? If all this was familiar to him, then it is almost incredible that he could have omitted it from his exhortations, and yet we find but the vaguest references to the Gospel

story, and even when we have found them, we cannot be certain that they may not have been added to the original text by an editor or copyist. Of the historical Jesus we can learn next to nothing from Paul. He preaches a mystic Christ, of intense reality, it is true, and no vague abstraction. But if we follow Paul we move in an atmosphere foreign to that of the editors of the Life.

Let us now turn to the summary of Paul's teaching as set forth in his First Letter to the troubled little community of Corinth. It prefaces what the late Dean Mansel in his *Gnostic Heresies* calls "the apostle's elaborate and triumphant argument for the resurrection of the body" (p. 50)—whereby he means the "again-rising" of the physical body; and so, indeed, it is understood by the vast majority of Christians to-day. But does Paul lend his authority to any such interpretation? If we have the correct text, what he writes is very simple. He recalls to the minds of his pupils at Corinth how that his teaching had been:

"That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;

"And that, He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures:

"And that, *He was seen* of Cephas; then of the twelve:

"After that, *He was seen* of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

"After that, *He was seen* of James; then of all the apostles.

"And last of all *He was seen* of me also, as of one born out of due time" (xv. 3-8).

The doctrinal points marked by the phrase "according to the Scriptures" we may leave aside from our present inquiry, and confine our attention to what we may call the historic statement. I have italicised the four times repeated phrase "*He was seen,*" because it is the key to the whole position. It is the "authorised" translation of the Greek *ὤφθη*, which occurs four times in the received text, followed in every case by a dative. The more correct rendering would be "He appeared unto." Now we know from Paul himself (and also from *The Acts*, the latest document of the whole canon) that this "appearing" was not of a physical nature as far as the apostle himself was concerned. Paul, however, makes no distinction between the nature of the appearance to himself and of that to the others. He uses the identical phrasing for all, and evidently, therefore, con-

sidered that it was of the same nature. In brief the "gospel" of Paul taught a non-physical appearing of the Christ among his pupils.

It is interesting also to notice the strange term used by Paul of himself—"as of one born out of due time" (ἐκτρώματι). We are here, as in so many other passages in the Pauline Epistles, face to face with a technical Gnostic term. The "abortion" was the name applied to the incomplete plasm of the world-system before it was informed by the Reason of God, the Logos. As with the great world so with the little world; Paul, when he had the good fortune to "see" the Master, was as yet unformed, the Spirit had not descended upon him to make him a Child of the Father. In the days of Paul, the Christ doctrines were still, for the most part, taught in the inner communities, and the nomenclature was that of the Gnosis.

But, what are we to think of "Cephas," and the "twelve," of the "five hundred brethren," of "James" and "all the apostles"? If we still have the words which Paul wrote before us, we are face to face with a number of difficulties which I am unable to solve without further assistance.

It is confidently asserted by all the most advanced students of Occultism whom I have the privilege of numbering among my friends, that the real historic Jesus was born 105 B.C. The only corroboration of this statement at present available to those of us who are compelled to confine our researches to the physical plane, is to be found in some obscure Jewish legends which are so overloaded with bitter misrepresentation of the great Teacher that one is almost ashamed to appeal to them. The same students who place the birth of Jesus at 105 B.C., confirm approximately the accepted date of Paul's activity, say 35-55 A.D.

I am inclined to believe myself, from a study of the mystic communities of the period, and what I have heard about the earliest followers of the Christ, that the "Twelve" were an order which was continued intact by co-optation as vacancies occurred by death, and that "Cephas" was a title. There was always a "Cephas." The "apostles" mentioned were probably members of the existing community which had in course of time grouped itself round the "Twelve" nucleus. "James" was probably the name of the president of the existing community at Jerusalem. The "five hundred brethren" may perhaps refer to some larger gathering that on some special occasion still within living memory had been favoured

with a Christophany, which was, as a rule, reserved only for those belonging to the "apostolic" degree.

But even these hypotheses are not altogether satisfactory, for we have to distinguish clearly between the "Church" at Jerusalem with whose members Paul had such unsatisfactory relations, and the sources of his information, those from whom "he received" a doctrine apparently so radically different from that of "general" Christianity. After the dramatic incident at Damascus, Paul disappeared into "Arabia" for some three years. Whither did he go during these three eventful years? Occult tradition says he went to the Essene community of which Jesus a century before had been a member. The "Church" at Jerusalem, on the other hand, belonged to the Ebionite line of tradition, that of the "poor men" (*ebionim*), based solely on what they could understand of the public teaching of the Christ.

But the more we learn of the occult tradition of the at present lost history of the origins, the less are we inclined to regard the matter as simple. A gap of a hundred years is a terrible chasm to face, and at present I can hardly see the wisdom of saying any more about it. Let us, who aspire to be students of theosophy, first of all familiarise ourselves with every source of information procurable on the physical plane, before puzzling our brains with other factors which have been kept hidden from the world for so many centuries.

A. J. R.—I should like to observe that apart from 1 *Cor.* xv. there is yet another source "on the physical plane," for the chronology of Jesus, *viz.*, "the Papias-Fragments" to be found in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, III. xxxix 3-4. According to Harnack (*Texte u. Unters.*, v. p. 176) Papias wrote his "*Λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεις*" about A.D. 140. In the Proœmion he says that he has consulted some presbyters concerning what the "disciples of the Lord," Aristion and the presbyter John, said to them. It is clearly to be seen that he had spoken to men who were contemporaries of disciples of the Lord. Writing in 140 at the age of seventy-five, he may have been, when he spoke to the presbyters he met concerning the absent Aristion and John, about twenty years, *i.e.*, in A.D. 85. Supposing these men to be then as old as seventy-five, they were born in A.D. 10, and accordingly twenty years old when they became disciples of Jesus, who entered on His ministry when He "began to be about thirty years of age." The above given chronology is thus in perfect accordance with the received date of the birth of Jesus.

Moreover, Eusebius relates that the same Papias said (according to Philippus Sidetes in his second book) that he conversed with the daughters of Philip, mentioned in *Acts* xxi. 9, who was a contemporary of the apostles.

As to the integrity and authenticity of the Papias-Fragments, there is but one voice (W. Weiffenbach, *Das Papias-Fragment*, 1874, pp. 10, 11).

G. R. S. M.—The Fragments of Papias quoted by Eusebius (about the beginning of the fourth century), in his *Church History*, have given rise to endless controversy and the most contradictory hypotheses. These Fragments are taken from the now lost five books of Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Syria, called “Expositions of the Dominical Logia.”<sup>1</sup> The date generally assigned to the writing of these books is somewhere about 140 A.D. (Harnack in his latest work, *Chronologie der altch literatur* i. 335, 342, says 140–160.) As these Fragments are the earliest extra-canonical source of information of any kind as to the composition of the Gospel writings, every single word in them has been microscopically scrutinised and hypothesis piled on hypothesis on the slender basis of a word or two.

The first Fragment referred to by A. J. R. runs as follows (for the text, see Routh’s *Reliq. Sac.*, i. 7, 8):

“Moreover I will not hesitate to incorporate also for you into my commentaries all things which I at any time well learned [as coming] from the elders and well remembered (ἐμνημόνευσα), being convinced as to their truth. For I used not to delight, as most did in those who said much, but in those who taught the truth; not in those who remembered (μνημονεύουσιν) someone else’s commands, but those [who remembered] the commands given by the Lord to the faith and coming from the truth itself. And if, moreover, anyone who had been a follower of the elders came to where I was, I used to inquire closely into the words of the elders, what Andrew and what Peter had said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord’s disciples; or what things Aristion and John, the elder, disciples of the Lord, were then saying. For I used not to think that what I got out of the (or their) books would do me so much good as what I got from the living voice that was still with us.”

Assuming that this quotation is correct—and this is a large

<sup>1</sup> I give this barbarous rendering of the title, simply because every single word of the Greek original has been interpreted in a dozen different senses.

assumption to make when we consider the general inaccuracy of Eusebius—what are we to understand by the statement of Papias?

The puzzles this ancient worthy sets us have so far not been solved. In the time of Papias' youth or early manhood, apparently; there were two elders, "disciples of the Lord," living, of whom he had heard, a John and an Aristion. This John was to be distinguished from an older John, also an elder and a "disciple of the Lord." There were, then, presumably, also elders who were not "disciples of the Lord," and the added title confers a special distinction. Of Aristion, it is generally asserted that we know nothing, but some months ago I came across a quotation which stated that Aristion was the writer of our canonical "Mark" gospel; unfortunately, I cannot at the present moment put my hand on the reference. The second John is thought by many to have been the writer of our fourth gospel.

In the ancient Muratorian fragment it is said "The Fourth Gospel is that of John, one of the disciples. When his fellow disciples and bishops entreated him, he said, Fast ye now with me for the space of three days, and let us recount to each other whatever may be revealed to us. On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that John should relate all things in his own name." Here we have the terms "apostles," "disciples" and "bishops" all mixed up together, a very curious compost, for the term "bishop" is a comparatively late one; we learn, however, from this interesting tradition the nature of the fourth Gospel and how it differs from that of an "eye witness," and this agrees entirely with the occult tradition which I have heard.

What, then, I glean from Papias is that "the living voice which was still with us," is the continued presence of the Christ among those of his followers who were distinguished as "disciples," that though this voice was then still "living" it by no means follows that the term "disciple" was applied to men who had heard the Christ in the physical body of Jesus.

All these disciples belonged to a circle which was to be distinguished from those who remembered "someone else's commands"—this is thought by some to refer to Paul and the Pauline Churches. Now Paul expressly declares that he is "the apostle, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (*Gal.* i. 1). This distinctly implies that he regarded the "apostles" with whom he came into contact, as no apostles of Jesus, but as men who appointed themselves to this

office; that is to say, as belonging to a circle whose authority Paul refused to recognise.

Papias, on the contrary, recognises this circle as the only authoritative "voice." We therefore get back to the same ground as that reviewed in my answer.

The names of the "twelve apostles" are only known from our gospel documents, the first editions of which are contemporary with Papias. The "books" which Papias refers to are perhaps the "Memoirs of the Apostles," from which Justin Martyr quotes, and which have disappeared, and these "apostles" are presumably an order which kept its members intact by co-optation; they were "apostles of men," as Paul would say.

The second quotation of A. J. R. is taken from an anonymous note lately found by De Boor in the Codex Baroccianus, and conjectured to have been extracted from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Philip of Side, which was published about A.D. 427. It simply says that: "The aforesaid Papias has narrated as having received it from the daughters of Philip that Barsabas, who is also called Justus, being tested by the unbelievers, drinking the poison of a viper in the name of Christ, was preserved harmless."

These may or may not have been the daughters of the Philip of the *Acts*. In any case the *Acts* are not a document to quote as history; they have the least historical authenticity of any book of the New Testament. But who was Philip of the *Acts*? A "disciple," an "apostle," like the rest with whom we have dealt above. "Philip" was an "elder," belonging to a certain circle which Papias considered to have still the "living voice" within it; the "prophets" were not yet dead in the Church.

I thus leave the question where I did in my last answer. Of course, after the publication of the synoptics, the fourth gospel, and the *Acts*, the fluid traditions of the earlier years became in a comparatively short time crystallised into a definite history round the axes which their assertions had laid down; anything which did not fit this configuration was rejected. But in the times of Papias it was not so.

E. L. Z. R.—In the above answers, two texts (Paul, 1 *Corinth.*, xv., and the Papias-fragments) have been opposed to the assertion of some theosophical writers, which places the birth of Jesus in the year 105 before the Christian era.

Will you allow me to mention a third, more decisive even than that of Paul, in respect to which Mr Mead cannot but recognise



the enormous difficulties in which the partisans of the new chronology are placed.

The passages to which I wish to draw the attention of Mr Mead, whose deep researches I fully appreciate, are in the writings of Irenæus and concerning the great Polycarpus.

In the first place, in *Adv. Her.* III. 3, he has written as follows (I give the Latin text, better known to the great majority of readers):

“Et Polycarpus autem non solum ab Apostolis edoctus, et *conversatus cum multis ex eis qui Dominum nostrum viderunt*; sed etiam ab Apostolis in Asia, in ea quæ est Smyrnis Ecclesia constitutus Episcopus, quem et nos vidimus in prima nostra ætate (multum enim perseveravit et valde senex gloriosissime et nobilissime martyrium faciens exivit de hac vita), hæc docuit semper quæ ab Apostolis didicerat, quæ et Ecclesiae tradidit, et sola sunt vera,” etc.

From this quotation it follows, amongst other things, that Polycarpus knew “*numbers of the faithful who had seen Christ.*”

Secondly, Eusebius (*Ecl. Hist.*, v. 20) relates the following of Irenæus:

“Irenæus has written a number of letters against those at Rome who were corrupting the holy rules of the Church. He has written one to Blastus touching the schism, another to Florinus touching the monarchy, or that God is not the author of evil, as Florinus has persuaded himself. Since then he has written a book in his favour respecting the number eight, when he saw him falling into the error of Valentinus. He declares in this book that *he had received the first tradition of the Apostles*, and he adds at the end a remark which I consider very suitable for insertion here. The following are the terms thereof: ‘In the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ and of His glorious coming when He shall judge the quick and the dead, I implore you who transcribe this book, to compare your copy word for word with the original and to correct it, and also to transcribe at the end this prayer.’ I have taken care not to omit a remark so important, which contains an example—that we should always keep before us—of the diligence and exactitude of the ancients, who were celebrated for their sanctity.”

The following is the most important passage: “He declares in the letter to Florinus that he had formerly conversed familiarly with Polycarpus. Here are his words: ‘This doctrine, my dear

Florinus, to speak as mildly as I can, is not a sound doctrine. It is contrary to the teaching of the Church and involves in impiety those who profess it. Even the heretics who are outside the pale of the Church have never dared to uphold it. The holy priests who have been before us, and who were disciples of the apostles, have not instructed us in regard thereto. When still a youth I saw you in Asia Minor near the person of Polycarpus. At that time living in splendour at the Court, you were doing your best to gain the estimation of the saintly Bishop. For I remember better what happened than much of what has occurred more recently. The things learned in childhood which are nourished and grow into the spirit with advancing age, are never forgotten; in such a manner I could tell you the spot where the thrice-happy Polycarpus was seated when preaching the word of God. I can see him entering and leaving, his manner of walking, his exterior, his mode of life, the discourse he addressed to his people, the whole is engraved in my heart. *Even now I seem to hear him relating how he had conversed with John and many others who had seen Our Lord himself, repeating to us their words and all that he had learned touching Jesus Christ, his miracles and his doctrine from those themselves who had seen the Word of Life. Polycarpus used to repeat literally to us their words, and what he said was confirmed in all points by the holy writings (. . . . Sermones denique quos ad populum habebat, et familiares consuetudines, quæ illi cum Joanne, ut narrabat, et cum reliquis qui Dominum ipsum vidissent, intercesserant; et qualiter dicta illorum commemorabat; et quaecumque de Domino ab iis audierat. De miraculis quoque illius ac de doctrina, pro ut ab iis qui verbum vitæ ipsi conspexerant Polycarpus acceperat, eodem prorsus modo referebat, in omnibus cum scriptura sacra consentiens.)* I listened unto all these things and engraved them, not upon tablets, but in the innermost depths of my heart. Before God I can affirm that had this apostolic man heard of an error like unto yours, he would in an instant have stopped up his ears and would have expressed his indignation in this exclamation which was customary to him: My God, why hast Thou preserved me to this day, that I must suffer these things—and, whether sitting or standing, he would immediately have fled away. What I have said can be verified by the letters he has written, either to the neighbouring churches for the purpose of fortifying their faith, or to some of the faithful in particular to reawaken their devotion and to apprise them of their duty.”

In analysing these texts, and in adding to them certain others which it would be useless to cite now, the conclusions arrived at are diametrically opposed on most points to the recent theories of theological writers on that which concerns the origins of Christianity.

However, for want of space, I will not deal with anything but the new date of the birth of Christ. These texts allow me to use with greater force the argument already invoked in regard to 1 Cor. xv. It is known that Polycarpus lived between the years 69 and 155. If we estimate at twenty the age at which he knew those who had seen Jesus we arrive at this result: that about the year 90 A.D. there still lived in Asia Minor men who had seen Christ. But if the year 105 B.C. is taken as the date of His birth these men would then have been at least 130 years old! (By subtracting 33 years from 105 we arrive at the year 72; if we subtract 50 years for the appearance we arrive at the most at the year 22; by estimating the age of those who had seen Christ at that period at 20, they must have been born 40 B.C. which to the year 90 A.D. gives us an age of 130.) Consequently the texts of Irenæus and Eusebius as well as that of Paul completely invalidate the date of 105 B.C. given as that of the birth of Jesus.

On the contrary, these texts, as also Paul's and all similar texts, accord perfectly with the accepted date of the birth of Christ.

G. R. S. M.—Here we have apparently a perfect refutation of the view that the "historic Jesus" was born about 105 B.C., and those who are not familiar with the controversial literature on the origins of Christianity will not so much as dream of questioning such (to all appearances) conclusive testimony. But let us for a moment put on one side this too provokingly exact date and turn our attention to the views of those who have contended that Jesus never existed; for such there be, men who are perfectly acquainted with all that Irenæus and Eusebius and the rest have to say on the subject, for, of course, the passages quoted are perfectly familiar to all students of the origins.

With regard to such extremists then, they do not hesitate to bring a wholesale charge of forgery against these early writers. This view, however, meets with favour only among such rationalists as regard the whole internal evidence of Christian writings *in the absence of one single corroborative word from external contemporary sources*, as of no value, and who are rendered all the more unmerciful by their frantic hostility to the "miraculous" element, belief in which they regard as the most pitiful superstition.

This view is, of course, too extreme for any kindly student of human nature; the problem is far more complex. There was no doubt falsification of fact when the "historicising" party gained the upper hand (it can be proved in a number of instances), but the original "historicising" did not begin in falsification, but in ignorant misunderstanding.

In order to understand this point of view, I would recommend E. L. Z. R. to read Gerald Massey's lectures, especially "The Historical (Jewish) Jesus and the Mythical (Egyptian) Christ," "Paul as a Gnostic Opponent, not the Apostle of Historic Christianity," "The Logia of the Lord; or the Pre-Christian Sayings ascribed to Jesus the Christ," and "Gnostic and Historic Christianity." These lectures were privately printed and are difficult to procure, but the data on which they are based is fully given in Gerald Massey's four encyclopædic volumes, *The Book of the Beginnings*, and *The Natural Genesis*, published by Williams and Norgate some twenty years ago. The author first of all contends that the real historic Jesus was, as the Talmud states, Jehoshua Ben Pandira, the disciple of Jehoshuah Ben Perachia, whose date was about 105 B.C. He further contends that "the original mythos and *gnosis* of Christianity were primarily derived from Egypt on various lines of descent, Hebrew, Persian, and Greek, Alexandrian, Essenian and Nazarene, and that these converged in Rome, where the History was manufactured mainly from the identifiable matter of the mythos recorded in the ancient Books of Wisdom, illustrated by Gnostic Art, and orally preserved amongst the secrets of the Mysteries. . . . It can be demonstrated that Christianity pre-existed without the Personal Christ, that it was continued by Christians who entirely rejected the historical character in the second century, and that the supposed historic portraiture in the Canonical Gospels was extant as mythical and mystical before the Gospels themselves existed" ("Gnostic and Historic Christianity," pp. 1, 2).

Here we have the view of a man who has worked in complete independence of modern theosophical writers, and yet who arrives at certain general conclusions, the main outlines of which can be amply demonstrated. The Jehoshuah Ben Pandira tradition, as I have several times stated before, is the most difficult point of all to disentangle; but it is of minor importance compared to the main position that Christism is ante-Christian; indeed, as Mr Massey says, the Ben Pandira story is not necessary to his general contention.

The canonical account is the account of the historicisers of the myth; the canonical gospels were composed about the reign of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.). It was about this time that this view began to be strongly asserted by those outside the Gnostic communities, and amongst its leaders were Polycarp, Papias and Justin Martyr, who, no doubt, honestly believed it with their whole hearts, whereas the Gnostics knew the Life was composed of fragments from the mystery-tradition.

“According to the unquestioned tradition of the Christian Fathers,” says Gerald Massey, “which has always been accepted by the Church, the primary nucleus of our canonical gospels was not a life of Jesus at all, but a collection of the Logia, oracles or sayings, the Logia Kuriaka, which were written down in Hebrew or Aramaic, by one Matthew, as the scribe of the Lord. . . . This tradition rests upon the authority of Papias, Bishop of Hieropolis, a friend of Polycarp, who is said to have suffered martyrdom for his faith during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, 165-167 A.D. Papias is named with Pantænus, Clement and Ammonius, as one of the ancient interpreters who agreed to understand the Hexæmeron as referring to an historic Christ and the Church. He was a believer in the millennium, and the second coming of the Lord, and, therefore, a literaliser of mythology. But there is no reason to suspect the trustworthiness of his testimony, as he no doubt believed these ‘sayings’ to have been the spoken words of an historic Jesus, written down in Hebrew by a personal follower named Matthew.” (“The Logia of the Lord,” pp. 5, 6.)

I quote this passage, as I have quoted others above, not to endorse their statements without considerable qualifications; but to show how a man who held some general conclusions, which are to some extent endorsed by the occult tradition, regarded the evidence. He sees no reason to doubt the *bona fides* of Papias, and so I take it of Polycarp (and Irenæus). They honestly believed their statements, and took the mystical utterances of the apostles of the Gnostic schools who “had seen the Lord” to be historic recitals concerning a definite person.

But the occult tradition goes further than all this; while asserting that the basis of the Life is composed of fragments of mystery-tradition, it allows for a certain admixture of “history”; while asserting the universality of the Christ myth (using the word myth in its best sense) in all the great mystery-traditions, it also declares the coming of a Great One who taught through Jesus;

while allowing that the sayings were generally pre-Christian, it asserts the teaching of the Master (in and out of the body) who threw fresh life into the minds of many thousands of pupils; while admitting that the synoptics were composed by historicisers, it declares that the original draft was not only sayings but also the simple outlines of a mystic life that was intended to be interpreted in the inner circles by further instruction in the Gnosis. This and much more does it assert; so that though I have quoted Mr Gerald Massey as an offset to Eusebius, I do not put him forward as the mouth-piece of the occult tradition, scraps of which occasionally appear in our theosophical writings.

Briefly, Papias, Polycarp and Irenæus may perfectly well have believed what they assert, and yet be very far out as to the real facts; contemporaneously with them were thousands of men of great ability—of far greater ability than those who were subsequently regarded as the Fathers of the General Church—who smiled at the historicisers. How history was made, and how the inner tradition differed from the outer legends, may be seen from the following instance.

One of the great festivals of the main stream of the Gnosis was the celebration of the Baptism on the fifteenth day of the Egyptian month Tybi. "They of Basilides," says Clement, "celebrate His Baptism by a preliminary night-service of readings; and they say that 'the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar' means 'the fifteenth day of the month Tybi.'"

That is to say the "fifteenth of Tybi" was changed by the historicisers into "the fifteenth of Tib(-erius)"!

Finally, I entirely remove the evidence of Paul from the category of the beliefs of Papias and Polycarp; it is of quite a different nature, and as I have pointed out, entirely in favour of the mystic view.

I will return to the subject and go into the matter more in detail, but I somewhat fear it is too lengthy for proper treatment in the VĀHAN.

G. R. S. M.—In fulfilment of my promise I return to the questions raised by E. L. Z. R.; but before doing so I should like to make quite clear what I consider to be the only reasonable position that any ordinary student of theosophy can take up with regard to this most important problem.

A few of our colleagues state that the real historical Jesus lived some hundred years before the generally accepted date.

This statement is made, it is claimed, on the authority of the occult records.

No student in the Society who has given any evidence of the power of reading these records, contradicts this assertion.

On the other hand, all the assertions of the early Christian literature preserved to us, to all appearances flatly contradict this assertion, the only supporter of it being the Talmudic tradition.

It results that the students in the Society who cannot read the occult records must form their opinions by the ordinary canons of evidence.

These students have not all the same privileges of opportunity to test the statements of their more advanced colleagues, nor the ability for a critical examination of the records of early Christianity, and, therefore, their judgments must be very dissimilar.

Speaking for myself, I have had the opportunity of testing many statements of friends who can read the occult records; in hundreds of cases I have checked their statements with regard to dates and facts, where facts and dates were previously unknown on this plane both to my informants and myself. I have, therefore, confidence in accepting their statements with regard to this subject *as a reasonable hypothesis* which I may be able to verify by research. So far, however, I have not been able to do so. Were it possible to have done so in any *direct* fashion, I should have attempted the task years ago. But the problem is far more delicate and complicated; the only possibility of its solution with the present materials at our disposal, is by the cumulative evidence of a series of deductions from very obscure traces, the investigation of which requires years of patient labour.

Meantime it may interest my colleagues to read a brief account of the way in which Polycarp and Irenæus transmuted belief into history. It is based on what I have heard, and is interesting as an analysis of the attitude of the "mind" of the early Fathers with regard to "history."

Irenæus was really convinced that the insignificant communities in the Rhone valley, over which he presided at the end of the second century, were destined to be great; he looked with burning impatience for the second coming of the Master and the immediate victory of the "elect." He wrote enormously and spoke with great fluency, with a vast mass of phrases at his command, of which, for the most part, he had no very clear conception.

In his boyhood, when about fourteen, he did see Polycarp at

Smyrna, was greatly impressed by him, and remembered some of his assertions. This was about 130 A.D. Polycarp, owing to his official position as bishop, had some years before received a copy of one of the now canonical gospels which had just been composed at Alexandria, and it made an enormous impression on him. He began to interpret everything that had happened to him in his youth. He gradually read into his own life many things which did not really belong to it, and appears to have had the capacity of going over and over a thing until it became part of himself, telling a story so often that at length he believed it absolutely and honestly, and was utterly unable to distinguish between imagination and fact.

As to the John ("the disciple of the Lord")—whom he had met some twenty years before, and who had told him some things "concerning the Lord"—he had been in connection with one of the "twelve" and "seventy" communities, and had spoken of their tradition of the Christ, but "seeing the Lord" meant the spiritual sight of vision, and not the historic Jesus.

Polycarp, after receiving his copy of the Gospel, at once jumped to the conclusion that this "John" was the John of that Gospel. This Gospel was one of the over-workings of the draft of an ideal Life (with a slight genuine historic admixture) written by a member of one of these inner communities, but placed out of its true historic environment to guard the real Teacher from the researches of prying curiosity.

In brief, Polycarp used all his wits to discover points of contact between the people he had himself come across (and who had taught the Christ tradition from their association with the inner communities), and the characters he read of in the new Gospel which had come into his hands.

Not only so, but he takes Aristion, one of his old teachers and an "apostle" of one of the communities, as being the writer of his Gospel, and refuses to believe Aristion when he denied that he had anything to do with it.

Polycarp believed too much; he was, no doubt, an excellent person, but he had not the faintest conception of history, and the "historicising" of the Gnostic writer of the original draft of the Life completely dominated his thought. It was an untold joy for him to think he had actually spoken with those who had known Jesus on earth, and he believed it with all his heart, and thus unconsciously laid one of the first foundations of the "Catholic" tradition.



## DIVISION XLIII

### THE ESSENES

#### QUESTION 112.

*Regarding the Essenes :*

- (a) *What book could one read in order to obtain authentic information concerning them ?*
- (b) *Were they indebted for the general trend of their traditions to the Neo-Pythagorean School of the Greeks, or to the Parsees, or to some more remote source ?*
- (c) *Lightfoot, in the dissertation at the end of his Colossians, takes great pains to explain how improbable it is that Jesus was ever a member of the community. Along what line can his arguments best be met ? (1899.)*

G. R. S. M.—(a) The best article on the subject is by F. C. Conybeare in the new *Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Hastings, and published by T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh. The first volume (A—F) was published in 1898, and the second (F—K) is just out. The price is 28s. per volume. Conybeare's article is absolutely impartial and gives all sources and some useful references to the general literature.

A full record of the literature will be found in Schürer's *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh ; 1897, trs. from the German).

Conybeare does not discuss opinions, he simply gives a translation of all the sources. The opening and concluding paragraphs of his eight column closely printed article run as follows :

“In regard to the origin and nature of this sect very various views have been held. It is, therefore, best to confine oneself to stating succinctly what is known about them from ancient authors. . . .

“The literature relating to the Essenes is so vast as to defy detailed reference. The student may be advised to study for himself the very limited documentary sources relating to them, and then to draw his own conclusions.”

(b) This question requires a very lengthy answer, in fact a monograph on the subject, and the writer hopes in a couple of years or so to attempt such a work. A bald statement of conclusions without the full evidence—of not only the documents relating directly to Essenism but also of the subsidiary, though all important, environment and setting of the picture of this famous community, that is to say, of cognate and contemporaneous organisations—before us, would be a purely dogmatic statement, and this at present would be premature.

(c) Lightfoot, though an excellent scholar, was an apologist, in fact he was the founder of the school of orthodox and apologetic criticism in England to oppose the German purely scientific school. Before his time there was nothing in this country that could be called criticism. Every one of the arguments in his interesting Commentary on *Colossians* has been met, and views, equally strong, but absolutely contradictory, have been marshalled against him with equal, if not greater, acumen and learning. (See Ginsberg's article “Essenes” in Smith and Wace's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, which is more easily accessible than most of the literature.)

Occult tradition asserts that Jesus was a member of the Essene community.

## DIVISION XLIV

### ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY

#### QUESTION 113.

*What, according to esoteric teaching, was the death of Jesus of Nazareth? (1899.)*

G. R. S. M.—Jesus of Nazareth, according to the occult tradition, was stoned to death ; this tradition has been preserved also by the Jews, but the Jewish legends on the life of Jesus are unfortunately so evidently prejudiced by sectarian bitterness that even the deposit of truth in them will receive no serious attention for many a year to come. I hope some day to take up the subject of these legends as found in the *Sepher Toledoth Jesu* and other sources, but so far I have little hope of being able to prove anything from the present material.

#### QUESTION 114.

*What was Christ, according to esoteric teaching? (1897.)*

A. B.—Jesus was a Hebrew, and became a member of the Essene community. He was of singularly pure and gentle nature, so pure that he was chosen as the vessel for a special out-pouring of Divine wisdom. At the time represented in the gospels as that of His baptism, this out-pouring took place, and He thus became, during His public ministry, the Word revealing Divine truth. He is now one of the Masters, and is concerned specially in aiding those who seek the spiritual life along the Christian path. "Christ," on the other hand, is not an individual name, but a generic title, applied to all Initiates who have reached a certain degree. The Christ is the "Son of the Father," in theo-

sophical parlance Buddhi, the Divine wisdom and compassion, the reflection of the second Logos, or the "Word made flesh." The awakening into activity of this principle in man belongs to the first great Initiation, when mystically the Christ is born in the human soul; this is the blessing which S. Paul invoked in his converts: "My little children, for whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." This Christ-life develops during the life of discipleship, until the final death to the lower life takes place in the Arhat, and separateness is put an end to by the destruction of ahankāra. The killing out of this separateness is the mystical crucifixion, and the "it is finished" proclaims its final extinction. Thereafter the Son ascends into heaven and becomes one with the Father—Buddhi is merged in Ātman.

#### QUESTION 115.

*What is the fundamental Creed of Christendom? (1898.)*

G. R. S. M.—Perhaps the most authoritative orthodox answer to this most important question may be found in a recent lecture by Professor Adolf Harnack. Harnack is in the very highest rank of New Testament scholarship, and no one at present knows more of Christian dogmatics than the Professor of Church History in the University of Berlin. Harnack opens his lecture, entitled *Christianity and History* (Eng. Trans., by Thos. Bailey Saunders; London, 1896), with the following words:

*"The name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved."*

This is followed by the emphatic paragraph: "Such is the creed of the Christian Church. With this creed she began; in the faith of it her martyrs have died; and to-day, as eighteen hundred years ago, it is from this creed that she derives her strength. The whole substance and meaning of religion—life in God, the forgiveness of sins, consolation in suffering—she couples with Christ's person; and in so doing she associates everything that gives life its meaning and its permanence, nay the Eternal itself, with an historical fact; maintaining the indissoluble unity of both."

The quotation in italics comes in a speech put into the mouth of Peter, in the document known as *The Acts of the Apostles* (iv.

10, 12). The passage is very corrupt in the MSS. Codex D, which is now considered to preserve a greater number of correct ancient readings than any other codex, omits the word "salvation" entirely.

The "name of Jesus Christ" does not signify the name "Jesus Christ," but the "name" or "power" (sci. of the Logos), which the great teacher, the Christ, used.

From this point of view, then, we may all admit the statement. It is by the Logos alone that we shall be saved.

If, however, we are to take the text in the narrow historical sense which orthodoxy assigns to it, it is tantamount to making the Christ responsible for a doctrine which set aside, if it did not condemn, the work of all His teachers, colleagues, and pupils, and this is hardly the teaching one expects from a great Master.

But, indeed, we have only to turn back a page to the translator's preface, to read: "There is a great difference, as Lessing argued, between the Christian religion and Christ's religion; between the structure of dogma erected by Greek philosophy on a Jewish soil, and the faith held by Christ Himself."

It is "the faith held by Christ Himself" which is the fundamental creed of Christendom, and the creed advanced by Professor Harnack is, as he says, "the creed of the Christian Church."

The fundamental creed of Christendom consists, of course, in the basic truths of Theosophy; it breathes the spirit of universalism, and is free from the constricting bonds of narrow exclusiveness.

#### QUESTION 116.

*What does Theosophy teach about "the Christ spirit"; and what is meant by the following quotation: "For that as soon as a man's nature contacted the Christ spirit, there was a revolution in the spheres, and the motion of half of them was entirely inverted"? (1898.)*

G. R. S. M.—The "Christ spirit" is that degree of the Eternal Wisdom of the Logos which "a Christ" has reached. It is *at least* the Nirvânic consciousness, and may be any more transcendent state right up to the *full* consciousness of the Logos Himself. The quotation refers to the famous Gnostic treatise

known as the *Pistis Sophia* (see pp. 24 sqq. of my translation). The Gnostic writer is dealing with the eternal mystic soteriology of the Logos. It is the eternal drama of "conversion," of which modern Evangelicalism has so much to say, although it confines its scope merely to the individual soul. The Gnostics, on the contrary, applied it to the Soul in general; not only to the souls of men, but also to the souls of globes, planets, systems, and universes. Thus the writer is treating of our system as a "living being," and working out the drama on the lines of mystic cosmogony and astronomy. The spiritual might of the Christ converts the forces or "powers" (represented as the motions of spheres), which previously tended all in one direction, with a "downward" tendency, that is to say, with an impulse to material things, so that half of them "repent" or strive towards the spiritual nature. This produces a balance or equilibrium of the forces, and the Christ thus brings about conditions whereby those who follow Him can pass through these previously opposing spheres. The soteriological drama, or drama of salvation, thus worked out on higher planes, is played in miniature in each individual soul that follows the Christ's example. Conversion and repentance are the necessary preliminaries to progress from a lower to a higher state. The Gnostic writer works out his spiritual theme with great acumen, and attempts to substitute a mystical, spiritual astrology for the vulgar astrology of the period. The subject, however, is too lengthy and abstruse for treatment in the VĀHAN.

#### QUESTION 117.

*On p. 337 of Esoteric Christianity, writing on the use of the Latin language in the services of the Roman Catholic Church, Mrs Besant says: "It is not used as a dead language here, a tongue not understood of the people, but as a living force in the invisible worlds. It is not used to hide knowledge from the people, but in order that certain vibrations may be set up in the invisible worlds which cannot be set up in the ordinary languages of Europe, unless a great Occultist should compose in them the necessary succession of sounds."*

*I shall be very glad to know upon what authority the above statement is based, as the most that the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church claim is that Latin was adopted as being*

*the universal tongue of early Christendom, and retained because, being a dead language, it was not subject to the changes inevitable in the cases of living languages. Vide Cardinal Gibbon's The Faith of our Fathers, pp. 377-380. (1902.)*

A. B.—The statement was made as a matter of fact, not based on authority. Probably only a comparatively few of the Roman Catholic clergy understand the value of the preservation by their Church of the mantra forms. But certainly among those who rule the Church there have been and are a few with occult knowledge, and they have made the preservation of the Latin tongue a matter of Church order. There are many statements in *Esoteric Christianity* which are not based on any authority save that of knowledge, and they are put as simple statements of fact, with no demand on anyone that he should accept them.

#### QUESTION 118.

*Is there any evidence to support the idea that there was in the early Christian Church a school for occult training? (1896.)*

G.—Supposing that there was in early times such a school within the ordinary Church, how much could we expect to learn of it from published writings? At most, if the school was kept really secret, we might find one or two hints given in some of the more daring writers of the time, and, therefore, anything that can be discovered on these lines is of importance. It must not be supposed that because such a school existed it necessarily extended throughout the whole Church, or that all even of the most noted defenders of the faith belonged to it, so that passages apparently contradicting the idea, which may be met with, would only show that the writers did not belong to such a society and were possibly ignorant of its existence.

The following quotations from Origen bear on this subject. They are taken from *Contra Celsum*, Book III.

“It is not the same thing to invite those who are sick in soul to be cured, and those who are in health to the knowledge and study of Divine things. We first invite all to be healed . . . and when those who have been turned towards virtue have made progress, and have shown that they have been purified by the Word, and have led, so far as they can, a better life, and not

before, do we invite them to participate in our mysteries. 'For we speak wisdom among them that are perfect.' . . . God the Word was sent, indeed, as a physician to sinners, but as a teacher of Divine mysteries to those who are already pure, and who sin no more."

The dual purpose of the Church is here expressed. Its aim was first to turn the earthly man to a view of higher things and to the desire for purification, and then to teach the more or less purified man the mysteries of his nature according to the instructions received. But we not only have this evidence, and much more to the same effect, but a description of the formal initiation into the "mysteries."

"Whoever is pure, not only from all defilement, but from what are regarded as lesser transgressions, let him be boldly initiated in the mysteries of Jesus, which properly are made known only to the holy and the pure. . . . He who acts as initiator, according to the precepts of Jesus, will say to those who have been purified in heart: 'He whose soul has, for a long time, been conscious of no evil, and especially since he yielded himself to the healing of the Word, let such an one hear the doctrines which were spoken in private by Jesus to his genuine disciples.'"

The purpose of such schools is also clearly shown both by Origen and by Clement, his predecessor. The latter wrote a work known as the *Stromata* or *Miscellanies*, a collection of discourses in which the nature of the "Gnostic" and his beliefs is expounded, the Gnostic being one who had studied the inner meaning of the Scriptures, and who, by a process of self-development, had arrived at a relatively high stage of spiritual progress. The object of the secret instructions was to help those who were fitted, by earnestness and intelligence, to attain to this Gnostic state, and no longer to build their creed upon mere faith.

When we note also, that according to the statements of many of the Fathers of the Church, some among them had power to work "miracles," in healing and other directions, and saw things invisible to most, it seems clear that some of the practices had for their object the obtaining of psychic and spiritual powers. These powers were attributed to the action of the Christ or Divine Spirit in the Church, and were signs of the continued manifestation of the Spirit. While probably there was much delusion connected with the "miracles" there is some evidence that there were traces of psychic powers and abilities in the Church of the first few centuries.



## QUESTION 119.

*How can we obtain a diagram of the Heavenly Man mentioned in  
Fragments of a Faith Forgotten, on p. 368?  
What are the letters of the ancient name for which the name of  
Jesus is a substitute, mentioned also on the same page? (1902.)*

G. R. S. M.—I am afraid that I cannot throw sufficient light on the subject to make it in any way intelligible to the readers of the VĀHAN without making up many numbers of our useful little monthly. I will, however, give the passages from Irenæus (*Adv. Hær.*, i. xiv. §§ 3 and 4) germane to the subject and append a few words of explanation. It will be remembered that Irenæus is “refuting the heresies” of Marcus, a kabalistic Gnostic, and quoting from a mystic document of his school. The contents of this document were thrown into the form of an apocalypse or revelation, the inspiration of which is ascribed to the Supernal Four (the Quaternion or Tetrad or Tetractys), one of the highest hierarchies of the Pleroma or ideal world, perhaps the Four into which “the Three fell” in the Stanzas of Dzyan. For this Greatness only reveals itself to mortals in its “female” form, since the world cannot bear the power and effulgence of its “masculine” greatness. In the individual economy it may perchance be the Buddhic glory surrounding the âtmic triad, the three-in-one of the eternal monad, the everlasting ground of man’s essential being.

Irenæus then proceeds to quote from the revelation of this Supernal Four, as contained in the Marcosian cryptic MS., as follows (in Keble’s translation, *Library of Fathers*, London, 1872):

“Now then I am minded to manifest unto thee the very Truth herself. For I have brought her down from the very mansions on high, that thou mayest look on her unclothed, and discern her beauty, and hear her speak, and marvel at her wisdom. Her face,  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$ ; her neck,  $\beta$  and  $\psi$ ; her hands,  $\gamma$  and  $\phi$ ; her bosom,  $\delta$  and  $\phi$ ; her feet,  $\zeta$  and  $\eta$ ; her thighs,  $\theta$  and  $\sigma$ ; her ancles,  $\lambda$  and  $\pi$ ;

This is the body of that  
his is the figure of the

alphabetical element, this the form of the diagram ; and he calls this element ' Man. ' ”

And then, turning again to the MS., he quotes the words of the Revealer to Marcus : “ She is the fountain of all discourse, and the beginning of all sound, and the utterance of that which is unspeakable, and the mouth of that still Silence. And this is indeed her body : but do thou, lifting on high the thought of thy mind, hear from the mouth of Truth the self-producing Word, which also conveys the Father. ”

I have no doubt I could make this somewhat more intelligible by an improved translation, had I the time, but other work of a pressing nature leaves me hardly a spare moment to write a hurried answer. It is evident that Marcus is simply adapting the Greek alphabet to some existing system of kabalistic mysticism ; presumably he is substituting Greek for Hebrew or some other letters, or even it may be Egyptian hieroglyphs, which already were but substitutes or labels for certain powers or forces.

And that this is so is evidenced by the following “ quotation ” from the same document which immediately succeeds the preceding paragraph.

“ [Whereupon] the Truth looked upon him, and opened her mouth and spake the Word ; and the Word became a name, and it became that name which we know and speak, Christ Jesus : which name as soon as she had pronounced, she became silent. ”

How much of this is quotation and how much a summary by Irenæus, it is not easy to determine, and, therefore, we cannot be certain that we have the exact data before us, knowing as we do the proved inexactitude of the Bishop of Lyons in dealing with Gnostic MSS. That it is not a verbal quotation, however, we are quite sure by the way in which Irenæus continues, when he writes :

“ And while Mark was looking at her for her to say something more, the Quarternion again coming forward saith, Thou didst esteem as contemptible that Word, which thou heardest from the mouth of Truth ” (ap. Stieren)—and here I must translate from the texts, for Kebel has entirely missed the sense—“ Yet this name which thou knowest and thinkest thou hast (in it the real name) is not the ancient Name. Thou hast His sound only and knowest not His power. For as to Jesus, it is the Six name (being of six letters) known unto all who are of His calling. But that

which is amid the æons of the Pleroma, the Name which exists manifoldly, is of another fashion and another type, known by those only who are kin to Him, whose greatneses are always with Him."

The "Name" then for which Jesus is a substitute, that Name who has many names, is One who is known only to those who are kin to Him, his legitimate children, those whose greatneses, whose angels and whose monads, are continually with Him.

#### QUESTION 120.

*Are we to regard the records of the Gospels as historical narratives or as allegories—the visions of a seer conveying truth in symbol? What proof is there that such clairvoyant visions of the origins of the faith as are described in Mrs Besant's Esoteric Christianity are not purely subjective? (1903.)*

A. A. W.—The querist is asking for what, by the nature of the case, cannot be given; and if he is inclined to throw the whole aside as "unscientific" for this reason, let him turn to the two valuable articles of Mr Dyne in the *Theosophical Review* and ask himself where is the "conclusive evidence" for Mendelejeff's Law therein discussed. There is absolutely none; only the *fact* that, by assuming it, we have a thread on which the facts of nature arrange themselves in such an orderly way, and one by which we may even predict the course of future discovery, and find our predictions verified, that we are convinced of its truth by an argument which is not a logical conclusion, but something still more satisfactory.

As between one who sees and one who is blind, the only possible evidence which can be given to the blind man is of this indirect nature. If several seers agree in their description of the landscape, that is a certain presumption in their favour, for if the vision of one was "purely subjective"—in plain English, if he were making it up out of his own head—the others would not be likely to agree. Or, again, the seer might say, "If you move so many steps forwards you will come to a wall—so many more and you will touch a tree—now you are running against a cow," and the like; and if the blind man made the experiment and found the prediction verified he would have again a fair presumption that the other did in truth see the things he could only touch.

Something of this latter kind was once done by Mrs Besant in her paper on "Occult Chemistry" in the *Theosophical Review*. She gave us the results of the investigation of the nature of the atom by the higher senses, and already the manner in which the results of chemistry are approximating more and more closely to her statements is forming a powerful argument in favour of the truth of her own and her friend's vision. I confess I myself should have been very glad if these researches had been followed up more completely; but it may be that they were discouraged just because such a verification of the vision by science would have furnished the "conclusive evidence" which the Powers always refuse to give. They want no unwilling converts. But even granting that our clairvoyants do see the scenes they describe, there is much to be considered before we make their visions the foundation of our view of history, and (to do them justice) no one has pressed these conditions upon us more than they have themselves done. People who see the same thing in physical life each see it differently, according to their prepossessions. A barrister knows perfectly well that a witness for the prosecution will, with the fullest intention to speak the truth and nothing but the truth, give an entirely different account of an occurrence from that of a witness on the other side; and no one who is not a barrister could believe how different two quite honest stories of an event may be. Something very similar is the case with clairvoyant vision; a seer can only see the thing in his own way, can only express it according to the habitual way of thinking of his own mind; to a man of a materialistic mode of thought, the vision will express itself with hard outlines and sharp divisions which another would not see at all. I should answer the querist that he would not do wisely to take these visions as more than hints for study, suggestions of a possible view. As such they are of much value; nothing of actual information is of so much value to a thinker (and especially to a young thinker) as these sidelights which open out a new range of thought, beyond the so narrow limits which surround us. I myself shall never forget the effect upon my mind, brought up in strictest Calvinistic orthodoxy, of accidentally coming upon W. White's *Life of Swedenborg*. I was not in the least tempted to become a Swedenborgian; but I learned that there was a vast world outside Calvinism—that there was much in that world truer and nobler than any results of Jonathan Edward's logic—I was a new man! But the revelations

of *our* Seers can never be set forth as an infallible guide ; those who cannot do without this must remain in the nursery and schoolroom, where alone such a thing is to be found. Theosophy is for students, for thinkers, who are able to take from teachings and from visions just what they need for their own spiritual progress, no more and no less. To these it will give the needful stimulus to move forwards and not to go to sleep where they stand, will show gleam after gleam of the Path before them, but always leaving it to their diligent research and piercing intuition to find for themselves the spot where next to set their feet. And to such students an occasional false step will do less injury than standing still, waiting for "conclusive evidence" that the next step will bear them.

## QUESTION 121.

*What is the origin of the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence in the bread and wine at the celebration of the Mass? (1898.)*

A. A. W.—To give even an outline of the *origin* of the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence would require a series of volumes, and *lives*—not one life only—of research. Perhaps the suggestion made by the author of *The Life of Michael Scot* (reviewed a month or two back in *The Theosophical Review*) may give the clue—that at the time the doctrine was finally put into shape the ruling idea in all existing science was that of Transformation, as now it is Evolution. It may very possibly, however, answer the purpose of the querist, to remind him that the words of institution given in the Gospels can, in their literal meaning, convey nothing less. The position of the Catholic Church on this matter is that of Luther himself, who, when pressed by his Calvinistic adversaries on this very point, chalked on the table the words, *This is My Body*, and fairly roared down all their arguments by constant repetition of them. To say, as so many Christians now do, "This is impossible, and hence Jesus *could* not have meant what He said!" was to take a liberty with Scripture he had not learnt to allow himself. It has become in these later centuries so habitual a matter to pick out of the Bible just the texts which seemed to confirm our own view, and pass over the others as being (if we only dared say it) "unscriptural," that we forget how entirely *illogical* such a proceeding is, and find it hard to enter into the

mind of the Catholic theologian to whom *every word* of the Bible is the "Word of God" and must find its place in his system. Modern theology is so entirely polemical—its Bible consists so exclusively of "texts" against Popery, "texts" against Infant Baptism, "texts" for justification by Faith, and the like, that we can hardly picture to ourselves the early Christian who, finding in his Gospels that Jesus said "Take eat, this is my Body," "Drink, this is my Blood," proceeded without misgiving or hesitation to frame his theology accordingly. For many centuries all Catholic doctrine and worship have been founded on the simple belief that Jesus *would* not have said it unless He had meant it. The world has moved since then; we now permit ourselves to reason on such matters, and our reason disagrees; but it might be well for Christians of the present day to examine a little more carefully how much of the *authority* of the Bible, as in any sense a Revelation above and beyond human reason, is, in truth, left when we allow ourselves to say that the unquestioned words of Jesus on this matter may safely be set aside as "unreasonable." This much, it seems to me, we may claim from them, amongst other things; that they should cease to assert an eternal Hell on the ground of one single phrase in the Gospels which, literally translated, does *not* mean anything of the kind, and so has far less in its favour than the doctrine of the Real Presence.

For the Theosophist the doctrine, like all the other Christian doctrines, is true in a far higher sense. The Divine presence is not limited to fragments of a physical body however Divine may have been the spirit which once animated it. In each one of us dwells the very same Divinity which dwelt in the flesh and blood of Jesus of Nazareth. We pay no reverence to the "Sacrament of the Altar" because altar and priest and sacrifice are equally within ourselves. We call a man, Saviour, Teacher, Master, when the veil of flesh is so thin that the glory shines through; but in every one of us, even the lowest, under whatever thick crust of ignorance, sin and shame it may be hidden, shines the Light of the Logos—that light which lightens every man that cometh into the world!

## QUESTION 122.

*What is the occult meaning of the Holy Communion and other Sacraments? (1898.)*

A. B.—In the various great religions of the world, rites are found analogous to the “Sacraments” of the Christian Church. These represent symbolically on the physical plane certain profound truths in nature manifested on the higher planes of being. Sometimes a fact in the spiritual world is reflected or imaged in the mental and astral worlds, and finally appears in the physical world as a “sacrament” or symbolical rite. Hence those who have learned some of the laws of the higher world regard these rites with respect based on understanding, and the various religious teachers have embodied such forms in the rituals devised by them for the instruction and guidance of the masses. In some sacraments, as in that of baptism, the inner meaning is obvious: water, the physical agent of purification, symbolises the spiritual energy which purifies the mental and astral bodies, and its typical character is the more marked from the fact that it readily takes up magnetic force, and thus affects the etheric and astral bodies in addition to the dense physical. The blessing of the water represents the magnetisation performed by the teacher, and it is well known that magnetised water may be used—quite apart from any idea of religion—for the curing of disease. In the “Holy Communion” the facts are more complex. First, it represents the all-important truth that the One Life is present in every material phenomenon, and that God may be seen and worshipped when veiled in form. Secondly, as the one sun, the symbol of the Logos, pours his life into the physical world, and his chemical and electrical forces draw together the elements that form corn and grape, imparting to them the qualities that—assimilated by other and higher living creatures—sustain and recuperate life; so does the One Life pour itself out to evolve forms, which in their turn sustain and recuperate other more complex vehicles of the same Life.

Thirdly, the material form is illusory, its qualities depending on the type of differentiated life embodied in the form; form does not give birth to life, but life shapes, moulds and gives qualities to form. Bread is bread while the monad informing the corn is

manifesting in the vegetable kingdom, but if an influx of higher life is poured into the form, the qualities are changed, though the resistant matter cannot at once re-arrange its particles under the new impulse, and it becomes in fact, though not in appearance, "the body of the Lord." This is seen in the spiritual world, where the life is beheld as the moulding energy, and the slow changes in the heavy physical region are disregarded as unimportant. What *will be* in the lower *is* in the higher. These realities of the true world are symbolically taught in the consecration and the changing of the "bread" into "flesh." Fourthly, bread and wine stand as representatives of all objects which yield themselves to perish as forms in order that the life thus set free may aid in evolving higher forms; one aspect of the Law of Sacrifice is pictorially shown—that only by the breaking up of forms can life be set free thus to embody itself, that forms must be disintegrated in order that their elements may be recombined to build the higher manifestations; the life does not perish with the form, but finds fuller expression as it escapes from the broken vessel.

Fifthly, a deeper aspect of the same Law of Sacrifice is shown; that which in the lower kingdoms is done involuntarily, under compulsion, and without knowledge, is done voluntarily, freely and with full understanding in the higher; Jesus, taken as symbol of Divine humanity, yields Himself as willing sacrifice that His out-poured life may be utilised for His brethren, and such a sacrifice has two chief aspects, Godwards and manwards. In the first there is the utter yielding up of the whole man to become nothing but a channel of the Divine energies, a force of the Good Law: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. I am content to do it." In the second there is the identification of the sacrificial offering with the race, the recognised oneness of humanity, the transcending of separateness. The oneness with the Supreme is shown in the act of self-sacrifice; the oneness of the race is symbolised by the act of communion, the "partakers of the sacrifice" being those who consciously recognise that unity; as the shared bread and wine nourish all the bodies, so the life invigorates the spiritual nature, and one life is shared by all. Moreover, the Divine humanity is the link between the evolving race and its Life-giver, and the partaking of the sacrifice is the condition of sharing in the life. This and far more is symbolically taught in Holy Communion, but the deeper mysteries can only be "seen," not "told."



The veil of Isis must be lifted by each for himself, and no merely physical man may lift it; the God in him must awaken and put forth his energy ere that task may be successfully accomplished. And even then it is true of all the deeper verities, that

Veil after veil will lift—but there must be  
Veil upon veil behind.

#### QUESTION 123.

*What is the true meaning and value of confession and absolution?*  
(1902.)

A. A. W.—This is a large question, which can only be very summarily answered in the space available here. As a portion of *Esoteric Christianity* I must leave it to one more qualified to speak; but one or two points of practical experience may be useful.

There are confessions—and confessions. H. P. B. has in several places used strong language on the subject, but the evil to which she was referring was not the mere practice of confession, but the abuse of what is known amongst Catholics as “*Direction*”—often combined with confession, but here to be carefully distinguished. That everyone with any pretensions to a spiritual life should habitually enter into himself at least once a day, should make *to himself* full confession of the day’s faults and failures, and set himself due penance for the same, is universally recognised by all writers as an actual necessity: by the author of *Esoteric Christianity* as strongly as anyone. That it is good, from time to time, to make such confession to some one else, can hardly be questioned by Christians, who read in their New Testament an explicit order to “confess their sins one to another.” Whether this “other” should be a priest, specially set apart and educated for the purpose—a qualified *soul-physician*, in short, according to the analogy of bodily sickness—or no, is a question we are (fortunately) not obliged to raise in this connection.

The ordinary Protestant declines this duty altogether; and if you press it, usually replies that he will only confess his sins to Almighty God. Here again, I pass the *theological* question. As a matter of practical fact, it is (as far as my experience goes) a rare event when such an one *does* confess his sins to Almighty God.

It is the oldest of old jokes that, whilst perfectly ready to confess himself publicly as a "miserable sinner," an ordinary Christian is roused to furious indignation by any suggestion that he has anywhere actually *sinned!* And more; sins look so very different when you have to put them in shape to show to someone else—to tell someone plainly and simply what you have done, to answer honestly and from the bottom of your heart his inquiries as to the motives of your actions, to set in so many words before yourself *and him* all the meannesses and shabbinesses which never showed themselves to you before—all this is a lesson which you can learn no other way. To my mind "Confession" of some kind is an indispensable assistance to our self-examination; and this quite apart from any theological value it may or may not have. The ordinary Christian method of treating our transgressions as careless housewives do the dirt—"rubbing it about until it is lost"—is quite inadequate for one who wishes to lead the higher life.

Next; as to "forgiveness of sins." Whilst it is quite true that we don't *need* any forgiveness, and that no form of words could give it if we did, this is not a sufficient answer for an inquirer. When a child, after a fit of naughtiness, comes to his mother and prays for forgiveness, with many protests that he *will* be a good boy hereafter, this does not mean that he thinks his mother *hated* him for his naughtiness, or has been *propitiated* by his punishment. If such analysis were possible to his infant mind, he would feel that he had set himself (to his own loss) against the movement of his own little world for a selfish desire of his own, and was sorry. His mother's forgiveness is recognition of his change of mind—her glad and loving acknowledgment that they are once more one in heart. And he is not quite at ease till she has said, in so many words, that it *is* so and she "forgives" him.

Now, in real truth, the Powers above us *have* this infinite mothers' patience with us, and more; "a love passing that of women." In a true confession we come as the child to say we are sorry; and that henceforth we will live for our selfish pleasure no more, but think and feel and love as They do; and our childish hearts value, and are right in valuing, the "forgiveness" which the priest speaks. We *know* that the change in us is seen and recognised by the Powers without words of ours or Theirs; but it is, and will be (for most of us) for long a true and lawful happiness to hear the words of forgiveness spoken in Their name and to feel the blessing which a true-hearted and loving

priest sends forth upon us as he utters the great mantra over the repentant soul.

There would have been no confusion about this, had Christian theologians been content to learn from Christ *alone* what He had to teach of the love of our Father in Heaven. The "Father" of Jesus Christ loves His children with this infinite unwearied patience of which I have spoken, and needs not so much as that Jesus should pray for us to Him, for the love of Jesus is only the love of the Father Who sent Him. But when they, not satisfied with Christ's teaching, proceeded to darken the face of the loving Father with the traits of the jealous, angry, blood-thirsty Jehovah of Ezra, Nehemiah and their successors, they made fatal ruin of the Christian faith. It is hence that come the "mortal sin," the "everlasting hell," the necessity of *priestly* absolution for salvation from it, and all the other developments which give a right to H. P. B. to speak hardly of what, in itself, is a beneficent ordinance. Her indignation was not for the priest who says to the sinner in the words of the Saviour, "Thy sins are forgiven thee—go and sin no more," but for the theological system which binds him (often against his own better judgment—his *knowledge*), to say to his penitent "*This* you must do—right or wrong—or go to Hell-fire for ever"; the system which encourages—nay does its best to force—a soul to give up its own judgment, its own conscience, to the ruling of another, lest the living of its own life should bring it to everlasting destruction. And in this Protestant is as guilty as Catholic. It is but George Fox and some of his earlier followers who have had a glimpse of that deep reverence for the separate and distinct working of the Spirit in each individual soul which is the characteristic of the Wisdom which Christ taught.

E. L.—The true value of confession lies in the fact that it implies (if considered in its ideal sense) a recognition of wrongdoing (without which the first step towards right action cannot be taken) and a renouncing of such wrongdoing. The priest to whom confession is made stands for the moment as the symbol of the penitent's own higher nature, externalised as it were, and in whose presence our avowal of past sins, and promise of future amendment is made. It is a curious and interesting fact that, however degraded the priestly office may be, those holding it keep their lips sealed with regard to confessions of whatever nature. The father confessor, then, is in one sense the sin bearer

from the moment that he pronounces the absolution. Penance imposed would seem to be a recognition of the karma which must follow the sin, however the burden of such be shared with one who typifies the Higher Life, the Guide. Confession and absolution apart from this inner significance have a value in that they exist in order to preserve a memory—however slight—of the occult verities which they represent, verities to be acknowledged and comprehended when the newer and more spiritual era is born on earth.

The absolution considered in its true meaning, what is it but the symbol of the karma outworn, the sins and shortcomings expiated, or rather transmuted by Divine Alchemy into those powers which crown each triumphant soul? The lesson has been learnt. The mere physical husk of karma incurred may remain, and have to be faced, but the man is *really free*, freed by that higher nature which is himself. The priest, of course, is a more or less distorted symbol of the true teacher or Master Who is one with His disciples, Who lifts them towards their freedom even while they must bear the penance, *i.e.*, their karmic liability, and themselves struggle upward.

## DIVISION XLV

### KING SOLOMON

#### QUESTION 124.

*What reason is there for describing King Solomon's temple as never having had a real existence, and the monarch himself as a "solar myth," as is done in The Secret Doctrine (N. E.), vol. 1., p. 334, there being nothing intrinsically improbable in the Jews having had such a temple or such a king? (1898.)*

G. R. S. M.—The reasons are based on the huge body of tradition concerning this personage floating about in the East; on the proportions and contents of the symbolic structure; and on philological and astronomical considerations. Since the time of Nork (cir. 1835), many scholars have devoted their attention to this interpretation of Jewish mythology. It is, however, not improbable that there was a person in the ancient East round whom the legends were woven. The account of Solomon and his greatness given in the Jewish document is, however, manifestly unhistorical; and even were it historical, the famous temple could have been only a small wooden (?) structure, a nothing compared to the mighty fanes of antiquity. The crude idea that the Jews were the leaders of the world in art and civilisation (an article of faith which had been undisputed for so many centuries), is now known to be an ignorant boast which has received its quietus by the proved existence of a highly-developed art and civilisation in Babylonia, the records of which are preserved on monuments of stone, on cylinders and tiles, and which antedates the temple of Solomon (c. 1000 B.C. ?) by 6000 or 7000 years. These temples of the ancient Chaldæans were built according to an astronomical canon; and the knowledge of Chaldæan lore, which the Jews acquired during the captivity, modified immensely, if it did not

originate, their tradition of the tabernacle and of Solomon's temple. Indeed, as is now acknowledged by both Jewish and Christian scholars, the captivity metamorphosed primitive Jewish ideas, and brought the Jews into contact with a civilisation from which they derived the better part of their subsequent intellectual and religious possessions. It was only after the captivity that they wrote up their records, some five hundred years after the date so kindly assigned to Solomon in the margin of the English Authorised Translation.

Personally, however, I am no fanatic of the sun-myth theory. This theory is but an exercise in correspondences; granted that such correspondences existed between the sun and the hero, what then? It follows that the great world and little world (or man), correspond generally. On this fact the inner cultus of the Chaldæans and later of the Jews was based; the initiators into this science of the soul, of man, of the Universe, and of God, invariably derived their descent from some great teacher in the far distant past. The Jews chose Solomon for one of the founders of their mystery cultus: hence the symbolic nature of their legend concerning him.

## DIVISION XLVI

### INTERPRETATION OF BIBLE PASSAGES

#### QUESTION 125.

*The questioner would be glad of a theosophical explanation of the parable of "The Prodigal Son." She is acquainted with the Christian explanations, but would also much like a theosophical view. (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—The beautiful Parable of the Prodigal Son is found in the third Synoptic (xv. 11-32), and should be so well known to every reader of the VĀHAN that we may proceed to a consideration of its contents without quoting text or giving translation. Whether or not the following will be called a "theosophical" explanation, I am unable to say; it is the result of a study of both the present presentation of theosophic thought and also of the writings of the great Christian philosophers of the earliest centuries. Students should first of all read the beautiful "Hymn of the Robe of Glory," given in my paper on "Bardaisan the Gnostic," in the March number (1898) of *The Theosophical Review* (xxii. 9 ff.). The whole Hymn, which is almost indubitably the work of Bardesanes himself, is the same Parable of the Prodigal Son in another guise. It is generally referred to as "The Hymn of the Soul," and tells how the younger son left his Father and Mother, the King and Queen of Glory (Ātman and Buddhi), and his elder brother (Higher Maṇas, Kāraṇa Sharīra, or causal body) and went down into Egypt to find the "one pearl" (the gnosis, gñānam, Brahma-vidyā, wisdom, theosophia). It tells of the realms he passed through on his journey from the East (his descent into matter) and the dangers of the way; how he was abandoned in Egypt (matter); and put on a robe like the robe

of the people of Egypt, and eat their food and *forgot* his high mission. It tells of how repentance (change of mind, the turning it to higher things) came to him. The holy bird (in this case an eagle and not a dove) descended, bringing a letter of comfort from above. And he *remembered* he was the son of kings. So he arose and lulled the terrible serpent (Kâma) which guarded the pearl to sleep, and snatched it away and turned to go back to his Father's house. And so he journeys eastwards (and upwards again); and when he has accomplished a great part of his journey, there is sent to him the glorious robe (? Buddhi) which he had left behind in his Father's house.

"The garment seemed to me like a mirror of myself; I saw it all in my whole self. . . . And I saw that all over it the motions of knowledge were stirring. . . . And I perceived in myself that my statue was growing according to its labours. . . ."

And my toga of brilliant colours  
 I cast around me, in its whole breadth.  
 I clothed myself therewith, and ascended  
 To the gates of salutation and homage;  
 I bowed my head and did homage  
 To the Majesty of my Father who had sent it to me,  
 For I had done his commandments,  
 And he had done what he promised,  
 And at the gate of his princes  
 I mingled with his nobles;  
 For he rejoiced in me and received me,  
 I was with him in his kingdom.  
 And with the voice of . . . .  
 All his servants glorify him.  
 And he promised that also to the gate  
 Of the King of kings I should speed with him,  
 And bringing my gift and my pearl,  
 I should appear with him before the King."

It would seem to me that here we have a hint of a still higher initiation (the âtmic after the buddhic), when the arhat reaches Nirvâna and becomes one with the Logos—the true Âtman of the kosmos and not the âtman (the Father) in man.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son, as found in the tradition of the compiler of the third Synoptic, seems to me to be part of the public teaching intended for the people. Its setting is Jewish; there is the strong antithesis of the eating of swine's food, for a Jew



the foulest food of the foulest animal, and the slaughtering of the choice fatted calf to make merry for the returned prodigal.

The Gnostic tradition preserves for us a far more detailed and delicate setting of the great mystery-teaching of the fall of the soul into matter and its re-ascent to spirit, when it becomes higher than its brother-souls who have not descended and re-ascended, who have not been lost and been found. "Ye shall be higher than all Gods."

An ancient Gnostic legend tells how that Lucifer was God's eldest born, who left his Father's house to seek for freedom, and how God loved him more than all the rest. "There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." For the sinners become the saviours.

## QUESTION 126.

*What is the explanation of "the sign of the prophet Jonas" in the following passage from Matthew?*

"38. Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

"39. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

"40. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."—Matt. xii. (1899.)

G. R. S. M.—The word σημεῖον, translated by "sign" in the Authorised Version, means a "marvellous happening" and also a "symbol" or "figure." If we have here an authentic Saying of the Christ, we are to understand that the leaders of the orthodox Jews demanded from the Master a "sign," that is to say, a marvellous work or phenomenon. The Master, however, though he performed many marvellous deeds for others, refused to gratify their curiosity and submit to a "test"; nevertheless he answered them "darkly," if they could receive it. You know, he said, the story of Jonah, how Jonah was three days and three nights in the monster's belly, so is it with the "Son of Man." That should be "sign" enough for you, if you can understand your own Scripture.

Now Jonah himself (ii. 2) calls the belly of the sea monster, the "belly of Hades." Moreover, Hades was called "Leviathan"

Sign

by some of the Gnostic Schools (see the Diagram of the so-called Ophites in Origen's *Against Celsus*). The "Son of Man" was also the technical Gnostic term for the perfect man or Christ, who has to pass three days and three nights in Hades, the Unseen World, before coming forth into the Light.

An interesting point is the play on the word "sign." It is used in one sense by the Jewish doctors and in another by the Master. I do not know whether any Hebrew word would convey the double meaning; if not, it is evidence that this Saying was originally written in Greek.

#### QUESTION 127.

*In the parable of the sheepfold, what was the inner meaning of the words, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers"? The orthodox explanation is "all other Teachers." But this is manifestly opposed to the teaching of One who was constantly referring to the authority of the Prophets, and who said, "They that are not against us are with us." (1898.)*

G. R. S. M.—The only meaning of the words  $\delta\sigma\upsilon\iota \eta\lambda\theta\omicron\nu\ \pi\rho\delta\ \epsilon\mu\omicron\upsilon$  is "all who came *before me*," referring to *time*. We may, therefore, dismiss all such twisting of the meaning as "without regard to me," "passing by me as the door," "instead of me," "pressing before me," and all the other "numerous shifts" (see Alford *in loco*) which pertain to apology and not to elucidation. Not, however, that we can agree with the orthodox position as summed up in the question, "*What pretended teachers then came before Christ?*" (*ibid.*). The answer to which is found in the fact, that though the writer of the fourth Gospel asserts that the Christ taught the Jews that Abraham and the prophets "*entered by Him*" (vii. 56), he in the same chapter (v. 44) asserts that Christ set in strong opposition to Himself and His these same Jews and "*their father the Devil.*" "*He,*" says Alford, "*was 'the first thief who clomb into God's fold.'*" The orthodox interpretation would, therefore, refer the words to all *false* teachers and centre these round the dogma of the Antichrist. Some, however, would have the phrase refer to the Pharisees, etc., who taught the people before Christ appeared.

All of this is exceedingly unsatisfactory to one who regards the fourth Gospel as a human document, and remembers that this

parable, or rather allegory, is found in it alone. Now although the writer of this document (c. the first quarter of the second century) was the most mystical of all the writers of the N. T. collection, he must have been acquainted with some of the literature of the circles in which he moved, and one of the most famous books of the period was *The Book of Enoch*. In chap. lxxxix. of this work is a very long vision describing the fortunes of Israel and its rulers under the figures of sheep and shepherds, and also other animals, but persistently of sheep. The whole vision is a product of the same literary circles as were responsible for the Sibylline and allied pseudepigraphs (see my articles in *The Theosophical Review*, July-November). The shepherds are either the incompetent Jewish heads of Israel, or their Babylonian, Persian or Grecian rulers. The writer of the fourth Gospel would seem in his allegory to regard the Christ as still the *King-Messiah*, and, therefore, all those who came before him are the temporal heads and oppressors of Israel who have all failed to bring Israel into its kingdom. This interpretation would take the question out of the domain of developed universalism and restrict it to the historical environment of the writer. The mystical temperament of the latter, and the time of transition of ideas out of the narrower area of Jewish national hopes into the less trammelled field of a nascent universalism would account both for the unqualified condemnation of all other shepherds and for the still faint clinging to the King-Messiah idea as set forth in *The Book of Enoch*. I am surprised that the last editor and translator of Enoch (R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch*; Oxford, 1893), in the part of his introduction on "The Influence of Enoch on the New Testament," does not refer to this passage although he gives five other passages from the fourth Gospel indicative of this influence.

## QUESTION 128.

*What interpretation does Theosophy put on the account of the healing the palsied man and our Lord's remark at the time?*  
—Mark ii. 5 and 10. (1898).

G. R. S. M.—The incident of the healing of the paralytic is also given by the other synoptical gospel-compilers (Matt. ix. 1. *sqq.*, and Luke v. 18. *sqq.*). The wording of the "sayings" in the recital is nearly identical in these documents, while the intro-

ductory passages and the attendant incidents, on the contrary, are very divergent. The verses referred to read as follows: "He says unto the paralytic, Be of good courage, child, thy sins be forgiven" (Matt.)—"Child, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark)—"Man, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Luke). And again: "But that ye may know that the Son of the man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt., Mark, Luke). It is evident that all the accounts are based upon a shorter common document, which was probably first of all translated from the Hebrew into Greek. The point of the narrative is not the healing-wonder which was the commonplace of antiquity, especially as the power of working such cures was claimed by the most pious of the Pharisees, as the result of their ninth degree of purity; but the answer attributed to Jesus. First, he is made to claim to be the Son of the [Heavenly] Man, that is to say, in direct relationship with the Logos, and secondly, to have the power to forgive sins. To the orthodox Jew the latter claim was naturally pure blasphemy, for, according to him, no one could forgive sins but God alone. The theosophical student, of course, has no difficulty in admitting the healing of the paralytic; thousands of far lesser mortals than Jesus have done as much. The question for us is whether we can admit the claim to forgive sins, for the claim that the Christ in Jesus was a "Son of 'the Man'"—was one of the Sons of God—presents no difficulty, provided that we have not to assent to the later dogma, that Christ was the *only* Son of God.

The writer of the incident plainly put forward the doctrine that physical suffering is the outcome of "sin," a common belief at the time, and one that a theosophist may accept, though he may ascribe a different meaning to the term "sin" than the orthodox Christian signification, and find a scientific basis for offences against the law of evolution on the physical, psychic, mental and spiritual planes, all acting and reacting on one another in a distinct and *substantial* fashion. The doctrine of the forgiveness of sins has been worked out in a striking fashion by some of the Gnostic schools, there being many degrees of forgiveness—the sins being categorised from simple transgressions up to the most heinous crimes. These degrees of forgiveness could be exercised by disciples according to the illumination they had received and the stage of spiritual knowledge and purity at which they had arrived; but the ultimate forgiveness ever remained in the hand of the First Mystery, the

Logos Himself, who for the world to which we belong is identical with God. The forgiveness of sins for these early Christian philosophers, however, meant the imparting of a certain power or "mystery," as they called it, whereby the recipient was enabled to gain a breathing space, and this power—whether given for physical healing or mental or spiritual help—could only be imparted by one who had knowledge of the past of the sinner; at the same time, the doctrine that every deed had to be worked out, and every debt paid unto the last farthing, was strenuously maintained. The "forgiveness" might alleviate for the time, but the results of every cause set in motion had to be borne. This Gnostic doctrine seems to be also held by the best minds in Christendom to-day, who, together with theosophical students, reject the idea of an entire wiping out of the past by miraculous means, and explain the "forgiveness of sins" as an imparting of what the theologian would call the "grace of God," whereby the man is strengthened to bear his karma.

The text of the account of the incident—which is plainly dressed out to suit doctrinal purposes—as it has come down to us, is evidently faulty, and the answer given has all the appearance of a *non-sequitur*. "But that ye might know that the Son of the Man hath power to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise," etc. We should rather have expected the reiteration of the first command: "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

## QUESTION 129.

*I am much interested in Theosophy, but I want to see that its views tally with the teachings of our Great Master. For instance, what would be said on His description of the last judgment, more especially His words in verses 41 and 46 of Matt. xxv. ? (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—The verses referred to are as follows in the Authorised Version:

"41. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. . . .

46. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Speaking for myself I should say that these words were never

uttered by the Christ. I would first of all refer to my review of Dr Charles' recent book on *Eschatology* in *The Theosophical Review* for February. This will give readers unacquainted with the subject some notion of the circle of ideas from which such doctrines proceeded. Dr Charles is the Professor of Biblical Greek at Trinity College, Dublin, and the scope of his work may be seen from the full title, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism and in Christianity*; or *Hebrew, Jewish and Christian Eschatology from Pre-prophetic Times till the close of the New Testament Canon*. Professor Charles in speaking of New Testament eschatology, writes: "In the first place, we shall not be surprised if the eschatology of the latter [the N. T.] should, to some extent, present similar incongruous phenomena as the Old Testament and subsequent Jewish literature. And, in the next, we shall be prepared to deal honestly with any such inconsistencies. So far, therefore, from attempting, as in the past, to explain them away or to bring them into harmony with doctrines that in reality make their acceptance impossible, we shall frankly acknowledge their existence, and assign to them their full historical value. That their existence, however, in the New Testament Canon can give them no claim to the acceptance of the Church, follows from their inherent discordance with the Christian fundamental doctrines of God and Christ; for such discordance condemns them as survivals of an earlier and lower stage of religious belief.

"That certain Judaistic conceptions of a mechanical and unethical character have passed into the New Testament must be recognised. But since these possess no organic relation to the fundamental doctrines of Christ, and, indeed, at times betray a character wholly irreconcilable therewith, they have naturally no time *rationale* in Christianity. In Christianity there is a survival of alien Judaistic elements."

And this is especially the case in the two verses cited. The first is based on *Enoch*, liv. 1-6. This Jewish apocalyptic had an enormous influence on the early Christian communities, and has evidently supplied the compiler of the canonical *Matthew* with the material he has here worked into a sermon of the Christ. The verses referred to run as follows:

"1. And I looked and turned to another part of the earth and saw there a deep valley with burning fire. 2. And they brought the kings and mighty and put them into this deep valley.

3. And then mine eyes saw how they made instruments for them, iron chains of immeasurable weight. 4. And I asked the angel of peace who was with me, saying: 'These chain instruments, for whom are they prepared?' 5. And he said unto me: '*These are prepared for the hosts of Azâzël* so that they may take them and cast them into the abyss of complete condemnation, and cover their jaws with rough stones as the Lord of Spirits commanded. 6. Michael, Gabriel, Rufael and Fanuel will take hold of them on that great day and cast them on that day *into a burning furnace*, that the Lord of Spirits may take vengeance on them for their unrighteousness in becoming subject to Satan and leading astray those who dwell on the earth.'

Verse 46 has its natural heredity in another great pseudopigraph of the time, the famous *Book of Daniel*, composed by the same school of apologists for unfulfilled prophecy and foretellers of the evil end of the enemies of Israel. In *Daniel* xii. 1, 2, we read:

"1. And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book.

"2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, *some to everlasting life*, and some to *shame and everlasting contempt*."

Here we have certain factors in the evolution of the dogma of the Last Judgment, and to them many hundreds of others could be added. Gradually the outlook of Jewry in the future was widened, as their hopes of re-establishing their political independence were again and again shattered, and, finally, in Christian circles the original hope of the "great day" for the Jews was evolved into the dogma of the "final judgment" of the whole world. But the crude elements of the vengeful Judaism were never entirely eliminated from it, and the compiler of the final synoptic, by including such ideas among the "Sayings," shows himself incapable of really understanding the spirit of the teachings of the Christ!

Our questioner writes: "I am much interested in Theosophy, but I want to see that its views tally with the teachings of our Great Master." True Theosophy tallies in every detail with the teaching of the Christ, but the difficulty is to discover what the

Christ really taught. We have such imperfect and contradictory accounts from the first two centuries that with the best will in the world it is impossible to get at the truth by ordinary means; but, of course, the ordinary believer in Christianity who has read nothing but the translation of a very few selected books out of a huge literature of which, indeed, he generally knows not even the existence, cannot be expected even to appreciate the problem.

QUESTION 130.

*What is the meaning of the phrase "a high priest after the order of Melchizedec"? And how is it that Melchizedec is referred to as having no father or mother? (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—This is an exceedingly interesting question, and I am sorry that it has been forwarded to me at a time when I cannot get at my books of reference. Still, even with their help, I doubt whether any real light can be thrown on the problem, for it is just one of those thousand and one puzzles in Jewish and Christian tradition of which we have no solution. The reason why the Melchizedec tradition is of special interest to me is that there was a Gnostic school called the Melchizedecians, of which we know nothing beyond the name; now we might be content to put up with our ignorance on this point, and regard it as a matter of small moment, were it not that the name Melchizedec comes into great prominence in the Coptic Gnostic works. In not only the so-called *Pistis Sophia* treatise and the *Extracts from the Books of the Saviour* (preserved in the Askew Codex) but also in *The Book of the Great Logos according to the Mystery* (of the Bruce Codex), Melchizedec is the name of one of the Great Receivers of the Light. That is to say, it is to him that is assigned the function of gathering in the light-sparks (higher Egos) and carrying them into the Treasure of Light. He is the *supernal* psychopomp and psychagogue; that is to say, the guide and conductor not of souls, but of spirits. He is always associated with Gabriel in this task, and his mystery-name is given as Zorokothora.

Now these two great powers or "lights" stand respectively for the *rulers* of the sun and moon. Melchizedec is, therefore, to be equated, not with the sun, but with the sun-god, the representative of the Logos; he is the "Legate" of the Supreme. When I say



that his mystery-name is given as Zorokothora, I mean that in these precious Coptic versions of original Greek Gnostic treatises, we find one if not more systems of cypher or cryptic names and sentences, which are nowhere explained, and of which, I believe, the key was only given by word of mouth.

Now Melchi-zedec is a Semitic name. Melchi = Malek (Heb.) or king. Melchizedec is then King Zedec.

In this connection it is curious to notice that in the ancient Phœnician system of cosmogony, compiled by Sanchouniathon from the ancient records of Tyre, and translated into Greek by Philo Byblus, there is mention of King Sydic, who has seven sons, who form the company of the Great Gods. King Sydic or Zedec is clearly here the mythological personification of the sun-god, in the ancient Semitic tradition. He is the representative of the Self-born, the Parentless, of Him who has no father and no mother.

The high-priest of the sun would naturally bear the name and be honoured by the attributes of the god; and the Melchizedecs would therefore be the "priests of the most high God," and their order would be the order of Melchizedec.

These priests would in all probability be initiates of the mysteries of King Sydic and the Seven, and indeed the Samothracian mysteries of the Kabiri are said to have been in close connection with this ancient Semitic mystery-tradition.

I have now thrown down on paper a few points of interest and suggested a few links.

We know that the Gnostics were intimately acquainted with the various mystery-traditions of their time; we are further informed that one of their schools was distinctly named the Melchizedecians. In all probability they did not so name themselves, but were so called by their orthodox opponents because they made much of Melchizedec in their mystery-tradition. We have further seen how the lately-recovered Coptic Gnostic works throw further light on the subject.

Further, the outer canonical documents of the New Covenant bear distinct traces of this inner teaching—the Melchizedec tradition being conflated with the Christ tradition, a most natural blending.

As for the Old Covenant documents, they preserve the Melchizedec myth in the way we might expect; the Jewish writers took over the old Semitic tradition and worked it into their tribal

legends for their own purposes. They did not understand the Melchizedec mystery-legend, but they knew how highly it was regarded and so invoked its authority in favour of their own unknown past.

The points of interest to theosophists who are students of the origins are: Was the old Melchizedec-tradition preserved? Had it anything to do with the Hyksos mystery-tradition? If so, had it still remained as *one* of the secret traditions in Egypt? Did Valentinus and his predecessors know it? Was Jesus in reality, among other things, a "priest after the order of Melchizedec" in a historic as well as in a mystic sense?

New Testament research is a dangerous and painful pursuit for any but those who have bidden orthodoxy a long farewell.

#### QUESTION 131.

*I should be glad if you could give me an interpretation of the passage in Isaiah which reads: "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." The difficulty I have is with the words implying the direct creation of evil by God. (1899.)*

G. R. S. M.—The passage is from *Isaiah* xlv. 6-7. It is one of the outbursts of what is called the "Second Isaiah" or "Deutero-Isaiah," and was addressed to Cyrus, King of Persia, to whom the Jews were looking for restoration to Jerusalem. Cyrus was to be their Messiah or Anointed. The whole passage runs as follows in Cheyne's translation (pp. 77, 78, in Haupt's Polychrome Bible):

"Thus says JHVH to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped.

That the nations may be terror-stricken before him, and that I may ungird the loins of kings.

To open doors before him, and that gates may not be closed;  
I myself will go before thee; ways will I make level.

Doors of bronze will I break in pieces, and bars of iron cut in sunder;

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness and the hoards of secret places;

For it is I, JHVH, who call thee by thy name, I the God of Israel.

For the sake of Jacob, my Servant, and Israel my Chosen,  
I call thee by thy name; I took delight in thee though thou  
knewest me not.

I am JHVH, and there is none else; beside me there is no God;  
That men may acknowledge, both in the east and in the west,  
That there is none beside me—I am JHVH, and there is none  
else—

Who forms light and creates darkness, who makes welfare and  
creates calamity,

I, JHVH, the true God, am the author of all this."

With this passage compare the outbursts by the same writer  
xli. 21 *sqq.* (*loc. cit.*, p. 69), where he claims that the God of the  
Jews was the only true prophet, all the other gods were false  
prophets. Yahveh is made to claim that he has called Cyrus to  
overthrow the empire of Babylon. "Already," says Cheyne in  
a note (p. 177), outlining the conception of the writer of the out-  
burst, "there are some highly-favoured non-Israelites whom the  
one true God leads to a knowledge of Himself. Chief among them  
is Cyrus, whom the Second Isaiah no doubt regards as a worshipper  
of the Persian god of light, Ahura-Mazda, of whose similarity  
to the JHVH of the Hebrew prophets some reports may possibly  
have reached him. To have announced the successful career  
of this noble-minded king and warrior is offered as a proof of  
JHVH's sole divinity. Which of the false gods has told in oracles  
the rise of Cyrus?"

The Babylonian empire fell unregretted by the Babylonians in  
528 B.C. Suffering under the weight of intolerable burdens to  
defray the enormous expenses of the architectural extravagance of  
the last king, Nabû-nâ'id, the people welcomed Cyrus as a saviour.  
All classes shared in this joy, and among them the Jewish  
communities, who took advantage of the occasion to find favour  
with the conqueror on the strength of a statement that they had  
been on his side all along. Doubtless Cyrus saw through it all,  
but considered it politic to have the influence of the priests  
and prophets of all persuasions in his composite empire on  
his side).

The claim that JHVH was the only God, and that he (Cyrus)  
was his Anointed, was gratifying to his vanity, for it proved that the  
Jews were giving him of their best. The ignorance of the writer  
of this pathetic epistle (if it were ever sent to the king) must have  
amused Cyrus, for the writer assumes that Cyrus did not know that

the God over all was one, that he did not know the fundamental tenet of his own faith that Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman were twin powers of one Deity. (See Geiger's *Zarathustra in the Gāthās*: Leipzig, 1897.)

"The prophet," writes Cheyne, "has contradicted Oriental dualism; light and darkness, he says, are alike ordained by JHVH" (note, p. 184). But there was no dualism in the vulgar sense to contradict. Oriental dualism is precisely the same as Jewish and Christian dualism. All three, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity, have it, and it is difficult to imagine how any theory of the beginnings can avoid dualism as its second stage, or refuse to posit unity as its first. Every religion, philosophy and science must do so. We have the somewhat crude statement that Yahveh creates evil. But if Yahveh is made identical with the God over all, then all must inevitably come from him. Evil, however, we love to think, does not exist in the universe; it is a wrong word to use in connection with things kosmic. We love to think, and rightly think, that the great universe is beautiful and good; evil is a term employed only concerning the little universe, man. But all this is a war of words. For instance, some of the wisest have refused the term good to the universe. God alone is good; the universe is beautiful, but not good, whereas man is neither beautiful nor good, but he may become so; thus teaches the Thrice-greatest, and so taught Plato. This simply means that we know that the good is above us, and that we ever strive after it; what is below us we foolishly regard as evil, whereas it is not evil, but for others in the lower stages of development it is good. But for God there is no below or above; for Him Yesterday and To-day are the same; Light and Darkness; Good and Evil. The ultimate identification of Good and Evil *towards* the Good is wisdom; the identification of them *towards* the Evil is retrogression and loss of consciousness, and the antipodes of wisdom, the ignorance that we should all strive to avoid.

#### QUESTION 132.

- (1) According to Matt. x. 34, Christ came not to send peace but a sword on earth. In verse 35 we are told He came to set relatives at variance. In Luke xiv. 26, our parents, brothers, and sisters, and our own lives even, are to be hated.  
 In Matt. xix. 11-12, a horrible rite is apparently recommended

by Jesus. Some early Christians, including Origen, are said to have practised this and become eunuchs.

- (3) Now, are these teachings authentic in the sense of being taught by the real Christ? What is to be the canon of judgment in regard to the truth or otherwise of the Gospels?
- (4) Failing a canon, would it not be wise to entirely eschew the Gospels as absolutely untrustworthy and misleading? (1901.)

G. R. S. M.—(i.) The mystical Gnostic exegesis of all such “dark sayings,” applies the same method of interpretation to the passages quoted as to the saying about our “parents.” The “sword” is the symbol of enmity between the higher and lower nature; it is a fiery sword, the fire of “baptism,” which burns up all impurity and “separates” off the “above” from the “below,” the “good” from the “evil” elements, the “brother” from the “sister.” Our “lives” again are the “lower” nature, the “animal.” But these sayings have a still wider scope and import, and are not to be applied simply to the individual economy of the disciple, for it is very patent that this “separation” wrought in the individual himself cuts him off to a large extent also from the “world,” the normal environment, and that this separation is felt, and for the most part resented. It is said, moreover, that whenever there is a strong pouring forth of spiritual power, there is always a strong reaction, and this must be patent to every one who has studied the history of religion. In the most literal of literal senses, then, the saying about the sword has been verified in Christendom. Compare with the whole of this teaching the setting of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the relatives drawn up on either side in the conflict.

(ii.) Touching the question of the marrying of divorced persons, it is reported that the disciples were confused at the Master’s answer, and thought that He condemned all marriage. Perceiving their difficulty He continued: “All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”

The final formula indicates another “dark saying.” If it be

permissible to hazard an interpretation on the lines of common sense and on the general wisdom teaching of the Masters of the great religions, it all seems clear enough. The passage suffers somewhat in translation, the stress coming on the wrong words. *Only those to whom it is given* can accept the conditions of celibacy. Most men cannot do so; indeed, are not called upon to do so. It is not to be expected that all the world should ape the ascetic life; nay, "celibacy" merely is not necessarily a higher state, it depends entirely on the motive. Some are born impotent (perhaps, we may speculate, in consequence of some abuse or of self-imposed celibacy for a selfish purpose in a previous life); some are forced into celibacy—either by the means suggested by the questioner, or by drugs, or by vows taken in ignorance and punishable by death as among the Vestals; others do so because of their longing for spiritual things.

In the third category alone are to be found, we must suppose, those whose celibacy is approved by the Master, and even here we are not free from the suspicion of spiritual selfishness in many cases. What, however, is of interest is that as we have here in all probability an authentic saying of the Christ, then *according to orthodox tradition*, in the very year of the ministry, the Master declares that "there *be* eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Who were these "eunuchs"; who were these celibates? Were they only the Essenes; or does the Master speak in general terms? If He speaks of the Essenes, then we have in existence men and women who were celibates for the "kingdom of heaven's sake" *before* that *new* gospel of the kingdom was preached according to other teachings. If He speaks generally—then we have His endorsement of *Pagan* practices, and the declaration that some of the Heathen did these things for "the kingdom of heaven's sake." We leave our orthodox particularists to take which horn of the dilemma they prefer.

Origin, mighty intellect though he was, misunderstood; at the same time it may be remarked that the "priests of Attys" were the relic of a once wide-spread archaic rite which in these ancient animal days was perhaps the only means of dominating certain passions.

(iii.) The above remarks go towards an answer to this question; as to a canon of judgment, it can only be acquired by every one for himself. The test is simply: Is this saying true? Then it

matters little whether it was spoken historically by this or that teacher. Personally, we see no reason to reject the sayings referred to ; they seem to us to be, in every probability, authentic utterances of the Christ, whether during the year of the ministry or during the post-resurrection period, matters little.

(iv.) The last question requires little answer in the VĀHAN. It proceeds from the same attitude of mind (though it has all the appearance of being the very antipodes of it) which declares the whole of the Gospels to be literally and infallibly inspired by the Spirit of Wisdom. The "sword" to which the Master referred is sometimes called "Viveka" in Sanskrit, and this is generally translated "discrimination" in English. Discrimination does not confuse absolute and relative, does not throw the whole cargo overboard because a few sacks of wheat are spoiled, or even half the ship-load damaged.

## DIVISION XLVII

### THE GREEKS, THE EGYPTIANS, AND GNOSTICISM

#### QUESTION 133.

*I have seen it stated that ideas are re-embodied in the same way as souls are reincarnated. If so, the present theosophical ideas must have been anticipated in antiquity; I suppose we must look to the East for the last incarnation of Theosophy. (1897.)*

G. R. S. M.—This subject has been already dealt with to some extent in my papers on the Later Platonists and Gnostics which have appeared in *Lucifer* during the past twelve months. The problem is exceedingly complex, and we must be careful not to use labels and confine the meanings of words to our own limited conceptions of things theosophical. Again, no prior combination of ideas can be said to be re-embodied in exactly the same combination; but that one can trace some of the same tendencies in our own day which have already played their part on the human stage in the past is patent to the student of history, not only inside the sphere of theosophical ideas, but also outside their pale. Nor have we to go so far as the technical East to find the traces of such ideas, or rather of similar combinations of such ideas. The student should read *A Literary History of Early Christianity* (London: 2 vols.; 1893), by the Rev. C. T. Crutwell, to be convinced of the fact. The period dealt with is the Ante-Nicene, that is, the first three centuries of the present era, and up to the Council of Nicæa, 325 A.D. On pp. 252-254 of his first volume Mr Crutwell writes:

“We have now traced the outlines of the three great types of heresy which distracted the Ante-Nicene Church, together with some of their combinations. We have shown that they proceeded



from three main sources—(1) Judaism, pure or mixed ; (2) Oriental or corrupted Platonism, including a mass of doctrines from the remotest regions imperfectly fused together ; and (3) the dialectical apparatus of Greek philosophy playing upon conceptions at bottom Judaic or Pantheistic.

“The first of these produced the Ebionite form of Christianity, the second the Gnostic, the third the Unitarian. These three forms have died out so far as their outward presentation is concerned, but their spirit is by no means dead. In the seething ferment of opinions at the present day it is not difficult to perceive the analogues of each of them. Ebionism is reviving under the guise of Biblical theology, which seeks to restrict the genuine Christian dogma to that form of it which historical criticism educes from the New Testament. The brilliant and suggestive works of Matthew Arnold are the best known exponents of this line of thought, whereby the person of Christ is reduced to nearly human dimensions, and the miraculous element in it classed as *Aberglaube*. Unitarianism, as the name implies, still holds its ground ; and in the works of Martineau and others rises to a lofty height of spirituality, far transcending the metaphysical restrictions on which the system is logically based. But it is Gnosticism, the hydra-headed, the Protean, that looms highest on the horizon, and once more darkens it by its huge but shapeless bulk. We are not alluding to the current supernaturalism of a magical or theurgic character, which in divers forms is nevertheless making way, both in Roman Catholic and Protestant countries. We speak here only of its intellectual aspect, which in the twofold sense of a theosophy and a science is manifestly reappearing among mankind. As a theosophy, Gnosticism rests upon the faculty of spiritual intuition among those favoured souls who, by discipline or natural insight, are enabled to transcend the physical sphere and penetrate the mechanism of the unseen universe. The recent influx of oriental ideas and systems into the higher culture of Europe has undoubtedly opened a path of development of which at present we see only the beginning. As a vast syncretistic edifice of religious thought, Gnosticism is even more distinctly re-appearing, though in place of the cosmogonical structures of the old Gnostics we meet with a comparative survey of the religious ideas of humanity founded on the method of science, from the point of view of the critical philosophy introduced by Kant. The science of religion has not yet proceeded far enough in its synthesis to evolve the

conception of a universal religion. But unless the human mind is to rest content with the dogmatic *non possumus* of Agnosticism, which is a highly improbable result, we may expect to see in the not distant future a vast religious structure essentially corresponding to the great systems of Basilides and Valentinus, transcending them indeed in the soundness of its metaphysical basis and in the purity of its method, but equally with them including the Christian revelation as one of many elements to be absorbed in its comprehensive scheme."

There is very little to find fault with in the above sketch of the situation: it reveals the mind of an acute observer, and shows how patent are the facts to a student of the history of ideas. If, then, a knowledge of past incarnations throws the strongest light on the make-up of present character; how much more important is the study of the past life of a body of ideas? The intelligent observation and comprehension of the present evolution of thought is one of the highest branches of the great science of life of which Theosophy is a synonym.

#### QUESTION 134

*Did the Gnostic teaching include or preclude the presence in man's nature of both the Divine and human? (1899.)*

G. R. S. M.—The Gnostic teaching on this point was identical with our own theosophical ideas. The Gnostics taught that the way up to union with the Divine was divided into many stages; that men could become gods, and finally God.

Believing as they did in evolution, they carried the idea to its logical conclusion, and perceived the patent fact that mankind as at present constituted, is in various stages of development. Thus they divided humankind into three classes: (a) the lowest or Hylics were those who were so entirely dead to spiritual things that they were as The Hyle or unperceptive matter of the world; (b) the intermediate class were called Psychics, for though believers in things spiritual, they were believers simply, and required "miracles" and signs to strengthen their faith; (c) whereas the Pneumatics or Spiritual, the highest class, were those capable of knowledge of spiritual matters, those who could receive the Gnosis.

But the Pneumatics themselves were also in various stages of

advancement towards perfection. Gnosis was but the beginning of the Way. Only when a man had become a Christ could one say that the Divine was really manifest in him, though even then not fully. He had become a god, but not yet was he at one with the Logos. He was a Son of God, but not yet God Himself.

On the other hand, the Divine was in everything, in the lowest of men, in animals, in plants, in stones. For all things were made by Him, and in Him they live and move and have their being. But all below the Christ had the Divine implicit in them and not yet unfolded. This "manifestation of the Sons of God" was the consummation of human evolution for the Gnostic philosophers, and Jesus for them was one of those Sons of God.

In present day theosophical nomenclature, this stage of perfection is spoken of as the attainment of the Nirvânic consciousness. This stupendous consummation marks a grand stage in the Great Journey, when the Divine *dominates* the human, the point of balance being on what is called the Buddhic plane. Only when the Divine dominates the human does it become *manifest*; until that stage is reached it is implicit, germinal, unmanifest.

For though the Divine exists in all mankind, the majority are entirely ignorant of its presence; many, however, believe in it and sense it dimly, while some begin to feel it in greater abundance and continually, and of those, again, a few know it throughout their whole being.

The Divine and human are then *actual* in *men* only, for as Hermes says, he who has not the Mind does not deserve to be called a *man*. In the rest of human kind the Divine is in them only *potentially*.

The difference between Gnostic and popular Christian doctrine on this point is that whereas the initiated philosophers taught a universal creed and a possibility for all men, the popular exaggeration erected an exclusive dogma which asserted that Jesus was, and will be, the only Christ, and still farther that he was very God of very God, thus confounding and confusing the verities of the Gnosis, and making the whole Universe and Godhead centre in Jesus of Nazareth alone. There is no harm, of course, in an ignorant believer thus identifying his own particular teacher with God, and it is one of the old, old ways, we are told, of reaching to higher things, provided of course the believer does not impose his ignorance on others; the outrage consists in fanatics forcing their belief on those who prefer the teaching of the Gnosis—

which was the doctrine of the Christ to those who could understand a higher view of the Infinite Love.

QUESTION 135.

*"The glyph of the Magdalene, out of whom seven devils were cast, has yet to be understood, and the mystery of Christ and the Seven Æons, Churches, or Assemblies (ecclesiæ) in every man, will not be without significance to every student of Theosophy. These data are common to all Gnostic ænology."*—Mead, Simon Magus, p. 39. *What does this mean?* (1900.)

G. R. S. M.—The Magdalene out of whom seven devils were cast is, in my opinion, a relic of the Mystery-teaching of inner Christianity. It is the glyph of the Sophia transferred to the historical plane. One of the synonyms of the Sophia was Prunicus, the "lustful one" or harlot, that is to say the soul lusting after things of matter; the same cycle of ideas lies at the back of the inventions of the Church Fathers concerning "Simon Magus," who they said travelled about with a harlot called Helen. Helen was the soul imprisoned in matter, the "lost sheep," for whose salvation the Christ (Simon), the Good Shepherd, descended. Simon (Shemesh) is, in another range of symbols, the sun, and Helen (Selene) the moon. The "seven devils" are presumably the seven powers of the soul turned towards matter, the seven "vices"; when the soul "repents" (repentance in Greek signifying literally "change of mind"), the powers turn towards the Light-world, the things of spirit, and the "vices" are transmuted into "virtues." The seven Churches or Assemblies are, from one point of view, the hierarchies of atoms composing the seven "principles"; they are the seven-fold veil of Isis (Sophia and Mother-nature), the world-soul; the coat of many (seven, and its permutations and combinations) colours. Osiris (the Christ, the Logos) is the "Æther," the threefold spiritual substance, the "robe of glory," the "coat woven without seam throughout"; thus making up the number ten, the perfect number of the "principles"; three of which are in all but the "perfect" still latent.

## QUESTION 136.

*What was the reason of the fear and confusion into which the powers were thrown by gazing at the vesture of light with which Jesus was clothed, as described in the Pistis Sophia? (1899.)*

G. R. S. M.—It is always difficult to venture on an interpretation of documents which treat of the mysteries of initiation, and it is especially so in the case of the *Pistis Sophia* document, which has preserved for us part of the inner teachings of a school which, beyond all others, delighted in the most abstruse speculations on the nature of God, the world and man.

The Greek Gnostic documents preserved for us in Coptic translation in the Askew and Bruce codices contain details of so complicated and enigmatical a nature that no one has at present been able to throw any light on the subject. Nevertheless, here and there in these writings, passages of transcendent beauty and of illuminating intensity reveal themselves unaided, and to one of these our questioner refers.

A theosophical student of Gnostic bent, who is really in love with the soul of things, and who knows that all the seeming complexity and unintelligibility of these great systems is but the working out of a simple type of spiritual life of infinite possibilities of self-permutation and self-combination, should, however, not be dismayed when he does not understand, but rather be the more determined to fit himself by the necessary study to realise that the mighty mazes of his "ancestors," as the pupils of Hermes would have phrased it, are not without a plan.

The *Pistis Sophia* and the allied treatises are, therefore, regarded by the present writer as a challenge to the industry of theosophical students in our own day—not, of course, a challenge to all students, or even to the majority of them, but to those few who yearn to understand the nature of the creative energy and the eternal type of the worlds and man. But to fit oneself for the task requires long preliminary training and a thorough acquaintance with the ancestry and environment of the Gnostic thinkers.

When the present writer put forward the *Pistis Sophia* treatise in English dress, he promised a commentary on its contents. In order to fulfil this promise, however, it has been found necessary to make a thorough study of the mystics, especially of the two first centuries (B.C. 100—A.D. 100) and the Gnostic schools of

the first two centuries of our era. This study will take years, but the ultimate object in view is, if possible, to throw some light on the direct Gnostic writings, which have so far entirely baffled the penetration of the keenest intellects, and to show their proper relation to Christianity, and how they reflect a ray of the light of the great Master.

At present, however, the writer hesitates to put forward an interpretation in any but a most tentative fashion, for he has learnt by experience that to hazard interpretations dependent on so-called "intuition" alone, unchecked by the necessary discipline of historical research, is but the piling of the Ossa of confusion on the Pelion of enigma.

He would, therefore, ask his readers to give him time to complete his present studies, before fulfilling his promise.

Meanwhile, with regard to the present question he ventures on a few remarks, though with every hesitation; for though no historical considerations need distract our attention from the enjoyment of the beautiful description of the light-robe of the Glorified One, yet seeing that we are being permitted a glance through the open doors of the sanctuary of holy things, no profane pen can presume to explain, or even intelligently describe, the glorious light that dazzles our unaccustomed senses.

The Master, "Jesus the Living One," is revealed to His disciples in His real form; the effulgency of light radiated from the sun of His being blinds their earthly eyes and His form as man fades from their gaze. It is owing to this glorious robe of light that He can come and go at will; He can pass through all the spheres, all firmaments, all regions. This vesture of power annihilates all space; and this space is everywhere living and intelligent to the eye of the seer. For space is the living soul of things—powers, dominions, principalities, with their countless servants and ministers, from the greatest soul to the tiniest in this system, each existing in the other in unending fashion, and all being the myriad-fold "appearances" of the Over-soul. But He, the Master, is king of space, He is of the nature of the Mind. His robe is woven by the ordering power of His spiritual intelligence into a perfect copy of the eternal Cosmos, the Divine Order. But the Soul of things is not yet in order, it is partly chaotic. And that which is chaotic fears the Divine Order, for at its approach it must bow down and worship and so give up its transient nature in submission to that-which-is-eternally. Hence

the powers of every plane are said to be in fear and confusion on the approach of the Master, for His passage through them reminds them of the law.

But this is only one tiny scintillation of an idea concerning this stupendous subject, for the reality of one single ray of a Divine truth is so transcendent that it can be manifested in an infinity of modes. The writer of this part of our treatise has done his best to pourtray the graphic and dramatic form of one of these modes; but no "tongue of flesh" can describe the reality, seeing that the infinite possibilities of man's Divine nature are beyond the comprehension of his physical being. And even so much as our writer describes was originally intended only for those who had submitted to the discipline of the holy life. Outside this circle it would only be misunderstood; on the one hand it would lend itself to superstition or vain pretensions, and on the other it would meet with denial and ridicule. It was this lack of comprehension which hounded the Gnosis out of Christendom in the early centuries; will it meet with the same fate to-day?

#### QUESTION 137.

*How many years of silence were enjoined on those seeking admittance to the inner Pythagorean Schools? Mr Mead, in his Orpheus, says that silence was required of probationers during the first two stages of their probation; he says the first stage lasted two years, but does not mention the duration of the second stage. Am I right in believing that a five years' silence was imposed? (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—We unfortunately do not possess any detailed information on this interesting point; it is *generally* stated that the strictest rule of the Pythagorean discipline enacted a five years' silence. Thus we hear that Apollonius of Tyana passed five years without opening his mouth, and that the Gnostic teacher Basilides, in imitation of Pythagoras, exacted a five years' silence from his disciples. Elsewhere we learn that Apollonius required four years to be spent in silence by his pupils; but this may be a mistake of his biographer or of a copyist, and we should read the usual five years. Whether or not the probationary degree of Hearer, during which the neophyte received instruction

but without the privilege of questioning his teacher, was part of the five years is, to my knowledge, nowhere stated.

If we then are to believe that so long a period as five years of silence was originally laid down by Pythagoras himself, and if our information with regard to the two years' probationary degree is correct—seeing that after these two years the pupil could ask questions, we must conclude that there was a preliminary period of three years of silence, without any instruction.

We should, however, remember that our accounts of the discipline of the Pythagorean School are exceedingly contradictory owing to the confusion of the exoteric and esoteric rules by the classical writers. On the one hand, we learn that the Pythagoreans were strictly forbidden to touch flesh or wine, on the other, that Pythagoras permitted his followers to eat certain kinds of meat and to drink wine. Equally confusing is our information on several other important points. The truth of the matter is that the members of the Inner School were enjoined to abstain rigidly from wine and flesh, while the members of the General School were permitted a certain licence in this respect. So with regard to other points; the Esoterics were rigid celibates, the Exoterics were exhorted to be continent, and wise parents, for the growth of the School depended on their children. It is then to be believed that the five years were for the Esoterics only; and it may well be that before receiving a word of the inner instruction, they were submitted to a three years' probation of silence, during which they reflected on the outer teaching and strove to purify themselves. Then for two years they received the preliminary theoretical instruction of the inner science, but still bound by the vow of silence—it being thought that most of their initial difficulties would solve themselves in the course of the instruction, and that it was improper for those who had the ambition of becoming philosophers, to bombard their teacher with a fire of questions, prompted by idle curiosity, or lack of attention, rather than by a real desire for spiritual instruction.

It was only after these five years that they could ask questions and be received in the higher degree of the School, where they became possessed of the practical instruction (*mathesis*) in the inner way and received the name of Mathematici.



## QUESTION 138.

*Did the Neoplatonic Schools also have this rule of silence? If so, had the probationer to keep silence for the same length of time? (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—I have never come across any direct statement to this effect. As, however, the Neoplatonic schools continued the tradition of the Orphic societies and the Pythagorean communities, it is not improbable that some of their members underwent the vow of silence. We have, unfortunately, no record of the pupils of Apollonius, who certainly kept the vow, and who continued into the second century A.D. Other links in the chain are the Gnostics of the Basilidian and Valentinian Schools, who also certainly kept the vow, and this brings us to the end of the second century. Still other precursors of the third century Neoplatonism of Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus, and Porphyry, were the disciples of the Trismegistic tradition (but in this I have so far not found any reference to the vow of silence in the Pythagorean sense, though I have in another).

On the other hand, if my memory holds good—though Porphyry and Iamblichus in treating of Pythagoras speak admiringly of the vow of silence—we have no distinct statement that any of them practised it. In all probability they did so; but history is silent on the point.

## QUESTION 139.

*Is there any truth in the assertion that there was an esoteric side to the religion of the Greeks and Egyptians? (1895.)*

The following quotations, from the Fifth Book of the *Stromateis*, or "Miscellanies," of Clement of Alexandria, will throw some light on the symbolical method of the ancients, and are all the more interesting as the Church father brought them forward in an apology of the Christian scriptures, *which, he said, were of a like nature*. I use the translation of the Rev. William Wilson, as found in Vol. XII. of *The Antenicene Christian Library*, as I have no text of Clement handy. Thus he writes: "'Many rod-bearers there are, but few Bacchi,' according to Plato" (cap. iii.). That is to say, there are many candidates, but few reach to real

Valentinianism and cannot be treated in the VĀHAN; the most accessible source to which I can refer is the admirable article on "Valentinus," in Smith and Wace's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, by the German scholar, R. A. Lipsius, the greatest living authority on the subject. I might also refer to my own articles in *The Theosophical Review* (late *Lucifer*), on "The Valentinian School" (xx. 441 sqq., xxi. 31 sqq., 134 sqq.). He will thus be able to learn what are the contents of these extracts and also the nature of the "Eastern Teaching" which was the common property of the Valentinian Gnosis.

#### QUESTION 141.

*Was the Rāja Yoga (Science of the Soul) supposed to have been studied by the Christians of the Alexandrian School (St. Clement, Origen, etc.)? (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—The whole of Clement's efforts were directed to proving that there was a Christian Gnosis—and Gnosis is precisely a synonym for the Science of the Soul. At Alexandria Clement moved in an atmosphere of Theosophy and inner instruction with regard to this holy science; it is true that he criticises his contemporaries, and imagines that his own way is the best, but at bottom he was aiming at the same goal and endeavouring along the same path. Clement is a link between the real Gnostics and Orthodox Christianity. Bishop Westcott, in his article ("Clem. of Alex." in S. and W.'s *D. of Ch. Biog.*) writes:

"Man, according to Clement, is born for the service of God. His soul is a gift sent down to him from heaven by God, and strives to return thither. For this end there is need of painful training; and the various partial sciences are helps towards the attainment of the true destiny of existence. The 'image' of God which man receives at his birth is slowly completed in the 'likeness' of God. The inspiration of the Divine breath by which he is distinguished from other creatures is fulfilled by the gift of the Holy Spirit to the believer, which that original constitution makes possible. The image of God, Clement says elsewhere, is the Word (Logos) and the true image of the Word is man, that is, the reason in man."

All of which Clement got from the Gnostics, Hermetics, and Platonists like Philo. Origen carried on and developed Clement's

work ; he also aimed at presenting the Christian Gnosis as an objective system. The writing of both Clement and Origen deal with precisely those subjects which have interested the mystics and religio-philosophers of all ages, and they both of them, must have been acquainted with the nature of the Science of the Soul. They, of course, boasted that they had the only correct doctrine and only directions for the Way—but they seem to have been rather theologians than mystics themselves.

## QUESTION 142.

*In The Key to Theosophy it is stated that the name Theosophy dates from the third century of our era, and began with Ammonius Saccas and his disciples. Can the VĀHAN quote some passages which substantiate this assertion, as well from writings of the early Theosophists themselves, as from equally early writings about them? If the quotations cannot be given, can the VĀHAN furnish the authority for the statement? (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—The authority for the statement made by H. P. B. in *The Key to Theosophy* is Dr Alexander Wilder in his *New Platonism and Alchemy* (A Sketch of the Doctrines and Principal Teachers of the Eclectic or Alexandrian School ; also an Outline of the Interior Doctrines of the Alchemists of the Middle Ages. Albany: New York, U.S.A.; 1869). I do not know on what authority Dr Wilder bases his assertion, but the classical references are as follows :

θεοσοφία.—Porphyry (latter half of 3rd cent.), *De Abstinētia*, 327 (ed. Reiske) ; Eusebius (1st half of 4th cent.) in *Patrol. Gr.*, iii. 48A, 176B ; Pseudo-Dionysius (5th cent.), *Mystic Theol.*, i. 1 ; Leontius (A.D. 610), i. 1368D.

θεοσοφος—Porphyry, *Epistola ad Anebonem* (in Villotion's *Anecdota Græca*, ii.), 30, 15 ; Iamblichus (end of 3rd cent. and beginning of 4th), *De Mysteriis* 249, 10 ; Eusebius, iii. 256C ; Sozomen, 897 A.D.

θεοσόφως—Clemens Alexandrinus (end of 2nd and beginning of 3rd cent.), in *Patr. Gr.*, 708A ; Methodius (end of 3rd and beginning of 4th cent.), in *Patr. Gr.*, 377C.

The above are taken from Sophocles' *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100 (New York ;

1887). Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* (the standard work in England), gives no references at all to these terms.

We thus see that the earliest writer who uses any form of this compound, as far as we have any remaining evidence, is Clement of Alexandria. We certainly cannot suppose that Clement invented it ; it was in all probability a known term in the schools, and, therefore, may have been familiar to Ammonius Saccas, who was a contemporary of Clement. Ammonius, however, is generally said to have left nothing in writing, so that we have no exact knowledge as to his use of the term. All we can say is that as Porphyry and Iamblichus used it immediately after him, and as Clement used it immediately before him, and as he was in the direct line of these ideas, he most probably was familiar with the word. It is not, however, true that Ammonius left nothing in writing, for we possess a small fragment from his pen ; the word "theosophy," however, does not occur in it.

That the word became subsequently a well-recognised and well-defined term may be seen from the record of the work of some now unknown theosophist, Aristocrites, preserved to us in the following anathema : " I anathematise also the book of Aristocrites, which he calls Theosophy, in which he attempts to show that Judaism, Hellenism, Christianity and Manichæism are one and the same doctrine " from the "Cursing of the Manichæans," (Cotelerius ad *Clement. Recog.*, iv. 544).

I do not for a moment suppose that the above exhausts all the evidence, but it is all I can lay hands on for the moment. *Theosophia* is only a later and more precise term to designate the range of ideas which were covered in the time of Pythagoras (6th cent. B.C.) by the word *philosophia*. Pythagoras is said to have invented this term, but I no more believe that the sage of Samos invented it than that Ammonius Saccas invented *Theosophia*. In course of time the term *philosophy* became employed for speculations and investigations which so entirely lacked the spirit of the science of sacred things so beloved by Pythagoras, that a more precise term became necessary for the students who continued the study of that holy science of many names.

## QUESTION 143.

*In the essays on "Orpheus" appearing in Lucifer, it is stated that the Platonists divided the virtues into four classes; is there any more definite information to be gleaned on the subject? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—There is a large amount of information to be gleaned from the writings of the later Platonists on this most interesting classification, and when time serves I will endeavour to get the matter into shape. It will be sufficient, however, for the present to append a digest of the ideas of Porphyry in his *Auxiliaries* (ii.), a treatise which he wrote as an introduction to the study of the philosophical writings of Plotinus.

The virtues are of four kinds: (1) the political or social; (2) the purificatory; (3) the contemplative; (4) the ideal.

(1) The civil or social virtues consist in the moderation of the passions, and follow on the proper understanding of duty. Their aim being to regulate our conduct with respect to our fellow-beings, they are thus called civil, or political, or social. In this class prudence has its source in the rational aspect of the soul; fortitude in the irascible or courageous; temperance in the agreement and harmony of the passional or desiderative with the rational aspect; and justice or righteousness in each of these performing its proper function both in ruling and obeying. On these virtues the perfect state depends, as Plato states in *The Republic*.

(2) The virtues of the man who dedicates himself to the contemplative life, consist in detaching himself from the bondage of earthly things, and are called purifications. Their object is to elevate the soul to true being. The social virtues are, therefore, the adornment of the ordinary man, and are the probationary step to the purificatory, which command a man to abstain from acts in which the body and its passions play the principal part. In such virtues, prudence consists in not following the impulses of the body, but in acting of oneself, under the guidance of the purest part of the mind; temperance in not being affected by the passions and feelings of the body; fortitude in not fearing a separation from body, as though death were annihilation; and justice in obedience to the behests of reason and the most spiritual intelligence.

The social virtues, therefore, moderate the passions, and teach us to live our lives according to the laws of human nature ; whereas the contemplative or theoretic virtues, as they are sometimes called, are designed to make a man like unto God.

But the process of purification is one thing, and being actually pure is another. The purificatory virtues, therefore, can be looked at from two points of view ; they both purify the soul and adorn the soul that is purified, because the end of purification is purity. And though purification and purity both consist in a separation from foreign matter, the good is something else than the soul that is purified. For if the soul that is purified had already been in possession of the good before losing its purity, it would be enough to simply purify it. But the soul is not the good ; it can only participate in the good, and have a similitude with it, or be like unto it ; otherwise it would not have fallen into evil. Good for the soul consists, therefore, in a union with its source ; evil in its being united with inferior natures.

Of evil also there are two kinds ; the one consisting in its being joined to inferior natures, and the other in giving itself up to the sway of the passions. It is the social virtues which liberate the soul from the sway of the passions ; whereas the purificatory virtues liberate the soul from its association with inferior natures. Further, when the soul is purified it must be united with its source ; and its virtue then, after its conversion, consists in the real knowledge of true being ; not that the soul is essentially without this knowledge, but without the principle which is superior to it, that is to say, without the true mind or spirit, it is not conscious of possessing it.

(3) There is, therefore, a third class of virtues superior to the former two classes, namely, the virtues of the soul which has its spiritual mind in active operation. In this class, prudence and wisdom consist in the contemplation of spiritual intelligencies ; justice consists in the soul's performing its proper function, that is to say, uniting itself with the spiritual mind and directing all its activities to it ; temperance is the internal conversion of the soul to that same mind ; and fortitude is impassibility, or the not being affected by lower impressions, by means of which the soul becomes like to the object of its contemplation, namely, the spiritual mind.

(4) Finally, there is a still more sublime class of virtues, the ideal or paradigmatic, which pertain to the spiritual mind alone.

They transcend the virtues of the soul, just as the type or paradigm transcends the image. For the spiritual mind contains at one and the same time all the essences which are the types of lower things. Therefore, in this case, prudence is direct knowledge, and wisdom is thought itself; temperance is the mind's conversion to itself, or self-reflection; justice or righteousness is the activity of its own nature; and fortitude is "sameness," or the perpetual identity of itself with itself, its persistence in remaining pure, concentrated in itself.

There are thus four classes of virtues: firstly, the ideal virtues, belonging to the spiritual mind as its essential characteristics; secondly, the virtues of the soul turned towards this mind and illumined by it; thirdly, the virtues of the soul undergoing purification, or which has been purified from the animal passions of the body; and fourthly, the virtues which adorn the ordinary man, and keep within bounds the actions of the irrational nature, and moderate the passions.

He who has the greater virtues possesses also the less, but the opposite is not true. The practical or social virtues make a man worthy or virtuous in the ordinary sense; the purificatory render a man angelic, or what is called a "good dæmon," that is to say, equal to the angels or intermediate entities between gods and men; the contemplative virtues make of a man a god, that is to say, equal to those highest spiritual intelligences between the Logos and the angels; whereas the ideal virtues unite man with the Logos, and make him "the father of the gods."

Porphyry then proceeds to explain the several classes in greater detail, but enough has been said to give the reader a general outline of this sublime scheme of morals.

#### QUESTION 144.

*Does Plato teach the theory of metempsychosis—by which I mean the incarnation of human souls into animal bodies and from these into human ones again? If he does so, how are we to reconcile this with the received opinion that Initiates of a high degree—like Plato—do not differ from each other in fundamental theosophical teachings? If he does not, how are we to understand the following passage in which he seems to do so? [Here follows a quotation in Greek from the Phædrus (249 B), which is italicised in the excerpt cited in the answer.] (1898.)*

G. R. S. 'M.—Let us first of all get the passage from the *Phædrus* and its context before us. As my text of this dialogue has mysteriously disappeared, I will use Taylor's translation (iii. 325, 326) in preference to Jowett's. Taylor does not write such good English, was not so fine a "scholar" as Jowett, but he is always more intelligent concerning things Platonic. The context of the passage runs as follows :

"No soul will return to its pristine condition till the expiration of ten thousand years :<sup>1</sup> since it will not recover the use of its wings before this period ; except it is the soul of one who has philosophised sincerely, or together with philosophy has loved beautiful forms. These, indeed, in the third period of a thousand years, if they have thrice chosen this mode of life in succession, and have thus restored their wings to their natural vigour, shall in the three thousandth year fly away to their pristine abode. But other souls, having arrived at the end of their first life, shall be judged. And of those who are judged, some proceeding to a subterranean place of judgment, shall there sustain the punishments they have deserved. But others, in consequence of a favourable judgment, being elevated into a certain celestial place, shall pass their time in a manner becoming the life they have lived in a human shape. *And in the thousandth year, both the kinds of those who have been judged, returning to the lot and election of a second life, shall each of them receive a life agreeable to his desire. Here also the human soul shall pass into the life of a beast,<sup>2</sup> and from that of a beast again into a man, if it has first been the soul of a man.* For the soul which has never perceived the truth, cannot pass into the human form."

<sup>1</sup> "The numbers three and ten are called perfect ; because the former is the first complete number, and the latter in a certain respect the whole of number ; the consequent series of numbers being only a repetition of the numbers which this contains. Hence, as 10 multiplied into itself produces 100, a plain [*sic*] number, and this again multiplied by 10 produces 1000, a solid number ; and as 1000 multiplied by 3 forms 3000, and 1000 by 10, 10,000 ; on this account Plato employs these numbers as symbols of the purgation of the soul, and her restitution to her proper perfection and felicity. I say, as symbols ; for we must not suppose that this is accomplished in just so many years, but that the soul's restitution takes place in a perfect manner."

<sup>2</sup> "We must not understand by this, that the soul of a man becomes the soul of a brute ; but that by way of punishment it is bound to the soul of a brute, or carried in it, just as dæmons used to reside in our souls. Hence all the energies of the rational soul are perfectly impeded, and its intellectual eye beholds nothing but the dark and tumultuous phantasms of a brutal life."



Let us now turn to the disciples of the great Master for further light on this tenet, and first of all to Plotinus. The most sympathetic notice of this tenet in Plotinus is to be found in Jules Simon's *Histoire de l'École d'Alexandrie* (i. 588 sq.), based for the most part on En. i. i. 12 ; ii. ix. 6 ; iv. iii. 9 ; v. ii. 2 ; and on Ficinus' Commentary, p. 508 of Creuzer's edition. After citing some "ironical" passages from Plotinus in which the philosopher disguised the real doctrine which in his day pertained to the secret teachings of initiation, Jules Simon goes on to say : " Even though admitting that this doctrine of metempsychosis is taken literally by Plotinus [which we are very far from doing], we should still have to ask for him as for Plato, whether the human soul really inhabits the body of an animal, and whether it is not re-born only into a human body which reflects the nature of a certain animal by the character of its passions. The commentators of the Alexandrian school sometimes interpreted Plato in this sense. Thus according to Proclus, Plato in the *Phædrus* condemns the wicked to live as brutes and not to become them, *κατείναι εἰς βίον θήρειον, καὶ οὐκ εἰς σῶμα θήρειον* (Proclus, *Comm. Tim.*, p. 329). Chalcidius gives the same interpretation, for he distinguishes between the doctrines of Plato and those of Pythagoras and Empedocles, *qui non naturam modò feram, sed etiam formas*. Hermes (*Comm. of Chalcidius on Timæus*, ed. Fabric., p. 350) declares in unmistakable terms that a human soul can never return to the body of an animal, and that the will of the gods for ever preserves it from such disgrace (*θεοῦ γὰρ νόμος οὗτος, φυλάσσει ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τοσαύτης ἰβρεως*)."

Finally, Proclus in his Commentaries on the *Timæus*, in the place already referred to, writes definitely as follows : " It is usual to inquire how human souls can descend into brute animals. And some, indeed, think that there are certain similitudes of men to brutes, which they call savage lives ; for they by no means think it possible that the rational essence can become the soul of a savage animal. On the contrary, others allow it may be sent into brutes, because all souls are of one and the same kind ; so that they may become wolves and panthers and ichneumons, but true reason, indeed, asserts that the human soul may be lodged in brutes, yet in such a manner as that it may obtain its own proper life, and that the degraded soul may, as it were, be carried above it, and be bound to the baser nature by a propensity and similitude of affection. And that this is the only mode of insinuation, we have

proved by a multitude of arguments, in our commentaries on the *Phædrus*. If, however, it be requisite to take notice, that this is the opinion of Plato, we add that in his *Republic* he says, that the soul of Thersites assumed an ape, but not the body of an ape: and in the *Phædrus*, that the soul descends into a savage life, but not into a savage body. For life is conjoined with its proper soul. And in this place he says it is changed into a brutal nature. For a brutal nature is not a brutal body but a brutal life." (See *The Six Books of Proclus on the Theology of Plato*, Taylor's translation; London, 1816; p. 7, Introd.)

It is evident from the above that our question also agitated the minds of the followers of Plato, and that it was keenly debated among them. It appears also that Chalcidius, who wrote in the fourth century A.D., was of opinion that Pythagoras taught metempsychosis in its crudest form; but in this he was but the forerunner of the scholasticism which has busied itself with Pythagoras without understanding even the elements of his psychology, and which has become a canon of criticism with our "Platonic" scholars of the nineteenth century of "enlightenment."  
*O tempora, O mores!*

The genuine followers of Pythagoras and Plato—the so-called Neo-Pythagoreans and Neo-Platonists—however, taught that the *soul* changed its nature and not the *body*, and who can deny that many a man and woman is a beast in human shape?

Is, then, the persistent popular belief, anciently current in the Græco-Roman world, and believed in by so many millions of Hindus and Buddhists to-day, that the soul of a man may pass back into the body of an animal merely a baseless figment of priestly invention? H. P. Blavatsky teaches that such a transmigration was possible at a certain period of evolution, when the "door" from the animal kingdom into the human was still open, but that is no longer possible, because that door has long been closed for our evolution. But there is an exception even to this rule; for those who choose evil for love of it, who set themselves in complete opposition to the current of evolution gradually wear themselves out and incarnate in lower and lower types of life. It has often seemed to me that this exceptional possibility has been exaggerated out of all just proportion by the priestcraft of the ages in order to hold the possibility *in terrorem* over the heads of the faithful, just as the hell-doctrine has been elaborated and fantastically exaggerated in all the great

religions. There is a nucleus of truth and a vast amount of fantasy and falsehood in it all. But experience teaches the theosophical student not to be too confident that his nineteenth century ideas of the possibilities of nature and his *bourgeois* science are large enough to embrace the Universe, and every now and then he has the distinct feeling, if not the actual proof, that his philosophy is a very "poor thing—but mine own"; in fact, that just because of its being his own it is a poor thing, and that the possibilities of nature and man are so vast, that so long as he is himself, that is to say, the mere reflection of the ignorant prejudices of his time, he stands but little chance of understanding the mystery of life. He must rise superior to his time and all those limitations of the mind which we regard as good sound common-sense and scientifically demonstrated facts. A little acquaintance with the phenomena of the so-called "astral plane," and with the possibilities of the immediate transformation of its substance into instant dramatic reality will give the student the key to most of the puzzles which ignorant commentators and readers have made out of clear and careful statements of great teachers, and will explain how easy it is for a reader, blind to everything but five sense consciousness, to imagine that Plato taught transmigration into the "body" of an animal, when he spoke of degenerating into the "life" of a beast.

## QUESTION 145.

*With regard to the last answer : (i.) Granting that the explanation of the cited passages, and of those quoted in support of this interpretation are true, why is it that Plato, so great a teacher, expressed himself so ambiguously that even his followers were "agitated" about so fundamental a tenet of his teaching? (ii.) Is it possible to give in modern theosophical phraseology the equivalents for, or to arrange into some system, such technical Platonic terms as [here follows a list of twenty-one Greek words]? (iii.) Is not the possibility of explaining by "life" instead of by "body" the entity into which the soul transmigrates, excluded in the following passages from The Republic [here follow three passages in Greek, sandwiching objections]? (1898.)*

G. R. S. M.—(i.) It should be remembered that a period of five hundred years and more separated Plato from the followers

whose works were referred to in our last answer. In these five hundred years the greatest upheaval of thought which the Grecian world, nay, which the Western world, ever experienced, had taken place. The Mysteries had been practically disclosed. In the time of Plato they were still jealously guarded in closest secrecy, and Anaxagoras had only recently been condemned to death on a charge of revealing them, mixed up with other political charges. Plato could only hint at the inner teaching, and had to resort to a literary disguise, when he touched on any details of the mystery teaching, as we shall see later on. His followers, the later school of Platonists, were far less hampered, for the breaking down of part of the secrecy of the inner schools—inaugurated by the public teaching of the great Master, the Christ, by the mouth of Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, which in time gradually forced out into the field of propaganda much that had been previously kept back—enabled the later followers of Plato or rather the adherents of the Orpheus-Pythagoras-Plato tradition, to draw aside the veil with which Plato had been compelled to cover his cosmogonic psychologic teachings.

(ii.) It certainly would be possible to give equivalents in the terms used by some of our modern theosophical writers for the technical Platonic terms quoted by our questioner. But the matter is one of great difficulty, and requires a far more intimate acquaintance with Plato's voluminous writings, than any member of the Theosophical Society possesses, at present. Part of the work, however, is being done by the writer elsewhere in connection with work on subjects, which, if not technically Platonic, almost invariably employ the common philosophic language of Greece.

(iii.) The passages referred to all come from the famous "Story of Êr, Son of Armënius," which Plato *quotes* at the end of the last book of *The Republic*. Whether or not "Êr, Son of Armënius," is the correct reading or translation must be left to a less popular month-sheet than the VĀHAN. It is the story of a man "killed in battle," whose body was brought home on the tenth day still fresh and showing no sign of decomposition. On the twelfth day, when laid on the funeral pyre, Êr awakes and tells a strange story of his experiences in the unseen world. This story should be taken in close connection with Plutarch's similar, but far fuller, story of Aridæus upon which I commented at length in my recent "Notes on the Eleusinian Mysteries" in *The Theosophical Review*. I there stated that the experiences of Aridæus were either

a literary subterfuge for describing part of the instruction in the Mysteries, or the popular story was so true a description of the unseen world that it required little alteration to make it useful for that purpose. I would also suggest that the Story of Êr is used by Plato for a similar purpose, although the story is less detailed than the recital in Plutarch. It is interesting to notice that one of the characters in the Story of Êr is called Ardiæus (Ἀρδιαῖος), while in Plutarch the main character is called Aridæus (Ἀριδαῖος). The transposition of a letter is so slight as to make the names identical, and the subject matter is so similar that we can hardly doubt that Plutarch was inspired by the example of Plato. The Story of Êr deserves a careful treatment as we have bestowed on that of Ardiæus, but space does not permit us to deal with it here in detail. Êr in a certain spiritual plane (τόπος τις δαιμόνιος) is made a spectator of a turning-point or change of course in the ascent and descent of souls. Omitting all the rest we come to the description of their choosing of lots for a new life, in which we find the passages referred to above (617D, *et seq.*, ed. Stallbaum). We will therefore append a translation and follow it with a few comments. The karmic world-whorl is represented by seven spheres (surrounded by an eighth) whose harmonious spinning is adjusted by the three Fates, the daughter of Necessity.

“Now when [Êr and the souls] arrived<sup>1</sup> they had to go immediately to Lachesis [she who administers the Karman of the past]. Next an interpreter<sup>2</sup> first of all arranged them in their proper order, and taking from the lap of Lachesis both lots<sup>3</sup> and samples of lives he ascended to a kind of raised place and said: ‘The word of the virgin Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity! Ye souls, ye things of a day, lo the beginning of another period of mortal birth that brings you death. It is not your genius<sup>4</sup> who will have you assigned to him by lot, but ye who will choose your genius. He who obtains the first turn let him first choose a life to which he will of necessity have to hold. As for virtue, necessity has no control over her, but everyone will possess her more or less just as he honours or dishonours her. The responsibility is the chooser’s;

<sup>1</sup> The whole story is in indirect speech; but I have changed it into the direct to make it run more easily for the reader.

<sup>2</sup> Lit., prophet or proclaimer.

<sup>3</sup> Or number-turns.

<sup>4</sup> δαίμων, lit., dæmon; e.g., the dæmon of Socrates, sometimes translated “god,” sometimes “genius,” sometimes “conscience.”

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one of those who came from heaven,<sup>1</sup> who in his former life [on earth] had lived in a well-ordered state, and been virtuous from habit and not from conviction [lit., philosophy].

“In brief it was by no means the minority of those who were involved in such unfortunate choices, who came from heaven, seeing that such souls were unexercised in the hardships of life. But most of those who came from earth [direct],<sup>2</sup> as they had suffered hardships themselves, and seen others suffering them, did not make their choice off-hand. Consequently, many of the souls, independently of the fortune of their turn, changed good for evil and evil for good. For if a man should always, whenever he comes into this life, live a sound philosophic life,<sup>3</sup> and the turn of his choice should not fall out to him among the last, the chances are, accordingly to this news from the other world, that he will not only spend his life happily here, but also that the path which he will tread from here to there, and thence back again will not be below the earth<sup>4</sup> and difficult, but easy and through heaven.

“Yes, the vision he had, Êr said, was well worth the seeing, showing how each class of souls<sup>5</sup> chose their lives. The vision was both a pitiful and laughable and wonderful thing to see. For the most part, they chose according to the experience of their former life. For Êr said that he saw the soul which had once been that of Orpheus choosing the life of a ‘swan,’ through its hatred of women, because, owing to the death of Orpheus at the hands of women, it did not wish to come [again] into existence by being born in a woman. He further saw the soul of Thamyras choose the life of a ‘nightingale.’ On the contrary, he saw also a ‘swan’ change to the choice of a human life, and other ‘musical animals’<sup>6</sup> in like fashion. The soul that obtained the twentieth

<sup>1</sup> Some of the souls in the intermediate state, between two lives, fail to reach heaven.

<sup>2</sup> That is, without going into the heaven-world.

<sup>3</sup> ὀγιῶς φιλοσοφεῖ,—both these are technical terms of the Pythagorean school. The pentagon was the sign of “health” or mental soundness; and philosophy, or love of wisdom, was what we to-day call Theosophy.

<sup>4</sup> The Tartarean spheres of the unseen world were popularly believed to be beneath the earth.

<sup>5</sup> ἕκασται αἱ ψυχαί—not each soul. What he saw was a typical vision (θεῖα), not a certain happening.

<sup>6</sup> ὧσα μουσικά,—musical does not mean merely devoted to music in our modern sense, but to all the arts and sciences.

God is blameless.' Thus speaking he threw the lots to all of them, and each picked up the one that fell beside him, except Êr, who was not permitted to do so. But everyone who picked up a lot knew what turn he had received.

"After this he set on the ground before them the samples of the lives, in far greater number than the souls assembled. They were of every kind, not only lives of every kind of animal, but also lives of every kind of man. There were lives of absolute power [lit., tyrannies] among them, some continuing to the end, some breaking off half way and ending in poverty, exile, and beggary. There were also lives of famous men, some famed for their beauty of form and strength, and victory in the games, others for their birth and the virtues of their forebears; others the reverse of famous, and for similar reasons. So also with regard to the lives of women. As to the natural rank of the soul, it was no longer in the power [of the chooser], for the decree of necessity is that on its choosing another life it should change into that life. As for other things, riches and poverty were mingled with each other, and these sometimes with disease and sometimes with health, and sometimes a mean between these."

Hereupon Plato breaks into a noble disquisition on what is the best choice, and how a man should take with him into the world an adamant faith in truth and right. And then (§ 619 B.) continues: "And this is just what the messenger from that unseen world reported that the interpreter said: 'Even for him who comes last in turn if he but choose with his *mind*, and live consistently, there is in store a life desirable and far from evil. So let neither him who has the best choice be careless, nor him who comes last despair.'

"And when he had thus spoken, the one who had obtained the first choice, Êr said, immediately went and chose the largest life of absolute power, but through folly and greediness, he did not choose with sufficient attention to all points, and failed to notice that there was wrapped up with it the fate of 'dishes of his own children,'<sup>1</sup> and other ills. But when he had examined it at leisure, he began to beat his breast, and bemoan his choice, not abiding by what the interpreter had previously told him; for he did not lay the blame of these evils on himself, but on fortune and the genius, and everything rather than himself. And he was

<sup>1</sup> Evidently a quotation from the tragic Muse of Greece, and its mythical recitals of Thyestian banquets.



one of those who came from heaven,<sup>1</sup> who in his former life [on earth] had lived in a well-ordered state, and been virtuous from habit and not from conviction [lit., philosophy].

“In brief it was by no means the minority of those who were involved in such unfortunate choices, who came from heaven, seeing that such souls were unexercised in the hardships of life. But most of those who came from earth [direct],<sup>2</sup> as they had suffered hardships themselves, and seen others suffering them, did not make their choice off-hand. Consequently, many of the souls, independently of the fortune of their turn, changed good for evil and evil for good. For if a man should always, whenever he comes into this life, live a sound philosophic life,<sup>3</sup> and the turn of his choice should not fall out to him among the last, the chances are, accordingly to this news from the other world, that he will not only spend his life happily here, but also that the path which he will tread from here to there, and thence back again will not be below the earth<sup>4</sup> and difficult, but easy and through heaven.

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<sup>6</sup> ζῶα μουσικά,—musical does not mean merely devoted to music in our modern sense, but to all the arts and sciences.

lot chose the life of a 'lion.' It was the soul of Ajax, son of Telamon, escaping from being a man because it still remembered [what it considered the unjust] decision about the armour. The next soul was Agamemnon's; and it too, out of hatred of the human race on account of its sufferings, changed into the life of an 'eagle.' The soul of Atalanta obtained its lot in the middle, and letting her eyes fall on the great honours paid to an athlete, was unable to pass it by, but took it. The soul of Epeus, son of Panopeus, he saw pass into the nature of a woman skilful in the arts. And far away among the last he saw the soul of the buffoon Thersites assuming an 'ape.' It happened also that the soul of Ulysses, having obtained the last lot of all, came to make its choice. From memory of its former labours it had given itself a rest from love of renown, and for a long time went about to find the life of a man in private life with nothing to do with public affairs, and with great difficulty found one lying in a corner and thus passed over by all the rest; on seeing it, it declared that it would have done the same even if it had had first turn, and been glad to do it. And, Èr said, even some of the other animals passed into men and into one another,<sup>1</sup> the vicious changing into wild ones, and the good into tame; in fact they were mixed up in every kind of blending.

"When, then, all the souls had chosen their lives, according to the number of their turn, they went in order to Lachesis [the singer of the past, in the harmony of destiny], and she sent along with them [on their journey into earth life], the genius each had chosen, to be the watcher over his life and to bring to pass the things each had chosen. And the genius first of all brought the soul to Clotho [the singer of the present], to be touched by her hand, that is, to be brought within the general influence of the whirling of the spindle,<sup>2</sup> thus ratifying the destiny each soul had chosen in its turn. And after having brought it into contact with her, the genius brought the soul to the loom of Atropos [the singer of the future], thus making the threads of destiny spun into

<sup>1</sup> καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων δὴ θηρίων ὡσαύτως εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἰέναι καὶ εἰς ἄλλα.

<sup>2</sup> The spindle of destiny is described as being composed of seven spheres of varying motions, with one of the same motion, the eighth. The eighth is the *present* motion, and this Clotho (with Necessity her mother) sets going with her *right* hand. Atropos sets the seven inner spheres moving with her *left* hand, the spinning of *future* Karman. Lachesis, the *past*, moderates both motions with either hand.

it irreversible. So thence, without turning back, they passed beneath the 'Throne of Necessity.' And when Êr had passed by it, and the rest of them had also done so, they all passed on to the 'Plain of Forgetfulness' (Lêthê), in a frightful and stifling heat, for it was bare of trees and vegetation of every kind. As it was now evening, they camped by the river Unmindfulness, whose water no vessel can keep out.<sup>1</sup> They are all, therefore, compelled to absorb a certain proportion of the water, and those that are not protected by prudence, absorb more than the proper quantity. And each as he drinks forgets everything. And when they had been lulled to sleep, and it was about midnight, a thunderstorm and earthquake occurred, and suddenly they were hurried upwards<sup>2</sup> to birth, some one way, some another, shooting [through space] like stars. Êr, however, was prevented from drinking the water; but in what manner and by what means he got back to his body he could not say, only, suddenly awaking in the morning, he found himself lying on the pyre."

The passages quoted above come from this description of the transformation of souls, and on the surface would seem to prove Plato guilty of the charge of a belief in metempsychosis in its crude popular form, and make the explanation of his later followers, who laid great stress on the "life" of an animal, as distinguished from the "body" of an animal, appear mere casuistry. But there are certain further considerations which we must take into account.

Firstly, did Plato endorse all the details of the vision of Êr or did he merely cite a popular story the better to point a moral lesson? I think that Plato did fully endorse the story of Êr, and that he would not have concluded his great dialogue on the ideal Republic with such a story without full intention.

Secondly, we should notice that the vision is *typical*. The types given are all well-known characters in Grecian legend and mythology; they are all so well known that it is hardly necessary to refer to their stories; we may, however, add that Thamyras (or Thamyris) was a Thracian bard, and that Epeus was the famous engineer of the Trojan Horse who was also notorious for his cowardice, hence his re-birth as a woman.

<sup>1</sup> οὐ τὸ ὕδωρ ἀγγεῖον οὐδὲν στέγειν—that is to say, no vessel of the soul is water-tight enough to keep this water from soaking into it. One of the technical Pythagorean terms for taking a new body was μετ-αγγισμός, meaning a change of vessel, also a pouring of water from one vessel into another.

<sup>2</sup> The Plain of Forgetfulness is thus represented as below the earth plane.

Thirdly, the life, or "way of life," was a distinct component part of the man; thus in *The Shepherd* of "Hermes," we read that on the dissolution of man, the body is dissolved into the physical elements; the "way of life" (ἄθος) becomes latent and is handed over to the charge of the genius (δαίμων); the senses become latent and pass back into the energies of nature; and the passion and desire nature become latent or inactive and are gradually distributed among the seven zones of the "harmony," the seven spheres of the Karmic whorl. This desire nature is the irrational soul of man; the rational soul passes to the eighth sphere, and finally the *man* is united with the Great Mind beyond.

Now this "way of life" is something which is decidedly physical, and yet invisible. The only component part of man answering to this description so far known to our practical students, is the so-called "etheric double." The "ways of life," the lives which the souls choose, are thus the manner of make up of the "etheric double." Now we know that this is protean in its nature and can take any mould. May it not then take on the life of a "swan," a "nightingale," a "lion," an "eagle," or an "ape"? May not these "animals" be chosen as *types*? If we refer to the so-called "diagram of the Ophites," which is still traceable in a fragmentary form in the polemic of Origen against Celsus, we shall find the seven creative spheres of animal types each characterised by one of the known animals, such as the lion, the eagle, etc. May there not be some intermediate line of birth with which we are unacquainted, a birth into an etheric body without a physical? May not the etheric body even of many souls on earth be in the type of certain of the main animal lives, although their physical bodies may be quite human? Again Orpheus and Thamyris were both poets, bards and singers. How do we account for the stupendous development of music in our own days along the ordinary lines of evolution or reincarnation? Nowhere in the history of the past can we point to anything approaching it. What again of the Gandharvas, Kinnaras, etc., in Hindu mythology—belonging to another line of evolution, and having no physical bodies? The Gandharvas especially are the musicians of the Gods and are represented, if I recollect rightly, as winged. Do our swan and nightingale come in here, and our eagle and lion and ape come in in the same connection, though along another line, the Kinnaras? I do not know. But this much I will say, that an occultist cannot be sure, with such considerations in mind, that Plato taught

the reincarnation of the souls of men into the *physical bodies* of animals as a general rule. He might have done so in the very exceptional case to which I referred in my last answer, but not otherwise.

Finally, we had better remember that we modern students of theosophy do not know the last word on the mysteries of reincarnation ; I doubt if we even know the first. There are still more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy, and we cannot as yet afford to put the writings of the great teachers of antiquity on one side as merely interesting fossils, compared to the living expositions of our own students.

#### QUESTION 146.

*Pythagoras amongst other groups of opposites gives the square and the oblong, the union of which he asserts produces harmony. How can this be explained? (1898.)*

G. R. S. M.—The ten pairs of opposites which the Pythagoreans termed the “elements” of the Universe are : (1) Limited and Unlimited, (2) Odd and Even, (3) One and Multitude, (4) Right and Left, (5) Male and Female, (6) Stationary and Moved, (7) Straight and Curved, (8) Light and Darkness, (9) Good and Bad (10) Square and Oblong. The first of each pair was looked upon as a good element, the second as bad in the sense of negative. Moreover, the terms of the first column seem to be taken as synonymous, and so apparently are the elements of the second column.

Perhaps the statement of the questioner means simply that any pair of opposites produces equilibrium and so harmony.

Again, if you take a unit square or monad and to it add three others (the three forming a gnomon), the whole figure of four will produce a new square, and the harmony will be restored ; but the simplest oblong consists of two unit squares in juxtaposition. The union of the square and oblong (the gnomon) may thus be said to produce harmony. But I am not certain that this is the correct explanation of the problem, nor am I even sure that the statement in the question is correct. I would strongly urge students to send in references to all such queries.

There may, however, be other explanations. For instance, the Pythagoreans called such a sequence of numbers as 4, 9, 16, 25,

“squares,” and represented them diagrammatically by so many points or monads; equally so they called the sequence 3, 6, 10, 15 “triangles,” representing them by diagrams of 3 points or monads, 5 points, etc., arranged in triangular figures. Perhaps they may also have had an “oblong” series, and a harmonical progression may have resulted from the square and oblong series; but this is a pure speculation, and I cannot see at present how it could have been possible.

Again in Mason’s article on Pythagoras in the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography* we read: “As in the octave and its different harmonical relations the Pythagoreans found the ground of connection between the opposed primary elements and the mutual relation of existing things, so in the properties of particular numbers and their relation to the principia did they attempt to find the explanation of the particular properties of different things, and therefore addressed themselves to the investigation of the properties of numbers, dividing them into various species. Thus they had three kinds of *even*, according as the number was a power of two, or a multiple of two, or of some power of two, not itself a power of two, or the even of an odd and an even number. In like manner they had three kinds of *odd*.”

Now a square is an even number, and the simplest oblong is formed by the juxtaposition of two monad squares, the sum of square and oblong thus making three (the first odd number, for one is both odd and even), which number was spoken of “as defining or limiting the Universe and all things, having end, middle and beginning, and so being the number of the *whole*.” Perhaps the explanation may lie in this direction. These suggestions are put forward with all hesitation, and I can only repeat that it would have been better to give the reference to the author who makes the statement. And by author I mean the classical author and not the speculations or inferences of the moderns.

#### QUESTION 147.

*Are there any extant moral precepts of Pythagoras other than the incomprehensible aphorisms usually ascribed to him? (1897.)*

G. R. S. M.—There is no “historical” evidence whereby any precepts can be definitely traced to Pythagoras. According to every account Pythagoras wrote nothing himself, and therefore his teaching had to be handed down orally. The tendency of

this instruction may be gleaned from the later tradition which has preserved many ethical fragments. The following are selected from the sentences of Sextus the Pythagorean, and are the translation of Taylor, with certain revisions, as found in his edition of Jamblichus' *Life of Pythagoras* :

The wise man and the despiser of wealth is like unto God.

Thou hast in thyself something like unto God ; therefore use thyself as the temple of God, because of that which in thee is like unto Him.

Honour God above all things, that He may rule over thee.

Whatsoever thou honourest above all other things will have dominion over thee. But if thou givest thyself to the domination of God, thou wilt thus have dominion over all things.

The greatest honour which can be paid to God is to know and imitate Him.

There is, indeed, nothing which wholly resembleth God ; nevertheless the imitation of Him as much as possible by an inferior nature is pleasing to Him.

God, indeed, is not in want of anything ; but the wise man is in want of God alone. He therefore who is in want of but few things, and those necessary, emulateth Him who is in want of nothing.

Consider all the time to be lost in which thou dost not think of divinity.

A good mind is the choir of divinity.

An evil mind is the choir of evil spirits.

Honour that which is just, for the very reason that it is just.

Thou wilt not be hidden from divinity when thou actest unjustly, nor even when thou thinkest of so doing.

The foundation of piety is continence ; but the summit of piety is love of God.

Pray that what is expedient and not what is pleasing may happen to thee.

Such as thou desirest thy neighbour to be to thee, such also be thou to thy neighbours.

That which God giveth thee, no man can take away.

The soul is illumined by the recollection of deity.

Thou shouldst not possess more than the need of the body requireth.

Possess only those things which no one can take from thee.

Ask only those things of God which it is worthy of God to bestow.

The reason which is in thee is the light of thy life.

Be not anxious to please the multitude.

It is unseemly to neglect those things which we shall require after the laying aside of the body.

Accustom thy soul after (it hath conceived all that is great of) divinity, to conceive something great of itself.

Regard nothing as precious which a bad man may take from thee.

Everything which is more than necessary to man is hostile to him.

The mind of the wise man is always with divinity.

God dwells in the mind of the wise.

Every desire is insatiable, and therefore is ever in want.

The wise man is always similar to himself.

Use lying as (thou wouldst) poison.

Nothing is so like to wisdom as truth.

Depraved affections are the beginnings of sorrows.

An evil disposition is the disease of the soul ; but injustice and impiety are the death of it.

He who useth mankind badly, useth himself badly.

Pray that thou mayest be able to benefit thy enemies.

To live, indeed, is not in our power, but to live rightly is.

Be unwilling to admit accusations against the man who is studious of wisdom.

Fly from intoxication as thou wouldst from insanity.

Think that thou sufferest a great punishment when thou obtainest the object of bodily desire ; for the attainment of such objects never satisfieth desire.

Declare that which possesseth wisdom in thee to be the (true) man.

Where that which is wise in thee dwelleth, there also is thy Good.

The fear of death rendereth a man sad through the ignorance of his soul.

Think that thy body is the garment of thy soul ; and therefore keep it pure.

Speak not of God to every man.

It is dangerous, and the danger is not small, to speak of God even things which are true.

A true assertion respecting God is an assertion of God.

It is better to have nothing than to possess much and give to none.



If thou injurest no one, thou wilt fear no one.

No one is wise who looketh downward to the earth.

It is not death, but an evil life which destroyeth the soul.

If thou knowest Him by whom thou wert made, thou wilt know thyself.

Divine wisdom is true science.

A real knowledge of God causeth a man to use few words.

The instructed, chaste, and wise soul, is the prophet of the truth of God.

A wise mind is the mirror of God.

## DIVISION XLVIII

### THE ROSICRUCIANS

#### QUESTION 148.

*It is very generally supposed that the history of Christian Rosenkreuz is a fictitious one, that no such person ever existed, and that the Rosicrucians were only heard of through the writings of Johann Valentine Andreae. Can any historical evidence be given to show that the Rosicrucians existed before the time of the publication of the Fama Fraternitatis, and the writings of Andreae? (1898.)*

I. C. O.—There is undoubtedly a good deal of historical evidence relating to the Rosicrucians in the general histories of the times. It is very commonly supposed that the whole history of the Rosicrucians was invented by Johann Valentine Andreae (1586–1654), who wrote the *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreuz* (Strasburg, 1616). But, as a matter of fact, the diaries and annals of the time prove that the body of mystics called Rosicrucians were known in Hungary, Bohemia, and Italy before the year 1604. In the *Memoirs of the Court, Aristocracy and Diplomacy of Austria*, by E. Vehse, translated by Franz Demmler, 1856, we get allusions to the relations of Rudolf II. with this body of people. Says Demmler, vol. i., p. 236, writing of Rudolf II. [1576–1612]: “He kept up a constant intercourse with Rosicrucians, Alchemists, Adepts of every sort . . . Dr John Dee, the celebrated English alchemist and necromancer, was one of the most conspicuous characters . . . of itinerant Adepts, who, from time to time, made their appearance at Rudolf’s court, and two famous Italians living in the grandest style, are also to be mentioned. These two philosophers, who, during the last half of the sixteenth century, were the astonishment of the whole of Europe, bore the names of Marco Bragadino and Hieronymus

Scotto." This Marco Bragadino was a native of Famagusta in Cyprus; his proper name was Manugna. "In 1578, he appeared as the Conte Manugnano in Italy, showed himself with the greatest magnificence in the circles of the Nobili at Venice . . . Count Hieronymus Scotto was a native of Parma. Khevenhüller expressly states that the whole of Europe had resounded with the achievements of this wonderful person." We find he was travelling in Germany in 1573; he was at Nuremberg and Cologne and was very often at the Court of Prague. But the most important personage mentioned by Demmler is Michael Mayer, who was known as a Rosicrucian at the Court of Rudolf II. long before the above-mentioned book written by Andreae appeared. Of him Demmler says: "He was Rudolf's physician and private secretary, and he was Rudolf's favourite writer, recording the Emperor's own ideas and experiences. He was, moreover, a Rosicrucian and a very fertile author. His works, bearing the mysterious signature 'Chevalier Imperial,' created an immense sensation. They were most of them published at Frankfort-am-Main and some were translated into French. Having afterwards entered the service of the Landgraf Maurice of Hesse-Cassel, Mayer died at Magdeburg in 1622." (Vol. i. pp. 236 and 238.)

Perhaps one of the most important of his works is that entitled *Themis Aurea: The Laws of the Fraternity of the Rosie Crosse*, written in Latin by Count Michael Maierus, of which a translation was published in London, in 1656. From various allusions made by Khevenhüller in his *Annales Ferdinandi* it is quite evident that the Rosicrucians were known at the Court of Rudolf II., for he gives interesting accounts of various experiments made at the Court of the Emperor. And it is more than probable that further investigation into the private histories of these Courts would furnish us with conclusive proof of the existence of the Rosicrucians before the year 1610, the important year when the famous *Fama Fraternitatis* first became public.

Another important point which Demmler gives us is the connection of the great Wallenstein with Occultism. Writing of him he says (p. 338): "He stayed for some time at Padua to be initiated by Professor Argoli in the occult sciences and in the mysteries of the Cabala." The date which our author gives for this visit is 1603. From other sources we have found that Padua was at this period a great centre for mysticism, about which there will be more to say later on.

## DIVISION XLIX

### BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM

#### QUESTION 149.

*Why is Buddhism spoken of by scholars as agnostic and negative ?  
Is there any truth in the statement ? (1898.)*

J. C. C.—It is only the so-called Southern Buddhism as recorded in the Pāli Piṭakas, which is supposed by some scholars to be agnostic and negative in tone. I do not think any scholar will ever venture to suggest that the Northern phase of the teachings of the Buddha is anything but emphatically positive in every respect.

Even with regard, however, to what has been called Southern Buddhism, it is not quite correct to regard it as negative. The Pāli Canon contains the grandest possible descriptions of Nirvāṇa, which is described as “uncreate,” and “immortal.” It is this positive Nirvāṇa to which the Buddhist aspires. But inasmuch as it is really beyond speech, it must be indicated as “not this” and “not this,” if one is to avoid misleading. Even then one is not quite free from the charge of being illogical. Silence alone is the best answer to all questions regarding Nirvāṇa. But humanity has not yet evolved high enough to be beyond the necessity of speech, and so we must speak if we are to communicate with one another at all. Therefore, the compilers of the Pāli books have tried to speak even of the unspeakable, the Nirvāṇa, and in so doing they have used the loftiest language to describe its nature.

Though they have doubtless failed in their object so far as it is concerned with description, yet they have succeeded in showing that Nirvāṇa is not only not negative but that it is the only thing positive and real. I have often wondered how, in the face of the

statements contained in the Pāli books, the scholars could ever assert that Buddhism was negative. The ultimate goal of Buddhism is as positive as anything we can find in religion. (See Udānam, VIII.)

Coming down from the consideration of that highest goal, we find in the Pāli books how one can gain definite and positive knowledge of *post-mortem* conditions, of the other beings which crowd the Universe, though invisible to the physical eye. We hear of different worlds and states of consciousness and Divine powers, all as real and positive as anything can be. Buddha prescribes most definite methods of training, whereby we can pass out of the body in a body "formed of mind" which is drawn out of the gross physical encasement "as sword from the sheath." (See Sāmaññaphala and numerous other parts of the Scriptures.)

Then when the aspirant is able to get out of the body he can visit at will different regions of the Universe, converse with gods and demons, and gather knowledge at first hand of things invisible to the ordinary sight. There are also definite methods prescribed for the recovery of the latent memory of past incarnations. Thus any charge of indefiniteness is not only unfair, but shows ignorance or gross misunderstanding of the Scriptures.

The only ground on which agnosticism can be predicated of Buddhism, is the fact that Buddha never favoured speculation on transcendental and abstract problems. Whenever such questions arose He either held his peace or answered them in such a way as not to commit Himself to any opinion on either side. But this persistent discouragement of speculation and inference on transcendental questions is not peculiar to Buddha. It is also the fundamental idea of the greatest of all Hindu philosophical systems—the Vedānta. In the Vedānta, "anumāna," or inference and speculation, has hardly, if ever, received any encouragement. For inference is possible only of things the like of which we have *observed*. If we have not observed things transcendental, how can we speculate upon them? This will hardly be understood in the West, where philosophy means speculation; "philosophy" in India means the science of the principle of things based on the first-hand observation of facts on the noumenal planes. ✕

But in the case of the Vedānta, the Teacher could draw upon the recorded knowledge and observed facts of the previous sages, as evidence, *i.e.*, he could fall back upon the Shrutis, or Scriptures.

Therefore there was no necessity for him to remain silent on metaphysical questions. He could teach them as theories and tell the students how to verify them. Buddha, on the other hand, had to refrain from all allusions to the Scriptures, because, when He flourished, the people had become letter-bound, and the Scriptures acted as hindrances rather than helps. Therefore, He taught his disciples only the method—the Noble Eightfold Path, as it is called—whereby they could develop the inner powers, and thus know and see the truth as it is in nature. And this Noble Eightfold Path is Yoga, pure and simple, and it is not different from the Yoga taught by the Vedāntic Teacher.

It is, as every occult student knows, the Gñāna Yoga, or the Yoga of Wisdom. As regards the other two forms of Yoga, Buddha remained silent.

Thus we find that Buddhism is no more negative than the Vedānta. Only in the case of the Vedānta the Teacher mentions beforehand most of the metaphysical truths which the student will verify by the practice of Yoga; whereas Buddha gives simply the Yoga, the Path, without saying much beforehand about the metaphysical truths which the student will recognise when the Path is trodden. He does so because he has seen the danger of giving transcendental ideas before the student has developed the powers to verify them, before he has prepared the instruments wherewith to perform the experiments. He has seen that truth told to the unprepared has often been misunderstood; for the transcendental cannot be fully expressed in words. But, unfortunately, His silence on certain metaphysical truths, while saving the unprepared from their misconception, has led them to deny such truths altogether, has made them agnostics and sceptics. This, it seems to me, is the reason of the charge of agnosticism made against Buddhism, or rather, against the modern misconceptions of it.

#### QUESTION 150.

*In studying Buddhism in non-theosophical literature, we find the constantly recurring assertion that there is no permanent reincarnating Ego, no individual continuity. For example, "It is not the Self but the non-Self which passes from form to form." I find it difficult to reconcile this with what I understand to be the theosophical teaching, viz., that a permanent Ego is rein-*

*car-nated in each new personality. Is there a permanent bit of All-soul held separate from the rest through the ages, by individuality, until Nirvāṇa is reached (or after)? If this is so, is it to be considered a Buddhistic doctrine, or a development of modern theosophy and modern thought? (1901.)*

A. P. S.—In studying non-theosophical Buddhist literature, the wise course to adopt is to disregard all statements encountered, if they run counter to (genuine) theosophic teaching. Exoteric eastern literature is just as corrupt as exoteric Christian literature. Theosophic teaching has proved in effect a revelation clearing up both varieties of corruption. If people cannot see that this is so on account of the inherent reasonableness of theosophic teaching—and its harmony with the results of every investigation into the mysteries of super-physical nature which it is in our power to carry out—so much the worse for their powers of interior vision. Sooner or later in the progress of their evolution they will see more clearly. As for Buddhism, no doubt there are multitudes of Buddhist priests (or monks or whatever you like to call them) who are as ignorant of the true meaning of reincarnation and Nirvāṇa, as the common-place country curate would be ignorant of the true meaning of the Atonement. The current exoteric Buddhist writings reflect their ignorance, and the English translations of these surround the subjects treated with a new stratum of fog. To answer the above question more fully would be to re-write modern theosophical literature. Reincarnation is not a Buddhist doctrine, nor a Brahminical doctrine, nor a Christian doctrine—though if the Christian books are properly understood it will be seen to be as much that as any other sort of doctrine. It is simply a fact in nature like the circulation of the blood, which the wisest men on earth have been familiar with through all the ages, which crops up, therefore, in all religious teaching, and which in recent years some of us have been privileged to verify by means of faculties of observation enlarged for that, among other purposes.

#### QUESTION 151.

*What is the basis of the theory that the Buddha denied the existence of "soul"? Are there any definite teachings of his on this point? (1896.)*

J. C. C.—The absurd idea that Buddha preached the non-

existence of anything like soul, rests chiefly on later and non-canonical books such as the *Questions of King Milinda* and so on. So far as the direct teachings of Buddha himself are concerned—teachings which are to be found in the Sutta and Vinaya Piṭkas—I do not think there are any passages which can be brought forward in support of the nihilistic view. Those who maintain that theory of negation, generally refer for their authority to what is known as the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta; and, as far as I know, this is the only discourse in which Buddha speaks definitely of what is the “Self” (âtman) but not the “soul,” that is, the reincarnating Ego.

This Sutta is a continuation of or a supplement to Buddha's first sermon known as the “Foundation of the Wheel of Law.” We find both the first sermon and its supplement fully recorded in the introduction to the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya Piṭaka (Mahāvagga I. 6, 38-46, Oldenberg's Edition, trans. Sac. B. East, Vol. XIII. pp. 100-101). The Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta itself again appears in the Samyutta-Nikâya of the Sutta Piṭaka. The meaning of the title of this Sutta is “The Discourse on the Indication of Non-self” (erroneously translated by Orientalists as the “Sutta of not having the Signs of Self”). Here Buddha first clearly mentions, exactly in the manner of the Upaniṣhads, what is not the Self. For it is only by excluding what is Non-self that we can know the Self which, as the Upaniṣhads say, can only be described as “not this, not this.” Here Buddha clearly tells us that rūpa (body or form) is not the Self (attā or âtmā); nor is vedanā (sensation or that part of our nature which has to do with sensation); saññā (perception); samkhârā (impressions, presumably that part of our mind which receives and is guided by mere impressions; the “impulsive mind”); nor viññāna (Buddhi, “rational mind”); that is the Self is not any of the five skandhas. We find here no mention whatever that the Self is *not*; but that the body and the rest which are generally mistaken for the Self, are not the Self. Self is something beyond them all. This Self, when it recognises itself as different from all else, divests itself of all attachment (râga) and “by absence of attachment he is made free.” Such is the conclusion. If the Self does not exist who is to be made free?

Western minds untrained in the ideas of the Hindus to whom Buddha addressed his sermons, see nothing but nihilism when reading that even “reason” is denied as the Self. Few can com-



prehend the idea that mind, reason and much beyond, no matter how sublime, are *essentially* the same as "body," that is to say, so-called "matter." But *âtman* or the Self transcends them all. Failing to grasp this thought, many of the non-Indian Buddhists and unqualified persons who joined the Sangha in later times, reduced the sublime teachings of Buddha to nihilism. The sublime teachings of the sages are ever the most abused when treated by the unfit; and here comes in the importance of the different *âshramas* or stages in religious life as recognised by the Hindus.

The Western scholars who are brought up with the idea that "mind" is the man and his soul and self, see darkness and materialism in Buddhism, when they find mind and reason spoken of as non-self, or as a subtle form of "matter."

This is the whole basis of the misconception regarding the Self which Buddha not only did not deny, but which he ever taught men to seek. The sole aim of his teaching was to destroy "*attavâda*" or egoism (*ahankâra*), but not the *attâ* or *âtman* itself. As regards his teaching about the soul, or the persisting Ego, which is the Self, as related to the individually differentiated subtle body, and is born again and again: we find abundant evidences in his direct teachings which absolutely contradict the theory that Buddha denied any persisting Ego. I will refer here only to one instance in the *Sâmaññaphala Sutta* of the *Digha-Nikâya*. After first mentioning the condition and training of the mind that are necessary for success in yoga, Buddha describes how a man can recover the memory of his past lives, and how he sees all the scenes in which he was in any way concerned passing in succession before his mind's eye. He illustrates it by saying: "If a man goes out from his own village to another and thence to another, and from there again comes back to his own village, he might think thus: I indeed went from my own village to that other. There I stood thus, I sat in this manner. Thus I spoke and thus I remained silent. From that village again I went to another and I did the same there. *The same* 'I am' (so 'mhi), returned from that village to my own village. In the very same way, O king, the ascetic, when his mind is pure, knows his former births, one, two, three, and many. He thinks, 'In such a place I had such a name, I was born in such a family, such was my caste, such was my food, and in such and such a way I experienced pleasure and pain, and my life extended over such a period. The

same I thence removed (so tato *cuto*), was born in some other place, and there also I had such and such conditions. Thence removed, the same I, am (now) born here.'” (Sāmaññaphala Sutta, 93-94.)

The above quotation shows clearly the teaching of Buddha, with regard to the reincarnating Ego. He illustrates also very beautifully in the same Sutta how a bhikshu can know the past births of others, and how he can see men dead in one place, and after the sorrows and joys of hell and heaven, the same born somewhere else.

I do not think he ever denies the persisting Ego. But this has been misinterpreted on the strength of a statement in the Brahmajāla Sutta, where Buddha, after mentioning all the various aspects of soul, says that they do not really *absolutely* exist, because their existence depends on “contact,” *i.e.*, relation. (Brahmajāla Sutta, III. 58, and Buddhaghosha’s commentary on it.) Buddha denies only the absolute reality of the soul, and so does every other great teacher. The existence, not only of the soul, but even of the Logos, is true only *relatively*. Untrained persons here again have misunderstood the idea.

#### QUESTION 152.

*In Buddhist books we frequently read that thousands of persons became Arhats in consequence of some sermon delivered by the Buddha; are we to take this as mere Oriental exaggeration; or if not, where are all these Arhats now? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—Whether exaggeration has or has not crept in where statements as to definite figures are made, it is impossible to say; it seems by no means improbable, although, on the other hand, there can be little doubt that the number of those who attained Adeptship during the earthly life of the Buddha was really very large.

We often get a very distorted idea of the work of the Buddha, because we persist in regarding it solely from our personal point of view. We are apt to look upon the preaching of the Law and the founding of a great religion as his principal, and, indeed, his only function, because it is by virtue of that that he comes into relation with the present age of the world to which we ourselves belong. We forget that he is the *fourth* Buddha of this world-period, and that his incarnation as Siddhartha Gautama was only the last of a number of lives devoted to the teaching of humanity.

During all those previous Bodhisattva-lives, he had linked to himself karmically, by ties of the deepest affection and gratitude, vast numbers of people whom he had taught and helped. These men would, of course, be among the flower of the fourth root-race, and would naturally, therefore, pass on into the first subdivision of the fifth. At a time when the majority of them were in incarnation there, the Buddha would take his final birth among them, and the tremendous force of his magnetic influence would act upon their inner nature as sunlight upon the growing plant, rapidly developing into Arhatship all those who by his previous efforts had been brought to the threshold of the Path.

Certainly he preached his law not only to them but to all the world, and thus laid a firm foundation for the work of his successor Maitreya, who will himself incarnate again and again among men, teaching and preaching as and when he may see to be best for his great purpose, until the time come when he also takes the final Buddha-birth and passes away from this world for ever, "bearing his sheaves with him" in the shape of the host of men of the fifth race who will by that period have attained Adeptship under his careful guidance.

It has always been known that the birth of a great Adept as a Buddha is his last upon earth, as is repeatedly stated even in the exoteric books. (See the well-known declaration of Gautama when he had attained the Buddhahood, "Anekajâtisamsâram," etc. *Nidânakathâ*, 278; also *Milindapañha* iv. 5, 8, and many other places.) But we have been too apt to look upon that birth as the beginning of his great work for man, instead of what it really is—its culmination: and thus we have missed the true significance of many points which would otherwise have been most luminous.

But although the Buddha, having once attained, can never again take human birth, it appears to be possible for him to retain a certain connection with the world which he has taught for so long. We have been given to understand that it is not the ordinary rule that he should do so, as his future work lies upon far higher planes of which we know nothing; but it seems that Gautama's action in this respect differed somewhat from that of his predecessors, and that his connection with earth was not entirely severed when he left it in physical form.

As regards the second part of the question, it would be impossible for us to trace those Arhats in their progress through

the higher realms of nature, even if we had any right to pry into the lives of the Holy Ones in order to gratify idle curiosity. But we know that beyond the position of the Arhat lies the further stage of the Asekha, "the one who has no more to learn" as regards our own planetary chain, and we are told that when man has reached this level, and so attained his spiritual majority, he assumes the fullest control of his own destinies, and makes choice of his future line of evolution among several possible paths which he then sees opening before him.

Naturally we cannot expect to understand very much about these, and the faint outline of some of them, which is all that can be sketched in for us, conveys very little to the mind, except that most of them take the Adept altogether away from the earth-chain, which no longer affords sufficient scope for his evolution. This latter fact may be taken as suggesting an answer to the inquiry as to where the immediate followers of the Buddha may be working at the present time, or, at any rate, as explaining why they are not now to be found upon earth.

One of the paths which they may take is that of those who, as the phrase goes, accept Nirvāṇa. Through what incalculable æons they remain in that sublime condition, for what far greater work they are preparing themselves, what will be their future line of evolution, are questions upon which we know nothing; and even if information upon such points could be given, it is almost certain that it would prove entirely incomprehensible to us at our present stage.

Another class chooses a spiritual evolution not quite so far removed from humanity, for though not directly connected with the next chain of our system it extends through two long periods corresponding to its first and second rounds, at the end of which time the Adepts of this line also appear to accept Nirvāṇa, but at a higher stage than those previously mentioned.

Others join the Deva evolution, whose progress lies along a grand chain consisting of seven chains like ours, each of which is to them as one world. This line of evolution is spoken of as the most gradual, and, therefore, the least arduous of the seven courses; but though it is sometimes referred to in the books as "yielding to the temptation to become a god," it is only in comparison with the sublime height of renunciation of the Nirmāṇakāya that it can be spoken of in this half-disparaging manner, for the Adept who chooses this course has indeed a glorious career before him,

and though the path which he selects is not the shortest, it is nevertheless a very noble one.

Yet another group are the Nirmānakāyas—those who, declining all these easier methods, choose the shortest but steepest path to the heights which still lie before them. They form what is poetically termed the “guardian wall,” and, as *The Voice of the Silence* tells us, “protect the world from further and far greater misery and sorrow”—not indeed by warding off from it external evil influences, but by devoting all their strength to the work of pouring down upon it a flood of spiritual force and assistance, without which it would assuredly be in far more hopeless case than now.

Yet again, there are those who remain even more directly in association with humanity, and continue to incarnate among it, as our own Masters are doing. But it would seem that only a certain comparatively small number adopt this course—probably only so many as are necessary for the carrying on of this physical side of the work. Perhaps only a few of the leaders of the Great White Brotherhood, as we know it now, belonged to the army of Arhats who attained that level under the direct influence of the Buddha. The majority of his advanced disciples have probably chosen some of the other possible lines of evolution.

#### QUESTION 153.

*When will the Lord Buddha reincarnate? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—He will not reincarnate in this world at all. The Buddhahood is not only one of the highest offices in the great Adept Hierarchy, but it also represents a certain exceedingly lofty initiation, after taking which it is in the nature of things impossible that a physical body should again be assumed. In the ordinary course of events, a Buddha, having preached the eternal truths of His Law in whatever form seems to Him best suited to the exigencies of the time, passes away altogether from this world to other and far grander fields of activity. But it is said that this, the general rule, was not exactly followed by the last Buddha, Gautama, who enjoys the distinction of being the first member of our humanity to attain that magnificent position, the previous Buddhas having been the product of a much older and far more advanced evolution. It has been hinted

that He has remained sufficiently in touch with this world to be able to shed down at intervals from its higher planes streams of spiritual force and blessing for the aid of the Adept Brotherhood in their work.

C. J.—In the *Questions of King Milinda*, iv. 5, 8, occurs the following :

“It was said by the Blessed One: ‘A Brahman am I, O Brethren, devoted to self-sacrifice, pure-handed at every time; this body that I bear with me is my last.’”

It is the belief of the Buddhists that the Buddha Gautama will never be born again on earth, as the very fact of His attaining Buddhahood freed Him from the necessity of re-birth. The above quotation also shows that Buddha Himself declared that He would not reincarnate again. There are many other statements of His to the same effect, a translation of one of which will be found in Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, at the end of Book VI.

#### QUESTION 154.

*As a worker in the cause of vegetarianism I am constantly confronted with the statement that the Buddha ate meat, and even died through eating it; what is the real interpretation of the passage which is supposed to convey this extraordinary idea?*  
(1896.)

C. W. L.—There can, of course, be no kind of doubt that the statement is an untrue one, if we are to take it literally. Various suggestions as to its interpretation have been made, but without special and careful investigation into the subject we should hardly be in a position to decide between them. Mr Sinnett has given his opinion on the matter very clearly in No. xii. of the *Transactions of the London Lodge*. He says :

“The sacred books of Eastern religions are written for the most part in a style which is rather a disguise than an expression of the meaning they are intended to convey. Figurative phraseology and intricate symbols are, at all events, so little in harmony with Western habits of thought, that such vehicles of philosophic teaching may easily be mistaken for the wild conceptions of a crude superstition, by readers accustomed to a more lucid treatment of religious doctrine.

“The same habits of speech which veil cosmological theories with narratives of divine incarnations in animal forms, lead Oriental writers to describe even such events as the Buddha's death and cremation in the circuitous language of symbols, rather than in plain matter-of-fact prose. Thus in the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta*, for the English version of which we are indebted to the admirable scholarship of Dr Rhys Davids, we are told how the Blessed One died from an illness which supervened upon a meal of dried boar's flesh served to him by a certain Kunda, a worker in metals.

“A prosaic interpretation of this narrative has passed into all epitomes of Buddhism current in European literature. Mr Alabaster, for instance, in his *Wheel of the Law*, calmly quotes a missionary authority for the statement that the Buddha died ‘of dysentery caused by eating roast pork’; and even Dr Rhys Davids himself gives further currency to this ludicrous misconception in his well-known treatise on Buddhism.

“One might have supposed that students of the subject, even without a clue to the meaning of the ‘dried boar's flesh’ in the legend, would have been startled at the notion of finding the simple diet of so confirmed a vegetarian as we must suppose any Indian religious teacher to have been, invaded by so gross an article of food as roast pork. But one after another European writers on Buddhism are content to echo this absurdly materialistic version of the figurative Eastern story. If they had sought to check their interpretation of it by reference to living exponents of the Buddhist faith, they would have fallen easily on the track of the right explanation.

“The boar is an Oriental symbol for esoteric knowledge, derived from the boar avatar of Vishnu—that in which the incarnate god lifted up the earth out of the waters in which it was immersed. In other words, according to Wilson's translation of the *Vishnu Purāna*, the avatar in question ‘allegorically represents the extrication of the world from a deluge of iniquity by the rites of religion.’ In the *Rāmāyana* we may find another version of the same allegory, Brahma in this case assuming the form of a boar to hoist up the earth out of primal chaos.

“Boar's flesh thus comes to symbolise the secret doctrine of the esoteric initiates, those who possessed the inner science of Brahma, and dried boar's flesh would be such esoteric wisdom prepared for food—reduced, that is to say, to a form in which it

could be taught to the multitude. It was through the too daring use of such dried boar's flesh—through his attempt to bring the multitude to a greater degree than they were prepared for it, within the area of esoteric teaching—that the Buddha died; that is to say, that his great enterprise came to an end.

“That is the meaning of the story so painfully debased by European writers; and that meaning, once assigned to its central idea, will be followed through many variations in the details of the Pāli narrative, even as translated by Dr Rhys Davids, apparently without any suspicion on his part of its true intention.

“The Buddha, for instance, before the feast, directs that he only should be served with the dried boar's flesh, while the brethren, his disciples, are to be served with cakes and rice; also that whatever dried boar's flesh may be left over after he has done, shall be buried, for none but himself, he says, can digest such food—a strange remark for him to have made according to the materialistic interpretation of the story, which represents him as *not* able to digest such food. The meaning of the injunction plainly is, that after him none of the Brethren shall attempt the task of giving out esoteric secrets to the world.”

Whatever may be the exact signification of this symbolic expression, it is difficult to see how the kreophagist can get much satisfaction out of the story, even when he takes it in the most absurdly materialistic sense, unless he is also prepared to contend that he is himself at the level of the Buddha to whom it was permitted, and not in the position of one of the disciples of the Good Law, to whom it was so strictly forbidden.

J. C. C.—The word in the *Mahā-Parinirvāṇa-Sūtra* (of the Pāli canon) which is translated by most of the European scholars by “dried boar's flesh,” is “Sūkara-maddava.” Now I fail absolutely to see how Sūkara-maddava can mean “dried boar's flesh.” No doubt the first part of the word “Sūkara” means “boar.” But “maddava,” which is in all likelihood derived from the Sanskrit “mārdava,” does *not*, as far as I know, mean flesh, much less “dried flesh.” I shall be very glad if some one can show me an application of “maddava” in the sense of “dried flesh” in Pāli literature. “Mārdava,” and therefore its Pāli form “maddava,” can only mean, at least to my mind until the case is proved otherwise, mildness, softness, gentleness, and so on.

The word Sūkara we must remember means also a kind of plant.



Then there are words beginning with Sūkara, such as Sūkara-krānta (a plant used for medicinal purposes), Sūkara-kanda and so on—words which apparently have nothing to do with a boar.

Considering all this, I am inclined to think that Sūkara-maddava probably means a kind of plant. That it does not mean “dried boar’s flesh” is almost certain, for, I repeat, I have never heard even of the “maddava” used in the sense of flesh, fresh or dried.

Apart from all this, there is another side to the question. The word occurs in a passage which must have struck every one who has read it as most mysterious, if nothing else. For we read that when Buddha arrived at the house of Chunda, whose guest He was, He said to him :

“O Chunda, what you have prepared of Sūkara-maddava, with that serve me ; whatever else you have prepared of soft and hard food, with that serve this body of Bhikshus.”

Then when Chunda gave Him some of his mysterious “Sūkara-maddava” the Lord again spoke to him, saying :

“O Chunda, whatever you have left of Sūkara-maddava bury that in a hole. I do not see, O Chunda, anyone besides the Tathāgata, either in the world of Gods, Māra or Brahman, or among the people in the world of Shramaṇa, Brāhamaṇa, Gods and men, by whom this (Sūkara-maddava) when eaten can become thoroughly assimilated.” (*Dīgha Nikāya*, vol. ii., *Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta*, pp. 159-160. King of Siam’s Ed.)

Now, if Sūkara-maddava be nothing more than “dried boar’s flesh,” as our scholars in the Occident would have us believe, what is the meaning of this statement of the Buddha, and why should Chunda bury the remaining food in a hole? There must be some underlying meaning in it, although we do not know what that meaning is.

Even if we were to admit that “dried boar’s flesh” was really the meaning of “Sūkara-maddava,” yet the above passage with the context would be enough, I believe, to show that there is in all likelihood an allegorical and mystical meaning of the puzzling term. But as no one has yet succeeded in proving that it does mean “boar’s flesh” we can safely say that the idea is based on a misunderstanding and consequent mistranslation.

whether or not Jesus of Nazareth told the multitude that none of them could be his follower unless he abandoned wife and child, their followers who wrote down the story of what they thought their Master's life and teachings ought to be, approved of the deed and the saying.

The problem, then, resolves itself into an inquiry as to whether they had any justification for such apparently extraordinary assertions.

The doctrine of Jesus is characteristically the doctrine of love, and yet he is here represented as distinctly teaching us to hate, for you cannot get over the *crux* by the weak-kneed ruse of the apologists who tell us that "to hate is not always to be understood rigorously; it frequently signifies no more than a lesser degree of love" (see Cruden *in loc.*). The Greek word *μισέει* means squarely "hate" and nothing else. To believe that the Christ, through the mouth of Jesus, taught us to actively hate anyone, would be an outrage, revolting to all that we hold as most precious. Are we, therefore, compelled to reject the Saying as apocryphal? By no means; the newly-discovered Sayings and a number of others which the "orthodox" Church has excluded, are evidently "dark sayings" to be explained by further instruction. Fortunately, one of the lines of tradition of the inner teaching of the Christ has been preserved to us (though doubtless in a garbled form) and that too, dealing with this very point. In the Gnostic treatise, *Pistis Sophia* (pagg. 341-343) we read as follows "[Jesus saith]: 'Hearken, therefore, while I speak with you concerning the soul, as to how I have said that the five great rulers of the Great Fate of the Æons, and the rulers of the disk of the Sun, and the rulers of the disk of the Moon breathe into that soul, and that there issueth therefrom a portion of my power, as I have just said unto you, and the portion of this power dwelleth within the soul so that it can endure, and the counterfeit spirit [kâma-rûpa?] is stationed without the soul, watching over it and dogging it, and that the rulers bind it to the soul with their seals and their bonds, they seal it to it that it may force it at all times to commit its mischiefs and iniquities unremittingly, that it may be their slave for ever, and be under their subjection for ever in the transmigrations into bodies; and they seal it to it that it may be in every kind of sin and all the desires of the world.

"It is because of things of this kind, then, that I have brought the mysteries into this world, [mysteries] which break all the bonds

of the counterfeit spirit and all the seals which are attached to the souls, which make the soul free, and ransom it from the hands of its *parents*, the rulers, and transform it into pure light, to bring it into the kingdom of the true father, the first father, the first everlasting mystery.

“For this cause have I said unto you aforetime, “*He who shall not leave father and mother to follow after me is not worthy of me.*” What I said then was, “Ye shall leave your parents the rulers, that ye may be all children of the first everlasting mystery.”

“And when the Saviour had said these words, Salome came forward and said: ‘How then, O Master, since the rulers are our parents, is it written in the Law of Moses, “He who shall leave his father or mother, let him die the death.” Surely the Law doth not, then, speak of the same matter?’

“And when Salome had said these words, the light-power which was in Mary Magdalene, seethed in her, and she said to the Saviour: ‘Master, bid me speak with my sister Salome, and tell her the interpretation of the word which she hath uttered.’

“It came to pass, therefore, when the Saviour had heard the words which Mary had said, that he proclaimed her blessed again and again. The Saviour answered and said unto Mary: ‘I bid thee, O Mary, utter the interpretation of the words which Salome hath spoken.’

“And when the Saviour had said these words, Mary hastened to Salome, and kissed her, saying: ‘Salome, sister, concerning the saying which thou hast uttered, to wit, that it is written in the Law of Moses, “He who shall leave his father and mother, let him die the death”; now, therefore, sister Salome, the Law hath spoken this neither concerning the soul, nor concerning the body, nor concerning the counterfeit spirit, all of which are the children of the rulers, and came forth from them, but the Law hath spoken it concerning the power which came forth from the Saviour, and which is the indweller of light in [each of] us unto this day. The Law hath further said, “Whoever shall remain without the Saviour and His mysteries which are all his parents, let him die the death, may let him be lost in utter destruction.”’”

It is to be noticed in the first place that the “Saying” we are discussing is given quite differently in the Gnostic tradition and that the objectionable word “hate” is entirely absent from it. It is further to be remembered that the *Pistis Sophia* document was *intended* originally (though it may not have been circulated) as a

## QUESTION 135.

*What justification can be given for Buddha's desertion of his wife and child, even though its object was spiritual enlightenment? Marriage confers both duties and rights: one is at liberty to sacrifice one's own rights but not one's own duties, much less the rights of others. Here, then, was Buddha at liberty to sacrifice the rights of his wife, she not consenting? Treason in the present day forbids this: why should it not in his? (1898.)*

J. C. C.—The whole question, it seems to me, is based upon the assumption that what we call our rights and our duties are the same under all circumstances.

The questioner assumes that it is the duty of a husband always to stay by the wife unless she permits him to go away. Any deviation from this rule, in the opinion of our questioner, is a neglect of duty on the part of the husband and a sacrifice of the rights of the wife which she has by virtue of marriage. Let us, however, take an illustration and see if this be so.

Suppose there lives in a country a heroic man who has a very devoted but cowardly wife. And also imagine that his beloved country and all his people are attacked by an enemy, whose creed is to rob, plunder, kill and take possession of the wives and daughters of the conquered nations. Now, the man sees that if he rush forth into the battlefield and lead the army of his country, he can save not only his own wife and children, but the whole country. But he finds that his wife is absolutely opposed to such a step on his part, she demanding that her husband should remain with her, no matter what may happen to the country, to the women and children, nay, even to herself.

Now, what a brave and patriotic man sees of danger under the circumstances described, is nothing compared with the peril and danger which the Bodhisattva sees hanging over the whole of the human race, unless it be guided in the proper direction. The "desertion" (?) of wife and family on the part of the Bodhisattva for the sake of mankind is, therefore, a thousand times more justified than the action of our heroic man, however noble that may be.

Thus if we try to understand the question of right and duty with reference to the surrounding circumstances, and the position of the person concerned, we learn that no particular course of action is

invariably a duty. And when we learn this, we no longer harbour such a thought as the injustice of the action of a Buddha. No longer do we think that Gautama was wrong in leaving his wife and child—a step which would certainly be wrong if it were taken only to avoid the burden of a married life, or from any other selfish motive. And I do not think that such a step in our own days, as in those of the Buddha, will in any way be opposed to the teachings of theosophy, which, nevertheless, will always forbid anything involving, in the slightest degree, the neglect of duty. But duty, like everything else in the manifested universe, is always relative, and never absolute.

G. R. S. M.—“And there went great multitudes with him : and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not (*μισέι*) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life [*soul rather, ψυχὴν*] also, he cannot be my disciple”—so run the 25th and 26th verses of the xivth chapter of the third synoptic Gospel. Let us take these verses of one of the basic Christian documents and the above query based on the Buddha-saga, together.

The first question that the theosophical student asks when confronted with such apparently “immoral” doctrine and practice in the case of the two greatest ethical teachers generally known to the world is: Before I break my brains or my heart over so formidable a difficulty, am I certain that the Buddha did anything of the kind or that the Christ said anything of the sort?

Personally, I have no more confidence in the presumed historical content of the Buddha-saga than I have in the so-called historical settings of the Sayings of the Christ. What Shākya Muni actually did during the years of his teaching, or what Jesus really did during the years of His ministry, has long been hidden beneath a thick veil of myth and legend, allegory, and phantasy, beautiful or grotesque, faith-compelling or unthinkable, according to the mental and emotional temperament of the reader. What Shākya Muni and Jesus of Nazareth actually were, or what they really did as living men, is unknown to all except the privileged few who can re-live those ancient times in present consciousness.

Therefore, until we are sure of the facts and the actual words, it would be imprudent to invoke the authority of these two great teachers for the puzzle which their followers have set us to solve. Our point of departure is centred in the sure ground, that whether or not Shākya Muni abandoned his wife and child, or

propagandist gospel written on the same lines as the synoptic popular compilation, but from the inner Gnostic standpoint; it was thus an *intermediate* document and not a really esoteric one. Hence the anxiety to reconcile the new doctrine with the old law. The student will also notice that the early followers of the Christ-teaching held women in the highest honour, and did not ostracise them from the hierarchy of apostleship, as did the Jews, and, subsequently, the orthodox Church.

But are we to suppose that the Christ actually spake such dark sayings to the ignorant multitude; should we not rather assume that such doctrines pertained to a more intimate circle? If we are not to reject such Sayings entirely, I think we must hold to the latter alternative. The question then arises: Are the teachings of the *Pistis Sophia*, and especially the interpretation of our Saying, the unbroken tradition of the teachings given by the Christ to his immediate circle of devoted disciples? This I do not entirely believe. The *Pistis Sophia* tradition was as far from the real spiritual teaching of the Christ as the pseudo-historical synoptic account was foreign to the real life of Jesus. Indeed it was *meant to be so*. So much only could be said. It was meant for an intermediate circle, and not for the innermost group of those striving for perfection. Its exegesis, though interesting and instructive, is, therefore, strained and hampered with the authority of texts, whereas the real doctrine is based on the authority of no spoken or written word, but on the silent Word of Truth.

The Gnostic teaching regarding this Saying thus *implies* that you must fulfil all your family duties as long as you remain in the family stage of development; and until you have fulfilled them you are not free to go on to the next stage. For the Gnostic is at pains to explain that these "parents" are our "mystical" parents and not our physical progenitors, thus plainly showing his anxiety to confirm the moral law of duty to our physical parents and all immediate family ties.

This is the general rule. The question that now arises is: Are there any exceptions to this rule? To answer simply Yes or No is fraught with equal danger. If you answer No, you strengthen the feeble morality of the "general" it is true, but at the probable sacrifice of truth; for it is *possible* that the Buddha did actually leave wife and child, and we certainly cannot suppose that so great a Master broke the moral law. It has always seemed

to me absurd to suppose that the Buddha was ignorant of his Buddhahood until the moment of his attainment of Bodhi. The legend of his life seems to me the antipodes of actuality in many respects, if we suppose that the Buddha occupied the body of Shākya Muni, from infancy onwards. If, on the contrary, the Buddha only took possession of the body at the time of enlightenment, then the question is another one, but I have never heard this suggested.

It follows then that the Buddha, who reached the highest step of perfection in the body of Shākya Muni, must have known his past and his destiny as soon as the body was old enough to bear the strain of the higher consciousness, that is, from early childhood onwards. If Shākya Muni married, his consort must have been one karmically attached to him by more than physical or psychic bonds, by nothing short of bonds of Adeptship or discipleship, and so with his son. The question then arises: Cannot a Master leave a disciple for a short space, especially when at his return he bestows the highest privileges of Illumination upon his pupils, for Yashodhara and Rahula eventually became Arhats and reached Nirvāṇa? We thus see that if we were to answer Yes to the question, Are there any exceptions to the general rule? we should be probably stating the truth, but at the expense of weakening the grasp of the "general" on the common ideal of morality, for only the very few can at present understand the possibilities of the higher stages of human evolution.

Do we, however, by this mean that there is a different moral law for the uninitiated and the initiated—a doctrine which has wrought so much havoc with the lives of certain mystic communities? By no means. Once there has been a "real marriage," neither can the husband abandon the wife, nor the wife the husband to follow the holy life the one without the other. Happy are those husbands and wives who are united not only in body, not even in body and soul, but also in spirit. And if this be so, the marriage of the Buddha must have been a "real marriage," for he *loved* Yashodhara. Is it then for us to carp and criticise and interfere between husband and wife with our paltry ideals of marriage; is it possible for us to understand the tie which bound these two great souls together?

A. A. W.—This question raises a point of duty which may perhaps be profitably discussed without entering on the further question whether (in point of fact) the Lord Buddha did anything

of the kind. *Was* it indeed the right of his wife that he should remain with her, shut up in the palace with the singing girls, for all his life, and leave the world to perish? Does the law of sacrifice really require that a man shall throw away the treasure of his own progress and that of others for his whole life because he is married? Is it indeed a sufficient reply to all summons to help the world to say, as in the Gospel, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come"?

I suppose that all will admit, that in this particular case at least, the wife was the inferior, and hence that I may widen the question out to the more general one: "What self-sacrifice does a man owe to his inferiors?" without stirring a hornets' nest about my ears. Let us see what they expect from him. To the frogs, a man's sole virtue is to keep his clumsy feet off them. Good; but if he is rushing to save another's life, you don't seriously find fault with him if he does not stop to pick one up from the road and lay it in safety before proceeding. His virtue to his dog is, I suppose, to take him out walks and throw stones for him all day long, but you would not have him spend his days thus. In that pretty allegory of Buddha giving his body to feed the starving tiger, you may admire, but you can't *approve*. What would a Master say if his best pupil should give his body—good, perhaps, for a hundred years' work—thus to feed a beast? To proceed: a father's virtue to his little child is, in the child's mind, not much more. It cannot understand anything higher than being well-fed and clothed and all day long played with; but the father must do more than that, whether the child approves or no. Next—I seem to have worked back to the hornets' nest of which I was speaking, but I *must* face it with what caution I can—as to the wife. I should not have had courage to suggest that there *are* wives whose demands upon their husband are hardly higher than the child's, if our question had not implied that Yashodhara herself was such a one; an insult to the sex I should not have perpetrated, old bachelor as I am. But for a man who thus neglects his own life to devote himself to the lower pleasures of his wife there are names provided in the English language: the learned call him "uxorious," the vulgar "henpecked"; and neither is a sign of approval or respect. It is instinctively felt that he is sacrificing the higher to the lower.

The foundations of this instinct must be looked for before Christian times. The first of these is the understanding of a fact



which modern religious society often overlooks, and which Ruskin in his *Ethics of the Dust* has put very beautifully and unanswerably—that *mere* self-sacrifice is never good; it may sometimes be a *necessary* evil, but the sacrifice of the higher for the lower is *always* a misfortune, for the world as for the individual. The second and more important is a faint recollection still surviving, of the true relation of husband and wife familiar in Buddha's days in India, but nearly destroyed in Christian society. It is a strange and sorrowful fact that a few words, surely presented by some evil spirit or spook—certainly not by the "Holy Ghost"—to St Paul, whilst writing (if he did write) to his converts at Corinth, should have had power for near 2000 years to degrade the married relation in Europe to an ideal very nearly that to which our question suggests the Buddha should have limited himself—the joint occupations of the luxurious house and the bridal chamber, and nothing more. How different would be our present English life if, for all these generations, a young couple, instead of being instructed that their duties to each other enforced only that "the husband hath not power over his body, but the wife," and so the wife with the husband, had learnt from their childhood up, to think of marriage as, beyond all question, Siddhartha and Yashodhara, and every Indian boy and girl of those far-off days were taught. There is no need to appeal to his knowledge as Buddha; merely as an Indian prince he would imbibe, almost with the "noble milk" with which he was nourished, the faith that he and his wife were to be fellow-travellers on the Upward Road, he her guide as the elder and stronger, but their mysterious link firstly and essentially the means of advance beyond what either could make alone. It has pleased Sir Edwin Arnold, for the sake of effect, to represent her as unsuspecting of her husband's intention, but this pathos is a purely Western feeling. As an Indian woman, she knew well that her husband, having obtained an heir, might leave her and pass away into the wilderness, to gain the power to show his love in something better than kisses and sweet speeches; and we *cannot* imagine the woman who was noble enough to love and to be loved by Him, refusing the permission which hundreds of her fellow country-women are brave and noble enough to give their husbands every year of this nineteenth century. Had she done so, we know He would have answered in the spirit, and most likely in the very words of the Scripture, an ancient writing in His

time, nearly 3000 years ago ; words strange to us modern English, but whose lesson will remain when England has followed Atlantis into the ocean depths, "Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but for the sake of the Self is the wife dear—for the sake of the Self is the wife dear."

## DIVISION L

### CONVERSION

#### QUESTION 156.

*In what light do Theosophists look upon "conversion" as generally understood by Christians, and what is its value in relation to treading the "Path" or becoming an Adept? (1899.)*

S. M. S.—I do not think it can be said that "conversion," as generally understood, has any value in treading the "Path," or in becoming an Adept. Those who would be likely to use the word at all would mean by it the turning either from one form of faith to another, or from a bad to a more or less changed life.

Now we are taught that before a man is fit to enter upon the "Path" he will have got rid entirely of the need of clinging to any religious *forms*. It is not that he is asked to give up anything that is a help to him, but only that a time comes when he outgrows all forms, recognising that they can no longer help him; and this because even at that stage he has realised within himself a spiritual life which overflows all boundaries of form and dogma and creed.

And yet if we look at "conversion," as it is well to do, in an altogether broader way, a truth may be found hidden in that crude and, from its association, somewhat revolting idea. Every stage of our pilgrimage is marked for each of us by an awakening, a further glimpse of the Ideal, which makes all the past appear wholly inadequate and unworthy, and which, however we may fail and falter on the way, gives us no rest till we have reached it. Then comes as it were a pause, followed by renewed struggle towards a further goal; for it is the Divine that is within us that urges us on, and "it is only for an interval that Nature can be still."

When man first realises the possibility of a higher life, a change, sometimes a very great change, comes over him. The effect is sudden and apparently without reason, but it is not really so. Man's spiritual growth is ordered and steady and gradual, and although neither he himself nor those around him may have known it, the preparation for the change has all the while been going on, the life within has all the while been growing stronger, till at last, like the conquering waves of an ever-encroaching sea, it sweeps away its barriers, and the character of the man seems almost to be transformed. In him an awakening has taken place, and never again he can be quite as he was before.

We have, thus, in every case of "conversion"—if for the moment we must use the word—these two factors, the triumph of the evolving life and the weakening of its barriers. And perhaps, in order to obtain some clear idea of what "conversion" as generally understood really means, we may say that it takes place when a man for the first time in his present life recognises the possibility of lending a hand at helping to strike away his own barriers. Hitherto the work has been done by circumstances and by the outer events of his life; now he tries to aid that work, with more or less of purpose, by his own efforts. The will and determination that he puts into those efforts will, of course, entirely depend upon the stage of development at which he has arrived; in other words they will depend upon the strength of the Ego itself. And so we may find one man at a comparatively very early stage of his development, who, under the influence of some exceedingly crude presentation of religion, with its promises of punishment and reward, may be waked up earnestly to try to conquer a particular vice of which he is the victim; and we may find another who, once he has seen the possibility of the higher life, goes towards it with definite and concentrated purpose.

The life of such a man would be marvellously changed within a short space of time, although previously he might have been going violently astray. There have been records of such changes from time to time, and the world has wondered, and later has disbelieved. People do not understand that all force is in its essence divine and, if turned in the right instead of in the wrong direction, is all-conquering and all-compelling.

All great and sudden changes in life and character may, I think, be explained in the way that I have attempted; and if we could really grasp their nature, there would be an end to that.

pharisaism which besets many of us who would fain leave such weaknesses behind.

A. A. W.—I suspect the querist really means “conversion” as generally understood by a comparatively small section—or rather number of small sections—of Protestants; which is not quite the same thing. Amongst certain sects of evangelical dissenters (within and without the Established Church) the word has obtained a technical sense, quite apart from its use as “generally understood by Christians.” Of “conversion” in this sense—the conviction that we are sinners and that for this reason God hates us and will continue to hate us to all eternity unless we believe that we are “saved” by a mysterious “atonement” of Christ, faith in which God accepts in lieu of (nay, in exclusion of) all improvement in ourselves—it seems hardly needful to say that it has no value in relation to treading the path. We may go still further, and say that of all the hindrances which avidyâ—blindness to the true Light on the Path—sets in the way upwards, this is (here and now) the most complete and fatal. If the querist will refer to any one of the various statements of the “Steps of the Path” given in our theosophical books, he will find that one of the indispensable preparations for entering the Path is named as the acquirement of what Mrs Besant calls toleration, Mr Sinnett freedom from bigotry—under whatever name, the knowledge that all religions, without exception, are the various worship of the same Higher Powers, all to be purified of the last stain of materialism by their enlightened followers, and all to be left behind as we come, by slow degrees, to the knowledge of what lies behind and above their various conceptions. And this must come before we are ready so much as to knock at the gate—the first step towards Adeptship.

But there are other and better Christians than these of whom I have spoken. To a large and increasing number the “love of Jesus” is precious as being *their* natural way upwards to this height of “toleration” to which I have referred. It is not to them merely a foundation for the self-conceit which thanks God that it is not as other men are; their “conversion” is the turning away the soul once for all from those purely selfish ideals for which they feel that “the time past” has more than “fully sufficed them.” No longer may they live for selfish pleasure (virtuous or vicious), whilst others suffer in this world; nor may they dream of eternal happiness in any succeeding one from which their fellows are for ever shut into the outer darkness. Conversion—from

## QUESTION 158.

*How long does the "blankness" last which comes over a man after he has partially succeeded in "cutting himself loose from his fast moorings in the world of sensation"? Could it by any possibility last until the end of his present earth-life? (1899.)*

S. M. S.—The answer to this question must depend upon the earnestness of each individual. If a man really has succeeded in breaking away from the life of sensation—if his centre of consciousness has really shifted from the life of the senses to a somewhat higher level—and if he be in earnest, there must gradually dawn upon him some feeling of the reality behind all the changing shows of earth. Once he has gained this, the blankness which he may still feel will never be quite of the same quality as before. Moreover, the sense of reality will continue to grow—again in proportion to his earnestness—and with it will come an ability more and more to forget himself and his own feelings, and to live increasingly in a larger life.

But if the questioner have in his mind, as the ending once and for all to blankness and dissatisfaction, a consciousness in his physical brain of higher planes than the physical, then, perhaps, one or two suggestions may prove of some slight help.

The object of our endeavour, whether we recognise it fully or not, is to break away from the life of form which is constantly changing and never permanently satisfying, and to learn to live in the life itself, which is unchanging, eternal, sure.

That is the final goal of human evolution, to which, in the far, far distance, we direct our inner gaze. But we are apt to pass quite lightly over the huge gulf which yawns between our present condition and that goal, and to imagine that, the first conflict won, all else will be comparatively smooth and easy. Such, however, is not the case, and it is well that, as far as may be, we should realise that it is not. The battles that we fight now are but the shadows of those which will meet us on higher levels, and in proportion to the number that we are able now to win will be the reserve of strength that will be ours later on.

From this it would seem that it is not well to make happiness the object of our effort, but that we should rather strive for patience and the spirit which is contented in whatever circumstances we may find ourselves. For the growth of the individual

brings either a greater and greater power of grasping and holding for itself, or a greater and greater power of letting go. The one is a force working against the Law, and must mean failure in the end : the other will at last lead us out of the worlds of form and change and sorrow into the world where life is felt as one.

Thus, at every stage comes the demand, "Give up thy life if thou wouldst live," and wise are we if we listen and obey; for there is nothing in the three worlds which can give us perfect joy, and there is that within us which finally will be content with nothing less. And although in the midst of the dust and whirl of the struggle we shall not be able to realise it, yet when it is over we shall know with blessed certainty that "he that loseth his life for My sake *shall* find it unto life eternal."

#### QUESTION 159.

*The "physical plane" being, in my mind, associated with the "waking state," the "astral plane" with the "dreaming state," and so forth, it seems to me natural to say that, whilst awake. I am thinking on the physical plane. If this be incorrect, as I am assured, I should like to have some explanation, in order to clear up in my mind the relations of the states of waking, dream and deep sleep with the Seven Principles and the physical, astral and other "planes." (1900.)*

A. A. W.—The materials for a complete answer to this question will be found in Manual No. VII., *Man and His Bodies*, especially in the last chapter, "The Man." Mr Leadbeater's little work on *Dreams* also contains much which should help to clear up the querist's difficulty. I fancy that the puzzle mainly arises from a misconception, not infrequent, of the nature of the various "planes," so often spoken of in theosophical works. These are not to be thought of as so many separate countries or worlds, out of one of which we travel to another. Just as our own physical, astral, and mental bodies interpenetrate one another and are co-existent, save as the finer may be somewhat larger than the coarser, so the physical, astral, and mental "planes" co-exist; and the passing from one to another simply means that the Ego becomes conscious of a new set of vibrations. An analogy from the senses may, perhaps, help us. A man who had only the one sense of *hearing* would only be conscious of the limited gamut of vibrations which

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S. M. S.—The answer to this question must depend upon the earnestness of each individual. If a man really has succeeded in breaking away from the life of sensation—if his centre of consciousness has really shifted from the life of the senses to a somewhat higher level—and if he be in earnest, there must gradually dawn upon him some feeling of the reality behind all the changing shows of earth. Once he has gained this, the blankness which he may still feel will never be quite of the same quality as before. Moreover, the sense of reality will continue to grow—again in proportion to his earnestness—and with it will come an ability more and more to forget himself and his own feelings, and to live increasingly in a larger life.

But if the questioner have in his mind, as the ending once and for all to blankness and dissatisfaction, a consciousness in his physical brain of higher planes than the physical, then, perhaps, one or two suggestions may prove of some slight help.

The object of our endeavour, whether we recognise it fully or not, is to break away from the life of form which is constantly changing and never permanently satisfying, and to learn to live in the life itself, which is unchanging, eternal, sure.

That is the final goal of human evolution, to which, in the far, far distance, we direct our inner gaze. But we are apt to pass quite lightly over the huge gulf which yawns between our present condition and that goal, and to imagine that, the first conflict won, all else will be comparatively smooth and easy. Such, however, is not the case, and it is well that, as far as may be, we should realise that it is not. The battles that we fight now are but the shadows of those which will meet us on higher levels, and in proportion to the number that we are able now to win will be the reserve of strength that will be ours later on.

From this it would seem that it is not well to make happiness the object of our effort, but that we should rather strive for patience and the spirit which is contented in whatever circumstances we may find ourselves. For the growth of the individual



brings either a greater and greater power of grasping and holding for itself, or a greater and greater power of letting go. The one is a force working against the Law, and must mean failure in the end : the other will at last lead us out of the worlds of form and change and sorrow into the world where life is felt as one.

Thus, at every stage comes the demand, "Give up thy life if thou wouldst live," and wise are we if we listen and obey; for there is nothing in the three worlds which can give us perfect joy, and there is that within us which finally will be content with nothing less. And although in the midst of the dust and whirl of the struggle we shall not be able to realise it, yet when it is over we shall know with blessed certainty that "he that loseth his life for My sake *shall* find it unto life eternal."

#### QUESTION 159.

*The "physical plane" being, in my mind, associated with the "waking state," the "astral plane" with the "dreaming state," and so forth, it seems to me natural to say that, whilst awake. I am thinking on the physical plane. If this be incorrect, as I am assured, I should like to have some explanation, in order to clear up in my mind the relations of the states of waking, dream and deep sleep with the Seven Principles and the physical, astral and other "planes." (1900.)*

A. A. W.—The materials for a complete answer to this question will be found in Manual No. vii., *Man and His Bodies*, especially in the last chapter, "The Man." Mr Leadbeater's little work on *Dreams* also contains much which should help to clear up the querist's difficulty. I fancy that the puzzle mainly arises from a misconception, not infrequent, of the nature of the various "planes," so often spoken of in theosophical works. These are not to be thought of as so many separate countries or worlds, out of one of which we travel to another. Just as our own physical, astral, and mental bodies interpenetrate one another and are co-existent, save as the finer may be somewhat larger than the coarser, so the physical, astral, and mental "planes" co-exist; and the passing from one to another simply means that the Ego becomes conscious of a new set of vibrations. An analogy from the senses may, perhaps, help us. A man who had only the one sense of *hearing* would only be conscious of the limited gamut of vibrations which

cause the impression of sound. Sound would be to him his world, or plane. Now close his *ears* and open his *eyes*; what happens? He will cease to sense the sound-vibrations; his world will, as it were, vanish from him, and in its place a new world, that of light-vibrations, will open upon him. This change he would naturally express as passing from the sound-plane to the light-plane. But if you allow him *both* to see and hear, he will not think of saying that he sees upon the sound-plane.

The passage from the physical to the astral and from that to the mental is similar to this. In our ordinary waking condition the physical world outside us makes impressions on our physical organs which are passed on to the brain; it is the *astral* body which *feels* them—on its own plane; and the lower *mental*, which *reasons* upon them. But it is always the Ego above all these, who thinks and understands; and passes down his orders to the physical brain, which is his sole means of action (often a very imperfect one) on the physical world, remaining himself on his own mental plane always. When we speak, as we often do, of our consciousness being on the physical plane, it would be more correct to say that in the waking state it *reaches down* to the physical plane; whilst in sleep we are no longer conscious of the physical, because the astral has temporarily left his grosser companion and does not transmit impressions made upon it to the Ego. At the present state of development of the ordinary man this makes a complete wall between the two states, and we speak of passing from one to the other; hereafter we shall come to carry our consciousness freely between the two, as the ordinary man can see and hear both together. But we must keep in mind that even now the Ego is fully conscious in sleep of the impressions *directly* made upon his astral body, so far as that is capable of receiving such.

The distinction between the Dreaming State and that of Deep Sleep or Trance is, that in the first the Higher Ego is not far away from the sleeping body—as it is described to us, “hovering over it,” and recalled to it by the most trifling disturbance; whilst in the second the better-developed Ego is able to function consciously and freely in the astral or even higher bodies, and may leave the physical body far away and for a long time.

I hope this brief explanation may help to make it clear to the querist why we object to the statement that we think upon the physical plane; whilst by no means condemning his association of the waking state with that plane. It is simply that the Thinker is

*never* on the physical plane at all ; but at the times we call waking he is able to put down a sort of tentacle or "feeler" into it, in order to gain information of what is going on there and to take his share of action upon it.

## QUESTION 160.

*Are "will" and "desire" synonymous terms, indicating the action of the fourth principle (Kama), or are they separate principles? (1897.)*

A. B.—The terms are used loosely, and in different senses by different writers, so that it is necessary to find out the definition used by the writer before we can follow his statements without confusion. In any case will and desire are not synonymous, though a common element is present in each. Perhaps the case may be looked at in this way ; the true Man, the human Monad, considered as a unit, is the source of all human activities ; his is the forthstreaming life that expresses itself as the energies working on different planes. This life appears to be different because of the different forms of matter in which it works, as the light from the one sun appears to be of different colours as it shines through red, or green, or yellow, or blue glass. From the Inner Man, then, pours forth this outgoing energy, and brings about the actions on the mental, astral and physical planes, directed to the attainment of certain objects. Now this energy may be directed either by an outward or by an inward impulse. Sometimes it is set in motion by an object attractive to the desire-nature, Kâma, acting as a magnet on iron ; the conduct is determined by the environment, which presents various objects that appeal to the passions and stir the man to activity in order that he may become their possessor. When his energy is thus put forth, determined in its direction by the appeal of the external object to his kâmic nature, we call it desire. Sometimes, however, the man, guided by the memory of past experiences, using reason to enlighten his judgment, sends forth his energy, determining its direction from within. He may act in opposition to the attractions presented by his environment to his lower nature, and bring his conduct into accord with his best judgment. Energy put forth to reach this result is will, and its mark is that it is determined from within, and has its direction imposed upon it through the mental nature, instead of through the

desire-nature. These definitions seem to meet all ordinary cases. The word desire has, however, been used to express the wish for manifested existence, the fundamental "will to live" in conditioned being. This high and unusual sense of the word must not be confused with its ordinary signification: in that lofty region desire and will would be one, and would express simply the self-originated choice to manifest.

#### QUESTION 161.

*In Thought Power, its Control and Culture, Mrs Besant gives the three aspects of the Self as "Knowing, Willing and Energising."*

*How does Willing differ from Energising?*

*Why is Desire included in Will? Are they not essentially different?*

*Is not the ordinary classification of consciousness—Knowing, Feeling and Willing—more adequate? (1903.)*

S. C.—There is no reason why the student should not adopt, for purposes of his own study, the threefold classification which happens to appeal to him as most adequate and most helpful. The theories put forward in theosophic books are not meant to be obstacles but ladders. None of the threefold classifications which are in use contain the whole truth on the subject. They are only temporary modes of thought, useful in pursuing different lines of study. In the same way, we sometimes classify the objects around us into solids, liquids and gases; sometimes into animals, vegetables, and minerals; but no one thinks of asking, "Why do you take the latter classification? Is not the former more helpful?"

If the student will refer to Mrs Besant's article on "The Evolution of Consciousness," in *The Theosophical Review* for August, 1902, p. 537, he will find that she herself does not by any means adhere to one method of describing the threefold division of consciousness, but uses a different method of description according to the matter in hand. The threefold division is there given as Will, Wisdom, Activity, while in *The Evolution of Life and Form*, it is stated as Existence, Intelligence, Bliss; and in *The Three Paths* as Devotion, Wisdom, Action. The student will, of course, have discovered that these different descriptions are

not contradictory, but belong to different stages of evolution and different sets of planes of consciousness.

The questioner would, perhaps, find the division given by Bhagavân Dâs more to his mind. This writer in *The Science of the Emotions* states the three aspects as Cognition, Emotion, and Will, where action is included in Will, and he remarks that the distinction between Volition and Action is not made in the East as it is in the West. Bhagavân Dâs evidently considers that willing does not differ from energising, and he also treats desire and will as belonging to different aspects. Comparing his division with that given by Mrs Besant in *Thought Power*, we find that they both state the three divisions as Cognition, Desire, and Action, but Mrs Besant places Will as the root of Desire, while Bhagavân Dâs places it as the root of Action. I would suggest that these interpretations are both true, and not only so, but that Will lies at the root of all three aspects, and is the basis alike of Cognition, Desire, and Action.

I take it the division given by Mrs Besant in *Thought Power* is meant chiefly for practical purposes, and in relation to the three lowest planes of nature, the mental, the astral, and the physical. In relation to higher planes, it would be necessary to state the matter somewhat differently. The activities carried on on the three lower planes respectively, are Thought, Desire, and Action. If the questioner does not agree with the statement that will is at the root of desire (there is no suggestion that will is the same as desire), let him leave out this point, as it does not affect the main argument. He may also, like Bhagavân Dâs, consider willing and energising to be the same thing. The purpose of *Thought Power* is practical. How are we to rule Thought, Desire, and Action in ourselves by means of the Will? Any mould of thought which furthers this object is useful.

#### QUESTION 162.

*Mrs Besant in Dharma, p. 31, says: "True, the hunger is in the inner body, but that is outside the centre of consciousness."*

- (1) *Does the inner body here mean the "physical" body—the using up of the tissues of which causes the feeling of hunger; or the "astral" body, the seat of the sensation of hunger?*
- (2) *Can we speak of an animal having "a centre of conscious-*

ness," and where is it? Is the "centre of consciousness" here an astral centre? Is a "centre of consciousness" formed by receiving and responding to stimuli? Would not such stimuli always originate in the Not-Self, i.e., outside the (present) "centre of consciousness"? (1902.)

B. K.—As far as I can see the answers to these points are as follows:—

(1) The "inner body" referred to in the passage quoted from Mrs Besant's *Dharma* is the astral body, not the physical. For all sensation, all feeling, belong to the astral body, primarily; but the vibrations of the astral body which constitute the "feeling" of hunger are set up by the reaction on the astral of the physical body, the exhaustion and destruction of the tissues of which, though they do not in themselves form any feeling or sensation—which would be wholly absent if the astral body were for the time separated from the physical—yet indirectly by the condition which they induce in the astral body do give rise to the sensation in question.

(2) Yes: an animal has a "centre of consciousness," for it is connected with a specific monad by the chain of "permanent atoms," for details as to which I must refer the questioner to Mrs Besant's papers now being published in the *Theosophical Review*.

(3) Essentially the "centre of consciousness" is the Monad, for thence proceeds the Life, one aspect of which is consciousness. But this Monad having "retired into silence and darkness," is in evolution represented by the three permanent atoms which form the Higher Triad—Âtmâ-Buddhi-Manas. But in the animal stage this triad even is practically unconscious, and the effective, the working active centre in that stage is the permanent astral atom.

In Mrs Besant's papers already mentioned will be found the answer in detail to the remainder of this question, which is too long and elaborate for treatment here.

#### QUESTION 163.

*What is meant by "sinking into unconsciousness," when the man's consciousness is passing inwards from one sheath to another; either when leaving the physical body, or when passing from the astral world into the devachanic? The Ego must ever be conscious on some plane or other, must it not? (1902.)*

B. K.—This question raises several points of considerable importance about which our knowledge is far from being either as accurate or as detailed as could be wished. Moreover, it must be borne in mind throughout the whole of what follows, that *all* our information is and must be conveyed in terms of the consciousness as functioning through the physical brain in waking experience, and not only must it be conveyed to us in such terms by those who can observe and investigate the facts upon other planes of being, but these observers themselves must in each case “translate” or “bring through” into *their own* waking consciousness in the brain the results of their observations and investigations upon other planes, and thus obviously import into them whatever limitations they themselves may be subject to when functioning in the physical body, in addition to the difficulties inherent in language itself when used to convey such results to other brains not acquainted at first hand with the experiences attempted to be described.

Having thus set forth a most necessary caution, and one the more needed as we are about to engage in the rather hazardous task of drawing inferences and reasoning from the statements made by such observers, let us try and summarise the information at our disposal.

First, then, what have we been told about the consciousness of the Ego itself *on its own plane*?

As it has been described to us, it is abundantly clear that the Ego, not merely at the outset of its evolution in the human kingdom, but throughout a very large part indeed of that evolution, cannot be regarded as “self-conscious” on its own plane, and still less as having any consciousness of the arūpa thought world as an *objective* world. From what has been said it would seem that the Ego, throughout this long stage, is rather a *source of consciousness*, a centre containing all consciousness *potentially*, but actually responding only to a very limited range of vibrations indeed, and quite without anything like self-consciousness or even consciousness at all *on its own plane*, excepting when the “flash” of consciousness occurs in it, at the termination of the devachanic period following each earth life, when, for a moment, it has been stated, the Ego is *conscious as itself and on its own plane*.

Hence it seems to follow that throughout the whole of this segment of its evolution, the Ego cannot be considered as “self-

conscious," nor even as "conscious" (on its own plane) in any intelligible sense.

Next, still confining our consideration to the Ego in this same period of its evolution, let us consider the problem of its consciousness in the mind body, the vehicle of the Ego on the rûpa mental plane.

The variety of stages needing to be distinguished is here greater, and for the sake of brevity we may deal in detail only with the ordinary average type of person—an intelligent specimen of the "man in the street," in whom there is little activity of "abstract thinking" properly so called, but considerable activity, though not much spontaneity, of concrete thought.

From what has been said of this type, it is obvious that on the lower mental plane—apart from the physical body during life—the Ego is *not* "self-conscious," and it may be questioned indeed whether the Ego would be able to hold the self-consciousness which it has undoubtedly acquired in the physical body, when apart from the latter even in the astral world and still less, of course, in the mental. For it has been stated that even a fairly advanced pupil in occultism requires to be taught by his Master to form the "mâyâvi-rûpa" or functional body of the lower mental world, and to retain his clear self-consciousness when centred in it. And though from what has been written about the consciousness of an ordinary intelligent man on the astral plane, when out of the physical body during sleep, it would appear that he then possesses a certain degree or kind of self-consciousness, not unlike that of one immersed in a brown study or day dream, yet he has little or no consciousness of the objective astral world around him, and indeed seems not to be "awake" to its phenomena. And this certainly seems to imply that even on the astral plane (during physical life) his self-consciousness must be very dim and certainly different in many respects from the clear, active, definite self-consciousness which he enjoys when awake and functioning normally in the physical body.

But the conclusions to which the foregoing would seem to point must, perhaps, to some extent be modified in the light of what has been said regarding the *post-mortem* consciousness of such a man as we are considering. From the descriptions given, it appears that when once he "wakes up" in the astral world after death, he is fully and vividly self-conscious and also aware of his objective surroundings, though his actual objective world is limited



to the particular sub-plane of the astral upon which his consciousness is focussed for the time being by the condition of the various layers into which the matter of his astral body has then become stratified. This state of things continues till the Ego sheathed in the mind body separates itself from the astral body, and then, after an interval of oblivion analogous to that following upon the death of the physical body, his consciousness again becomes active in the devachanic condition.

In Devachan, the consciousness clearly has present to it an "objective world," although it is a world of its own creation, since the "forms," "scenery," etc., which the consciousness perceives in that condition are the creations of its own mental energies and activities, and not the actual objectivity of the mental plane as distinct from the action of the individual's own mind upon it. But how about self-consciousness in this condition? On this point I do not recall any specific information, nor do any of the descriptions which have been given, nor the instances observed, throw clear light upon the question. Personally, I incline to think that self-consciousness—at any rate so far as deliberate self-introspection and conscious thought about oneself are concerned—is in abeyance during the devachanic state in the vast majority of cases, the consciousness being wholly absorbed in the direct contemplation and blissful experience of the self-created objectivity with which the man's mind surrounds him. But I am by no means sure that this is the case. In any case, however, the decision on this point does not seem to me of vital significance in relation to the general conclusions to which the foregoing summary appears to point. These would seem to be as follows:—

1. The Ego during incarnation is, at the outset of its evolution, only self-conscious in and through the physical body, and it retains this self-consciousness after death only through its astral existence—since in the early stages of human progress the Ego enjoys no Devachan at all (*cp.* C. W. L.'s *Devachanic Plane*).

2. When the evolving Ego has attained the level of the intelligent ordinary man, it is still only fully self-conscious in and through the physical body during life, but it has developed a dim and modified self-consciousness in the astral body during sleep. After death it is fully self-conscious during the astral life and (perhaps) dimly so during its period of *rūpa* Devachan.

3. In neither case, however, is the Ego self-conscious upon, or

even aware of, the objectivity of its own plane—the arūpa mental—except during the momentary “flash” already spoken of.

Passing on now to consider the Ego in a still more advanced stage, say in one who has entered upon the Path, we are told that such a man first becomes fully self-conscious and awake upon the astral plane during the sleep of the physical body; then learns to form the mind body into the māvāvi rūpa, and to function self-consciously and fully awake to his objective surroundings on the lower mental plane, and, finally, to function in full self-consciousness in the causal body, having united the personality to the individuality, and thus aroused full and complete self-consciousness in the Ego itself.

But before this last stage is reached, we are told that the “flash” of self-consciousness in the Ego, which occurs at the close of each devachanic period, has become prolonged, or drawn out progressively into an increasing span of clear self-conscious activity in the Ego, which is spoken of as its “arūpa” Devachan. It seems, however, to be implied that this extension in time of the “flash” is not permanent, but sooner or later fades out and the Ego sinks back into oblivious unconsciousness before, reversing their polarity, its energies are again poured forth into the denser planes on the way to re-birth. But it seems implied that where once the personality has been merged in the individuality, and the waking self-consciousness of the living man (whether or no any memory thereof is impressed on the physical plane) has been united with and established in the causal body, the Ego has then at last attained to permanent, unlapsing, indestructible self-consciousness on its own plane and in relation to the objectivity of its own world—the arūpa levels of the mental plane.

Taking now what has been said in connection with the general teaching regarding the Ego’s evolution and its relation to the various sheaths or vehicles, we may, perhaps, summarise its bearing as follows:—

1. The development of self-consciousness in the Ego is *gradual*.
2. It begins in connection with the physical body, and is at first only maintained so long as that physical body is actively awake.
3. It is gradually established also in the astral body, when separated from the physical; and similarly in relation to the mind body and the causal body.

4. Self-consciousness seems to demand a "lens," a something which shall concentrate and focus (as it were) the potential rays of consciousness into a centre in which the Ego can become aware of itself.

5. This "focus" can exist—at any rate until the Ego becomes fully self-conscious on its own plane—only in one vehicle or body at a time, however rapidly, in the developed man, the focus may change from one body to another.

6. In the absence of such a "focus"—as appears in the case of an undeveloped and ill-organised vehicle—self-consciousness lapses, either entirely or partially.

7. In the case of the Ego which has attained full self-consciousness on its own plane, we have not as yet any definite information regarding its condition *quâ* self-consciousness while it is actively functioning through the waking physical body. It seems, however, probable that as the "focus" of its attention and activity is then centred in the physical body, it is comparatively inattentive to, and therefore unaware of, the objectivity of its own, or intermediate planes, except in so far as these can be reflected into the physical brain.

And now, after these lengthy preliminary considerations, we may turn to the questions propounded.

The passing of consciousness inwards from one sheath to another (taking the case of the developed man "on the path," as the most illustrative), implies the shifting of the focus of self-consciousness from one body to another. Now, if the connecting links of etheric matter between, say, the dense physical and the astral bodies are well developed and functional, this passage will take place not only *gradually*, but the *focus itself* will be maintained clear and well-defined at each step or stage of the process, and hence there will be no "blank," no "sinking into unconsciousness" as the focus passes from one body to the other either way. The whole process will be continuous and unbroken by any sudden jumps or leaps across imperfect or missing rungs in the ladder of ascent, but if these etheric links are imperfect, impermeable, or functioning badly, such leaps or jumps will certainly occur, and at each the "focus" of self-consciousness will be disturbed, or it may be lost altogether, and a momentary lapse of self-consciousness, either wholly or partially, will result, and further from the standpoint of the backward-looking memory there will be a blank, there will be nothing remembered to give a

content to such moments when the focus leaps across a gap, or is disturbed in passing through an imperfect link.

So much for the living man who has reached the stage of functioning self-consciously and awake on planes higher than the physical.

And the same explanation will obviously apply even more forcibly to the *post-mortem* passage of the focus of self-consciousness from the physical to the astral, and from the astral to the devachanic.

As regards the last part of the question, the answer to it is contained in what has already been said. The Ego is certainly *not self-conscious* always "on some plane or other," as we have seen. On the contrary, it is only at a comparatively advanced stage of evolution that the Ego becomes permanently "self-conscious" on its own plane; while, as we have seen, according to its stage of growth, the Ego may be self-conscious *only* on the physical plane during life and on the astral after death, or its self-consciousness may extend to the devachanic later on, and gradually expand from a momentary "flash" to a more or less prolonged period of self-consciousness of the Ego itself after the *rûpa Devachan* is over.

E. S. G.—I hope that B. K. will not think me presumptuous if I venture to say that his reply, valuable as it is, seems to me to lack full point through an apparent confusion of consciousness with self-consciousness. The question is put in terms of consciousness; B. K. replies in terms chiefly of self-consciousness. Surely they are two distinct phases of evolution, consciousness belonging to the plane of sensation, self-consciousness to the stage of understanding; self-consciousness would include consciousness, but sensation does not necessarily include understanding of the sensations. Were the waking from ordinary sleep a more gradual process, the difference between consciousness and self-consciousness would be more impressed upon our minds, as it seems to be when one is recovering from the influence of an anæsthetic. At such a time there comes a strange, slow awakening of sensation, which in a small way seems to be very typical of life experience. There is a slow awakening of consciousness to sensations of light and darkness, warmth or cold, pain or ease, movement or cramp, with frequent re-loss of that consciousness; and this seems to go on for some time without there being any idea of connection with a self. Then as consciousness becomes

stronger it begins to take in the fact of the presence of people, and, becoming conscious of other selves, immediately begins to become conscious of self. In like manner, when sinking into unconsciousness, one loses first what is gained last, *i.e.*, self-consciousness.

If, as it would appear, consciousness is the result of the pouring out of the life-essence, or activity of the Ego, into its various bodies, until each in turn becomes the first conscious, then self-conscious; "sinking into unconsciousness" would be the withdrawal of that activity from the outermost body, when that body would lose first self-consciousness, then consciousness; and it is perfectly clear that that body, living only by virtue of its cell-life, could not possibly know if its Ego were conscious on any other plane. It seems equally clear that the Ego while it lives as an Ego must be conscious on some plane—but whether it is self-conscious is quite another matter, depending entirely upon its stage of evolution.

If this definition is correct—and I submit it with all deference to higher knowledge—then it seems to open the way to the understanding of many things; for consciousness grows as the body grows—unconsciously, a natural unfolding of the powers of the senses; but self-consciousness is of the head, and so can be aided or retarded by our own efforts. Consciousness does not surely function through the physical brain, but through the senses, and it grows by exercise of natural functions; self-consciousness functions through the brain, it grows by contact with other selves—and herein lies a grand idea. Consciousness is of the general life-sensations shared by all, the touch of nature that makes all akin. Self-consciousness is separation in the way of individualisation of powers and activities; it is a matter of knowledge, and knowledge can be cultivated and its results used. Now it is clear that if consciousness is general likeness, self-consciousness must be differentiation, and there is no possibility of knowledge of differentiation except by seeing other differentiations, or selves; so that by comparison we may become self-conscious, that is, knowing and understanding every part of our own individual composition. To this end it must be necessary that we should be in constant near contact with other selves more evolved, equally and less evolved; and equally necessary that we should keep all natural sense-powers active; else we should not be able to advance in our perception of other selves,

and consequently be unable to attain to self-consciousness in all our bodies; because if we cannot perceive the various bodies and their various functions in other selves, we have no means of gaining knowledge or understanding of our own selves, such understanding being gained only by comparison.

Seeing others makes us conscious of self, of the wealth or poverty of our own powers, and sets us actively seeking to gain the like wealth of power seen in another. Self-consciousness, then, is knowledge, or realisation, of one's own self, its complexities, limitations, powers and needs; consciousness may be gained a very long time before self-consciousness comes. Who among us can declare that we are really self-conscious in our physical body which we can see, and to a certain extent examine for ourselves; that we thoroughly understand its functions and means of sustenance and recreation? There is scarcely one to be found capable of assuming full responsibility and care of the physical body. And if we are not yet fully self-conscious in the physical, what can we expect of the possibility of consciousness even in our other bodies of which the many have not even heard! It seems clear that, to most Egos, life other than physical can be very little more than general consciousness, of which no memory could remain but a sense of well, or ill, being.

B. K. writes of "blanks" or "broken links" of consciousness. May not these be brought about by failure, through ignorance or wilfulness, in observing the sequential law of cultivation, distribution, assimilation and dispersion? If we fail to cultivate our natural senses we do not gain power of perception, and consequently fail to see the higher beauties which we can cultivate in ourselves; and fail also to hear the less evolved needs crying for our assistance. If, seeing, we enjoy the higher and refrain from sharing with those around, or refuse to give the light of our experience to those below, we cut ourselves off from the full flow of the consciousness universal. If this can apply to a physical finger cut off by a ligature from the circulating life-blood it must apply still more forcibly to every part of every body of each self. To be perfectly self-conscious with no broken links it would seem as if each Ego must know every function, power, and need of every one of its own bodies, and as that knowledge can be realised only by comparison, each Ego must become keenly perceptive of, and responsive to, the functions, powers, and needs of all other selves. No body can live without its special

sustenance. Before we can know what food we want we must see the effect of that food upon another. If we would have our own special need supplied, we must first see and help to supply the special need of those near and less evolved—thereby we make complete our chain of consciousness. But to be really self conscious, the chain must be complete in each separate body and self by contact through consciousness with every other self. It is a grand possibility to strive for.

## DIVISION LII

### EXTINCTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

#### QUESTION 164.

*What is implied by the term "conditionally immortal"? Is that which is capable of losing immortal consciousness the personality which has failed to supply the Thinker with any useful material? The mere blotting out of a useless memory does not appear to me to be a very dreadful thing. (1902.)*

G. R. S. M.—“Conditional immortality” is a theological term generally employed in connection with the dogma of “soul saving.” The idea is that you have a soul to save; it is not *naturally* immortal, you have to win immortality for it; if you fail, it, and with it you, “perish everlastingly.” This involves us in somewhat of a dilemma, for if we “perish everlastingly,” even so the soul is *naturally* immortal, at any rate in the sense of everlasting. But if “immortal” means not subject to death, as it should mean, then “conditional immortality” would mean that we have to free ourselves from the necessity of “death,” that is, from the necessity of embodiment, for it is only the body or form that perishes, and not the Self. Now bodies are of many grades; we may free ourselves from the necessity of re-birth in a physical body, but there are bodies psychic and celestial and supercelestial as well. Hence it is that there is progress in immortality; that is to say, absolute immortality pertains to the Self alone, all other forms of immortality are relative, or conditional.

S. C.—It is evident that no part of the nature of man can be immortal except that which identifies itself with the One Life. Probably when H. P. B. spoke in the *Key to Theosophy* of the personality being conditionally immortal, she referred to a very advanced stage of spiritual development, when it has identified



itself completely with the individuality, and through that with the One Life, so that it becomes a mode of expression for the Divine Energy, and has no separate purpose of its own. The Ego makes a series of experiments in this direction, and one—the last—is attended with success, so that no further experiment is needed.

## QUESTION 165.

*From my reading I had obtained the idea that Theosophy taught that every Ego was striving for the final extinction of its own self-consciousness ; but an expression I have lately read that "the Logos gathers up the experiences of all the Egos into His consciousness" conveys to my mind a very different idea. Which is the correct one ? (1900.)*

A. P. S.—Nothing could be more remote from true theosophical teaching than that which the questioner describes as the first he obtained. The final extinction of self-consciousness is, I believe, an illusory purpose entertained by some Eastern ascetics who misunderstand spiritual science altogether, and probably their misconceptions spring from a too literal acceptance of some phrases used in Buddhist scripture. It is only by degrees that theosophical students have realised that the Eastern idea of "Moksha" represents this perverted aspiration. We understand indeed that a terribly protracted, though not final, extinction of consciousness is a deplorable result to be actually achieved by certain protracted misdirections of energy, and the subject is not without interest ; but firstly, be it clearly understood that the true purpose of human evolution is to maintain, strengthen, and exalt self-consciousness till it expands to something like God-like heights ; never to repress or extinguish it for one instant. The sublimity of the later stages of this process does indeed render some forms of human speech embarrassing when we attempt to forecast the ascent of self-consciousness to higher levels of being. Anyone who realises the A B C of theosophical teaching will see, to begin with, that our early personalities are not much worth remembering. The current one always seems very important, but later on it fades into insignificance as the individuality, the true spiritual Ego, grows in dignity. Now as long as a human being is merely human—and his humanity extends up into very high levels indeed, including that on which the Masters of Wisdom are

standing—the individuality undoubtedly persists. But our “mind’s eye” is an instrument of very long range, and since we venture to speculate sometimes about the ultimate mergence of the human individuality in the Logos, we are *then* dealing with conditions in which the individuality itself is transcended. There is not much profit in speculation that endeavours to reach so far, but it may save people who will concern themselves with problems of eternity and infinitude from some false conceptions, if it be borne in mind that when occult writers talk of “Man” as ultimately attaining God-like levels, the meaning of the phrase is *not* that each individual man becomes an individual God. The truer idea may be gathered from reflecting on the obvious meaning of the term sometimes employed in reference to stupendous beings approximating to the condition of the Logos. Each is sometimes said to be not one, but “a host,” and it will be a host of human individualities by the confluence or mergence of which the newly-developed Logoi to emerge from the activities of our system as a whole will be engendered. But all attempts to put such thought into explicit language must necessarily be unsatisfactory.

As for the Eastern idea of Moksha, it will now be more clearly seen where the error comes in. The man who succeeds by unnaturally dissociating himself from all the attractions of life, in quenching the force that should bring him back into incarnation, simply paralyses his own spiritual growth. As far as one can make out, he may possibly paralyse it for a whole world period, perhaps for a manvantara, and the result will be that he will have to accomplish his neglected progress in presence of those who were once his contemporaries, but who will then have enormously outstripped him in the race.

## DIVISION LIII

### INSANITY

#### QUESTION 166.

*What kind of evil doing in past lives is the karmic cause of insanity? (1897.)*

A. B.—Insanity appears to be the karmic result of grave crimes committed against knowledge and bringing serious ills to others. That which may be termed ordinary wrong-doing, committed from ignorance, heedlessness, or under the blind impulses of passion, works itself out in the ordinary sufferings of life, and by these the Ego learns the existence of law and the folly of setting himself against the evolutionary process. But there are crimes committed against light and against knowledge, especially those which drag back a soul progressing in the higher life, and these may bring about insanity as a karmic consequence. Let us suppose that an Ego has definitely entered on the pathway which leads to discipleship, and is within measurable distance of that condition; another Ego—prompted by envy, by lust, or by any other evil feeling, or by some deeper motive into which the mental element largely enters — allures or tempts the rapidly advancing soul, shakes it from its balance, and thus causes it to fall from the point it had attained, and perchance entails on it many a weary incarnation ere the lost ground is recovered; such a criminal reaps as harvest the appropriate fruit of insanity, during which his own Ego, tethered to a body physically incapable of serving it as its vehicle or expression, suffers on the astral plane all the tortures of impotent longing to progress, a sentence, as it were, of penal servitude, cut off from human association and from the joy of activity. Thus fettered, the Ego learns that it is an evil thing and bitter to hinder the growth of another soul, and experiences

in his own person the delay he has induced for another. It seems not unlikely that Jesus had this penalty in mind in his impressive warning to any who should cause to offend "one of these little ones," whose "angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Quoth the Teacher: "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (See *Matt.* xviii. 6, 10.) The loss of a physical body is a light thing compared to the being bound to a physical body which is dead to every higher impulse.

#### QUESTION 167.

*Are those who die as lunatics still insane upon the astral plane after death, and if so, at what stage do they recover? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—That would depend upon the type of their lunacy, and the depth to which it extended. Insanity is a deeply interesting subject, of which as yet we know but very little. Still, even the most superficial observation shows us that there are several different kinds of lunatics, and that the condition which we call madness down here may be brought about in various ways.

I think we may assume that it is always a karmic penalty, and one of the very heaviest that a soul can have to pay, since it means the possession of an unworkable instrument, and consequently either the partial or total loss of an incarnation. But as to the particular sins which are most likely to bring about so terrible a result, we have little knowledge, except that we have been given to understand that cruelty is one of the chief among them.

But putting aside the karma which may be described as its remote cause, let us see what is usually the immediate cause of lunacy. We find that from the occult standpoint we may group the insane into four great classes, each, of course, having many subdivisions with which we have neither the time nor the knowledge to deal now.

1. Those who are insane merely from a defect of the dense physical brain—say from its insufficient size, or from some accident like a heavy blow, or some growth which causes pressure upon it. These are cases which may often be cured by purely physical operation, showing that nothing was wrong with any of the higher prin-

ciples, but only with the physical vehicle, so that when that is put in order, all once more goes well.

2. Those who have something wrong with the etheric part of the brain, so that its particles no longer correspond perfectly with the denser physical particles, and so cannot properly bring through the vibrations from the higher vehicles.

3. Those in whom the astral body is in fault instead of the etheric—in whom there is a want of accurate adjustment between its particles and those of the vehicles either above or below it.

4. Those in whom the mind-body itself is in some way out of order, and consequently unable to bring through the instructions or wishes of the Ego.

Now it is obvious that the *post-mortem* conditions of these broad classes cannot but vary considerably. Those belonging to the first and second types would be quite sensible when out of the body in sleep, and, of course, they would also be all right as soon as they were dead; and fortunately these are much the commonest kinds of insanity. But the third type would not recover perfectly until they reached devachanic levels, and the fourth type not until they returned into the causal body; so that in both these cases the men would still be lunatics, even on the astral plane.

This is, of course, a mere rough sketch of the outline of a very large subject; but it may serve as a superficial answer to the question.

#### QUESTION 168.

*What is the theosophical theory respecting insanity? (1903.)*

G. R. S. M.—So far no competent student of alienation or professor of mental pathology, who has also some first-hand knowledge of the inner constitution of man, has taken up his pen to explain insanity either in THE VĀHAN or any other theosophical publication, or for a matter of that in any publication whatever, even those specially devoted to such matters. This is one of the innumerable subjects which is still waiting for its Galileo or Darwin. Our own writers who “see” have repeatedly put forth suggestions and hints, but no one of them has treated the subject in detail. They can no more treat the subject in detail without a thorough training and vast experience of insanity in the schools and asylums, than can the specialist explain the countless unsolved problems which

present themselves, without a knowledge of the vehicles of man and their infinite inter-relations. It cannot be too often repeated that we are at the beginning of things in our theosophical studies; Theosophy is a change of standpoint, and it will take many a long year before the familiar "fields of knowledge" have been properly focussed and brought beneath the exhaustive observation of the seeing scientists of the future.

QUESTION 169.

*Might the cause of insanity, in some instances, be the absence of one grade of matter in the astral body, thus preventing any impulse from the Ego reaching the physical brain? (1897.)*

B. K.—The questioner has, I fear, by no means realised the scope of his question, or he would have formulated it very differently. In the first place, what does he include under the exceedingly wide term "insanity"?

Medically speaking, this term includes a series of innumerable and most widely-differing conditions, ranging from whatever may be the point where marked idiosyncrasy, or strong individual peculiarity, passes into incipient monomania, up through a myriad varieties of the one-ideaed, the unbalanced, the so-called hallucinated, on into the classes of violent homicidal or suicidal mania, *la folie des grandeurs* or megalomania, sexual mania, and a host of others. And very probably the questioner would include idiocy, whether congenital or subsequently developed, under his connotation of insanity, though, as a matter of fact, "idiocy" differs radically and entirely from nearly all the forms of insanity properly so-called. Indeed, the wording of the question looks as if the questioner really had "idiocy" and not "insanity" in his mind when asking it.

From the legal point of view, "insanity" has a rather more restricted meaning than from the medical, but even in law its scope and meaning are very ill-defined, and it is a matter often of the greatest difficulty to decide whether or not any given case comes within its range or not.

Now as to the causes of insanity, I am personally inclined to think that they are as different and various as the divers kinds of insanity themselves. And I feel pretty sure that not even the

most developed clairvoyance would be able to assign any one cause for them all.

Indeed it seems to me that such investigation would reveal a different state of things in almost every case—at any rate in each distinct type of mental unsoundness. Thus it seems more than probable that many so-called cases of insanity, such as the hearing of voices, visual “hallucinations” and so on, are merely sporadic, uncontrollable, and incoherent manifestations of psychic sensitiveness; others again seem to point clearly to astral obsession, either by elementals or human entities in *kāma-loka*; others, such as very many forms of monomania, seem due to a mental condition analogous to that of hypnotic-suggestibility wherein the whole mind becomes dominated by a single idea.

Doctors tell us that all these are accompanied—whether they are caused thereby or not we cannot say—by definite physical lesions and changes in the brain; and certainly in very many cases *post-mortem* examination does show this clearly and unmistakably, though I question whether such physical changes can be demonstrated in all cases.

At any rate enough is known to make it obvious that the causes of insanity are many and various, and to at least render it probable that they originate, not only in the physical brain, but may equally be due to malformation or imperfect development in the subtler vehicles also.

But while this is the case with reference to the very wide area included under the term “insanity,” it seems to me to be quite otherwise with respect to the much better defined condition properly called “idiocy.” The former—speaking very roughly—includes every form of “want of balance” in the nature which is sufficiently marked to attract attention, though unless it be such as to make the sufferer unfit to associate with the average people about him, it may not be regarded technically as “insanity,” either from the medical or the legal point of view. But “idiocy” implies the *complete* lack of power to reason or to think, and it may be possible to assign a definite cause for this state of things.

And first, the cause of *idiocy* is, I believe, to be looked for in the physical, including the etheric body, not in the higher vehicles, for the following reasons. We have been told that the Ego itself forms the mental and astral bodies, which are immediately and directly its own expression in the matter of those planes. Now the Ego, however undeveloped it may be, is not and cannot be

*totally* devoid of mind and intelligence—and a true idiot is one who is *totally* without “reasoning” power of any kind—*on this plane*. However one-sided, unbalanced, abnormal the development of an Ego may be, it yet retains its one essential characteristic of being a thinker, and hence that capacity can hardly be lacking in those vehicles—the mind and astral bodies—which are its own formation and direct expression. For as we know the Lords of Karma have nothing to do with the building of these bodies, and hence impose no limitation which could prevent the essential nature of the Ego from expressing itself therein up to the point of the development which it has attained. But it is otherwise with regard to the etheric and physical bodies. These are designed and formed under the guidance of the Lords of Karma according to the effects on the world around him which the previous activities of that Ego have produced, and hence it seems quite natural and appropriate that an Ego should sometimes generate effects such that the body designed according to them should be an absolutely dead weight on the Ego, a vehicle so imperfect that his essential nature, his thinking power, should be quite unable to find expression through it.

Therefore I believe that the cause of idiocy is always such malformation of the etheric, and consequently of the physical brain that it cannot respond *at all* to the vibrations of manas, and hence cannot act as a means by which the Ego can think *on this plane*, though it may be quite able to do so when the brain is asleep and it is functioning in the astral world.

This view seems to me to harmonise with the fact that *invariably* in all cases of idiocy marked structural malformation is found in the brain on *post-mortem* examination.



## DIVISION LIV

### HELPING THE DEAD

#### QUESTION 170.

*Have prayers for the dead any value? If so, what is their effect, and how far should the practice be carried? (1895.)*

A. B.—“Prayers” for the “living” and the “dead” have always value, as they are dictated by love, and are offered by aspiring and concentrated thought, but it is as well to understand the reason of their efficacy and the conditions which may increase it. A “prayer” is efficacious in proportion to the concentration of the thought expressed in it, the purity and strength of the will by which it is directed towards the person for whose benefit it is intended, and the knowledge possessed by its utterer. The value of a prayer is that of a thought, and a prayer, like any thought, creates a form in which is individualised a portion of elemental energy; this form is really an artificial elemental, “an active beneficent power,” which goes to the person for whose benefit it has been called into existence, and affords that person any aid for which opportunity occurs. As this energy is expended on the astral plane, it can affect any person who has an astral body; and the mere incident of death—the shedding of the gross body and its etheric double—cannot make any difference in its power for good, though it may change the nature of the services rendered. So long as the soul remains on the astral plane, in Kâmaloka that is, it can be helped and protected by such thought-forms. This aid can be enormously increased when the creator of the thought-form understands the nature of the power he is exercising, and when he, therefore, himself uses this power to effect a definite object, instead of praying indefinitely that some one else will aid. For instance, a man of knowledge and of power, knowing the constitution of the astral body of a departed soul, may deliberately

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... which is material elemental as is spoken of above, to assist in the emancipation of the shells that imprison the soul, and may also aid in quickening its passage towards Devachan. Such is the case with some of the mantras used in the Hindu Shrāddha, and employed by a poor and wise man, they are of the greatest assistance to the soul. Those who are instructed as to the facts of the other world within having yet reached personal knowledge of such may help the soul of a departed friend by a strong wish that he may pass on swiftly through the Kāmaloka to Devachan. It is not necessary to say to theosophists that if they wish to help for a soul, and so petition instead of pray, the petition should not be addressed to the Supreme Being, but should take the form of a strong wish that one of those good spirits among departed souls may aid the one in question. Such wishes or petitions would draw attention to the soul, and the assistance to be given would be extended.

QUESTION 171.

*Will the spirits in the other world be conscious of grateful or loving thoughts sent to them, and can they distinguish such thoughts as generated by me individually? Can they be helped in any way? Can sending them these loving, helpful thoughts be of any use?*

The spirits in the other world would certainly be conscious of grateful or loving thought that you send them, and the spirits in this world would be aware that such thoughts came from you. But would they get the benefit of the good wish, and would they know where they know from whom it comes? In this world they would not know, but if they were undeveloped or undeveloped consciousness upon the mental plane, they might simply be conscious of the thought and to trace it to its source.

QUESTION 172.

*Will the spirits in the other world be conscious of prayer to God for them, and will they be aware of them and sorrowing for them? Can they be helped in any way?*

The spirits in the other world are beset with difficulty, and will be most responsive to those who are still with

us, or as regards those whom we speak of as "having left us." We make the problem all the more difficult with regard to these latter, if, in spite of our theosophical studies, we persist in regarding the casting off of the physical body as creating a barrier between individuals such as did not previously exist, and thereby rendering them less capable than before of mutually helping each other. Surely the reverse of this must be more nearly the case. How is it that we ever do really help? Not in the thousand and one things which we ever seek to do for those who are dear to us; all this is merely the altogether inadequate attempt on our part to express in action a force coming from within—the force of love. This force, pouring down from above, brings about results on all the planes below it, but the higher the plane on which it acts the more direct is its action and the more does its expression tend to approach the reality. When, therefore, the physical body has been struck away, the power of helping remains unaffected thereby, while, it may well be, the response is the more complete owing to the removal of one veil.

In proportion as the "personality" is eliminated, so does the power of helping increase, and as the sense that "I" am the actor and the doer disappears, so does the channel for the outpouring of this Buddhic force become more perfect.

The fact that we are no longer on the physical plane able to perform actions for the helping of one who "has left us" should not for a moment be allowed to make us think that we are poorer in our powers of helping.

In thinking on these problems, the more we try to regard them from the Life as distinguished from the Form side the less liable shall we be to conclude that our theosophical conceptions rob us of anything which seemed vital to us in our less instructed days. The question of prayer addressed to God is a good example of this; our theosophical studies may have given us much clear intellectual understanding of the vast ranges of being covered by this one word God, may have taught us to distinguish between different aspects of prayer, but however crude the intellectual idea, however vague the notion of prayer, yet if the self-surrendering love which seeks to serve and think only is present, the lower is offered up to the higher and becomes a channel for the forces of that higher. Even when the help is definitely sought on behalf of some special individual there does not seem in this anything antagonistic to theosophical ideas.

It is true that there are greater ones whose one task is the helping of the race, but all links are necessary in the chain, and it may be that we are given the opportunity of serving as that particular link, which thus becomes a privilege placed in our way by the hand of karma.

Thinking, if it is wishing to recall; sorrowing, if it means clinging to and holding; these, having their origin in ignorance and selfishness, hamper the progress of the beloved one and do injury. Just as by the unselfish sacrifice of a personal sorrow we may convert it into a power to aid, so by its selfish indulgence we can erect barriers to impede.

Those who can observe have told us that they who are passing away from things physical can be, and are, so injured by the selfish sorrowing of those on earth; in that lies the assurance that it is within our power to help, unless we are deluded when we assert that Love is greater than Hate and that the end of all is Good.

#### QUESTION 173.

*Can one do anything to help a person who is about to die, and how? Is it of any use to try to help before the third day after death? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—Assuredly it is possible to aid a person who is about to die. If one has access to him physically, and if his illness is of a nature which makes it possible to discuss with him the conditions of death and its after-states, a little rational explanation of these will often very greatly relieve his mind and lighten his burdens. Indeed, the mere meeting with a person who speaks confidently and cheerily about the life beyond the grave is frequently the greatest consolation to one who finds himself approaching it.

If, however, for any reason this physical communication is impossible, much may be done during sleep by acting upon the dying man from the astral plane. An untrained person seeking to give such help would simply follow the rules laid down in our books; he would fix the intention of aiding that particular person firmly in his mind before going to sleep, and he would even decide as far as possible upon the arguments which should be presented, and even the very words which should be used for the more

precise and definite the resolution is made while awake, the more certain is it to be faithfully and exactly carried out in the astral body during sleep.

The explanations to be given to the sick man are naturally the same in both cases. The main object of the helper is to calm and encourage the sufferer, to induce him to realise that death is a perfectly natural and usually an easy process, and in no case a formidable or terrible leap into an unknown abyss. The nature of the astral plane, the way in which a man ought to order his life upon it if he wishes to make the best of it, and the preparation necessary for progress towards the heaven-world which lies beyond, all these would be gradually explained by the helper to the dying man. The helper should always remember that his own attitude and state of mind will produce even more effect than his argument or his advice, and consequently he must be exceedingly careful to approach his task with the greatest calmness and confidence. If the helper himself is in a condition of nervous excitement, he is very likely to do more harm than good.

The questioner is evidently under the impression that most persons remain unconscious for at least three days after the physical death. This is by no means always the case, and should therefore never be calculated upon. The unconsciousness at death sometimes lasts only a moment, sometimes for a few minutes or for several hours, and sometimes for many days or weeks. The trained pupil would naturally observe for himself the condition of the "dead" man's consciousness, and regulate his assistance accordingly; the untrained man would do well to offer such assistance immediately after death, and to hold himself in readiness to give it for several succeeding nights, in order that he might not fail to be at hand when his services were needed. So many diverse circumstances affect the duration of this period of unconsciousness that it is scarcely possible to lay down any general rule in the matter. Some information on this subject may be found in the revised and much enlarged edition of *The Astral Plane*, which has just passed through the press.

## QUESTION 174.

*It is said that a suicide will remain longer on the astral plane than a man who has died in a natural way. Can prayers help him—that is to say, can good thoughts sent to him help him and give him some hope that the suffering he is undergoing is not eternal? In short, can anything be done for him even after he has been dead some fifteen years? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—A man who committed suicide fifteen years ago is almost certain to be still upon the lowest level of the astral plane and well within reach of the assistance which he probably so greatly needs. Assuredly he may be helped by strong and earnest thought, whether it takes the form of prayer or not. An account of the way in which it is possible under such conditions to assist a suicide is given in *The Theosophical Review*, vol. xxii., p. 81.



"To enter and know the astral world from the physical, one must know in the physical those things and forces of the physical which correspond to the elements, forces or beings in the astral world." Selected.

#### DIVISION LV

#### WORK ON THE ASTRAL PLANE

#### QUESTION 175.

*We are told that much useful work is done by certain students of Theosophy upon the astral plane during sleep; can any information be given as to the nature of such work, or the qualifications needed by one who is anxious to fit himself to join in it? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—The first part of the question, as to the nature of the work, was fully answered in some articles which I wrote two years ago under the title of *Invisible Helpers*. They are just being issued in book form, revised and greatly enlarged, and can be had from the Theosophical Publishing Society.

As to the second part of the query, there is no mystery as to the qualifications which are needed by one who aspires to be a helper; the difficulty is not in learning what they are, but in developing them in oneself. To some extent they have been already incidentally implied in the articles mentioned, but if set forth categorically, they would appear somewhat as follows.

1. *Single-mindedness.* The first requisite is that we shall have recognised the great work which the Masters would have us do, and that it shall be for us the one great interest of our lives. We must learn to distinguish not only between useful and useless work, but between the different kinds of useful work, so that we may each devote ourselves to the very highest of which we are capable, and not fritter away our time in labouring at something which, however good it may be for the man who cannot yet do anything better, is unworthy of the knowledge and capacity which should be ours as theosophists. A man who wishes to be considered eligible for employment on higher planes must begin

by doing the utmost that lies in his power as definite work for Theosophy down here.

Of course I do not for a moment mean that we are to neglect the ordinary duties of life. We should certainly do well to undertake no new worldly duties of any sort, but those which we have already bound upon our shoulders have become a karmic obligation which we have no right to neglect. Unless we have done to the full the duties which karma has laid upon us, we are not free for the higher work. But this higher work must nevertheless be to us the one thing really worth living for—the constant background of a life which is consecrated to the service of the Masters of Compassion.

2. *Perfect Self-control.* Before we can be safely trusted with the wider powers of the astral life, we must have ourselves perfectly in hand. Our temper, for example, must be thoroughly under control, so that nothing that we may see or hear can cause irritation in us, for the consequences of such irritation would be far more serious on that plane than on this. The force of thought is always an enormous power, but down here it is reduced and deadened by the heavy physical brain-particles which it has to set in motion. In the astral world it is far freer and more potent, and for a man with fully-awakened faculty to feel anger against a person there, would be to do him serious, and perhaps even fatal, injury.

Not only do we need control of temper, but control of nerve, so that none of the fantastic or terrible sights that we may encounter may be able to shake our dauntless courage. It must be remembered that the pupil who awakens a man upon the astral plane incurs thereby a certain amount of responsibility for his actions and for his safety, so that unless his neophyte had courage to stand alone, the whole of the older worker's time would be wasted in hovering round to protect him, which it would be manifestly unreasonable to expect.

It is to make sure of this control of nerve, and to fit them for the work that has to be done, that candidates are made to pass what are called the tests of earth, water, air, and fire, which I described in *The Christian Creed*. In point of fact, they have to learn with that absolute certainty which comes, not by theory, but by practical experience, that in their astral bodies none of these elements can by any possibility be hurtful to them—that none can oppose any obstacle in the way of the work which they have to do.

Further, we need control of mind and of desire; of mind, because without the power of concentration it would be impossible to do good work amid all the distracting currents of the astral plane; of desire, because in that strange world to desire is very often to have, and unless this part of our nature were well controlled we might perchance find ourselves face to face with creations of our own of which we should be heartily ashamed.

3. *Calmness.* This is another most important point—the absence of all worry and depression. Much of the work consists in soothing those who are disturbed, and cheering those who are in sorrow; and how can a helper do that work if his own aura is vibrating with constant fuss and worry, or grey with the deadly gloom that comes from perpetual depression? Nothing is more hopelessly fatal to occult progress or usefulness than our nineteenth century habit of ceaseless worrying over trifles—of eternally making mountains out of molehills. Many of us simply spend our lives in magnifying the most absurd trivialities—in solemnly and elaborately going to work to make ourselves miserable about nothing.

Surely we who are theosophists ought, at any rate, to have got beyond this stage of irrational worry and causeless depression; surely we, who are trying to acquire some definite knowledge of the cosmic order, ought by this time to have realised that the optimistic view of everything is always nearest to the divine view, and therefore to the truth, because only that in any person which is good and beautiful can by any possibility be permanent, while the evil must, by its very nature, be temporary. In fact “the evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound,” while above and beyond it all, “the soul of things is sweet, the heart of being is celestial rest.” So They who know maintain unruffled calm, and with Their perfect sympathy combine the joyous serenity which comes from the certainty that all will at last be well; and those who wish to help must learn to follow Their example.

4. *Knowledge.* To be of use the man must at least have some knowledge of the nature of the plane on which he has to work, and the more knowledge he has in any and every direction, the more useful he will be. He must fit himself for this task by carefully studying everything that has been written on the subject in theosophical literature; for he cannot expect those whose time is already so fully occupied to waste some of it in explaining to him what he might have learnt down here by taking the trouble to read the books. No one who is not already as earnest a student as his

capacities and opportunities permit, need begin to think of himself as a candidate for astral work.

5. *Love*. This, the last and greatest of the qualifications, is also the most misunderstood. Most emphatically it is *not* the cheap, namby-pamby, backboneless sentimentalism which is always overflowing into vague platitudes and gushing generalities, yet fears to stand firm for the right lest it should be branded by the ignorant as "unbrotherly." What is wanted is the love which is strong enough *not* to boast itself, but to act without talking about it—the intense desire for service which is ever on the watch for an opportunity to render it, even though it prefers to do so anonymously—the feeling which springs up in the heart of him who has realised the great work of the Logos, and, having once seen it, knows that for him there can be in the three worlds no other course but to identify himself with it to the utmost limit of his power—to become, in however humble a way and at however great a distance, a tiny channel of that wondrous love of God which, like the peace of God, passeth man's understanding.

These are the qualities towards the possession of which the helper must ceaselessly strive, and of which some considerable measure at least must be his before he can hope that the Great Ones who stand behind will deem him fit for full awakening. The ideal is in truth a high one, yet none need therefore turn away disheartened, nor think that while he is still but struggling towards it he must necessarily remain entirely useless on the astral plane, for short of the responsibilities and dangers of that full awakening there is much that may safely and usefully be done.

Indeed, none need sadden himself with the thought that he can have no part nor lot in this glorious work. There is hardly one among us who is not capable of performing at least one definite act of mercy and goodwill each night while we are away from our bodies. Our condition when asleep is usually one of absorption in thought, be it remembered—a carrying on of the thoughts which have principally occupied us during the day, and especially of the last thought in the mind when sinking into sleep. Now, if we make that last thought a strong intention to go and give help to some one whom we know to be in need of it, the soul, when freed from the body, will undoubtedly carry out that intention, and thus the help will be given. There are several cases on record in which, when this attempt has been made, the person thought of has been fully conscious of the effort of the would-be helper, and

has even seen his astral body in the act of carrying out the instructions impressed upon it.

Nor need our helpful action be confined to our hours of sleep. Whenever during our manifold daily occupations we have time to send a loving thought or an earnest good wish to a friend, we are assuredly acting as very real, though invisible helpers; for such thoughts and wishes are living and strong, and when we so send them they do actually go and work our will in proportion to the strength which we have put into them. Thoughts are things—intensely real things, visible clearly enough to those whose eyes have been opened to see, and by their means the poorest man may bear his part in the good work of the world as fully as the richest, for everyone who can think can help.

#### QUESTION 176.

*How is it that the astral body, irrespective of the resistance of other grades of matter, annihilates distance with such instantaneity; and what is the nature of the force propelling it? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—The astral body does not annihilate distance, though it does move very rapidly. A certain time is undoubtedly occupied in the transit across the Atlantic Ocean, for example, though it is probably hardly more than a minute. It is probable that even on the mental plane movement is not truly instantaneous, although from our present point of view it seems to be so; but on the astral plane there is distinctly the consciousness of passing through the intermediate space when moving from one place to another. The matter of other grades does not exist for the astral body, and its own particles are so arranged that it readily interpenetrates other astral matter. The force which propels it is simply the human will, though the detail of the action of that will is hardly more readily explicable in this case than it is in the moving of the hand or the foot on the physical plane.

#### QUESTION 177.

*Is it possible for bodies or forms in the astral world to get smashed up by collision as in the physical world, and can a resident there lose his astral body by an accident of that sort? Also, is suicide possible there as in the physical world, e.g., by taking an astral poison, or cutting one's astral throat, or getting "choked*

*to death" by an astral gas, or "burning to death" by an astral fire? If none of these things occur, what are the astral analogues of such events upon the physical plane? (1902.)*

E. L.—The only information I can remember having on this subject was a story related by Mrs. Besant of a case coming under her notice where a person having received a violent shock of some kind suffered an injury to the astral vehicle. A "polarisation" (the nearest analogue possible to describe it by) of the particles of the astral took place, and they received a twist or jerk, so to speak, out of their normal position with regard to each other. Certain currents on that plane would be injurious to the vehicle belonging to it if it came in their vicinity. "Accidents" (if you like to use this expression belonging to limitation) must occur, one would think, on other planes besides the physical.

If we believe in any *connection* between the different planes at all, it seems reasonable to suppose that one cannot be affected without the others being affected in some analogous manner peculiar to *their* nature. A first-hand knowledge of the law of re-action is wanted here. The question is, how long would that law continue operating, and how far do its effects extend?

In other words, since a suicide down here is determined by an impulse towards such an act, and by something else, perhaps many other things *behind* the impulse, linked in orderly succession unto it, and since suicide taking place in one life can result in a morbid tendency in that direction in another, we can infer that many, if not all, events taking place here have their appropriate *correspondences* on the higher level.

The question opens up an interesting field of inquiry, concerning which either one or the other of two conclusions (or both) may be stated, *i.e.*, that very little is *known* of this region, or else much known is not given out by those who are trained investigators. Of such we can safely say there are few.

#### QUESTION 178.

*How can we benefit others on the astral plane? If it is possible, is it not our duty to learn to do so? (1901.)*

A. A. W.—We are taught that the majority of mankind are not yet capable of working on the astral plane, whilst confined within

the physical body. Those of us who are awake on the astral plane will learn by experience that there also the great law holds, that to do what we can to benefit others is the strict condition of our own advance; but even of these the vast majority have no consciousness of their adventures when they wake, and no learning on this plane will be of any avail to assist. Fortunately, the gulf which, for most of us, divides consciousness on the physical plane from consciousness on the astral does not thus limit our thoughts and desires. When we, in the physical body, fix our thoughts on our beloved (wherever they may be) our good wishes are an actual power to bless, not only on the astral plane, but as high above it as our spiritual development reaches, and as our friends are capable of receiving. Of this, the only way in which most of us are able to benefit others on *any* plane, so much beautiful teaching has been given by Mrs. Besant, Mr. Leadbeater and others in our theosophical literature, that the querist can find no difficulty in obtaining what he wishes. But as far as *duty* goes, our duty whilst on the physical plane is to do our best to help the world around us and leave the astral world to mind its own business, of course excepting the case of those of our family and friends who have passed over, and whose claims upon our help and good wishes are rather increased than diminished by the fact that they are what we call "dead," and thus to be found only on the astral plane.

## QUESTION 179.

*Is there any system by which distinct consciousness of astral work can be developed? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—Certainly there are efforts of Yoga by which continuous astral consciousness may be attained; and to the man attaining this night and day would be as one. But these Yoga practices should be undertaken only under the direct supervision of a Master, as there would be very serious danger connected with any mismanagement of them. There is, however, a very simple method with which some of our people have had great success. If when the man is out of his body and just about to return to it he can check himself just before entering it, with the resolve that the moment he passes into it he will make it sit up and write down all the events which have taken place, he will certainly find himself

able immediately to carry out his wish. But if he delays the writing down even for five minutes, the whole chain of events may pass from his mind, and he will probably be quite unable to recollect them.

QUESTION 180.

*Are there any means, other than the bringing back of consciousness to the physical brain, by which one can assure himself of the actuality of his astral work? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—Men have frequently assured themselves of the actuality of their astral work through hearing of its results upon those whom they have tried to help. It will often happen that, when a determined effort has been made on a certain night to reach and assist some friend who is in trouble, that friend will mention in physical life how much he felt strengthened and comforted by a dream which he had on that particular night. He may or may not remember enough to associate this happy change with the friend who is really its cause; but in any case a series of such coincidences will gradually prove to the operator that his efforts are not without result. A simple experiment which has sometimes been successful is to resolve to visit astrally some well-known room, and note very especially the arrangement of furniture books, etc.; or if, without previously intending it, the experimenter finds himself in a spot which he recognises (that is to say, in ordinary parlance, if he dreams of a certain place) he may also set himself to observe it with great care. If everything remains exactly as when he last saw it physically, he has no definite proof; but if he observes any decided change—if there is anything new or unexpected—then it is distinctly worth his while to step round in the morning and visit that place physically in order to test whether his nocturnal vision has been correct.

QUESTION 181.

*Are orthodox Christians permitted to become invisible helpers and be conscious of so doing? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—The questioner will have seen in a previous answer what are the qualifications required in one who wishes to join the



band of invisible helpers, and she will notice that no question of mere belief comes into the matter at all. If she will read my new book *Invisible Helpers* she will find there, in addition, the qualifications required for the Path of Discipleship, and she will see that along that line sectarian bigotry distinctly prevents progress. So that the answer to the question would be that even the narrowly orthodox might help in the way described on page 101 of my book, but they would hardly be likely to find anyone who would take the responsibility of fully awakening them until they had advanced somewhat further along the path of progress.

## QUESTION 182.

*Is utter fearlessness absolutely necessary for work on the astral plane, and does action thereon imply such a condition? Would a physical coward be able to function on the astral plane? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—Courage in man seems to be very largely a question of habit. A man who would be entirely fearless in a battle, is often terribly frightened of a ghost. It may be supposed that the converse might possibly, be true, and a man who was not brave in physical danger might be perfectly self-possessed upon the astral plane, though I do not recollect having seen such a case. Probably no man can say with certainty that he is absolutely fearless; nevertheless, if his nerves have been subjected to many trials and have stood the test successfully, he feels that he can rely upon them. This is all that we can hope for, on the astral plane as on the physical, and true fearlessness probably remains a counsel of perfection. Many of us have often been very badly frightened, though we have so far contrived not to show it, which is always the main point in dealing with unpleasant entities.

## QUESTION 183.

*Does the dreaming of ordinary events interfere at all with astral work? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—The dreaming of ordinary events does not interfere with astral work, because that dreaming is all taking place in the physical brain while the real man is away attending to other business. Of course if the man, when out in his astral body,

devotes himself to thinking over the events of his physical life, he will be unable during the time of such thought to do efficiently any other work, but that is a totally different thing from a mere ordinary dream of the physical brain. But when the man awakes in the morning it is frequently very difficult for him to distinguish between the two sets of recollections, as is mentioned in the little book on *Dreams*. It really does not matter what the physical brain does, so long at least as it keeps itself free from impure thoughts, but it is undesirable that the man himself should waste his time in introspection when he might be working on the astral plane.

QUESTION 184.

*In reference to the story in Invisible Helpers of a warning given which saved a man from death, I am confused on the following points: The man heeded the voice and was saved, therefore it seems not to have been in his karma to die at that time. But if so, what is the use of the warning, as in any case his life would be safe? And if a man whose karma it was to die suddenly from an accident had such a warning, presumably he would not heed it; else why the opportunity given of paying the debt, and why in that case the warning? We often hear of warnings being given, sometimes attended to, sometimes not. (1900.)*

I. H.—It appears to me that the first point is answered on pp. 69–70 of Mrs. Besant's recent book on *The Evolution of Life and Form*. The questioner says: "In any case his life would be safe." True! but it appears clear to me that the karmic law must have an agent; surely all nature's forces and all human beings are such agents. Say that, as in the case to which reference is made, a chimney is falling upon a human body; it is not within the karma of the Ego to whom that body belongs, to meet with such a death; nevertheless, if the chimney falls upon his body, that body must be destroyed; the karmic law prevents such an occurrence by means of a warning human voice. It may be said that if that warning is not given the man will be saved just the same, even, perhaps, by an apparent miracle. But it seems to me that the warning voice, or a reversal of the laws of gravity, would equally be the effect of karma working on behalf of the man who

was to be saved, and I cannot see why the lesser expenditure of force should not be the one used. It is obvious that something must be done, because a heavy chimney hurled upon a human body must destroy it, whether the owner "deserves" that it should be destroyed or not. As to the second point, it seems to me that it might be possible that the "invisible helper" might give the warning, seeing a fellow-man in peril, and entirely ignorant of his karma. If the warning failed, I suppose he would know that it was the man's karma to be killed, but I do not see that this would be any concern of his. Often in ordinary affairs of physical life one may try to help and fail. But I think that cannot be helped, and should not enter into one's calculations if it be possible to avoid it.

#### QUESTION 185.

*Is it possible to throw a little more light upon the difficult and obscure question of repercussion? In An Astral Experience, published some time ago in LUCIFER, it was stated that the victim on waking found his feet stained with the blood of the elemental dragon which he had encountered while away from his body, which shows clearly the close sympathy between the physical body and the materialised form; yet with reference to a more recent story of the wider life given in In the Twilight I am told that the boy who materialised himself in order to save another from a burning house was in no kind of danger, and that his physical body would not have suffered in any way even though his materialised form had passed through the flames or fallen from the high ledge described. Why was there so much less sympathy in this case—supposing, that is, that both the stories are true? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—Both the stories are undoubtedly true, and not at all irreconcilable. As the questioner quite rightly remarks, the subject of repercussion is a difficult and obscure one, and we have not yet sufficient knowledge of it to enable us to undertake any real explanation of its phenomena; yet several points of difference between the two cases cited at once suggest themselves which may probably account for the dissimilarity of result.

First, it must be remembered that there are at least three well-defined varieties of materialisation, as anyone who has at all an extended experience of spiritualism will be aware.

1. There is the materialisation which, though tangible, is not visible to ordinary physical sight. Of this nature are the unseen hands which so often clasp one's arm or stroke one's face at a *séance*, which sometimes carry physical objects through the air or produce raps upon the table—though, of course, both these latter phenomena may be produced without a materialised hand at all.

2. There is the materialisation which, though visible, is not tangible—the spirit-form through which one's hand passes as through empty air. In some cases this variety is obviously misty and impalpable, but in others its appearance is so entirely normal that its solidity is never doubted until some one endeavours to grasp it.

3. There is the perfect materialisation which is both visible and tangible—which not only bears the outward semblance of your departed friend, but shakes you cordially by the hand with the very clasp you know so well.

Now while there is a good deal of evidence to show that reper- ussion takes place under certain conditions in the case of this third kind of materialisation, it is by no means so certain that it can occur with the first or second class. There seems little doubt that in the case described in *An Astral Experience* we have an example of a full materialisation of the third class, judging from the footprints found the next morning in the sand on the shore of the island; whereas in the case of the boy helper it is probable that the materialisation would not be of that type, since the greatest care is always taken not to expend more force than is absolutely necessary to produce whatever result may be required, and it is obvious that less energy would be used in the production of the more partial forms which we have called the first and second classes. The probability is that only the arm with which the boy held his little companion would be solid to the touch, and that the rest of his body, though looking perfectly natural, would have proved far less palpable if it had been tested.

But, apart from this probability, there is another undoubted difference between the two cases which would of itself be quite sufficient to account for the variety in results. When a full materialisation takes place, whether the subject be living or dead, physical matter of some sort has to be gathered together for the purpose. At a spiritualistic *séance* this matter is obtained by drawing largely upon the etheric double of the medium—and some-

times even upon his physical body also, since cases are on record in which his weight has been very considerably decreased while manifestations of this character were taking place.

This method is employed by the directing entities of the *stance* simply because when an available medium is within reach it is very much the easiest way in which a materialisation can be brought about; and the consequence is that the very closest connection is thus set up between that medium and the materialised form, so that the phenomenon which (although very imperfectly understanding it) we call repercussion occurs in its clearest form. If for example, the hands of the materialised body be rubbed with chalk, that chalk will afterwards be found upon the hands of the medium, even though he may have been all the time carefully locked up in a cabinet under circumstances which absolutely precluded any suspicion of fraud. If any injury be inflicted upon the materialised form, that injury will be accurately reproduced upon the corresponding part of the medium's body; in one case at any rate, food of which the spirit-form had partaken was found to have passed into the body of the medium.

There seems little doubt that the materialisation described in *An Astral Experience* (a very unusual experience, be it remembered), was managed in this manner, and that whatever matter may have been required for such materialisation as was necessary was temporarily withdrawn from the etheric and physical bodies of the writer of the account. Since it is evident that the whole incident took place under the immediate eye of the Master there could be no possible danger, and as the theatre of operations was in the near neighbourhood of the bed on which the body was left, his method would be easy and convenient.

It would be far otherwise, however, in the second case quoted. Cyril was in America, thousands of miles from his sleeping physical body, upon which, therefore, it would be quite impossible for him to draw, and the regulations under which all pupils of the great Masters of Wisdom perform their work of helping man would assuredly prevent him, even for the noblest purpose, from putting such a strain upon any one else. Besides, it would be quite unnecessary, for the far less dangerous method invariably employed by the helpers when materialisation seems desirable would be ready to his hand—the condensation from the circumambient ether, or even from the physical air, of such amount of matter as may be requisite. This feat, though no doubt beyond

the power of the average entity manifesting at a *stance*, presents no difficulty to a student of occult chemistry.

But mark the difference in the result obtained. In the former case we have a materialised form in the closest possible connection with the physical body, made out of its very substance, and therefore capable of producing all the phenomena of repercussion. In the latter we have indeed an exact reproduction of the physical body, but it is created by a mental effort out of matter entirely foreign to that body, and is no more capable of acting upon it by repercussion than an ordinary marble statue of the man would be.

Thus it is that a passage through the flames or a fall from a high window-ledge would have had no terrors for the boy-helper, and that on another occasion a member of the band, though materialised, was able, without any inconvenience to the physical body, to go down in a sinking vessel. While we are by no means as yet in a position fully to explain the very remarkable phenomena of repercussion, we yet know by observation some of the conditions which permit its action and some which definitely exclude it, and so we are able to answer the question as far as this; but in order to understand the subject perfectly, it would probably be necessary to comprehend the laws of sympathetic vibration on more planes than one.

## DIVISION LVI

### PURGATORY AND HADES

#### QUESTION 186.

*What relation does Purgatory, as taught by the orthodox Roman Catholics, bear to Kâmaloka and Hades? How did the differences between the two conceptions of Purgatory and Hades arise? (1895.)*

A. A. W.—The theological idea of Purgatory took its rise from the very natural idea that many men and women pass from this life without being either bad enough for the Christian Hell, or good enough for an endless Heaven. And this, vague instinct as it was, had even more in it; it anticipated the point so strongly enforced by Swedenborg in a later century—that an ordinary man, dying with his passions unpurified, full of the images of his past life, would not find Heaven a very delightful place of abode, and might even find a certain grade in Hell actually more to his taste. The details of the method by which this fundamental conception was worked out by theologians from the few passages in the New Testament which have any bearing upon it, need not be discussed here. The relation of the theosophical doctrine of Kâmaloka to that of Purgatory is really a very close one. The former, it is true, is founded on actual knowledge of what takes place after death, whilst the latter is merely the result of logical deductions from “texts,” hampered by the fundamental error of the absolute eternity of the state to which it leads; still, it is remarkable how closely the two agree. In both, the soul has to be purified in some way from the stains of earth’s life; in both, after its purification, it passes on to a higher state. This purification has, as a general rule, to be made by suffering. The impressions as to the particular kind of suffering which fill

The various Books of Devotion are not authorized by the Church, and I am aware, anything to prevent their being taken as the theosophic view as what it is—  
 a thoroughly satisfactory *explanation* of what the Church teaches is truth, without being able to explain the irreconcilable difference is not Purgatory—

It is with considerable certainty the evolution of the idea from the older conceptions of a state immediately intermediate between earth life and a further state of bliss or punishment. This intermediate state is mentioned in many religions, but can be traced in almost all of them. The early Christian writers, as a rule, accepted the older Greek sense, as a place into which all souls passed on leaving the body, irrespective of their moral qualities. The general conception among the Christian fathers was that the souls passed until the great resurrection, and was pleasant or unpleasant according to the nature of the soul. It was always an intermediate state and one which could only last for a certain time. The souls were not to speak imprisoned, and in this state Jesus, according to some legends, were said to have visited them and talked to them. Communications between living men and the souls were also believed in, and the latter could be rescued by magical arts. Thus the relation of both the Pagan idea of the souls to Kamaloka is quite clear, although the latter was prevalent in accordance with the general teaching of the various religions. One of the main points of difference between the modern Purgatory and the ancient Hades, is that the latter is a state of punishment for those who are morally wicked or blameworthy, whereas Hades was the abode of the souls of both good and evil men, just as in the case of the Nihon was the grave into which all men passed on leaving the body. Purgatory again is a place of suffering in which expiation is made for sins, an idea not found in the older religions, though the conception of some intermediate state of bliss was general. The change in the doctrine was not so sudden, and not till several centuries after the Christian era, and the idea of Purgatory clearly developed. The change appears to have been due to the influence of the doctrines of the Church, so that the idea of a state interpenetrating this world, we



get a material land of suffering, occupying some definite part of space, in which physical torments are substituted for the sufferings of the soul, consequent on its separation from the lower forces of its nature.

G. R. S. M.—As a contribution towards the elucidation of this question, I append some valuable information concerning the opinions of the ancient Hellenic philosophers on the invisible world, from which it may be seen that the latter half of the question is to a great extent a *petitio principii*.

As the pages of THE VĀHAN are limited, I shall content myself with reproducing some striking passages from Thomas Taylor's admirable dissertation on *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*. It would be possible to write a volume, or several volumes, on the subject; but to be of any value to the theosophical student the matter must be treated from the point of view of Taylor, who alone, of all the moderns, appealed to the ancients for an explanation of their own ideas. The rest of the critics, almost without exception, consider it their duty in life to criticise their own misconceptions of the ancients, and so foist upon them absurdities of which it was impossible for them to have ever dreamed. And now for the authorities quoted by Taylor.

Part of the shows or dramas in the Mysteries consisted in a representation of the Hades or unseen world. Thus Clemens Alexandrinus (*Stromateis*, iii.) writes: "Pindar, speaking of the Eleusinian Mysteries, says: Blessed is he who, *having seen these common concerns in the under-world*, knows both the end of life and its Divine origin." And Proclus, in his Commentary on the *Politicus*, says that Plato, in the *Phædo*, "venerates, with a becoming silence, the assertion delivered in the arcane discourses that men are placed in the body as in a prison, secured by a guard, and testifies, according to the mystic ceremonies, the different allotments of *purified and unpurified souls in Hades*, their several conditions, and the three forked path from the peculiar places where they were; and this was shown according to traditionary institutions; every part of which is full of a symbolical representation, as in a drama, and of a description which treated of the ascending and descending ways, of the tragedies of Dionysus (Bacchus or Zagreus) [the human soul], the crimes of the Titans, the three ways in Hades, and the wanderings of everything of a similar kind."

The "three ways" are probably the higher Kāmaloka, the

intermediate realm, which is a shadowy representation of the earth, and the lower levels.

Thus "the soul's punishment and existence hereafter are nothing more than a *continuation of its state at present*, and a transmigration, as it were, from sleep to sleep, and from dream to dream." So Heraclitus, speaking of unembodied souls, says: "We live their death and die their life." And Clemens again, in the same book, reproduces the saying of Pythagoras, "that whatever we are when awake is death; and when asleep a dream." That is to say, that the soul, by *being merged in matter*, resides among the dead, *both here and hereafter*.

And Plotinus (*Ennead*, i. viii.): "The soul therefore dies as much as it is possible for the soul to die; and the death to her is, while baptized or immersed in the present body [whether gross or subtle], to descend in matter (*hyle*), and be wholly subjected by it; and after departing thence to be there till it shall arise and turn its face away from the abhorrent filth. This is what is meant by *falling asleep in Hades*, of those who have come there."

And so Plato (*Republic*, vii.) speaking of him who is made by the exercise of his higher reason (Buddhi) to "define the idea of The Good" and separate it from all other objects—that is to say, who is skilled in the discrimination of the Self from non-self, or "Spirit" from "matter," called by the Vedântins Âtmânâtma-viveka—remarks: Shall we not say that "he is sleeping and dreaming away his present life; and before he is roused, will descend into Hades, and there be profoundly and perfectly laid asleep"? For existence in Hades is sleep, as compared to the perfect wakefulness of the true spiritual existence.

And again Plato, in the *Phædo* (xxxviii.), clearly writes: "Those who instituted the Mysteries for us, appear to have intimated that whoever shall arrive in Hades *unpurified* and not initiated shall lie in mud; but he who arrives there *purified* and initiated shall dwell with the Gods. For there are many thyrsus bearers, but few who are inspired [Bacchi]" This is the "many are called, but few chosen" of the Gospel.

And Plotinus ("On the Beautiful," *Ennead*, i.), speaking of the myth of Narcissus, writes: "Hence as Narcissus by catching at the shadow plunged himself in the stream and disappeared, so he who is captivated by beautiful bodies, and does not depart from their embrace, is precipitated, *not with his body*, but with

his soul, into a darkness profound and repugnant to intellect (the higher soul), through which, remaining behind *both here and in Hades*, he associates with shadows." And this right up to the highest phase of the "Summer Land" of all religionists.

And so Ficinus, commenting on Plotinus, aptly remarks: "Lastly, that I may comprehend the opinion of the ancient theologians, in the state of the soul after death, in a few words: they considered things divine as the only realities, and that all others were only the images and shadows of truth. Hence they asserted that provident men, who earnestly employed themselves in divine concerns, were above all others in a vigilant state. But that improvident men [*i.e.*, without foresight—Buddhi], who pursued objects of a different nature, being laid asleep, as it were, were only engaged in the delusion of dreams; and that if they happened to *die in this sleep*, before they were roused [by instruction in the Mysteries], they would be afflicted with similar and still more dazzling visions in a future state [*i.e.*, in the "Summer Land" of the higher planes of Kâmaloka, and even in the lower planes of Devachan]. And that as he who in this life pursued realities, would, after death, enjoy the highest truth [the higher planes of Devachan], so he who pursued deceptions [such as the literalism of mythological religion], would, hereafter, be tormented with fallacies and delusions in the extreme: as the one would be delighted with true objects of enjoyment, so the other would be tormented with delusive semblances of reality."

But enough, for the present, on this most interesting subject.

## DIVISION LVII

### LIFE AFTER DEATH

#### QUESTION 187.

- (a) *Is man's survival, after the death of the physical body, capable of being positively proved? What kind of evidence would suffice for the purpose?*
- (b) *Upon what lines of thought is man likely to discover the best arguments in favour of the immortality of the Ego?*
- (c) *Is the immortality of the Ego capable of being logically demonstrated? (1898.)*

B. K.—The answers to all these questions involve as a preliminary a clear, definite understanding as to what shall be regarded as “positive proof.” Leaving aside what may for the moment be called the metaphysical and philosophical arguments, and taking “positive” proof to mean for our present purpose “proof upon the lines recognised as valid by physical science,” we may state the conditions of proof bearing on these questions as follows :

I. The existence of a material object is proved by the simultaneous and concurrent testimony of the senses of several observers, subject to the condition that these observations must be capable of repetition indefinitely at will.

II. The existence of material substance, though imperceptible to the senses, may also be proved by inference from actions and effects perceptible to the senses, as in the case of the luminiferous ether; but this method of proof does not possess the certainty attaching to I.

III. The existence and action of “force” is proved by observed changes in the condition of sensible matter.

IV. The presence of intelligence may be inferred from the actions of a body perceptible to the senses; though the nature of

the relation which the intelligence bears to that body must be separately determined, *e.g.*, the signals in a telegraphic instrument.

Let us apply these canons to the various classes of evidence adducible as to (a).

(A) The evidence of the so-called spiritualistic phenomena.

1. *Materialisation*.—There is a sufficient number of thoroughly well-authenticated instances of the materialisation of human forms to render the fact certain. But logically they do not “prove positively” man’s survival after death, but only the appearance of a human form—which may or may not be adequately identified as the appearance of a known and once living man—from out of the invisible. But the main reason why this evidence is inadequate for *proof* is twofold: at present the records—especially as to identity—do not sufficiently satisfy the condition of there being “several simultaneous and concurrent observers,” and second, because these observations are not as yet capable of “being repeated indefinitely at will.”

When these conditions are satisfied, it may be possible to fill up the logical gap by convincing proof of personal identity, and then the survival of man would be proved.

2. *Communications through Mediums, etc.*—The value of this line of evidence depends almost entirely on the establishment of the identity of the communicating intelligence. Dr Richard Hodgson has recently been completely convinced by evidence along this line obtained through Mrs Piper, but subjective personal elements enter so largely into the estimation of evidence of this kind, that I question whether the “positive proof” which has convinced one person would convince another on hearsay or even in book form.

(B) *The Evidence of Persons possessing the so-called “psychic” senses*.—The first step is to establish the existence of such senses. On this head evidence is rapidly accumulating, and before very long we may expect that unimpeachable proof on this point will be available.

Next would come the “simultaneous and concurrent” observation by several such psychic observers of human beings, still continuing to live and function intelligently in bodies of subtler matter after the disintegration of their physical bodies.

The careful use and observation of canons I., II. and IV. would furnish complete, logical, and *positive* proof of this; but how far such observations, when read or heard at second-hand,

would be more effective and convincing than the communications through mediums, is not easy to determine. Indeed, one may almost say that, practically speaking, until the opportunities of first-hand verification become so numerous and widespread that everyone can avail himself of them at little trouble or expense, it is very doubtful whether a majority of the thinking world will be convinced, and even then one may question whether anything short of the development of the psychic senses in themselves will really prove convincing to many sceptical temperaments. For evidence which is logically sufficient and amply authenticated is very often indeed singularly lacking in its power of impressing minds antagonistic to the idea in question. So that at last we come down to the bed-rock of human nature, and find that in such matters every individual must, in the last analysis, obtain his own conviction for himself, and that not infrequently this conviction is not in truth determined by either logic, reason, or evidence at all.

(b) On this point lines of argument are open to us. The first is philosophical and metaphysical, and is, indeed, the only one *logically* valid. For the second, the argument from the use of the higher devachanic senses, though it proves the continuance and survival of the Ego after the disintegration of the astral and lower mental bodies, and the fact of Reincarnation, cannot prove logically the "immortality" of the Ego, since though the powers of observation of these higher perceptive faculties extend backwards through millions of years, and can trace the evolution of the Ego throughout these enormous spaces of time, yet that time is *finite*, and as the Ego itself has a beginning, so also it *may* have an end, for all that even such powers of observation can tell, since they do not cover *infinite* duration.

Hence we are in reality thrown back on the philosophical and metaphysical argument, strengthened and confirmed, however, by the verification of its accuracy within the tremendous scope of observation open to the consciousness functioning in the causal body.

(c) I hold that it is, on the lines indicated above. But, again, I must admit that what seems to me an absolutely convincing line of argument may not appeal equally to other minds. And the only *positive proof*—that of actual first-hand individual experience—is in this case unattainable, since it involves the experience of unbroken existence throughout *infinite* time, if the term "im-

mortality" be taken strictly. But if for "eternal" immortality we content ourselves with "æonian" immortality measured by a cycle of years requiring fifteen ciphers for its expression, then such "positive proof" is accessible along lines analogous to those indicated in (b) for the demonstration of man's survival after the death of his physical body.

## QUESTION 188.

*How is it that the astral body of an unevolved man, which is cloudy and shapeless during physical life, should be able immediately after death to mould itself into the exact likeness of the physical body? Yet if it does not do so, how is it recognisable? (1898).*

C. W. L.—The questioner does not quite understand the structure of the astral body, and is consequently (very naturally) confusing statements in our literature which were intended to apply to different parts of it.

We have often been told how, to the clairvoyant eye, the physical body of man appears surrounded by what we call the aura—a luminous coloured mist, roughly ovoid in shape, and extending to a distance of some 18 inches from the body in all directions. All students are aware that this aura is exceedingly complex, and contains matter of all the different planes on which man is at present provided with vehicles; but for the moment let us think of it as it would appear to one who possessed no higher power of vision than the astral.

For such a spectator the aura would, of course, contain only astral matter, and would therefore be a simpler object of study. He would see, however, that this astral matter not only surrounded the physical body, but interpenetrated it, and that within the periphery of that body it was much more densely aggregated than in that part of the aura which lay outside it. Possibly this may be due to the attraction of the large amount of dense astral matter which is gathered together there as the counterpart of the cells of the physical body; but however that may be, the fact is undoubted that the matter of the astral body which lies within the limits of the physical is many times denser than that outside it.

When during sleep the astral body is withdrawn from the physical, this arrangement still persists, and anyone looking at

such an astral body with clairvoyant vision would still see, just as before, a form resembling the physical body surrounded by an aura. That form would now be composed only of astral matter, but still the difference in density between it and its surrounding mist would be quite sufficient to make it clearly distinguishable even though it is itself only a form of denser mist.

Now as to the difference in appearance between the evolved and the unevolved man. Even in the case of the latter the features and shape of the inner form would be recognisable always, though blurred and indistinct, but the surrounding egg would scarcely deserve the name, for it would be in fact a mere shapeless wreath of mist, having neither regularity nor permanence of outline.

In the more developed man the change would be very marked, both in the aura and the form within it. This latter would be far more distinct and definite—a closer reproduction of the man's physical appearance; while instead of the floating mist-wreath we should see a sharply-defined ovoid form, preserving its shape unaffected amidst all the varied currents which are always swirling around it on the astral plane.

Now though the arrangement of the astral body is largely changed after death by the action of the kâmic elemental, such alternation affects principally the outer portion of the egg, and the form within always remains fairly recognisable, though it would certainly tend on the whole to grow fainter as time passed on. Practically, therefore, the difficulty raised in the question does not exist at any time, either during life or after death, even in the case of the most undeveloped man.

#### QUESTION 189.

*Is there such a thing as sleep or periodical rest for entities on the astral plane? Are there any alternations in the conditions, such as day and night on this earth? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—So far as has at present been observed, no sleep or periodical rest is experienced upon the astral plane, nor does it seem to be needed, for the moment the physical body is left behind all sense of the possibility of fatigue vanishes. It appears probable that to entities existing entirely upon the astral plane



life is one long day, and to them the sense of weariness would mean the approach of dissolution.

The physical changes of day and night make no difference that is readily perceptible on the astral plane, except that night populates it with a large number of semi-unconscious beings whose physical bodies are asleep. Changes in the conditions are produced by various planetary and other influences, and these are, of course, cyclical in their action on that plane as on this ; but they cannot be said to correspond in any way with day and night.

#### QUESTION 190.

*It has been stated that part of the punishment, say of a drunkard, after death, lies in his inability to gratify his appetite for drink ; but if every material particle has an astral counterpart, why should not the astral drunkard gratify his taste with the astral counterpart of his favourite beverage ? (1902.)*

G. R. S. M.—It is said that in the opinion of toppers who have taken up their abode on the “astral,” the liquor there does not taste “so good” as that to which they have been accustomed “down below” or “up above” (whichever is the right direction of space in this connection). We have no personal experience ourselves.

A. A. W.—So far as I am aware we have no direct teaching on this point, and we, who cannot see for ourselves, must be content with conjecture. The first point I would raise, in trying to give an answer, is “Is there such a thing as an astral counterpart of whisky?” This is not decided by the admitted fact that there are astral counterparts of every particle of the physical plane whisky. We are authoritatively informed that the astral body of a human being does not consist of *organs* corresponding to the physical ones ; that whilst the astral body does possess an astral counterpart of every particle of the physical body, these astral particles are in perpetual motion all over it, the only trace of organisation being the “wheels” through which all pass, and by which they are kept in relationship with the corresponding chakrams in the physical body. It seems evident from this that there can be nothing corresponding to the mechanical or chemical workings of the organs of the physical body, and I

think we may fairly conclude that "astral whisky" is probably not an intoxicating drink.

But there is another question, of still greater importance. On this plane the direct effects of whisky are purely upon the gross and etheric bodies. It is the modification produced by it in the circulation of the blood, and (probably) also of the Prāna along the nervous system, which is translated by the desire-body into pleasure. Now, have we any reason to suppose that this feeling of pleasure can be produced in the astral body by anything which is not physical? We are told that the first thing a pupil has to learn when beginning to go about consciously in his astral body is that physical fire will not burn him nor physical water drown him. But these also have their astral counterparts, which seem to be equally innocuous. When we speak of *mental* pleasure and pain, I strongly suspect this is a confusion; that mental pleasure differs from physical enjoyment in kind, not in degree, and does not come down into the desire-body at all. If this be so, it is plain that our question is fully answered;—there is nothing in the drunkard's astral surroundings which can make him *feel* at all.

It may, however, be asked, "What then is it which the lower creatures seek in hanging about gin-palaces, butchers' shops, etc., as we are told they do?" Well, we might answer that the whole history of magic and folk-lore suggests that the beings referred to are *not* wholly immaterial; that they are not freed from the etheric body, and that the fumes of blood, etc., have something which gives them actual nourishment, and hence—pleasure. But we need an explanation which covers the case of those who are truly "disembodied spirits," and it is not far to seek. Though the whisky itself can no longer give pleasure, there are the drinkers with astral bodies thrilling all over with the vibrations, which of all others are most nearly attuned to those of the dead drunkard's astral body, and hence most easily transmitted to it. Thus the dead and living act and react on each other, the dead receiving pleasure and the living being confirmed in their evil habits. There are grim stories in spiritualistic literature which illustrate this; of the "spirits" of men who have died of drink having been evoked at *séances*, and the rash invokers "possessed" by them and driven, in their turn, to ruin and death. Nor can we doubt that in the frequent cases of lifelong and unavailing struggle against evil habits we are

often dealing, not only with the elemental tempter, formed and maintained by the unhappy victim himself, but with true obsessing beings, who need, not his *soul*, but the enjoyment which his sin thus gives them. His ruin is nothing to them—when he is used up they will get another. The consolation the Wisdom has for these poor souls is that this ruin is not eternal, as the vulgar religions would have it, but only a sorrowful episode which delays for a moment the pilgrimage which *cannot* fail of its appointed end—in God.

## QUESTION 191.

*How does a person rid himself of impurities in Kāmaloka, and is he alive to the necessity of getting rid of the evil which detains him? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—He does *not* rid himself of evil tendencies in Kāmaloka, any more than he would in this life, unless he definitely works to that end. The length of his astral life may be said to depend on two factors—the strength and persistence of his desires, and the material which he has built into his astral body during earth-life. The desires are chiefly such as need a physical body for their satisfaction, and since he has that no longer they often cause him acute and prolonged suffering; but in process of time they wear themselves out, they become as it were atrophied, and die down because of this very impossibility of fulfilment. In the same way the matter of the astral body slowly wears away and disintegrates, as the consciousness is gradually withdrawn from it by the half unconscious effort of the Ego, and thus the man, by degrees, gets rid of whatever holds him back from Devachan.

But the worst of the trouble is precisely that indicated in the second clause of the question—the man is generally *not* alive to the necessity of getting rid of the evil which detains him. It is obvious that if he realises the facts of the case and gives his mind to the work, he can greatly expedite both the processes referred to above. If he knows that it is his business to kill out earthly desires and to withdraw into himself as quickly as may be, he will earnestly set himself to do these things; instead of which he usually, in his ignorance, broods over the desires and so lengthens their life, and clings desperately to the grossest

particles of astral matter as long as he possibly can, because the sensation connected with them seems nearest to that physical life for which he is so passionately longing. Thus we see why one of the most important parts of the work of the "invisible helpers" is to explain facts to the dead—also why even a merely intellectual knowledge of theosophical truths is of such inestimable value to a man.

A. J. R.—C. W. L. writes: "The desires are chiefly such as need a physical body for their satisfaction," meaning the desires of the "kâma rûpa." That desires for knowledge, wealth, glory, etc., may exist in that body after the loss of the dense body, I will not deny. But how is it possible to have a desire for food when there is no stomach to feed, a desire for sexual intercourse when there are no sexual organs to use; when there are no organs that cause such desires?

C. W. L.—The objector appears to make the mistake of supposing that what we usually call desire is a function of the physical body, or at least originates in it. But surely this is not so. Of course when the stomach is empty it intimates that fact by the feeling of hunger, and that might perhaps be considered as a purely physical form of "desire," quite unconnected with the astral body. We should not, however, usually give that name to it in theosophical study, but should rather apply it in such connection to the desire of the gourmand for the delights of the palate, which has no necessary relation to the condition of his physical stomach.

The craving of the drunkard for the bestial so-called "pleasures" of intoxication is in no way connected with physical thirst, though often confounded with it by the thoughtless; for water, which readily quenches physical thirst, in no way satisfies that desire. In this physical life, men are constantly led by desire both to eat and drink what is in no way needed by their dense body and even what is extremely injurious to it. All these desires take their origin in the astral body, and one who has been foolish enough to let himself fall into their power while alive, is still subject to them when he has lost the physical form through which alone they can be gratified.

## QUESTION 192.

*In the Growth of the Soul, p. 176, Mr. Sinnett says that the astral plane after death is a world of effects, not of causes, and that the will-power is inactive, while in the last answer Mr. Leadbeater speaks of a man after death ordering his life there, if he wishes to make the best of it. Is that only a seeming contradiction, or a real difference of opinion? (1901.)*

A. P. S.—I feel sure there is no real difference of opinion. The seeming contradiction merely arises from the way all theosophical writers find themselves sometimes speaking of broad rules, sometimes of exceptional possibilities. For the vast majority of people at the present stage of evolution the astral plane can only be a world of effects. From the days of *Esoteric Buddhism*, indeed, it was recognised that in rare cases people could continue to make bad karma on the astral plane after the death of the physical body, and later investigation has shown that the highly-developed person can do the other thing—make good and benevolent use of his astral life; but that possibility has to do with the varieties of activity open to persons either on or entering on the Path. And referring to C. W. L.'s answer, I do not think he is dealing with that possibility at all, but merely with the way in which an ordinary person might be induced to give himself up quietly to the purification processes, so to speak, of the astral period, and thus as soon as possible float on to devachanic conditions. There would be no making of fresh karma one way or the other in such a mere adaptation of himself, on the part of the person concerned, to the laws of nature and progress.

## QUESTION 193.

*How does it benefit a man to pass into the hells on the lower astral plane so long as he does not get rid of his vile passions and desires? See Ancient Wisdom, p. 92. (1900.)*

E. L.—The entities mentioned on the page referred to are of various types, and those who belong to the "hells" spoken of, exist there (when out of the physical body) simply because they have chosen to do so, and are treading the darker paths. I do not think the question of "benefit" comes in, unless it be where such

a person suddenly exhausts the bad karma that in past lives may have brought him there, and so becomes free to pass on to and appreciate some higher level. You *must* pass into the sphere you have fitted yourself to respond to, whether it be a "hell" or a "heaven." If the former, it certainly would not benefit him to pass into the latter, even supposing it possible, and it would not be heaven to him. He has worked to gain entry elsewhere. In the case of an ordinary human being after death, who might have some karma to work off on the lower levels, this process would be distinctly beneficial, in that it would be for him one of necessary purification, a stepping stone to higher regions. He must get rid of his infirmities there, or else he remains bound. His the choice always, but if he choose to remain evil, he certainly does not benefit himself, but the reverse.

QUESTION 194.

*Why can some persons recently deceased succeed in materialising themselves and others not? For instance—in "The Two Brothers" (Theosophical Review, Nov., 1897), the dead Lancelot could not communicate in any way by himself with his living brother, while in "An Astral Murder" (Theosophical Review, Dec., 1897), Tom Price was seen by three persons the morning he stole the engine to kill his rival, more than a month after his death. Are hate and desire of revenge stronger than love, as it would seem from these two cases? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—Assuredly hate and revenge are *not* stronger than love, regarded as abstract forces; but one man's hate may very easily be stronger and more concentrated than another man's love, and this is mainly a question of the amount of force exercised—of strength of will and power of concentration, and not of the direction in which they may be turned.

It does not always follow that those who patiently collect and study large numbers of facts are, therefore, invariably able to explain all they see; if they are questioned as to the facts they can answer, but the reasons lying behind those facts may often be only matters of conjecture, just as is the case in some of the investigations of physical science. I believe both those stories to be absolutely true (I *know*, that one of them is), but, nevertheless, there are probably all sorts of karmic forces working at the back

of each of them of which I know nothing whatever, and to give a perfect explanation of them, all those would have to be taken into account.

There is, of course, no difficulty in seeing why poor Lancelot was unable to communicate with his brother, for that inability is simply the normal condition of affairs; the wonder is that Cyril *was* able to materialise himself, not that Lancelot was *not*. Not only, however, was the feeling probably stronger in Cyril's case, but he also knew exactly what he wanted to do—knew that such a thing as materialisation was a possibility, and had some general idea as to how it was done—while Lancelot naturally knew nothing of all this.

If either of the cases needs accounting for, it is not Lancelot's, but Tom Price's. It may be taken as certain that *he* knew nothing whatever of occult methods or possibilities, yet he contrived to gain his nefarious end by the use of them; how is it probable than this was accomplished?

It is most likely that a man of such violent passion and such terrible force for evil had drawn round him during life powerful astral entities of the most objectionable type who would gleefully aid him in such a work of destruction; but quite possibly his concentrated and venomous malignity may have been strong enough to burst through the barriers for itself, just as Cyril's intense pity did in the other case.

Inexplicable as it may seem, there is no doubt whatever of the existence in nature of this stupendous power of will over matter of all planes, so that if only the power be great enough, practically *any* result may be produced by its direct action, without any knowledge or even thought on the part of the man exercising that will as to *how* it is to do its work. We have plenty of evidence that this power holds good in the case of materialisation, although ordinarily it is an art which must be learned just like any other. Assuredly an average man on the astral plane could no more materialise himself without having previously learned how to do it than the average man on this plane could play the violin without having previously learned it; but there are exceptional cases, and if Tom Price had no assistance he must have been one of them.

## QUESTION 195.

*If it is to be inferred (see Sinnett's Growth of the Soul) that there is no growth during spiritual periods for the Ego—but only assimilation of past experiences—why does Theosophy encourage missionary effort during the night—or day—in those who can transfer their consciousness, while still living, on to the “invisible” planes? If spirits can't be helped, what is the use of trying? (1901.)*

K. B.—The efforts to influence those on superphysical planes encouraged by theosophic teaching have several objects in view and are not confined, as “missionary” efforts generally are, to the conversion of those helped. Neither are the “spirits” necessarily disembodied and entering on their period of rest and assimilation.

Much is no doubt done by more advanced disciples among entities bewildered and terrified by the unexpectedly natural conditions in which they find themselves immediately after their physical death. It is possible to smooth and shorten their path through the intervening “purgatorial” Kāmaloka by suggestions as to the best manner of freeing themselves from the bonds which still attach them to earth.

But a much larger field of activity is among those who, like ourselves, are only temporarily freed from their bodies during sleep, and with whom one can come in touch during the precious night hours untrammelled by the illusions of time, space and opportunity. Enormous is the help which even a slightly advanced student may give if he truly and unselfishly loves his fellow man. He can soothe him in trouble, advise him in perplexity, and suggest new courses of action, explain intellectual difficulties, or lead him to some more advanced friend who can do so.

All this, and much more, can those do who can transfer their consciousness on to the invisible planes. The harvest is ripe, but the labourers are few.

## QUESTION 196.

*A mother who has lately lost her child is anxious to know something of its whereabouts, etc. She has read all the likely books she has bearing on such subjects, but without any satisfactory*



*result. Will you answer these questions?—1. What becomes of a young baby after death? 2. Has it a long stay in Kāmaloka—say to end of its natural life? 3. Or does it go straight to Devachan? 4. Or does it reincarnate again almost immediately? (1901.)*

A. A. W.—The root of the difficulty here is the old one, that people do not always succeed in moulding their actual thought according to the knowledge they possess. They really know better than to ask such questions, but we must not be hard upon the unreasonableness of a mother's grief, or be impatient if, to her, the little warm body she has so lately pressed to her bosom seems the reality, and she asks if this, the baby she has so loved, goes straight to Devachan. It is the same confusion which makes the mother at a spiritualistic *séance* expect her child to show itself as grown up to the age it would have had had it lived. Of this we have lately spoken in these pages.

What really is this "young baby" whose future is in question? It is the preparation for a human being—the living, breathing house shaped by the Lords of Karma to be for a single life-time the fit dwelling for a soul; fashioned according to the special karma of that soul, according as it has to be made happy or miserable; to find its progress upwards in this life assisted by the perfection of its dwelling or the contrary, as the sins and virtues of its past life may have determined its fate in this. The "breath of life" has been breathed into it; but, at birth, it is an animal only; the soul for which it was made has not yet taken possession of its vehicle. Now, as far as I know, the only certain information we have on the matter is that we must not reckon the ensoulment of the body as complete before seven years old—the age universally and rightly known as the "age of reason."

But of this much I think we may be sure; that the soul takes an absorbing interest in the preparation and growth of the body in which it is to dwell, watches it anxiously, and from time to time makes efforts to do something with it. There is no loving mother who has not to tell of looks and actions of her infant seeming to manifest an intelligence, as is said, "beyond its years." If it be remembered that the soul which is to use this tiny form is not itself a baby soul, growing *with* the body, but, on the contrary, one possibly older and higher than its parents', there will be no wonder or incredibility about this. It will be understood that

the true Self of the babe has, for a moment, looked out upon the world through its tiny eyes—that the mother has for one instant been in the presence of her son in soul as well as body, an instant of soul communion possibly deeper than the chances of his grown-up life may ever again grant her. It is over in a moment; the soul does not yet possess the body fully, but it is a pledge of what shall be hereafter. Another suggestion is furnished by the distinct *character* which many children bring into the world with them. Indeed, very few children's minds are the blank pages which the older educationalists believed them; and all these differences are the working of the soul within.

Now for our question. Somehow this ensoulment fails to take place; the body dies, and the soul is left to look for another chance of reincarnation. How is this possible? How is it that karma thus allows itself seemingly to be vanquished and its work wasted? It may come about in many ways. It may be that the karma of the parents brings this sorrow on them; it may be that the waiting soul has this karmic penalty to pay. What has been told us of souls drawn into renewed earth-life by desire to meet others may suggest the possibility of something like a premature attempt to return—a desire sometimes granted by the Lords of Fate and sometimes refused. And besides such causes as these, it is evident that we must often be in presence of what is called “chance”; a word we use to express the action of a law or laws, unknown to us, and beyond the working of our own personal karma. Something done, or thought, or suffered by the mother may have reacted upon the unborn babe and made it unfit to be the soul's dwelling place, or it may be caught and crushed in the great wheels of national or Cosmic Karma—Fate—without any personal fault of its own or its parents. I pass by the question whether there may not be a child born for which no soul is waiting, and which simply drops off as unripe fruit from a tree, for this would lead us too far.

Anyway, in the case put by the questioner—the death of the infant before the soul has taken full possession—there is no difficulty in answering her question. The soul which was to have made a human being of the dead child remains just where it was before. It has not gone through death, for it has never lived in that body at all. There is no question of a new spell of Kāmaloka or Devachan for it. We can hardly doubt that links of love have been formed by its temporary association with the parents of the

body which was to have been his ; links which will have their effect upon his next incarnation ; links which it seems not unreasonable to imagine might possibly, under favourable circumstances, bring him into reincarnation as another child of theirs. I do not see anything which by our doctrines could be pronounced impossible in the published stories of cases in which a child has brought with it certain recollections to this effect. It is in this direction, as it seems to me, that theosophists must look for something to replace for us that satisfaction to our human love and longing which a mother feels, and cannot be reproached for feeling, when at a materialising *séance* a form resembling and calling itself her child presents itself to her embrace. Put it at its best this is only a happiness of the physical world. In its stead I think we theosophists may fairly believe and trust that the mother's devotion to her child whilst living, and her thoughts and prayers and loving remembrances afterwards, cannot but form the closest of ties betwixt her own soul and that other which has stood by, conscious of all that she has done and felt for it, loving and sympathising in return, sharing her hopes and fears for the new man who was to have been their joint work. Nor can we doubt that when the two meet in the higher world he will indeed "spring to her and call her his," even if they should never more meet on this lower physical plane. For what is all meeting on earth, compared with an instant's communion of souls in Devachan or the Buddhic plane—the Place of Bliss !

F. A. — A. A. W. says, in speaking of the "young baby that at birth it is an animal only ; the soul for which it was made *has not yet* taken possession of its vehicle." The truth underlying this statement seems to me to be contained in the concluding lines of the paragraph, *viz.*, that "we must not reckon the ensoulment of the body as complete before seven years old." This seems to be the case, but to say that at birth the young baby "is an animal only" appears to me rather a strong way of describing the facts as they have been stated. It is true that the exact time when the entity comes into connection with its new vehicle has not been told us, but there is much to point to the conclusion that this connection takes place in the ante-natal life, and that the new vehicle is even then influenced by the incoming entity, so that although the consciousness may be more on the astral than on the physical plane. I yet, to use the words of another writer, "from the earliest beginning the child and the soul to which it might be destined to

incarnation must evidently be regarded as already in union." So that the mother as she clasps the tender new-born infant to her breast may feel that it is not the mere animal form that she cherishes, but that the living soul is there in close connection, a soul perchance with whom she may have been in the closest bonds of affection in the bygone ages of time.

With respect to the question as to why in some cases the young body dies and there is not the maturity of ensoulment, it seems to me that karma gives ample explanation ; it may be, it must be, as A. A. W. says, the karma of the parents also, but I cannot conceive that in any case it can be apart from or outside the karma of the experiencing entity, although it is quite conceivable that that personal karma may be included in what we call national karma, but it seems evident that in the past history of many individuals there must be karma that would allow of an early death ; if it were not so I think we should find that the child would be brought back even, as it were, from the gates of the grave. I do not think that we can imagine that any physical form should be built and a child born for which no soul is waiting, because the mould on which the body is built is made suitable for the incoming entity, and is so determined by the thought of the Lords of Karma ; I do not mean that every germ must fructify, for physical nature is lavish in its possibilities, but when the body is formed with its special characteristics and capacities, it is so formed in view of the special needs of a certain entity, or perhaps, in the more undeveloped, of certain types of entities, but in all cases long before birth there is the connection of the body and soul.

These considerations, however, do not go very far in answer to the question, nor would it bring much comfort to a mother's natural sorrow at the loss of her child ; but where the mother may draw comfort is, that, as A. A. W. says, there is no question either of Kāmaloka or Devachan for the entity connected with the infant body. It has generated no fresh causes, so that it has none to work out ; it will, therefore, await a re-birth, and if there has been soul love between the mother and the entity that has left the child body, it is certain that they will come together again, perhaps even in the same incarnation. Instances have been known in which the ensouling entity of a child that died young was reincarnated almost immediately, so as again to be present in the same life with those it loved.

A. A. W.—If I were to undertake a controversy with my old

friend F. A., I should expose myself to the retort with which the old Bishop of Birmingham (I forget his name) ended a discussion with the late Cardinal Manning: "Manning—I was a Bishop when you were an 'eretic!" I will only plead that I think a careful reading of my answer to the question referred to will show that there is really no serious difference between us; if there is I give in!

## QUESTION 197.

- (a) *Are the disembodied spirits—who are awaking to conscious life on the astral plane, especially in the lower regions—able to see and follow events taking place upon the physical plane?*
- (b) *If the power to do this (i.e., to see and follow events) varies in the different individual cases, what principle determines this variation?*
- (c) *Are disembodied individuals able to utilise means for study (such as books) belonging to the physical plane, or are the books they study only imaginary?*
- (d) *Do the disembodied see this physical world as it is, or the astral counterpart plus beings and objects belonging to the astral regions?*
- (e) *Seeing, then, that physical objects have a totally different aspect when seen astrally, what determines and guides the visual power of the disembodied? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—(a) There are three sub-divisions of the astral plane from which it might be possible, though not desirable, for them to do so to some extent. On the lowest sub-plane the man is usually fully occupied in other ways, and concerns himself with little that takes place in the physical world, except, as explained in our literature, when he haunts vile resorts; but in the sixth sub-division (counting from above downwards) he is in very close touch with the physical plane, and may quite probably be conscious of it. In rapidly diminishing degree this consciousness is also possible as he ascends through the fifth and fourth sub-planes, but beyond that it would be only by the special effort to communicate through a medium that contact with the physical world could be gained, and from the highest sub-plane even that would be extremely difficult.

(b) It would be determined by the character and disposition

of the person, as well as by the stage of development to which he had attained. Most of those who are ordinarily called good people, living out their lives to their natural end, would sweep through all those lower stages before awakening to astral consciousness, and would, therefore, be extremely unlikely to be conscious of anything physical at all. Some few however even of these are drawn back into touch with this world by great anxiety about some one left behind.

Less developed entities would have in their composition more of the matter of these lower sub-planes, and would be much more likely to be able to follow what goes on upon earth. Most of all would this be the case if they were people whose whole train of thought was essentially of this world—who had in them little or nothing of spiritual aspiration or of high intellect. It is to be remembered also that this downward tendency grows with the using, and that a man who was at first happily unconscious of what lies below him may be so unfortunate as to have his attention attracted to it (frequently by selfish manifestations of the grief of the survivors) and will then exert his will, to keep himself from rising out of touch with this life to which he no longer belongs; and in such a case his power of seeing earthly things would almost certainly increase for a time, and he would be likely to suffer mentally when he presently found such power slipping from him. Such suffering would, of course, be entirely due to the irregularity introduced into the kāmālokic life by his own action, for it is absolutely unknown in the ordinary and orderly evolution after death.

(c) They certainly could not utilise physical books unless they had developed a lower sight in the highly undesirable manner just mentioned, though in many cases they might be able to assimilate ideas direct from the mind of some student interested in their special subjects. The books spoken of as used upon the highest sub-plane, however, are by no means imaginary, but are real astral duplicates of those down here.

(d) Neither the departed nor we on this plane ever see the physical world *as is is* at all, for we (or most of us) see only the solid and liquid portions thereof, and are altogether blind to the far vaster gaseous and etheric parts; while the departed do not see the physical matter at all, nor even the whole astral counterpart of it, but only that portion of the latter which belongs to the particular sub-plane upon which they are at the time. The only

man who ever gets anything like a really comprehensive view of affairs is he who has developed etheric and astral sight while still alive in the physical body.

(e) The disembodied, as has already been explained, does not see the physical object, and would not, as a rule, recognise its astral counterpart with any certainty, even when he saw it. He would usually require considerable experience before he could clearly identify objects, and any attempt which he made to deal with them would be liable to be very vague and uncertain, as is often seen in haunted houses where stone-throwing, trampling, or vague movements of physical matter take place. His power of identification is thus largely a question of experience and intelligence, but it is little likely to be perfect unless he has known something of such matters before death.

#### QUESTION 198.

*Is Kâmaloka, the abode of man after death, a definite region in the astral plane, or does it include the whole of that plane, so that ordinary persons who have passed from the body may be found in all parts? (1896.)*

B. K.—Kâmaloka, the abode of man after death, is, so far as I understand, not a definite region in the astral plane, but the whole astral plane of our earth with its seven subdivisions or sub-planes, corresponding to the solid earth, the water, the air, and the four etheric levels of the physical plane.

Also, I believe that ordinary persons who have passed from the body may be found in all parts of it, though the questioner must remember that in *post-mortem* life a person is confined to one of the seven astral sub-planes at a time.

This is the general fact of the matter; but a question arises in relation to certain parts of our earth's astral plane, such as, for instance, those which coincide in space with the interior of the earth. I have heard that ordinary clairvoyants, and even living people whose life on the astral plane is fully conscious and developed, are unable to penetrate into these regions. This raises the interesting question whether the same conditions which render the interior of the earth so difficult of access to the living psychic, also exclude the presence there of the ordinary run of disembodied entities.

Finally, it must be noted that the seven sub-planes of the astral plane of our earth are not all of them continuous throughout the solar system. It has been said that only the highest or atomic-ether sub-planes of the physical, astral and devachanic planes are continuous throughout our solar system, while the six lower ones in each case, representing as they do, further degrees of condensation of the atomic-ether sub-plane of each, are localised or specialised as the individual atmosphere of each planet or globe. This implies that while a vibration in the atomic-ether state of the physical, astral, or devachanic planes can travel unhindered throughout the solar system, this would not be the case with a vibration on any one of the denser sub-planes. Such a vibration could only travel to the limit of the specialised aura or atmosphere of the globe on which it was started.

C. W. L.—The use of Sanskrit terms is so excessively uncertain that one hesitates to say exactly what the real meaning of any one of them may be, since no two schools of thought in India appear to agree about them. But there is no doubt that in theosophical literature the word Kâmaloka has been used simply as a synonym for the astral plane, and there is also no doubt that ordinary persons who have passed from the body may be found upon all the subdivisions of that plane, as was stated in Manual No. v. Indeed, it would not be inaccurate to say that every one after death has to pass through all these subdivisions on his way to Devachan, though, of course, it must not be inferred that he would be conscious upon all of them. Precisely, as it is necessary that the physical body should contain within its constitution physical matter in all its conditions, solid, liquid, gaseous, and etheric; so it is indispensable that the astral vehicle should contain particles belonging to all the corresponding subdivisions of astral matter, though, of course, the proportions may vary very greatly in different cases. Now, it must be remembered that along with the matter of his astral body a man picks up the corresponding elemental essence, and that during his life this essence is segregated from the ocean of similar matter around, and practically becomes for that time what may be described as a kind of artificial elemental, which has temporarily a definite separate existence of its own, and follows the course of its own evolution downwards into matter without any reference to the convenience or interest of the Ego to whom it happens to be attached—thus causing that perpetual struggle between the will



of the flesh and the will of the spirit to which religious writers so often refer. When the man passes away at death from the physical plane, the disintegrating forces of nature begin to operate upon his astral body, and the kâmic elemental thus finds his existence as a separate entity endangered. He sets to work, therefore, to defend himself, and to hold the astral body together as long as possible ; and his method of doing this is to rearrange the matter of which it is composed in a sort of stratified series of shells, leaving that of the lowest (and, therefore, coarsest and grossest) sub-plane on the outside, since that will offer the greater resistance to disintegration.

Now, a man has to stay upon the lowest subdivision of Kâmaloka until he has disentangled so much as is possible of his Manas from the matter of that sub-plane ; and when that is done this consciousness is focussed in the next of these concentric shells (that formed of the matter of the sixth subdivision), or, to put the same idea in other words, he passes on to the next sub-plane. It is, therefore, obvious that the length of his detention upon any sub-plane will be precisely in proportion to the amount of its matter which is found in his astral body, and that in turn depends upon the life he has lived, the desires he has indulged, and the class of matter which by so doing he has attracted towards him and built into himself. It is, therefore, possible for a man, by pure living and high thinking, to minimise the quantity of matter belonging to the lower astral levels which he attaches to himself, and to raise it in each case to what may be called its critical point, so that the first touch of disintegrating force should shatter its cohesion and resolve it into its original condition, leaving him free at once to pass on to the next sub-plane. In the case of a thoroughly spiritually-minded person this condition would have been attained with reference to all the subdivisions of astral matter, and the result would be a practically instantaneous passage through Kâmaloka, so that consciousness would be recovered for the first time in Devachan. Of course, the sub-planes must not be thought of as divided from one another in space, but rather as interpenetrating one another ; so that when we say that a person passes from one subdivision to another, we do not mean that he moves in space at all, but simply that the focus of his consciousness shifts from the outer shell to the one next within it.

The only persons who would normally awake to consciousness

on the lowest level of Kāmaloka are those whose desires are gross and brutal—drunkards, sensualists, and such like. There they would remain for a period proportioned to the strength of their desires, often suffering terribly from the fact that while these earthly lusts are still as strong as ever, they now find it impossible to gratify them, except occasionally in a vicarious manner when they are able to seize upon some like-minded person, and obsess him. The ordinarily decent man would probably have little to detain him on that sub-plane; but if his chief desires and thoughts had centred in mere worldly affairs, he would be likely to find himself in the sixth subdivision, still hovering about the places and persons with which he was most closely connected while on earth. The fifth and the fourth sub-planes are of similar character, except that as we rise through them mere earthly associations appear to become of less and less importance, and the departed tends more and more to mould his surroundings into agreement with the more persistent of his thoughts. By the time we get to the third subdivision we find that this characteristic has entirely superseded the vision of the realities of the plane; for here the people are living in imaginary cities of their own—not, of course, each involved entirely in his own thought, as in Devachan, but inheriting and adding to the structures erected by the thoughts of their predecessors. Here it is that the churches and schools and “dwellings in the summerland” so often described at spiritualistic *séances*, are to be found; though they would often seem much less real and much less magnificent to an unprejudiced living observer than they are to their delighted creators. The second sub-plane seems especially the habitat of the selfish or unspiritual religionist; here he wears his golden crown and worships his own grossly material representation of the particular deity of his country and time. The highest subdivision of Kamaloka seems specially appropriated to those who during life have devoted themselves to materialistic but intellectual pursuits, following them not for the sake of benefiting their fellowmen thereby, but either from motives of selfish ambition or simply for the sake of intellectual exercise. Such persons will often remain upon this level for many long years—happy enough indeed in working out their intellectual problems, but doing no good to anyone, and making no progress on their way towards Devachan. It must, however, be clearly understood, as before explained, that the idea of space is not to

be associated with these sub-planes. A departed entity functioning upon any one of them might drift with equal ease from here to Australia, or wherever a passing thought might take him ; but he would not be able to transfer his consciousness from that sub-plane to the one next above it until the process of detachment described had been completed.

## QUESTION 199.

*In Mr. Leadbeater's Astral Plane, seven divisions are described, in each of which human beings after death can reside before passing to the devachanic region. Is it necessary to pass consciously through all the stages from the lowest one on which the man awakes, or may he miss any? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—It must be remembered that a man's stay on any sub-plane of Kâmaloka depends entirely upon the amount of the matter of that sub-plane which he has built into his astral body. Some matter of each sub-division—even of the lowest—it seems to be necessary that he should have in its composition ; but if during life he has refined his portion of the matter of, say, the seventh sub-plane to the highest possible degree, it reaches a kind of critical point at which the slightest further impulse would break it up into matter of the sixth sub-plane. The indrawing by the Ego of all his forces after death furnishes this additional impulse ; the shell of matter of the seventh sub-plane is at once shattered, and the man is upon the sixth. Obviously he may have applied the same method of refinement to the matter of that sixth sub-division, and in that case the process would repeat itself, and he would be almost instantaneously upon the fifth sub-plane. In the case of a highly-developed person this would happen with every sub-division of the astral world, so that before such an one recovered consciousness after death he would be already in Devachan. Between this eminently desirable condition and that of the undeveloped man who lingers long on every sub-plane, there are, of course, innumerable gradations, so that a man may have conscious existence on any possible combination of the sub-divisions so long as he takes them in regular order from below upwards. Even the conjunction of the seventh and the first, though naturally a very rare one, has been known to happen ; and in that case the man, after spending a period of extreme discomfort

on the lowest sub-plane, would sweep rapidly through all the intermediate ones and enter upon his life upon the highest.

QUESTION 200.

*It seems evident that confinement to one sub-plane of the astral after death will very much restrict our ability to help others who may know less than we do; is there no way in which we can avoid or transcend this limitation? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—This restriction is not in any way a necessary evil, but is the work of that manifestation of the man's lower nature which has sometimes been called the desire-elemental (see the new enlarged edition of *The Astral Plane*, p. 40) and is produced by it entirely without any reference to, or indeed any knowledge on its part of, the evolution of the man as a whole.

The ordinary man, knowing nothing whatever about all this, accepts these arrangements of the desire-elemental as a part of the new and strange conditions which he finds surrounding him, and supposes himself to be seeing the whole of the *post-mortem* world, when in reality he has only an extremely partial view of one of its sub-planes. But there is no reason whatever why the student of Occultism, who understands the situation, should tamely submit himself to the sway of this elemental after death any more than he did during life. He will, of course, decline to permit the case-hardening which would confine him to a single sub-plane, and will insist upon keeping open his communications with the higher astral levels as well.

Thus he will be in practically the same position as he was when he passed into the astral world in sleep during earth-life, and, therefore, will be able to move about much more freely and make himself much more useful, than if he allowed himself to be the slave of the lower desires. So once again we see the exceeding advantage of having accurate knowledge beforehand with regard to these after-death conditions.

QUESTION 201.

*We have been told that all who die suddenly from accident are consigned to the lowest subdivision of the astral plane until such*

*time as their death would normally have occurred. Does not this seem somewhat hard, especially in the case of young children?* (1898.)

C. W. L.—If the statement quoted were true, it certainly would seem to be rather a hard case, but all the evidence with which we are yet acquainted goes entirely the other way. Large numbers of accidents, both to adults and children, have naturally come under the notice of those whose duty it is to try to smooth the path of the departing, and among them all no single case has yet been observed in which the suggested rule held good ; so that if it is, or ever was really a rule, it does not appear to be operative at the present time.

To quote a few only out of many examples well known to me, there is first of all the case of the two brothers, so well described in *The Theosophical Review* for November last. It will be remembered that one of them, a boy of about fourteen, was killed by an accident in the hunting-field, so that he presents in many ways what might be considered a typical instance. Now it is, of course, quite impossible for us to say what would have been the natural limit of his life if this had not happened, but it seems hardly likely that it could have been adequately represented by the few hours of entire unconsciousness which were all that he passed upon the lowest subdivision of the astral plane. When he came to himself at the expiration of that time he found himself on the sixth sub-plane among the home surroundings with which he was so familiar, and it was there that the helper's attention was attracted to him—there also that he still remains, trying in his turn to pass on to others the aid which was so freely rendered to him.

The other example to which I referred was the case of a child killed by violence at the still earlier age of seven. He spent a few months only on the astral plane, not touching the lowest level consciously at all, and was in Devachan for about fifteen years ; he then reincarnated in the ordinary way, and is alive at the present time.

Yet another case was that of a child drowned at the age of twelve, who did not reincarnate until forty-one years later ; but as he spent thirty-seven of these in Devachan and did not consciously touch the lowest level of the astral plane during the four years of his life there, he can hardly be said to exemplify the supposed rule quoted by the questioner.

So far as we are able to see, the sub-plane of the astral upon which a man, whether young or old, recovers consciousness after death is not at all determined by the nature of that death, but by quite other factors. The human being starts in life with an astral body in which matter of all the sub-planes is mingled in proportions determined partly by the general development of the Ego, and partly by the nature of his last earth-life. But whether as he grows up he retains this proportion depends entirely upon the use he makes of that astral body.

If he gives way to and intensifies all his lower desires, he will steadily increase the amount of the coarser and denser matter in his kâmic vehicle, and there will be a proportionate decrease in the amount of the finer matter of the higher sub-planes. If on the contrary he steadily represses these lower tendencies, his astral body will develop on exactly opposite lines, becoming gradually more and more refined, and as the various particles in turn pass away from the body, the tendency will be always to replace them by others of higher quality.

It must by this time be well understood by all students of theosophical literature how after death the kâmic elemental rearranges the matter of which the astral body is composed, and how consequently the length of a man's stay upon any sub-plane depends upon the amount of matter belonging to that sub-plane which he has built into himself during earth-life. To this rule there is no kind of exception so far as we are yet aware, except that, of course, a man's actions when he finds himself conscious upon any sub-plane may within certain limits either shorten or prolong his connection with it.

But the amount of consciousness that a person will have upon a given sub-plane, does not invariably follow precisely at the same law. Let us consider an extreme example of possible variation in order that we may grasp its method. Suppose a man who has brought over from his past incarnation tendencies requiring for their manifestation a very large amount of the matter of the seventh or lowest sub-plane, but has in his present life been fortunate enough to learn in his very earliest years the possibility and necessity of controlling these tendencies. Of course it is very improbable that such a man's efforts at control should be entirely and uniformly successful; but if they were, the substitution of finer for grosser particles would progress steadily, though slowly.

This process is at best a very gradual one, and it might well

happen that the man died before it was half completed. In that case there would undoubtedly be enough matter of the lowest sub-plane left in his astral body to ensure him no inconsiderable residence there; but it would be matter through which in this incarnation his consciousness had never been in the habit of functioning, and as it could not suddenly acquire this habit the result would be that the man would rest upon that sub-plane until his share of its matter was disintegrated, but would be all the while in a condition of unconsciousness—that is to say, he would practically sleep through the period of his sojourn there, and so would be entirely unaffected by its many disagreeables.

It will be seen that both these factors of *post-mortem* existence—the sub-plane to which the man is carried, and the degree of his consciousness there—depend not upon the nature of his death but upon the nature of his life, and that no accident, however sudden or terrible, can seriously affect them. Nevertheless, there is reason behind the familiar old prayer of the Church, “From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us.” For though a sudden death does not necessarily affect the man’s position upon the astral plane in any way for the worse, at least it does nothing to improve it, whereas the slow wasting away of the aged, or the ravages of any kind of long-continued disease, are almost invariably accompanied by very considerable loosening and breaking up of astral particles, so that when the man recovers consciousness upon the astral plane, he finds some at any rate of his great work there already done for him.

It is also undoubtedly true that the great mental disturbance and terror which sometimes accompany accidental death are in themselves a very unfavourable preparation for the astral life; indeed, cases have been known in which such agitation and terror persisted even after death, though this is happily rare. But enough has been said to show that the popular desire to have some time in which to prepare for death is not a mere superstition, but has a certain amount of reason at the back of it.

Naturally to any one who is leading the theosophical life it will make but little difference whether the transition from the physical plane to the astral comes slowly or quickly, since he is all the time doing his best to make as much progress as possible, and the object before him will remain the same in either case.

To sum up then: it seems clear that death by accident does not necessarily involve any lengthy residence on the lowest level

of the astral plane, though it may in one sense be said slightly to prolong such residence, since it deprives the victim of the opportunity of wearing out the particles belonging to that level during the sufferings of a lingering disease. With regard to young children, it is exceedingly unlikely that in their short and comparatively blameless earth-lives they should ever develop much affinity for the lowest subdivision of astral life; indeed as a matter of practical experience, they are hardly ever to be found in connection with that sub-plane at all. In any case, whether they die by accident or disease, their life on the astral plane appears to be a comparatively short one; their Devachan, though much longer, is still in reasonable proportion to it, and their early reincarnation follows as soon as the forces they have been able to set in motion during their short earth lives work themselves out, precisely as we might expect from our observation of the action of the same great law in the case of adults.

QUESTION 202.

*After death the etheric double is separated from the dense body, and yet it is said to disintegrate with it. Why does this occur? If the dense body is burnt, is the etheric double also burnt? (1896.)*

B. K.—The etheric double is primarily the vehicle of Prāna, the co-ordinating machinery by which the organic life of the body *as a whole*, in contradistinction to that of its individual cells, is maintained. Now what we call the death of the body is simply the cessation of this co-ordinating activity, and it is the self-assertion of the individual living units which build up the body which causes its decomposition—each tiny life going on in its own way regardless of the whole. Clearly, therefore, so long as the etheric double is united to the gross body, so long can the play of Prāna through it go on, and so the gross body be kept alive. So if death is to occur, the etheric must be so separated from the gross body that Prāna can no longer act through it upon the latter. Hence the separation of the two at death, though in fact the etheric body even then never goes to any distance from the gross body. But when thus separated permanently, the etheric body has no longer any *raison d'être*, and Prāna no longer playing through it, it naturally disintegrates bit by bit. Since the



two are thus separated at death, the etheric double is not affected by the burning of the physical.

C. W. L.—The etheric double disintegrates after death for precisely the same reason as does the physical body—that the co-ordinating force of Prāna is then withdrawn from it. It must not, however, be supposed that these two disintegrations depend upon one another. Whether the physical vehicle is burnt, or decays slowly in the usual and most objectional manner, or is indefinitely preserved as an Egyptian mummy, the etheric double pursues its own line of quiet disintegration entirely unaffected. The advantage gained by cremation is that it entirely prevents any attempt at a partial and unnatural temporary reunion of the principles, or any endeavour to make use of the corpse for the purposes of the lower magic—to say nothing of the many dangers to the living which are avoided by its adoption.

The second part of the question is already answered by implication. It would be quite impossible to *burn* matter in the etheric state at all, in the ordinary sense of the word; though being still physical and not astral, such matter is not entirely unaffected by cold or heat, but might be subject to a certain amount of contraction or expansion thereby. It is, however, absolutely certain that the fears of those who dread to have their physical bodies burnt, lest some pain should thereby be caused to the etheric double, are entirely without foundation. No such sensation could possibly be produced, except by the very magical ceremonies against the practice of which cremation guarantees them.

#### QUESTION 203.

*Can we hope to meet after death those we have loved here, if on different planes and of different faiths? For instance, one who, though trusting in God, yet believed in total extinction, and another who was either a Christian or Theosophist; and do we meet in Devachan, or where we first go after death, or have we to wait till we return to earth?*

*We are often separated here from those we love; are we to judge in this from the known to the unknown? (1899.)*

A. P. S.—This question is not put now for the first time, but it is extremely important that theosophical students should correctly apprehend the answer. At the first glance people are apt to think the teaching of occult knowledge comfortless in

this respect, as compared with the assurances blithely offered sometimes by—one is tempted to say religious ignorance, to make the antithesis complete, but let us rather put it, by the uninstructed imagination of commonplace religious teachers. Content to suppose that he has already reached the culmination of all possible earthly evolution, the ordinary religious man assumes that after death friends will resume their progress together under happier conditions, and the rest he leaves involved in a golden mist of uncertainty. The hypothesis, however, ignores many difficulties. Not to speak of those entangled with the necessity of future incarnations, the ordinary assumption entirely overlooks the trouble that may arise in heaven when A. B., for instance, requires for his happiness the love and companionship of C. D., while C. D., quite indifferent to A. B., imperatively requires the love and companionship of E. F. to make heaven a sphere of happiness for him or her. In fact the whole ordinary conception of after-death states, inasmuch as they touch the problems of companionship at all, calmly assume that “those we have loved” have always loved us; that all affections are mutual, and the task of Nature in providing happiness for her children, assuming she is disposed to do this, perfectly plain sailing. What should be recognised as obvious, is that some of the bitterest griefs humanity is capable of feeling down here, must be protracted in “heaven,” or else there must be some desperate mistake in the commonplace theory of heaven and of the after-death conditions of people who have known one another in earthly life.

This exordium is necessary in dealing with the theosophical explanation as to how the matter really stands in the devachanic condition of the ordinary entity after death (and after the intervening condition on the astral plane): the devachanic vision, as it has sometimes been called, is *not* a reality in the sense usually attached to the word, but a delightful illusion in which the entity concerned fully believes he has the loving companionship of those whose companionship he desires. That illusion is built up of all the thoughts and desires he has had concerning them in the past life, so it presents them to him in the most engaging aspect. And the vision never fades until the long period of devachanic rest is over, although it may go through all the modifications dictated by the variegated interests of the past life. Although a spiritual existence in the strictest sense of the term, it is not one of the most exalted order, any more than the ordinary human being to

whom it is allotted is a being of the most exalted order. The rūpa-devachanic state is a condition of the most perfect happiness while it lasts, but is essentially a condition adapted to the spiritual needs of humanity in its present stage of evolution, not one that fulfils all our loftiest imaginings—far outrunning our present evolution concerning the final state of spiritual perfection. Before we can attain to that, we must have reached the final perfection of earthly evolution, and we are very far short of that as yet.

In one sense there is a greater degree of what is commonly meant by reality about the intercourse that may in some cases be possible on the astral plane, than can be fairly recognised as belonging to the rūpa-devachanic condition. In the case of two entities actually inspired by a mutual love as the strongest force of their nature, and passing away from this life at periods not very widely separated in time, the meeting on the astral plane might be quite genuine—even as regarded from the earthly point of view, but the ultimate falling asleep and the awakening on the rūpa-devachanic plane would not seem to impair the perfection of such companionship.

As for the embarrassment of “different planes and different faiths,” it will be seen that the devachanic vision must necessarily ignore all such questions, having its origin for each person in his own subjective condition. It seems only necessary to add that the arūpa plane of Devachan is a sphere of existence in which the entity capable of passing on thither has outlived the need of the ordinary devachanic vision. There he is in the presence of spiritual realities, but these are not easily comprehended from a level of thought so saturated with ideas of form as that on which most of us in incarnation habitually live.

#### QUESTION 204.

*Death is looked forward to with dread by many, not only because of a doubt as to the future or a fear of suffering on the other side, but also because they must part with all those to whom they are much attached. How can Theosophy remove this dread, teaching, as it does, that we do not generally meet our friends again as we knew them, but only as unrecognised forms in future lives? (1897.)*

S. M. S.—“There is no death!” Thus, for countless ages have prophets declared, preachers taught and poets sung; and

yet, how comparatively few there are in this modern world who really believe the statement to be true.

And so we find that death still holds sway as the great enemy, the great destroyer and the great problem of life. So, too, even among theosophists, questions akin to the above are continually arising, nor can we wonder that it should be so. For among us, as among so many outside of the Theosophical Society, there are those who do not really believe all, or nearly all that they profess.

For no reason should the theosophist look forward to death "with dread." He should be filled with hope—nay, with certainty—as to the future; knowing that no suffering, in the sense of punishment, can possibly come to him, convinced that whatever may have been his mistakes and failures in this present life, there is, for him and for all, progress and joy beyond human thought in the limitless future that lies beyond. For him, therefore, death should have no terrors, but should rather be looked upon as a friend, who, for a time, brings him release from the ceaseless struggle of earthly life with its so quickly alternating sun and shadow.

But, unfortunately, there are many among us who have not grasped the essence of the teaching we have been so lavishly given, sufficiently to have gained any real conviction upon this great problem; and so, when we are brought face to face with it, as all of us must be at some time, we find—and perhaps the discovery comes upon us with a shock—that we are *not* certain as to the future, but are filled with fear and doubt.

Can Theosophy remove this doubt, and so take away every trace of fear? Most certainly it can and will, and it is doing so every day. Theosophy, properly understood and really grasped, "cuts all doubts with the sword of knowledge." But there is no royal road to the acquisition of this knowledge; the key, and the only key, that will open its doors, is effort continually exerted and constantly renewed.

And although there are very, very few who have earned the right to the direct knowledge which we now know to be attainable at some time by all, yet is there possible for many an inner conviction so strong and unshakable as to be of very practical and constant help, both to themselves and to those amongst whom they are thrown.

There are many to whom Theosophy has given this conviction, teaching as it does, not only that there is no "death," but explain-

ing, so far as such things can be explained in language, the conditions through which a man passes on the other side of the grave. Those, therefore, who are able to accept these teachings can no longer feel that when the body dies they will enter into an entirely unknown land. Moreover, we are told that it is the very "dread" which so many have of death that gives it its horror—a horror which re-acts upon vast numbers to an extent of which we have no conception. If a man has lived an ordinarily good life, having purified himself of all the lower forms of passion, no matter what may have been his creed or no creed, there is for him absolutely nothing to fear in any region in which he may find himself after he has cast off the body. On the contrary, an enormous period of happiness and rest awaits him, exactly adapted to his capacity for its enjoyment.

We are taught, also, that those who are conscious upon higher planes, and who therefore know that there partings cannot be, can and do help others who have left this earth, and who find themselves in strange and, perhaps, to them incomprehensible surroundings. And most important fact of all, we are told that each of us may qualify himself to render this most effective help where it is able to be taken.

But even those of us who are upon much lower levels can do our share. The power of thought of which we are sometimes apt to talk so much and to think so little, is just as strong, for good or for evil, in the astral world through which those who "die" must first pass; and if when a friend dies we give way to our grief, and think of him despairingly, he is pursued by our disturbing thought and hindered in his progress onward towards the haven where he would be, and even may be really injured. Who of us would willingly be responsible for such a grave mistake? And yet there are many even among those who have the opportunity of knowing better, who *are* so responsible.

In truth, the parting from friends is for many of us, in our blindness, the supremest test of all; but it is one to the passing of which we should bend all our energies year in and year out. For the way in which we meet it is a very clear indication of the extent to which we have managed to get rid of the personality, and of the extent to which we have really grasped the teachings we have been given. We know that the *man* exists apart from his physical body; we know, if we are honest with ourselves, that it is the man himself whom we love, and not his outside casing;

we also know that he has had many other houses in which he has dwelt for a brief time, and will have many more. These things being so, surely we may learn to look upon the breaking up of the outer form which is no longer able to contain the ever-evolving life, as a perfectly natural process; and patiently await the time when our eyes shall be opened, and we shall be able to look back and see the separate links that have bound us to our friends in the past, of which our present affection for them is the result, and which will grow more and more strong in the future as we grow nearer and nearer to the Divine.

We must continue to feel a sense of loss when our friends go out of sight of our physical eyes, but we can purify our sorrow from every stain of bitterness and rebellion and despair; and when a man has done that, he will realise, for the first time, how truly near akin are joy and pain. Then he will be able to say with St Francis of Assisi, in his *Canticle of the Sun* :

“Praised be thou, my Lord, for our sister, the death of the body, from which no man living is able to escape. . . . Blessed are they who are found walking by Thy most holy will, for the second death shall have no power to do them harm.”

A. A. W.—Those who think of death as a parting from their friends have not realised how small a portion of their real life their successive manifestations on the physical plane comprise. The average of humanity after spending fifty, sixty, or seventy years on earth will have the best part of two thousand years during which (if so disposed) they may enjoy to the full the company of those whom they have loved on earth. No matter whether their friends are on earth still or already departed, if they are needful for their happiness, they will be there. It is hard, I know, for an O. P. to understand that it is the life after what we call death which is the true waking life, but so it is. After so long a life in company with his beloved ones, it surely cannot be hard to have to sleep another short earth-life apart from them, if so his karma requires. And it is not quite true that in his next incarnation, if they meet, it will be as “unrecognised forms.” True, the new bodies and minds have never actually met before and thus cannot recognise each other, but the true individuals—the souls—are not thus limited, and wherever a strong attachment is found between two human beings, the probability is that its foundation has been laid in mutual love, perhaps many lives ago. Love is not ruled by reason, and when men or women meet the souls which answer to their own,

and spring to claim them regardless of outward circumstances and often of personal deformity and such other qualities as might, in *reason*, repel, the explanation is that they have known and loved long ago and that the bond so framed holds them together still, and may last for many thousand years to come. If our querist has ever loved anyone in this life with ardent and unselfish love, he may be very sure that in his next life they will meet again and renew their tie ; even though they do not remember the names they now bear. But it is not everything which calls itself love which deserves this reward. Let him ask himself if he has made *their* bliss, as they have made *his*, and judge himself accordingly. It may be that karma may renew their bond for his punishment, not for his pleasure.

But all these considerations are condescensions to human weakness—milk for babes. To those who are strong enough to bear it, Theosophy has a sterner and more manly lesson. Our repeated returns to earth-life are mainly to enable us to grow out of these very attachments which seem so indispensable to the multitude. As long as we cannot live without them we shall have them—never fear ; yet “ there is a more excellent way.” Sooner or later we must widen out our sympathy, our love, to embrace *all* that lives ; *every* elder must be to us a father ; every younger, a brother ; and every woman, mother or sister. This is the Brotherhood which our Society has to promote ; and when we attain it, it will be enough for us to know that our personally loved ones are bravely pushing onwards life after life on the upward path, without (like children) sitting down to cry because perchance they are so far ahead as to be for the time out of our sight.

E. G.—The question here seems to resolve itself into what it is we love in our friends ! We come to love the forms of our friends truly—but is not this love of the form a matter of habit, secondary surely to the love that flows from soul to soul—the higher sympathy stimulating mental and spiritual activity, which is able to deny itself wholly for the one loved ? Has it not ever been borne in upon us, when trying to analyse the attraction drawing us to this person or that, that our love was really called forth more by the possibilities that we felt to lie in our friend's nature than by any definite set of character or combination of qualities actually manifested ? In future incarnations—if we have not outgrown our friends, or they us—we shall be drawn together again by this same strong bond of sympathy, whatever may be the future forms

taken. And if we have grown away from each other, we shall no longer be friends, and there can hardly be trouble for that which does not exist. We are all units of one great whole, and as we develop there will come other friends to fill the places of those who have dropped away—dropped away for a while at least. “Of progressive souls,” writes Emerson, “all loves and friendships are momentary. Do you love me? means, Do you love the same truth? If you do we are happy with the same happiness, but presently one of us passes into the perception of new truth; we are divorced, and no tension in nature can hold us to each other. I know how delicious is this cup of love—existing for you, existing for me; but it is a child’s clinging to his toy; an attempt to eternise the fireside and nuptial chamber; to keep the picture alphabet through which our first lessons are prettily conveyed.”

But if the questioner will turn to Mrs. Besant’s *In the Outer Court*, p. 157, he will find there the real solution to the question he asks—the very definite hope regarding this matter held out by the theosophic teaching—a greater hope than has ever before been given out to the world generally. Alluding to the unification of consciousness on the various planes—possible in the future to all who will make the necessary effort here and now—Mrs. Besant writes: “Separation and death exist not for him who has crossed the threshold . . . . it is only while he is in the body that the separation exists for him, and he may be out of the body at will, and go where space and time can no longer hold him. . . . No friend can again be lost to him, no death can again take from his side those who are knit to him in the bond of life. For to him neither separation nor death has a real existence; those are evils of the past, and in their most terrible forms they are finished with for evermore.”



## DIVISION LVIII

### DEVACHAN

#### QUESTION 205.

*What is the meaning and derivation of the word Devachan?*  
(1898.)

V. M.—As Madame Blavatsky remarks (*Secret Doctrine*), vol. III., p. 408), Devachan is the Tibetan word for the Sanskrit Sukhāvati. Notwithstanding, there remains a tenacious tradition amongst our members that the element Deva in “Devachan” is connected with the Sanskrit word “Deva,” and the word has even been publicly explained as being formed by “Deva” (Sanskrit) = a god, and “khan” (Tibetan) = place; its meaning, being, according to this explanation, the place of the gods—Devaloka. This is altogether wrong, and I here give the right etymology of the word.

Its first part is formed by the Tibetan word *bde ba*, which corresponds exactly with the Sanskrit *sukhā*. Its significations are (a) as a verb: to be well, to be happy; (b) as a noun: happiness; (c) as an adjective: happy, good, favourable, beautiful, etc., etc.

Its proper root is *bde*; *ba* being the usual particle which follows most Tibetan words.

As to *khan*, this really is a Tibetan word for place, but it has nothing to do with Devachan, as the *ch* in the latter word is a transcription for a sound like the Sanskrit *ch* in ordinary transcription. The Tibetan word *chan* signifies: having, being provided with; and so corresponds with the Sanskrit suffix *vat* (*f.*: *vati*).

So the word *bde ba chan* (pronounced *de buchān*, *i.e.*, with Sanskrit pronunciation of *ch*), is the exact translation of *sukhāvati*, and is pure Tibetan.

It occurs amongst others in *Gyaltrabs*, a history of the kings of

Tibet, and Köppen mentions it in *Die Religion des Buddha* (II. 27). See also Jäschke's great dict. 270 II.

QUESTION 206.

*What re-awakens the desire for re-birth in the soul in Devachan? Do the thought images which surround it, when it passes into Devachan, gradually grow fainter and finally disappear? (1899.)*

B. K.—Just as there is the great pulsation of the One Life—the out-breathing and in-breathing of the universe, so also is there an ebb and flow, an out-breathing and an in-drawing of every separated life into which the One Life becomes differentiated. In each case this forthgoing and withdrawing of life starts from whatever may be, at the particular stage of evolution in question, its (relatively) permanent centre. Thus in the case of the evolving group-soul of the animal kingdom, it is the group-soul which constitutes the relatively permanent centre from which is put forth the life which ensouls a given physical animal form, and into which that life is again drawn back when the time comes for that physical form to break up. In man it is the causal body which forms this permanent centre, and it is this same universal law of out-breathing and in-breathing which determines the putting forth of the life of the Ego into incarnation and its withdrawal in due course of time. The awakening of the desire for re-birth is the aspect in the consciousness of the Ego which this universal law assumes, and while in the earlier human stages the putting forth of the life of the Ego into incarnation is an instinctive, barely conscious process effected by the impulse of the great law rather than by any conscious desire or choice on the part of the individual, this state of things changes more and more as evolution proceeds and self-determination is evolved, until, while still being guided by the one Law—since man's inmost essence *is* that Law—the conscious desire and choice of the individual acquire an ever greater importance in determining in detail its working out.

As the life ebbs back into the Ego from the mental body, the vividness of consciousness in that body naturally lessens, and *pari passu*, the thought forms, which its activity had held in manifestation, gradually fade out and disappear, as, indeed, was indicated in one of the earlier letters of the Master K. H., which the student will find in *The Occult World*.

## QUESTION 207.

*It is said that in Devachan there is no sorrow or longing, but nevertheless the existence there is not eternal. Now, how is it then with those whose time to stay there has expired, and who see themselves compelled to get down and go out once more, thus to leave the pleasant surroundings, and to change them for a coarser world? They must feel despair, or at least dissatisfaction, and what about the disposition of those who miss them? Or must it be conceived that the getting out is a kind of pleasure for them, rather in the way of some one who is rising from table after his dinner and feels no desire to stay any longer, or who has heard a fine concert or attended any other pleasure of more or less high character, and is therefore blasé, and happy to find some hard work for his renewal? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—This question displays quite a comic misconception of all the conditions of the life of the heaven-world—in fact, we owe a debt of gratitude to the querent for lightening the grave columns of THE VĀHAN to this extent.

Of course nobody ever gets *blasé* in Devachan, and nobody ever feels himself “compelled to get down and go out.” Nor does any one ever know that he is about to exchange his blissful surroundings for those of a coarser world. It would be quite impossible that he should know, unless he were so highly developed as to be able to carry his consciousness clear through into his causal body, and in that case he would know the whole scheme of evolution, and gladly co-operate in it.

Nor is it possible for any one in the heaven-world to “miss” another, for he will have his friends always around him whenever he wishes for them, quite irrespective of whether they are in or out of incarnation. The whole of a man’s life on that plane is simply a prolonged experience of all the highest happiness of which he is capable, and when the forces which are acting to produce this condition gradually wear themselves out, the man sinks gently, blissfully into unconsciousness without being in any way aware of what is happening to him, or what lies before him.

I fear it must be sorrowfully admitted that at present the questioner is not within measurable distance of any comprehension of the state of the facts. One can but recommend him to read over again with the closest attention the sixth of our theoso-

“real”; and until this is clearly seen and felt, the devachanic association must seem more or less of a fraud, as our friend rather rudely puts it. We confuse ourselves by treating the body as the reality, and the Self as something which “ensouls” it—which may dwell in it or leave it—the body in either case unaltered and “real.” That which is our friend is, in real truth, his Self and not his body—astral or physical. It is the commonplace of moralists and poets how little man really knows of his dearest friend or lover; that he may live in the closest relationship with men and women for a whole life long, and yet be an entire stranger to their real mind and heart, and this is because the body *hides* them. If the friendship is of the physical plane only—a matter of mere physical convenience or pleasure, then the so-called friends will not meet in Devachan at all—their connection is not “real” enough. But if there has been spiritual communion down here, where the physical veil of matter renders recognition so hard, then, surely, when they meet *without* the veil between, there can be no idea of “illusion”—no “fraud”! The “fraud” is in the physical plane, which clogs our senses, and clouds the clear sight by which entities in Devachan comprehend each other.

I am not sure that the difficulty which our querist feels has not been at least aggravated by a too materialistic exposition of Devachan—that in trying to bring it down to *our* comprehension the Seers have not condescended rather too far, if one may say so without offence. We are led to picture it to ourselves as a sort of glorified Summer Land where we sit surrounded by figures of our own creation, which (says the O. P.) can't be “real” because the originals are living all the time down on earth. From the ordinary person's point of view, there is much to be said for this, but we Theosophists should know better. The originals are *not* living on earth—only their bodies—that is what we are apt to forget. The Higher Egos of those who live on earth are *ever* on the plane of Devachan, when the Devachanee can meet them in an intercourse incomparably more real than anything on the physical plane. And the picture of the soul, shut up in a sort of cell from the world outside, edifying itself with dreams of the good it would do or the marvels of music or painting and science which pass, apparently idly, through its mind, is one which, whilst good for a first rough sketch, must not be allowed to hang as a weight upon our higher intuitions. Our intercourse with our friends, living or dead, on the devachanic plane, is no looking at pictures or statues—no question of “illu-

sory forms" or of forms at all, but the answer of soul to soul, outside the bounds of space and time. When our mind first opens into consciousness in the "fine air" of the Heaven-world, it opens to the feeling of perfect, intense *bliss*, which for the time is enough for it. As it grows a little accustomed to its new existence, it feels around for those presences who made the joy of its past earth-life. The thought is a call to them, as they range freely in the space where, at present, the new comer is unable to go to them; they come about it as the blessed souls in Paradise swarmed about Dante with the joyous cry, "Lo, here a new companion to increase our love!" And whether it be with us as with him, that first we only dimly sense their presence; then know them by their light, too dazzling for earthly eyes to behold; and, finally, when (as to Arjuna) new eyes and new sight are given to us, are able to distinguish the loved form and gracious air; or however it may be, of *one* thing we are certain, that no least doubt of *reality* will trouble the perfection of the "joy of our Lord."

## QUESTION 209.

*It is sometimes stated in theosophical books that the life in Devachan is in truth fuller and more real than life on the physical plane; how is this possible, when all that a man has with him there are subjective images of his friends, which in reality are merely his own thought forms? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—This question betrays an absolute lack of comprehension of the real conditions of the devachanic existence. The images are something very much more than mere subjective dreams, and the statement as to their greater reality is absolutely true, although there are circumstances connected with it which are difficult to realise fully down here.

It should be remembered that the keen affection which alone brings one man into the Devachan of another is a very powerful force upon these higher planes—a force which reaches up to the Ego of the man who is loved, and evokes a response from it. Of course the vividness of that response, the amount of life and energy in it, depends on the development of the Ego of the loved one, but there is no case in which the response is not a perfectly real one as far as it goes.

Our communion with and our knowledge of our friends

down here, much as they mean to us, are in reality always exceedingly defective, for even in the very rare cases where we can feel that we know a man thoroughly and all through, body and soul, it is still only the part of him which is in manifestation on these lower planes while in incarnation that we can know, and there is far more behind in the real Ego which we cannot reach at all. Of course the Ego can be *fully* reached only upon his own level—one of the arūpa subdivisions of the mental plane—but at least we are very much nearer to that in Devachan than we are here, and therefore under favourable conditions we could there know enormously more of our friend than would ever be possible here, while even under the most unfavourable of conditions we are at any rate far closer to the reality there than we have ever been before.

Two factors have to be taken into consideration in our enquiry into this subject—the degree of development of each of the parties concerned. If the man in Devachan has strong affection and some development in spirituality, he will form a clear and fairly perfect thought-image of his friend as he knew him—an image through which at that level the Ego of the friend could express himself to a very considerable extent. But in order to take full advantage of that opportunity, it is necessary that the Ego of the friend should himself be very fairly advanced in evolution.

We see, therefore, that there are two reasons for which the manifestation may be imperfect. The image made by the Devachanee may be so vague and inefficient, that the friend, even though well-evolved, may be able to make very little use of it; and, on the other hand, even when a good image is made, there may not be sufficient development on the friend's part to enable him to take due advantage of it.

But in any and every case the Ego of the friend is reached by the feeling of affection, and whatever may be its stage of development it at once responds by pouring itself forth into the image which has been made. The extent to which the true man can express himself through it depends on the two factors above mentioned—the kind of image which is made in the first place, and how much Ego there is to express in the second; but even the feeblest image that can be made is at any rate on the mental plane, and, therefore, far easier for the Ego to reach than is a physical body two whole planes lower down.

If the friend who is loved is still alive, he will, of course, be entirely unaware down here on the physical plane that his true self

is enjoying this additional manifestation, but that in no way affects the fact that that manifestation is a more real one and contains a nearer approximation to his true self than this lower one, which is all that most of us can as yet see.

It is sometimes objected that since a man may well enter into the devachanic life of several of his departed friends at once, he must thus be simultaneously manifesting himself in all these various forms, as well as, perhaps, managing a physical body down here. So he is, but that conception presents no difficulty to anyone who understands the relation of the different planes to one another; it is just as easy for him to manifest himself in several devachanic images at once as it is for us to be simultaneously conscious of pressure of several different articles against different parts of our body. The relation of one plane to another is like that of one dimension to another; no number of units of the lower dimension can ever equal one of the higher, and in just the same way no number of devachanic manifestations could exhaust the power of response in the Ego above. On the contrary, it seems certain that such manifestations afford him an appreciable additional opportunity for development on the mental plane.

Thus it will be seen that the theory that Devachan is an illusion is merely the result of a misconception, and shows imperfect acquaintance with its conditions and possibilities; the truth is that the higher we rise the nearer we draw to the one reality.

#### QUESTION 210.

*If between two earth lives we have fifteen centuries of the magnificent mental activity of the devachanic plane, where thought moves so very much faster than it does down here, and it is so much easier to learn and to develop, ought we not to be very much better and greater than we are when we return to earth at the end of such a period? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—That is perfectly true; but we must remember that the Ego does make very considerable progress between life and life as soon as he has begun to realise anything of his higher possibilities. Very much of this improvement does not show itself on the physical plane, and cannot in the nature of things do so as yet; but, nevertheless, it is there, and if we were to examine the causal body of a man at intervals of five or ten thousand

years, as we followed the line of his evolution, we could not fail to be struck with the very great advancement which was shown. Perhaps, however, we are making a mistake when we import into this question the consideration of our ideas of time, since the real development of the Ego is taking place very largely on planes to which this idea does not apply.

#### QUESTION 211.

*No satisfactory reason has ever been given for the enormously long period assigned to devachanic life. Considering the immense rapidity with which thought must move on its own plane, it does not seem possible that the results of even a long and fruitful earth-life could fill even one year of Devachan, so that surely the heaven-life must be very much shorter than is generally supposed. Can any information be given as to this? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—The idea as to the duration of Devachan expressed in the question does not seem to be borne out by the cases so far observed. It is quite true that thought moves very rapidly on its own plane, but there is such an infinity of it to move that there is no possibility of its speedy exhaustion.

We hardly get a full and correct view of the conditions of a person in the heaven-world if we think of him as going over and over again the enjoyments or thoughts of his earth-life. One would rather say that this mental plane is itself a kind of reflection of the Divine Mind—a store-house from which the person enjoying Devachan is able to draw according to the power of his own thoughts and aspirations generated during the earth-life and the astral life. It is not so much his own thought and aspiration which takes so long in its expression, as the magnificent fulness of the response which this application of his draws down from the infinity of the Divine Mind.

So that even out of what seems to us quite an ordinary life this long period of devachanic bliss is produced, whereas in the case of some great saint or holy one who for some reason still takes his Devachan instead of renouncing it, the period becomes enormously longer. It may be remembered that Madame Blavatsky stated that the Devachan of Plato would last for ten thousand years at least, and that the exoteric Buddhist books speak of a period of 124,000 years of Devachan as following



upon one of the earth-lives of the Bodhisattwa, taken under the title of the Great King of Glory.

The questioner may be assured that to all those who investigate this mental plane, the wonder is not that it should take fifteen hundred years to exhaust the share of it which one man is able to grasp, but rather that anything short of infinity should be sufficient to express a bliss so wide-spreading and so many-sided.

QUESTION 212.

*Are there any alternate states in Devachan corresponding to our sleeping and waking? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—No; the only waking in Devachan is the slow dawning of its wonderful bliss upon the mind-sense as the man enters upon his life on that plane, and the only sleeping is the equally gradual sinking into happy unconsciousness when the long term of that life at last comes to an end. Devachan was once described to us in the beginning as a sort of prolongation of all the happiest hours of a man's life magnified a hundred-fold in bliss; and although that definition leaves much to be desired (as indeed all physical-plane definitions must) it still comes far nearer to the truth than the questioner's idea of day and night. There is indeed what seems an infinity of variety in the happiness of Devachan; but the changes of sleeping and waking form no part of its plan.

QUESTION 213.

*If before entering the devachanic plane the desire body disintegrates, surely the individuality must still be conscious of evil, inasmuch as the loftiest conceptions of conscious bliss are attained by the knowledge of evil, or are brought about by selfishness, which entails a knowledge of self, or in other words desire; and if conscious so far must also be conscious of the terrible evils yet unconquered, and therefore potentially possessed. Is this correct? (1900.)*

J. V. M.—Leaving aside the purely technical answer to the question, I should like to remark that one of its propositions seems scarcely well taken. The querent says that "the loftiest concep-

tions of conscious bliss are attained by the knowledge of evil, or are brought about by selfishness which entails a knowledge of self or in other words desire." This statement I regard as not quite correct, if we take it in its general surface meaning such as seems implied here. Only a much deeper intention might lend truth to the assertion.

I mean this. We down here, limited in consciousness, limited in knowledge, and limited in true, unselfish love and devotion to each other's interests and evolution, are apt to regard this or that action, word, or opinion, either as evil or as good. This means only that the visible side of that manifestation does not square with the end and line of evolution of our neighbour's sphere of existence and activity which *we* are able to see and comprehend. But broadening our power of understanding and expanding our faculty of knowledge and love, we soon find that what seemed evil with reference to the small visibilities that our sight is able to compass, becomes useful and helpful—maybe even good—with regard to wider stretches of vision, and that the old saying holds good, that all is well that ends well. In this light we are able to see the profound truth of the adage that *tout comprendre est tout pardonner*.

To the perfectly opened vision—it seems to me—the "evil" is still known and seen, but not as before. Evil is realised as evil only in its smaller connections, but the broader view transmutes that smaller evil at the same time into mere links—useful and necessary—in the great chain of the evolving life, resulting in a most glorious and lofty end. To him who realises all this, evil cannot longer appear as such, as he knows that evil is a thing of the sheaths and not of the innermost self, a passing, temporal, *mâyâvic* clothing, which screens the inner life, but forms no part of its essential being. One of the highest expressions of this ennobling truth is in the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* (x. 34, 36): "And all-devouring death am I; I am the gambling of the rogue." Such is also the teaching of that priceless, though too little known book, the *Tao Tê King*, of which as yet no faithful and truly spiritual translation exists in English. Compare for instance Chapter 38, if possible, in Victor von Strauss' German rendering.

To quote a few lines from the said chapter, translated almost literally from the text:

1. High virtue, no virtue.
2. Therefore it has virtue.

3. Low virtue loses virtue not.
4. Therefore without virtue.
5. High virtue is actionless, but not for the action.
6. Low virtue acts, but it is for the action.

Which means : High virtue loses even the consciousness of its own excellence ; for *being* virtue, having become one with virtue it *has* no virtue ; that is why it is truly virtuous. But low virtue does not lose the consciousness of being virtuous, it *has* virtue and so is impelled to *become* such itself, remaining a subject in contradistinction to its object, *viz.* : virtue. Therefore it is only a secondary virtuousness. And thus high virtue acts not, because it is not the virtuous one who acts, but it is *the one virtue* through and within him, whose action he expresses (“Father, thy will be done”), whereas low virtue acts not merely as a passive though willing agent of virtue itself, but on account of virtue’s beautiful sheaths, the *individual* pleasure found in doing what is good and noble.

And this high virtue is truly an imaginable ideal, wherein all knowledge of evil as such completely falls away, so that, realising this, we will find ourselves able to form those “loftiest conceptions of conscious bliss” which are *not* “attained by the knowledge of evil, or are brought about by selfishness which entails a knowledge of self, or in other words desire.” This is what has been taught so completely in the *Bhagavad Gitā* and *Tao Te King*, and this is that same Yoga on which Mrs. Besant lays so much stress.

Of course, I do not mean to say that this primary virtue is within direct reach for us common mortals, or that this secondary virtue itself is to be despised instead of being valued at its high worth, nor do I want to discuss whether the individuality, in Devachan or before it, is conscious of evil in the same narrow and limited way as ordinary mortals in the flesh ; the only thing I wanted to draw attention to, is that of conscious bliss and virtue there may be formed even a loftier conception than the “loftiest” described in the query to which I append these words.

A. A. W.—Our querist has confounded two very different things—the *feeling* of bliss, and the *conception* of bliss formed by the mind. We must remember that “bliss” belongs, in its own nature, to a plane above the mind. It is the Buddhic body which is the true Body of Bliss ; and the mind, in forming its conception of it, is only doing its best to make intelligible to itself something which is really beyond its reach. This it seems only able to do

by way of exclusion. It brings before its view all the evils it can think of, and says, "Bliss is that which has none of these." And as long as this is all the conception it has, it is perfectly true, that it depends wholly upon the knowledge of the evils so excluded. But this is not any real *knowledge* of bliss ; it is only the conception, the imagination of something quite beyond all knowledge in the physical brain-mind : and it passes with the kâma-manas which has formed it, with the earthly sights and sounds which have given joy to the Ego whilst in the flesh.

The bliss which floods the soul on the higher planes is not this merely negative conception of the intellect—not a removal of evil, but the positive, actual bliss itself, as independent of all conditions of the mind as the light of heaven is ; you do not gain it by reasoning, you feel it. You have not to remember either the evil or the good of your past life in order to feel it ; it is something quite independent of all pleasure in thinking of past performance or future help for humanity, of all the *mental* enjoyments of the devachanic state. Perhaps the joyous feeling of perfect physical health and strength comes nearest to an intelligible analogy on this plane.

#### QUESTION 214.

*Would an arûpa devachanee be conscious of the rûpa levels ; and could he consciously enter the thought-form of himself, made by another, and teach ? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—This would entirely depend upon the level which he himself had reached. On the third sub-plane, and even in the lower part of the second, his consciousness of the sub-planes below him would still be dim, and his action in the thought-form largely instinctive and automatic. But as soon as he got well into the second sub-plane his vision would rapidly become clearer, and he would recognise the thought-forms with pleasure as vehicles through which he was able to express more of himself in certain ways than he could through his personality.

The only case in which the suggestion of the questioner is fully true, however, is that of a Master or Initiate whose causal body functions in the magnificent light and splendour of the highest arûpa level. His consciousness is instantaneously and perfectly active at any point in the lower divisions to which he wills to direct

it, and he, therefore, can intentionally project additional energy into such a thought-form when he wishes to use it for the purpose of teaching.

## QUESTION 215.

*Is an Ego at any time during the period in Devachan conscious of the nature of its next earth-life? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—If the ordinary life in Devachan is meant—the long period of bliss spent upon one or other of the rūpa levels—then the answer must be in the negative, for that life is merely a prolongation under the happiest auspices of the more spiritual part of the existence of the last personality; and in the vast majority of cases, here in the West, that personality would be entirely unaware that it had to be born again.

But after the period of what we usually call Devachan is over, there is still another phase of existence for the Ego before it is re-born on earth, and though in the case of most people this stage is a comparatively short one, we must not ignore it if we wish to have a complete conception of man's superphysical life.

We are perpetually misunderstanding the life of man because we are in the habit of taking a partial view of it, and entirely disregarding its real nature and object. We generally look at it, in fact, from the point of view of the physical body, and not in the least from that of the true Ego; and we therefore get the whole thing utterly out of proportion. Each movement of the Ego towards these lower planes and back is in reality a vast circular sweep; we take a little fragment of the lower arc of this circle and regard it as a straight line, attaching quite undue importance to its beginning and ending, while the real turning-point of the circle naturally entirely escapes us.

Think of the matter for a moment as it must seem to the true man on his own plane, as soon as he begins to be at all clearly conscious there. In obedience to the desire for manifestation which he finds within him, which is impressed upon him by that law of evolution which is the will of the Logos, he copies the action of that Logos by pouring himself forth into lower planes.

In the course of this process he clothes himself with matter of the various planes into which he passes—mental, astral and physical in turn, all the while steadily pressing outward. Through the

earlier part of that little fragment of existence on the physical plane, which we call his life, the outward force is still strong, but at about the middle of it, in ordinary cases, that force becomes exhausted, and the great inward sweep begins.

Not that there is any sudden or violent change, for this is not an angle, but still part of the curve of the same circle—exactly corresponding to the moment of aphelion in a planet's course round its orbit. Yet it is the real turning-point of that little cycle of evolution, though with us it is usually not marked in any way. In the old Indian scheme of life it *was* marked as the end of the *grihastha* or householder period of the man's earthly existence.

From this point there should be nothing but a steady drawing inward of the whole force of the man, and his attention ought to be more and more withdrawn from mere earthly things, and concentrated on those of higher planes—from which we at once see how exceedingly ill-adapted to real progress are the modern conditions of European life.

The point at which the man drops his physical body is not a specially important one in this arc of evolution—by no means so important as the next change, which we might call his death on the astral plane and his birth on that of Devachan, although really it is simply the transfer of the consciousness from astral matter to devachanic matter in the course of the same steady withdrawal of which we have already spoken.

The final result of the life is known only when in that process of withdrawal the consciousness is once more centred in the Ego alone on his own arûpa-devachanic level ; then it is seen what new qualities he has acquired in the course of that particular little cycle of his evolution. At that time also a glimpse of the life as a whole is obtained ; the Ego has for a moment a flash of clearer consciousness, in which he sees the results of the life just completed, and something of what will follow from it in his next birth.

This glimpse is, perhaps, what was in the mind of the questioner ; in any case it is the nearest approach which we find in the soul's *post-mortem* history to the consciousness about which he enquires. It can hardly be said to involve a knowledge of the nature of the next incarnation, except in the vaguest and most general sense ; no doubt the main object of the coming life would be seen, but the vision would be chiefly valuable to the Ego as a lesson in the karmic result of his action in the past. It offers him an oppor-

tunity, of which he takes more or less advantage according to the stage of development to which he has already attained.

At first he makes little of it, since he is but very dimly conscious and very poorly fitted to apprehend facts and their varied inter-relations; but gradually his power to appreciate what he sees increases, and later the ability comes to remember such flashes at the end of previous lives, and to compare them, and so to estimate the progress which he is making along the road which he has to traverse.

#### QUESTION 216.

*Theosophy teaches: firstly, that each unit must pass through an average number of earth-lives; secondly, that a very lengthened Devachan is the reward of the more highly developed entities; thirdly, that a conscious renunciation of the bliss of Devachan, and a rapid return to earth-life, is to be desired. How can these three be reconciled? Does it not appear that the higher a man's standards and aims in earth-life, the longer is his real progress delayed—even though granted that spiritual teaching is part of the devachanic training? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—When these statements are properly understood it will be seen that there is no sort of contradiction between them. No definite number of earth-lives is arbitrarily fixed through which an entity *must* pass; but, considering the level which had been reached by the various classes of pitris before their entry on the stage of this world, it is abundantly obvious that many lives would necessarily pass before there could be any possibility of sufficient development to put them within measurable distance of entry upon the Path, and in this sense the statement is true. Just in the same way we might say that an average number of years must pass before a baby attains the height of five feet, and the truth of that general statement is in no way affected by the fact that some children grow much more quickly than others.

The questioner will be much more likely to arrive at a correct understanding of the devachanic condition if he looks upon it as the necessary *result* of the earth-life, rather than as its reward. In the course of his physical existence a man sets in motion by his higher thoughts and aspirations what may be described as a certain amount of spiritual force, which will react upon him when

he reaches the devachanic plane. If there be but little of this force, it will be comparatively soon exhausted, and the Devachan will be a short one; if, on the contrary, a great deal has been generated, a corresponding space of time will be needed for its full working, and the Devachan will be very greatly prolonged.

It is therefore quite true that as a man develops in spirituality his devachanic periods become longer, but the statement that his progress is thereby delayed is entirely untrue. On the contrary, for all but very highly-advanced persons the devachanic period is absolutely necessary, as it is only under its conditions that their aspirations can be developed into faculty, their experiences into wisdom; and the progress which is thus made by the Ego, the real man, is far greater than would be possible if by some miracle he was enabled to remain in physical incarnation for the entire period. If it were otherwise, obviously the whole law of nature would stultify itself, for the nearer it came to the attainment of its great object, the more determined and formidable would be its efforts to defeat itself—hardly a reasonable view to take of a law which we know to be an expression of the most exalted wisdom!

With regard to the third point—the renunciation of Devachan and the rapid reincarnation—there seems to be a great deal of misunderstanding. One quite frequently hears members of our Society talking about it in an airy sort of way, as though a man had only to know of the possibility of such a course in order to be able at once to adopt it. Apparently they have not yet realised the perfect justice of the Great Law, which permits no man to renounce blindly that of which he is ignorant, nor to depart from the ordinary course of evolution unless and until it is certain that such departure will be for his ultimate benefit.

The matter is by no means so simple. Be it clearly understood that no one can renounce the bliss of Devachan until he has experienced it during earth-life—until he is sufficiently developed to be able to raise his consciousness to that plane, and bring back with him into physical existence a clear and full memory of that glory which so far transcends all terrestrial conception.

The man who wishes to perform this great feat must therefore work with the most intense earnestness to make himself a worthy instrument in the hands of those who help the world—must throw himself with the most devoted fervour into labour for the spiritual good of others, not arrogantly assuming that he is already fit for so great an honour, but rather humbly hoping that, perhaps, after a



life or two of strenuous effort his Master may tell him that the time has come when to him also this may be a possibility.

As in this case, so in many others, if people who imagine they have discovered a contradiction in the teachings of the Wisdom-Religion, would but wait awhile and study more deeply, they would find that on closer examination the contradiction disappears, and that in fact it had existed only in their own misapprehension.

M. S.—In the above answer, it is stated that no one can renounce the bliss of Devachan until he has not only experienced it during earth-life, but can bring back into physical existence a clear and full memory of it. I have heard the contrary of this given as theosophical teaching, and have supposed that realisation when in the astral body would be sufficient; am I wrong in this, or is there an exception to the rule indicated?

C. W. L.—M. S. is not wrong; there is such an exception as is described, but since it comes into operation only in a few very special cases, no reference was made to it in the general statement contained in the previous answer. Indeed, but for the fact that misapprehension has evidently arisen in the minds of some who have been permitted to know something of the exception (as is shown by the question under consideration), I should myself have considered it hardly a subject for mention in a paper which circulates unreservedly through our Society. But since the question is raised it may be as well to settle it so far as may wisely be done in print.

The general rule is undoubtedly as was stated in the previous answer—that no one is in a position to renounce Devachan until he has experienced it during earth-life—until he is sufficiently developed to be able to raise his consciousness to that plane, and bring back with him a clear and full memory of its bliss and its glory.

A little thought will make obvious the reason and the justice of this. It might be said that since it is the progress of the Ego which is really in question, it would be sufficient for him to understand on his own plane the desirability of making the sacrifice of devachanic bliss, and then to compel his lower self to act in accordance with his decision. Yet that would not be just, for the enjoyment of devachanic bliss on the rûpa levels, though it belongs to the Ego, belongs to him only as manifested through his personality; it is the life of that personality that is carried on

in Devachan, with all its familiar personal surroundings. And so before the renunciation of all this can take place, that personality must realise clearly what it is that is being given up; the lower mind must be in accord with the higher on this subject.

Now such realisation obviously involves the possession during earth-life of a consciousness on the devachanic plane equivalent to that which the person in question would have after death. But it must be remembered that the evolution of consciousness takes place from below upward, as it were, and that the comparatively undeveloped majority of mankind are effectively conscious as yet only in the physical body. Their astral bodies are for the most part still shapeless and unorganised—bridges of communication indeed between the Ego and its physical vesture, and even vehicles for the reception of sensation, but in no sense as yet instruments in the hand of the real man or adequate expressions of his future powers on that plane.

In the more advanced races of mankind we find the astral body much more developed, and the consciousness in it in many cases fairly complete potentially, though even then in most cases the man is entirely self-centred—conscious of his own thoughts mainly, and but little of his actual surroundings. To advance still further, some few of those who have taken up the study of occultism have been regularly awakened on that plane, and have therefore entered upon the full use of their astral faculties, and are deriving in many ways great benefit therefrom.

It does not, however, necessarily follow that such men should at first, or even for some considerable time, remember upon the physical plane the activities and experiences of their astral life. As a general rule they would do so partially and intermittently, but there are cases in which for various reasons practically nothing worth calling a memory of that higher existence finds its way through into the physical brain.

Any kind of definite consciousness on the devachanic plane would, of course, indicate still further advancement, and in the case of a man who was developing quite normally and regularly, we should expect to find such consciousness dawning only as the connection between the astral and the physical became fairly well established. But in this one-sided and artificial condition which we call modern civilisation people do not always develop quite regularly and normally, and so there are cases to be found in which a considerable amount of consciousness on the devachanic

plane has been acquired and duly linked on to the astral life, and yet no knowledge of all this higher existence ever gets through into the physical brain at all.

Such cases are, of course, very rare, but they certainly do exist, and in them we see at once the possibility of an exception to our rule. A personality of this type might be sufficiently developed to taste the indescribable bliss of Devachan and so acquire the right to renounce it, while he was able to bring the memory of it no farther down than into his astral life. But since by the hypothesis that astral life would be one of full and perfect consciousness for the personality, such recollection would be amply sufficient to fulfil the requirements of justice, even though no shadow of all this ever came through into the physical waking consciousness. The great point to bear in mind is that since it is the personality that must resign, it is also the personality that must experience, and it must bring back the recollection to some plane on which it functions normally and in full consciousness; but that plane need not be the physical if these conditions are fulfilled upon the astral. Such a case would be unlikely to occur except among those who were already at least probationary pupils of one of the Masters of Wisdom; so it is perhaps better merely thus to state the possibility, and not further to discuss it in a paper which may come under the eyes of members of the general public.

#### QUESTION 217.

The Key to Theosophy states that it is impossible for a materialist to have any Devachan, as he did not while on earth believe in such a post-mortem condition; but supposing such a person to have been a man of strong and unselfish affection, on what plane does such affection work itself out after death? (1897.)

C. W. L.—It seems probable that Madame Blavatsky was employing the word "materialist" in a much more restricted sense than that in which it is generally used, since in the same volume she also asserts that for them no conscious life after death is possible at all, whereas it is a matter of common knowledge among those whose nightly work lies upon the astral plane that many of those whom we usually call materialists are to be met with there, and are certainly not unconscious. For example, a prominent materialist, intimately known to one of our members,

was not long ago discovered by his friend upon the highest sub-plane of Kāmaloka, where he had surrounded himself with his books, and was continuing his studies almost as he might have done on earth. On being questioned by his friend he readily admitted that the theories which he had held while upon earth were confuted by the irresistible logic of facts ; but his own agnostic tendencies were still strong enough to make him unwilling to accept what his friend told him as to the existence of the still higher spiritual state of Devachan. Yet there was certainly much in this man's character which could find its full fruition only upon the devachanic plane, and since his entire disbelief in any life after death has not prevented his astral experiences, there seems no reason to suppose that it can check the due working out of the higher forces in him upon the devachanic plane. It will, however, be interesting to watch the further development of this case.

Another instance still more recently observed was that of a materialist, who, on awakening upon the astral plane after death, supposed himself to be still alive, and merely experiencing an unpleasant dream. Fortunately for him there was among the band of those able to function upon the astral plane a son of an old friend of his, who was commissioned to search for him and endeavour to render him some assistance. Naturally enough, he at first supposed the young man to be merely a figure in his dream ; but upon receipt of a message from his old friend referring to matters which had occurred before the birth of the messenger, he was convinced of the reality of the plane upon which he found himself, and became at once exceedingly eager to acquire all possible information about it. The instruction which is being given to him under these conditions will undoubtedly have a very great effect upon him, and will largely modify, not only the Devachan which lies before him, but also his next incarnation upon earth.

What is shown to us by these two and by many other examples need not after all surprise us, for it is only what we might expect from our experience upon the physical plane. We constantly find down here that nature makes no allowance for our ignorance of her laws ; if under an impression that fire does not burn, a man puts his hand into a flame, he is speedily convinced of his mistake. In the same way a man's disbelief in a future existence does not affect the facts of nature ; and in some cases at least he simply finds out after death that he was mistaken.

The kind of materialism referred to by Madame Blavatsky in the remarks above mentioned was, therefore, probably something much coarser and more aggressive than ordinary agnosticism—something which would render it exceeding unlikely that a man who held it would have any qualities requiring a devachanic condition in which to work themselves out; but no such case has as yet come under observation in the course of the more recent investigations.

## DIVISION LIX

### SLEEP, TRANCE, ANÆSTHETICS, AND MESMERISM

#### QUESTION 218.

*In the case of an ordinary person, does the soul always leave the body in sleep? (1896.)*

A. B.—The soul leaves the body in sleep, even in the case of the most ordinary person, sleep being, in fact, the sign of such withdrawal. The physical body and etheric double are left together in what we call sleep. The difference between the “ordinary person” and the more developed does not lie in any difference as to the soul leaving the body, but in the difference between the souls themselves and between their astral vehicles. The soul of the ordinary person is dreamy, semi-conscious, in a cloud-like ill-defined astral body, whereas the more developed soul is awake and conscious, in a well-formed, sharply-outlined astral. Moreover, the soul of the ordinary person cannot go far from the sleeper that belongs to it, while the more developed soul can travel freely in its astral vehicle, leaving the body at rest. There is a further difference discernible when the soul has reached the point which makes the use of the *Mâyâvi Rûpa* possible; it then leaves the astral body behind with the physical, employing the more subtle and convenient vehicle for its journeying in the invisible world.

C. W. L.—If the questioner wishes to be really accurate in his thought he will do well to avoid the use of the word “soul,” since it has been so degraded by the absurd and unscientific connotation attached to it by modern Occidental theology, that unless specially defined every time it is employed, it simply misleads the reader. If, as seems probable, what is here meant is the Ego, the real man, the answer must be in the affirmative, for it is the withdrawal of that Ego which causes the condition of the body

which we call sleep. But it must be noted, that though withdrawn, he yet remains in very close connection with his body, as indeed is shown by the fact that the slightest disturbance of that body—even a touch in many cases—will immediately bring him back to it, even when he is sufficiently developed to be able to pass away to a considerable distance from it. Many clairvoyants have attributed this to the existence of a sort of cord which they describe as connecting the Ego with his body; but careful and trained investigation seems to show that such a cord or rather stream of etheric matter exists only in the very rare cases when the etheric double is also partially withdrawn, as may happen with a medium at a *séance*. In ordinary sleep, when the Ego is absent in his astral body (or, if much more highly developed in his Mâyâvi Rûpa) his connection with the gross and etheric physical bodies he leaves behind seems to be merely that of sympathetic vibration, so that the slightest disturbance set up in either of them instantly produces a corresponding effect on the other, the distance between them apparently making no appreciable difference in the rapidity of this sympathetic action.

## QUESTION 219.

*When an animal sleeps, does the same process occur as in the case of man—does the astral body leave the physical? Is there anything analogous to this in the case of plants? (1896.)*

B. K.—When an animal sleeps, its astral body separates from and hovers over the physical body, just as in the case of a man, only the animal's astral body is still less defined and coherent, still more vague, nebulous and shadowy than that of the least developed human being.

With regard to plants—at any rate the plant world in general—I believe that nothing of the kind occurs. Nor would the careful student, it seems to me, expect to find anything of the kind. For we have been taught that the circling monadic essence reaches its lowest stage in the mineral, and there, passing the turning point of its evolution, develops upwards again *by the unfolding of consciousness* in the various sheaths which it has assumed. Thus in the plant, as we see, the unfolding of consciousness is still very slight, and can hardly be said to exhibit those karmic activities which mark the activity of the astral sheath. Hence it cannot be

supposed that the astral body of a plant has any stir of consciousness in it, and therefore it would seem probable, that being so inactive, it would not detach itself from the physical so long as the latter existed.

Another consideration may also be brought forward—that there is nothing exactly like sleep in plant life in general. There is of course the winter season of relative inactivity and repose in deciduous trees and in animals, as well as the alternation (general all through the vegetable world) between the inspiration of carbonic acid during daylight, and the expiration of oxygen at night ; but there seems to be nothing exactly analogous to sleep in the animal to be found in the plant-world. And even granting that the condition of our northern trees and plants in winter presents a fair analogy with sleep, it will be obvious that the tropics can show nothing of the kind, and hence that the analogy will fail as being of only partial application, and therefore not true to the essence of the matter.

C. W. L.—Sleep in animals, as in man, appears to consist in the temporary withdrawal of the astral body from the physical, and in the case of the sleeping dog or cat the astral form of the creature may usually be seen hovering close above it. But generally this form is exceedingly vague, and it is only in the case of a specially advanced animal that it would be a passable representation of the physical shape. In the rare instances where a creature is already differentiated, the form is a distinct one, and cases have been recorded in which such a form has been used as a vehicle at some distance from the physical body, and an apparition of the animal has taken place. Nothing analogous to this withdrawal of the astral body has as yet been observed in the case of plants, but this is a subject upon which information is lacking.

#### QUESTION 220.

*Is karma the cause of our forgetting the astral experiences we have during sleep? (1897.)*

A. B.—In a sense karma is the cause of everything, but it is not concerned directly in the forgetfulness here spoken of. The most general cause for this forgetfulness among those who are “awake on the astral plane” is the incapacity of the brain to receive and retain impressions from the soul, when the soul has



been passing through experiences wholly apart from the physical body. The brain of most persons is entirely untrained to receive the higher experiences ; it is the tyrant rather than the servant of the soul, and busy with its own impressions received from the physical world, ceaselessly throwing up images caused by physical vibrations, it is curiously unreceptive of vibrations generated within, and dealing with matters entirely outside its own province. The daily practice of meditation, the detachment of the heart from worldly interests, the setting of the affections "on things above," the purifying of thought and desire, the absence of haste and anxiety, the steady habitual control of the mind—these are some of the conditions for remembering astral experiences. It is, however, well to bear in mind that it is more important that we should be of service, whether in or out of the body, than that we should remember our personal activities. Until we have made considerable progress in destroying the personality, a full remembrance of astral experiences is very apt to nourish and magnify the lower self, and to increase the tendency, already too potent, to run round and round in a circle, like a kitten after its tail, the attention centred on our own caudal appendage. Further, until balance is gained, a memory of astral work is apt to withdraw attention and diligence from the work entrusted to us on the physical plane ; like children, we rush after the novel and neglect the ordinary, and as the astral work will not suffer by our ignorance of it down here, while the physical might suffer by our remembrance of the other, we are often more useful during the early stages of our development with the absence of memory.

## QUESTION 221.

*Have the figures, apparently living and conscious, seen in dreams, any subjective or real existence of their own? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—The answer to this question must, of course, depend upon the kind of dream to which it refers. When the Ego is able to move about upon the astral plane, he will be likely to meet other entities in the same condition, who are as real as he is himself ; but if the dream is merely a dramatisation by an undeveloped Ego, or a series of picture-memories evoked from the etheric brain, the figures seen in it are real only in the same sense as a reflection in a mirror is real, that is to say, while they must

undoubtedly be held to have a real existence for the moment, it cannot be called in any sense an independent existence of their own.

QUESTION 222.

*When the soul is free of the body, is the body comatose, or does it carry on the usual functions—breathing, etc.?* (1901.)

A. P. S.—Certainly the functions of breathing, digestion, etc., are carried on all the time. The body is not dead, any more than a house is empty and deserted, because the master may go out for a time. The activities he has organised there go on in his absence because it is known that he will return. How does the body know that the absent soul will return? it may be asked. That question would not be so easy to answer. The more profoundly we study nature the more we are struck by the way in which even the simplest processes involve some mystery we cannot explain. Throw a little salt into a glass of water. Presently it disappears from sight. What has become of it? Why, of course, it has been dissolved, replies the simple-minded person content to deal with the obvious side of events. But who really knows what happens when salt is dissolved in water? Profound chemists have written many books on the subject, and the theory of solutions is still unsettled. Roughly we may conjecture, that some of the astral matter, some of the mânasic, and so on, belonging to the higher vehicles of the soul remain behind in the case of flights from the body during life, and that these are enough to maintain the bodily organism in a fit condition to receive back the absent master when he returns. But in saying this we do not really get much further than we get in the other case, when we say that salt dissolves!

QUESTION 223.

*Mrs. Besant in Man and His Bodies, speaking of the astral body (kâmic body) says:—“Without the general action through the astral body there would be no connection between impacts made on the physical senses and the perception of them by the mind. The impact becomes a sensation in the astral body, and is then perceived by the mind. The astral body, in which are the*

*centres of sensation," etc. Is the unconsciousness to pain which comes by the use of an anæsthetic caused by the withdrawal of the inner sheaths down to the astral body from the physical and its etheric double? In sleep an impact on the physical would quickly recall the inner sheaths. Does the use of an anæsthetic make some barrier which cannot be crossed by the inner sheaths? (1896.)*

A. B.—The unconsciousness resulting from the use of an anæsthetic—taking ether and nitrous oxide as examples which have been watched in their action—differs from that of sleep. These anæsthetics expel the etheric double with the higher principles and thus very much diminish the amount of vitality in the body.

In sleep the etheric double is left with the dense body, and the vital currents play through both in the regular way. The body is thus much more alive, and responds quickly to impacts, at the same time notifying its owner of any attack made on his property. A violent shock will, however, often recall the conscious entity even when it is forcibly expelled by an anæsthetic. A person under nitrous oxide (laughing gas) will sometimes re-enter his body with inconvenient promptitude if much violence be used by the dentist.

B. K.—Very little is as yet known, from the occult standpoint, with respect to the action of anæsthetics, and hence no very definite answer can as yet be given to the question. With regard to chloroform, no observations, made with the help of the higher senses, are as yet available. Indeed the only anæsthetic whose action has so far been thus observed, appears to be laughing gas or nitrous oxide; and in respect to this even the observations seem a little discrepant, or rather they seem to imply that its action differs in respect of different individuals. In the best observed case thus far known, the effect of the gas was to set up an exceedingly violent hammering vibration throughout the body, which forcibly caused the separation of the *etheric* body from the gross body, an obviously sufficient reason for the interruption in the perception of the current of physical sensation.

In another case, the man was forced out of the body by the action, but it is not certain whether he was in the astral body only, or in the astral *plus* the etheric. At present these are all the facts within my knowledge, and they are at least sufficient to show that

the question cannot be answered from theoretical considerations alone, but demands an extended and careful series of observations by those able to use with accuracy the astral senses at least.

QUESTION 224.

*In the case of Curative Mesmerism what happens, exactly, to the physical body, the etheric double, and the prāna specialised by the spleen, of the operator and of his subject?*

*Also what happens when Mesmerism is used as a local anæsthetic in the case of slight operations?*

*Is the "magnetic fluid" spoken of in Mr. Sinnett's Rationale of Mesmerism the specialised prāna? and what is "bad magnetism"? (1902.)*

A. P. S.—The more we study these phenomena the more difficult it seems to be to define exactly what takes place. I regard the mesmeric fluid as identical with prāna or the specialised jiva. It is projected against the subject by the operator's will—there we have to do with another mystery we do not in the least understand—and apparently displaces the corresponding fluid circulating in the nerve system of the patient's etheric double. We have to assume or guess that in disease the prāna of the patient becomes itself diseased, so that its expulsion is desirable. That view seems supported by the certain fact that important curative results are to be obtained sometimes by a process almost the reverse of that just described. If the mesmerist knows that the evil he has to deal with is seated in some particular organ of the patient, he may effect good results by using his will, not to drive in prāna from himself, but simply to withdraw that of the patient. Somehow it does come away, and if with every pass the operator has the thought of drawing it away and throwing it off into infinite space, striking curative effects will sometimes ensue.

It will be seen that I leave as a mystery, the details of which it is impossible for us to explain, in the present state of our knowledge, the manner in which the etheric double acts on the denser physical matter of the external body, but a fundamental assumption guides us to the idea that the condition of the etheric double must always react on the denser physical.

The anæsthetic phenomena of mesmerism are explained as fully as I could explain them now in *The Rationale of Mesmerism* (see p. 97).

“Bad magnetism” is a loose expression we all of us use from time to time to cover deficiencies in our knowledge, but in mesmerism I suppose it must be taken to mean diseased prâna—if there is such a thing.

## DIVISION LX

### CLAIRVOYANCE

#### QUESTION 225.

*Clairvoyants and those able to withdraw the consciousness from the physical and who thus visit "other worlds than ours," give descriptions of inhabitants and conditions seen and heard in those spheres. This can only mean that senses (i.e., sight, hearing, etc.), go with the Ego, or belong to the Ego, per se. Is this so? (1900.)*

A. B. C.—It has very frequently been explained in theological literature, by those qualified to speak from first-hand knowledge, that all observations made on another plane of consciousness are made by means of the vehicle of the Ego appropriate to the plane in question. Thus the astral body in which the Ego functions on the astral plane has organs which may be roughly said to correspond to our sense organs on the physical plane, and they respond to the vibrations of the life of that plane in such wise as to convey the impression of hearing, seeing, etc., to the Ego, or perhaps it would be still more accurate to say, give rise to the impressions we call hearing and seeing, etc., down here; for the fact is that all our comprehension of other planes is limited by our experience in this, and our investigators tell us they are continually hampered by the difficulty of expressing the facts of other planes in the symbols belonging to this one. In this they are not alone, as the history of mysticism in all ages and all climes abundantly testifies. They are, then, obliged to use the terms seeing and hearing, but that certainly does *not* mean that the senses, *as we know them*, "go with the Ego." We are told that the "senses," *i.e.*, powers of observation, are much fuller and more complete on the astral plane, and still more so on

the mental planes, while the powers of the Ego in still higher regions—say the Nirvāṇic plane—mean practical omniscience so far as this universe (solar system) is concerned. What the Ego, then, does “take with him,” what does “belong to him *per se*,” is the faculty of consciousness, but the vehicles (sense-organs, if our questioner likes it better) are different for every plane, so different indeed, as regards the higher planes, that the term “senses” would be a complete misnomer.

#### QUESTION 226.

*It is stated in the manual on The Devachanic Plane that the information there given is based upon the investigations of members. Were these investigations made by clairvoyance while in a trance-condition, and how is such clairvoyance to be developed? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—The investigations upon which the information given in *The Devachanic Plane* was based were made by several of those among our members who possess the higher faculties, working in collaboration. From one point of view the term clairvoyance might be applied to all those higher faculties, although in the ordinary sense in which that word is used it implies only a very small modicum of astral sight, and certainly nothing which belongs to the higher mental plane.

If the questioner has read our later theosophical literature he will be aware, that as man evolves he gradually develops these higher faculties, usually in a certain definite order. While his consciousness is confined to the physical plane during waking life, he will have at his disposal the astral faculties during sleep. But when he has so far evolved himself along this particular line as to be able to use the astral sight along with the physical while still awake, he will then find the mental world opening to him when he leaves his body in sleep.

A further stage is that in which he has the faculties of the mental, astral and physical planes all at his command simultaneously in the waking condition; and when that is the case he would be able during sleep to function upon the Buddhic plane.

The investigations referred to were made by members who had

attained this last condition, so that there was no need for them to enter into trance or to leave their bodies in order to see all the different subdivisions of the mental plane, and to describe what they saw, so far as mere physical words can pourtray that which belongs to so much higher a level.

QUESTION 227.

*I have been for some years a member of the Theosophical Society, but I have seen no effort on the part of its writers to give proof to the world of the reality of clairvoyant powers or of other planes. For example, when some years ago a child was lost among the Welsh hills, why should not some of our clairvoyant members have demonstrated their power to the whole world, by turning the search for him in the right direction? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—It is strange to find one who has been for some years a member of the Theosophical Society, as the questioner says he has, and has not yet realised that no theosophical writer has the slightest desire to “give proof to the world of the reality of clairvoyant powers or of other planes.”

This question of phenomenal proof was discussed so fully in some of the very earliest theosophical books that we need hardly waste time over it now. Those who are seeking for information or advice theosophists are always willing to help to the utmost of their power, but to those who desire proof they have nothing to say but “Work at the thing for yourself, study, and, if you will, try experiments for yourself; and so in good time the only proof which is worth having will come to you.”

The particular case to which the questioner draws attention is one of a very large class, and differs in no way from the rest, except that it happens to have attracted a large share of public notice. But we may be sure of this—that those whose work it is to help are always looking out for opportunities to make themselves useful, and if they can do nothing in any particular case it is because of some good and definite reason.



## QUESTION 228.

*Would it be wrong for a person who had a mother to maintain, and who was gifted with clairvoyance, to use that gift as a means of livelihood? (1902.)*

G. R. S. M.—It would be necessary in the first place to know who the person was, what his (or her) circumstances, what his abilities, what the nature of his clairvoyance, before an answer could be attempted in the special case which the questioner may have in mind. Speaking generally, it might be said that if the person could gain his livelihood in any other way it would be preferable to do so, and to use the dawning of the subtler senses as an opportunity for the development of the best within them. On the other hand, to use such faculties for the support of those who are naturally dependent upon us is a higher thing than to use them for mere selfish purposes.

If the subtler senses are regarded as a means of coming into conscious touch with the higher, and are never willingly used but for this purpose, they become a blessing and not a curse, for they are then dedicated to the service of God. But these senses in themselves are not necessarily spiritual (in a higher sense) as we all well know; in the majority of cases they are psychic, and things psychic differ only in degree of greater subtlety and intensity from things physical.

Again, if you say that clairvoyance should never be used as a means of livelihood, you must clearly define how this differs from any other gift of intellect or intuition. Is the poet, for instance, never to use his poetic gift as a means of livelihood; is a musician never to sell his symphonies; an artist his pictures? Is there not a clairvoyance of ideas, a formless "seeing"? Is the mystic never to publish; the inspired orator never to speak for fee; the patient student who has ideals and truths to track out in the maze of history and literature never to receive the small royalties which are usually the modest honoraria of his labours; the contemplator of nature never to accept a paid chair of astronomy or physics? What *is* clairvoyance in its real sense?

The question says "to use that gift as a means of livelihood." If that means to yield oneself up as a psychic tipster for the "markets" and other "events," as a means of gratifying the vanity and curiosity of frivolity, then it is a low way of living, for

it is scarcely to be distinguished from prostitution. But if it means something higher and better, then the old saying "the labourer is worthy of his hire," may apply in this case as in all the others we have cited.

QUESTION 229.

*Suggesting a person to have a definite picture in his mind of a friend or enemy whom he might wish to benefit or injure, would a trained clairvoyant see this mental picture? (1309.)*

C. W. L.—He would see the entire thought exactly as it was, and therefore, of course, the mental image also. If the latter were clearly and definitely formed, he would be able to recognise the friend or enemy quite readily by its means; but many people's thought is so vague and inaccurate that the image made would be a mere dummy, and of very little use as a clue to the person whom it was intended to represent. But the uncertainty would be wholly in the formation of the picture, not in the trained clairvoyant's vision of it.

QUESTION 230.

*When a trained clairvoyant sees the thoughts of others, does he see them in colour, according to the nature of the thought, and in form definite or vague, according to the nature of the thought in itself? (1310.)*

C. W. L.—Certainly he sees them in colour and form, exactly as the querent suggests, but it must not be supposed that the man whose devianth or faculties are fully developed is dependent upon that sight for his reading of the thought, though, of course, he could read it in that way also if he wished. The moment that he turns his attention to any person, the vibrations of that person's mental body are unconsciously reproduced in his own, by sympathy as it were, so that his mind reflects the other man's thought as it is formed, and he does not need to go through any process of translating the colour and form taken by the elemental essence which that thought proceeds to assume.

Even his sight was directed strictly to the mental plane, the method of direct thought-reading would probably be

the examination of the thought-form, though only either selfish thoughts or those in some way connected with a desire would image themselves on the plane which he could see.

But it is almost certain that though he could not directly *see* on the devachanic plane, he would yet by that time be able to sense the thought of another there with very fair accuracy, so that it would be only for a short time quite early in his training that he would really need the slower method. But, of course, he would always continue to see the form-and-colour expression of thought in addition.

#### QUESTION 231.

*If a person is continually thinking ill of another, does he create a thought-form by this thinking, and if so, would a clairvoyant on the astral plane be deceived by that thought-form, and mistake it for the real person, who might be quite different? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—The meaning of this question is not absolutely clear. Every thought creates a thought-form of some sort, and if one person thinks strongly of another (whether ill or well) he not infrequently calls into existence a thought-form resembling himself which appears to that person.

But it seems more probable that the questioner is suggesting a possibility that by thinking frequently of another we might create an image *of the person thought of*, and that since such an image would obviously represent only our idea of the person, and not his real condition, injustice might be done to him if our misrepresentation were mistaken for the reality. I have not personally met with any such case as is here suggested, but I imagine that it is by no means impossible; and I suppose that an entirely untrained clairvoyant might perhaps be considerably influenced by such a misrepresentation, much as a foolish or unthinking person may allow himself to be considerably influenced by gossip and slander on this plane.

But it is inconceivable that any one who had been at all properly trained in the use of astral sight could ever mistake a thought-form for a living person. The distinction between them is so clear to practised sight, that to confuse them a man must be either extremely ignorant or almost incredibly careless.

## QUESTION 232.

*In seeing astrally at a great distance without leaving the body, how are the impressions obtained? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—There are various ways in which this may be done. First we may mention that much-abused phrase, the “astral current,” which is so often written of and so little understood. Without endeavouring here to give an exhaustive disquisition on astral physics, we may just state that it is possible to make a definite connecting-line in astral matter which shall act as a telegraph-wire to convey vibrations by means of which all that is going on at the other end may be seen; such a line being established, be it understood, not by a direct projection through space of astral matter, but by such action upon a line of particles of that matter as will render them capable of forming a conductor for vibrations of the character required. Even this preliminary action can be set up in two ways—either by the transmission of energy from particle to particle until the line is formed, or by the use of a force from a higher plane which is capable of acting upon the whole line simultaneously.

Another method would be the projection to the desired spot of a thought-form—that is to say, an artificial elemental moulded in the shape of the projector and ensouled by his thought. This form would receive whatever impressions there were to be received, and would transmit them to his maker, not along an astral telegraph-wire, but by sympathetic vibration. Yet another way would be to send either an ordinary artificial elemental or a nature-spirit, and simply let them see for themselves, and either bring back their report as a whole or transmit it fragment by fragment as their observations were made. Of course all these are astral methods, and are quite independent of the use of that devachanic sense to which the other side of the world is as much present as this.

## QUESTION 233.

*People have often been known to see their own doubles, and this is sometimes supposed to be a sign of impending death. What is it that is seen on such occasions? (1896.)*

C. J.—The cases of people actually seeing their own doubles are very few. The large number of instances are where they see

other people's doubles, and then it very often proves to have happened at the moment of death of the visiting entity or just before it. But when the former do occur, the explanations might surely be many. The most probable one would be that some person had unconsciously made a thought-form of another, by dwelling on the latter's image very vividly, and had then sent it to the person in question, who happened to see it. If it really turn out to have been a sign of impending death, it might be some astral entity who, foreseeing the death about to take place, and desiring to communicate the fact for the person's benefit, manifests himself in that person's form so as to make a vivid impression. There is an authenticated case where a gentleman saw his own double sitting in a chair, but on further investigation and enquiry by some theosophic students, it was found that for some hours previously, being extremely tired and weary, he had looked forward to sitting down and taking some rest after finishing the work he had had to perform. This then would seem to be a case of the formation of a thought elemental, and certainly this did not foretell the gentleman's death, as it happened some years ago, and he is still living.

QUESTION 234.

*Is sight developed in the etheric double apart from the dense body, and if so, is it by such sight that the various kinds of ether are perceived? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—The etheric double is really part of the physical body, and as a general rule we are less likely to fall into error about either of them if we think of them together. They separate completely only at death, and even partial separation occurs only under anæsthetics, except in the case of a medium. There is etheric matter as well as solid and liquid matter present in the retina of the eye and in the brain, and it is probable that ordinary sight is connected quite as much with the vibrations of the former matter as with those of the latter. The capability of examining the molecules or atoms of either would seem to be rather a different faculty, and apparently implies the use of a much higher power; but large masses of matter in the etheric state, or the bodies of the inhabitants of the etheric sub-planes, may often be seen under favourable conditions by what seems to be a mere intensification or exaltation of ordinary sight.

This question is probably closely connected with the evolution which is slowly but steadily taking place in the physical atom itself. Those who have read the article in *Lucifer* on "Occult Chemistry" will remember that four sets of spirillæ are there mentioned as existing in the atom, lying as it were one behind the other, each set forming the spiral running round the walls of the tube of the larger or grosser set below it. There are in reality seven sets of such spirillæ, thus lying one behind or within the other, and one of them comes into activity in each round of our evolution. Thus since we are now in the fourth round, only four sets of these spirillæ may be observed in working order in the atom as we see it to-day; but by the end of the seventh round the entire system of seven orders of spirillæ will be fully vitalised, and therefore the physical atom will no doubt be a far more sensitive object, able to answer to many finer vibrations which at present evoke from it no response.

Now one of the lighter tasks of the aspirant to adeptship is the development of the very atoms of which his physical body is composed, so that they *may* be capable of response to these finer forces of nature, and as he does this he gradually becomes sensitive to all kinds of etheric vibrations which had not previously affected him, and is therefore conscious of much to which the undeveloped man is totally blind.

Naturally his efforts along these lines have to be continually kept up, since the atoms of his body are constantly changing, and every new atom which is absorbed into his frame needs to be subjected to this process of development. Thus he is assisting in his small way in the evolution of the physical universe, for the atoms which have passed through his body are distinctly the better for his use of them. Though after they leave him their finer spirillæ sink back into inactivity, they are yet much more ready to be again aroused into response to the play of the higher forces than would be the case with other atoms which had had no such experience. These more advanced atoms come in process of time to form part of other organisms, and the presence of a number of them in the brain, even of a quite ordinary person, would be very likely to give him occasional opportunities of a certain amount of what is commonly called etheric vision.

## QUESTION 235.

*What is the difference between etheric and astral sight, and by which of these can one comprehend the fourth dimension? (1898.)*

B. H. S.—There is a distinct difference between etheric sight and astral sight, and it is the latter which seems to correspond to the fourth dimension.

The easiest way to understand the difference is to take an example. If you looked at a man with both the sights in turn, you would see the buttons at the back of his coat in both cases; only if you used etheric sight you would see them *through* him, and would see the shank-side as nearest to you, but if you looked astrally, you would see it not only like that, but just as if you were standing behind the man as well.

Or if you were looking etherically at a wooden cube with writing on all its sides, it would be as though the cube were glass, so that you could see through it, and you would see the writing on the opposite side all backwards, while that on the right and left sides would not be clear to you at all unless you moved, because you would see it edgewise. But if you looked at it astrally you would see all the sides at once, and all the right way up, as though the whole cube had been flattened out before you, and you would see every particle of the inside as well—not *through* the others, but all flattened out. You would be looking at it from another direction at right angles to all the directions that we know.

If you look at the back of a watch etherically you see all the wheels through it, and the face *through them*, but backwards; if you look at it astrally, you see the face right way up and all the wheels lying separately, but nothing on the top of anything else.

## QUESTION 236.

*Is there any good use to which ordinary untrained clairvoyants can put their powers? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—Most assuredly. The possession of clairvoyant power is a very great privilege and a very great advantage, and, if properly and sensibly used, it may be a blessing and a help to its fortunate holder, just as surely as if it is misused it may often be a hindrance and a curse. The principal dangers

attendant upon it arise from pride, ignorance, or impurity; and if these be avoided, as they easily may be, nothing but good can come from it.

Pride is the first great danger. The possession of a faculty which, though it is the heritage of the whole human race, is as yet manifested only very occasionally, often causes the ignorant clairvoyant to feel himself (or still more frequently, herself) exalted above his fellows, chosen by the Almighty for some mission of world-wide importance, dowered with a discernment that can never err, selected under angelic guidance to be the founder of a new dispensation, and so on. And be it remembered that there are always plenty of sportive and mischievous entities on the other side of the veil who are ready and even anxious to foster all such delusions, to reflect and embody all such thoughts and to fill whatever *rôle* of archangel or spirit-guide may happen to be suggested to them. Unfortunately, it is so fatally easy to persuade the average man that he really is a very fine fellow at bottom, and quite worthy to be the recipient of a special revelation, even though his friends have through blindness or prejudice somehow failed hitherto to appreciate him.

Then another danger—perhaps the greatest of all, because it is the mother of all others—is ignorance. If the clairvoyant knows anything of the history of his subject, if he at all understands the conditions of these other planes into which his vision is penetrating, he cannot, of course, suppose himself the only person who was ever so highly favoured, nor can he feel with self-complacent certainty that it is impossible for him to be mistaken. But when he is, as so many are, in the densest ignorance as to history, conditions, and everything else, he is liable in the first place to make all kinds of mistakes as to what he sees, and secondly, to be the easy prey of all sorts of designing and deceptive entities from the astral plane. He has no criterion by which to judge what he sees or thinks he sees, no test to apply to his visions or communications, and so he has no sense of relative proportion or the fitness of things, and he magnifies a copybook maxim into a fragment of Divine wisdom, a platitude of the most ordinary type into an angelic message. Then, again, for want of common knowledge on scientific subjects, he will often utterly misunderstand what his faculties enable him to perceive, and he will in consequence gravely promulgate the grossest absurdities.



A third danger is that of impurity. The man who is pure in thought and life, pure in intention and free from the taint of selfishness, is by that very fact guarded from the influence of undesirable entities from other planes. There is in him nothing upon which they can play; he is no fit medium for them. On the other hand, all good influences naturally surround such a man, and hasten to use him as a channel through which they may act, and thus a still further barrier is erected about him against all which is mean, and low, and evil. The man of impure life or motive, on the contrary, inevitably attracts to himself all that is worst in the invisible world which so closely surrounds us; he responds readily to it, while it will be hardly possible for the forces of good to make any impression upon him.

But a clairvoyant who will bear in mind all these dangers and strive to avoid them, who will take the trouble to study the history and the *rationale* of clairvoyance, who will see to it that his heart is humble and his motives are pure—such a man may assuredly learn very much from these powers of which he finds himself in possession, and may make them of the greatest use to him in the work which he has to do.

Having first taken good heed to the training of his own character, let him observe and note down carefully any visions which come to him; let him patiently endeavour to disentangle the core of truth in them from the various accretions and exaggerations which are sure at first to be almost inextricably confused with them; let him in every possible way test and check them and endeavour to ascertain which of them are reliable, and in what way these reliable ones differ from others which have proved less trustworthy—and he will very soon find himself evolving order out of chaos, and learning to distinguish what he can trust and what he must for the present put aside as incomprehensible.

He will probably find in course of time that he gets impressions, whether by direct sight or only by feeling, in reference to the various people with whom he comes into contact. Once more the careful noting down of every such impression as soon as it occurs, and the impartial testing and checking of it as opportunity offers, will soon show our friend how far these feelings or visions are to be relied on; and as soon as he finds that they are correct and dependable, he has made a very great advance, for he is in possession of a power which enables him to be of far more use

to those among whom his work lies, than he could be if he knew only as much about them as can be seen by the ordinary eye.

If, for example, his sight includes the auras of those around him, he can judge from what it shows him how best to deal with them, how to bring out their latent good qualities, how to strengthen their weaknesses, how to repress what is undesirable in their characters.

Again, his power may often enable him to observe something of the processes of nature, to see something of the working of the non-human evolutions which surround us, and thus to acquire very much most valuable knowledge on all kinds of recondite subjects. If he happens to be personally acquainted with some clairvoyant who has been put under regular training, he has, of course, a great advantage, in that he can without difficulty get his visions examined and tested by one upon whom he can rely.

Generally speaking, then, the course to be recommended to the untrained clairvoyant is that of exceeding patience and much watchfulness; but with this hope ever before his eyes, that assuredly if he makes good use of the talent entrusted to him, it cannot but attract the favourable notice of those who are ever watching for instruments that can be employed in the great work of evolution, and that when the right time comes, he will receive the training which he so earnestly desires, and will thus be enabled definitely to become one of those who help the world.

#### QUESTION 237.

*Ought not an Ego, awaiting reincarnation on the astral plane, to be visible to ordinary clairvoyants, and if so, why are not all clairvoyants at one with theosophists as to the doctrine of reincarnation? (1903.)*

A. P. S.—There are only two or three people that I know of in the Society who could answer this question from personal observation, and I am not one of them, but on general principles the answer is easily given. Egos coming into reincarnation would be so unlike anything an ordinary clairvoyant could recognise as a human entity that they would probably escape his observation

altogether. Their old astral vehicles would have disintegrated a thousand years previously, there or thereabouts. Their devachanic existence has, so to speak, washed the Ego clean of all traces of the last personality. There is nothing to recognise except for the clairvoyant who can freely discern and comprehend the phenomena of the mânasic plane. Finally, although a good many theosophical doctrines are construed too literally very often, and their significance exaggerated, it would seem to be difficult to exaggerate the extent to which the astral plane is saturated with appearances which are not what they seem, to the perpetual confusion of the "ordinary clairvoyant." In reference to what they see and to what they do not see, ordinary clairvoyants are the victims of endless delusions, accounting for the enormous discrepancy in the teaching of different schools of spiritualists, and the various seers who have each, no doubt, in the most conscientious spirit, endeavoured to enlighten this world concerning the "next."

## DIVISION LXI

### THE ETHERIC AND HIGHER BODIES.

#### QUESTION 238.

*In surgical cases, where amputations are performed, does the Linga Sharira leave the "body" during the operation? If not, is it capable of thus being injured? (1895.)*

I. P. H.—No, I think not, for we are told that to the presence of the Linga Sharira may be ascribed the fact that a man whose leg has been amputated "feels" his foot. I judge that the Linga Sharira is capable of being injured by the mind; that it is of such a quality of matter that steel would not injure it. I think that as the amputated limb disintegrated, the astral model would do the same, as in ordinary cases of the dissolution of the body; also I should think that the mind being strongly impressed by the fact that the limb was no longer there, this impression would shrivel and destroy the Linga Sharira.

P.—The Linga Sharira could not leave the body unless the subject were a medium or sensitive. It might or might not be severed by the surgeon's knife, but in the latter case its fluidic nature would permit of its restoration to its original form.

G. R. S. M.—The Linga Sharira of the Esoteric Philosophy is the psycho-physical double of the body. Judging by the many cases of continued feeling after the amputation of the physical limb, I should say that the Linga Sharira is not injured. That which leaves the body when anæsthetics are used, appears to me to be what the Vedantic psychologists call the Sūkshma Sharira or subtle body; we may, perhaps, render this as the kâmic astral to bring it into line with the nomenclature of the Esoteric Philosophy.

## QUESTION 239.

*If the Linga Sharira does not suffer in like manner with its physical counterpart, how are clairvoyants capable of recognising it as the "double" of the subject under conditions favourable to its manifestation? (1895.)*

C. W. L.—It is difficult to see how the recognition of the double by a clairvoyant can be supposed to depend upon the suffering or pleasure of the Linga Sharira. If the idea in the mind of the questioner is that in the case of, say, the amputation of a physical limb, the corresponding part of the Linga Sharira will still remain, and therefore there will be a difference between the two bodies, he is so far quite right; but, first of all, the double seen by a clairvoyant at a distance from the physical body is not the Linga Sharira at all, but an astral body composed of the material of the kâmic aura, and, secondly, even if he were to see the Linga Sharira of a friend (as he might if he visited the spot where that friend was buried), his recognition of it would depend upon the impression made upon his consciousness by its general appearance, not upon any one detail of that appearance, such as the absence of a particular limb. Surely that is so even on the physical plane; a man recognises his friend, not by his eyes, his nose, or the colour of his hair, but by the *tout ensemble*—the impression on his mind which represents to him the idea of that friend.

A. B.—The Linga Sharira is not the form which is seen by the clairvoyant who recognises the presence of a friend whose body is far away. The Linga Sharira may be seen as inter-penetrating the body, filling the intermolecular spaces left by the grosser particles of physical matter, and serving as the vehicle of Prâna, which, by means of it, permeates the whole body, and is brought into touch with every particle. When it leaves the body, oozing out in the way that has been often described, it never goes very far away, and remains in magnetic touch with its physical counterpart; many clairvoyants see a cord which unites the two together. After emerging from the physical body, it assumes the shape of the latter, and so becomes recognisable; but it is to be remembered that this astral matter, extruded from the physical body, may be moulded into other forms if it be used as a vehicle by other entities or forces, and is often so moulded at materialising *séances*.

## QUESTION 240.

*At the "death" of the "physical body" are the Kâma Rûpa and the Linga Sharîra coexistent, are they capable of independently manifesting themselves at one and the same time, and is it possible for the Kâma Rûpa to manifest itself through the Linga Sharîra prior to disintegration? (1895.)*

C. W. L.—The Kâma Rûpa certainly cannot *manifest* through the Linga Sharîra or through anything else, for it is itself only a vehicle through which the Self manifests. Prâna leaves the Linga Sharîra almost immediately after death, as the other principles do, so that the Linga is disintegrating *pari passu* with the physical body over which it floats, and could no more be reanimated or again used as a vehicle by the Self than the latter could. A foul and altogether horrible life can for the time be put into it by certain loathsome magical practices, but this part of the subject is too unsavoury to pursue—as indeed are all these churchyard investigations, in the opinion of most clairvoyants.

A. B.—The Kâma Rûpa, strictly speaking, is only formed as an independent entity after death, although the kâmic principle and its aura are an integral part of the man whether he be in his physical or in his astral body. At death, the man for a brief space may be regarded as consisting of six principles, the lowest, the body, having been dropped off; then the five higher principles drop off the Linga Sharîra, leaving it with the corpse to disintegrate at leisure, and Prâna is set free; the Kâma Rûpa becomes the vehicle of the Ego, rearranging itself into *post-mortem* form. It does not manifest itself independently of the Ego, until after the Ego has passed onward, and it could no more take up the Linga Sharîra again than it could take up the physical body. The Linga Sharîra might be seen near the corpse, and the Ego in its Kâma Rûpa might show itself there or elsewhere, but the latter would not reassume the Linga Sharîra.

## QUESTION 241.

*If the etheric double is the exact counterpart of the physical body, how does one explain the fact that a man may grow stouter or thinner? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—The difficulty here is not exactly an obvious one, for why should not the etheric double grow stouter or thinner also? The questioner has, perhaps, in mind the statement that a man's etheric double is made for him by the agents of the Lords of Karma, and so feels that it should be impossible for him to produce any alteration in it. But that is not so. The work of building up the etheric double of a child is begun before its birth by what we call an artificial elemental, energised by the thought of the Māharājahs, and this creature builds exactly according to the pattern given to him from the mind of the Lipika. He continues his work until the child is seven years old (the period at or about which the Ego takes full charge of his own vehicles), and from that time forward the etheric double no longer receives special attention, but is developed along with the other principles by the action of the Ego.

All these principles act and react on one another, and the growth of the etheric double may be influenced, on the one hand from above, by the desires which sway the kāmīc body, or on the other hand from below, by the condition of the denser physical body. If the latter takes much food and little exercise, and so grows fat and gross, the etheric double is also influenced by its action (or want of it), and draws into itself more and grosser particles. Nothing can affect one of the vehicles of man without sympathetically affecting all the others; and the difficulty felt by the questioner is one which disappears upon fuller comprehension of the subject.

## QUESTION 242.

*Does the etheric double sometimes leave the body, or is this possible only for what is called "the Linga Sharīra proper," and what are these two bodies respectively? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—The use of the term Linga Sharīra has for some time been discontinued in theosophical writings, because it was found

that it was used in the East in various senses differing widely from the meaning which we in England had been attaching to it, and that therefore much confusion had been caused. Even in our own literature the name had been very loosely used, and Madame Blavatsky herself seems to have applied it sometimes to the etheric double and sometimes to the astral body. It was eventually decided to drop it out of the system of theosophical nomenclature altogether, and to adopt the term "etheric double" for the mould upon which the denser part of man's physical body was formed. This title was chosen as expressing in plain English the real characteristics of the principle in question; "etheric" because it is formed of etheric matter only, and "double" because it is an exact duplicate in every way of the physical body—or rather it would be more accurate to say that the dense body which we see is a duplicate of it.

Thus the two bodies mentioned by the questioner are really one and the same, and when in some of the earlier writings qualities are attributed to the Linga Sharīra which the etheric double certainly does not possess, it must be understood that the author was either referring under that name to what we now call the astral body, or was simply confusing the functions of two distinct though closely allied principles.

Under ordinary circumstances, and in the case of ordinary persons, the etheric double leaves the body only at death; in fact, it is precisely in that complete withdrawal of the true man in his etheric double as a vehicle from the physical body that death really consists.

In the case of those who are called mediums, however, the lower principles cohere less strongly, and entities acting from the astral plane can easily compass the partial withdrawal of the matter of the etheric double from its denser counterpart. When so withdrawn, this matter is used by the manifesting entity, whatever that may be, either for the purpose of materialisation or to supply the link between astral and dense physical matter which is necessary to enable him or it to produce results upon this plane.

It is to be observed, however, that this borrowed etheric matter is always connected with the body to which it belongs, by a current constantly flowing from the one to the other—a current which is frequently described as resembling a rope connecting the two together



Consequently, the materialised form cannot usually pass to any great distance from the body of the medium, and has a constant tendency to rush back and reunite with it.

This frequent though temporary loss of a part of himself is naturally exceedingly trying to the constitution of the medium, and often causes excessive nervous prostration ; indeed, it will be found that sooner or later almost all mediums for physical manifestations succumb under the strain, and fall victims either to epilepsy and kindred maladies, or to the still more terrible disease of drunkenness, brought on by the intense craving for stimulants which is a natural consequence of the collapse which follows extreme and recurrent exhaustion.

For further information as to the etheric double the questioner is referred to Theosophical Manuals v. and vii., and also to the new edition (*not* to the old one) of Manual i.

QUESTION 243.

*In Mrs. Besant's Manual, Karma, p. 8, it is said that : " The term Subtle Body covers a variety of astral bodies, respectively suitable to the varying conditions of the very complicated region indicated by the name psychic plane." Are these different and separable astral bodies ? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—The passage in question can hardly be intended to convey the idea that man has several astral bodies which are different and separable, but rather that the kâmic vehicle of man contains within itself matter of all the subdivisions, of the astral plane, all interpenetrating one another, so that to a vision which could see only the matter of one of those subdivisions, the man would appear to have a perfect body composed of that matter. When we say that a man is functioning on a particular sub-plane of the astral, what we really mean is simply that his consciousness is for the time acting only through that matter in his kâmic body which corresponds to the sub-plane in question. The term "subtle body" is often so used as to include the mind-body and the Mâyâvi Rûpa, so it is possible that the passage may refer to these, though they could not in strictness be spoken of as astral, except perhaps (in a sense) when astrally materialised in order to function temporarily on that plane.

A. B.—I intended the term "subtle body" to include the astral

body well or ill-developed, and varying much in composition, as it exists during life; next, that same body as re-arranged after death differing in constitution, according to the sub-plane on which it is functioning; thirdly, the Mâyavi Rûpa when it is densified by the matter of the astral plane, so as to make it perceptible to astral vision; lastly, the thought-likenesses of himself that a man might send out and clothe in astral matter for some special purposes.

QUESTION 244.

*What exactly is the chhâyâ of which we read so much? Is it composed of astral matter, and what is its function in the formation and nutrition of the body? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—The word chhâyâ is Sanskrit, and means simply shadow; but there is no term which has been used in theosophical literature in a more confused and misleading manner. Further references to it will be found in the forthcoming third volume of *The Secret Doctrine*; but the statements made about it frequently appear quite irreconcilable one with the other. A little examination, however, clearly shows us that Madame Blavatsky employed the word as a kind of general term for any body which was made in the likeness of the physical, and therefore might be called by poetic licence a “shadow” of it. She sometimes uses it for the etheric double, sometimes for the astral body, sometimes for that etheric organ in man which specialises the solar jîva into prâna, and sometimes for an artificial body thrown out and materialised.

It would be a capital exercise for an earnest student first to familiarise himself thoroughly by a careful study of Manual VII. with the constitution, functions, and powers of the various vehicles of man, and then to go through the references in older writings to the chhâyâ and the Linga Sharira, marking against those words each time they occur what he conceives to be the accurate translation of each in that particular case. In all cases he will find it best first to get a firm grasp of the outlines of his subject from the smaller and simpler books, and then to build into that outline the fragments of the more detailed information which he will find scattered about in the larger and more complicated works. By so doing he will save himself much severe labour and many serious misconceptions.

It will be seen that it is impossible to answer the last part of the question; one can only say that to define the functions of the chhâyâ in any particular case, one must first know in what sense the word is there used; the matter is then simple enough.

## QUESTION 245.

*Is the fluidic body of were-wolves and vampires always an astral body, clothed sometimes with physical matter in order to render it visible? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—The condition either of the were-wolf or the vampire is happily exceedingly rare and entirely abnormal. It is in fact a hideous anachronism—an appalling relic of a time when man and his surroundings were in many ways not what they are now. Undoubtedly the astral body is present in such manifestations, but there is probably also a great deal of the matter of the etheric double, and perhaps also a toll is levied upon the gaseous and liquid constituents of the physical body, as in the case of some materialisations. In both cases this fluidic body appears able to pass to much greater distances from the physical than is ever otherwise possible, so far as is yet known, for a vehicle which contains at least a certain amount of etheric matter. The two states, though they have some points in common, and are, perhaps, equally horrible, are yet quite distinct, as will be seen by reference to Manual v.

## QUESTION 246.

*Are there organs in the astral body corresponding to those in the physical? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—This is a question which is very often asked by those who are trying to realise the physiology of the astral body, and it is one of the many apparently simple questions, a short answer to which is almost inevitably misleading. The reply cannot but be in the negative, but to make it satisfactory to the mind, further explanation is necessary.

It is not improbable that the questioner has in mind some of the statements that have been made, as to the perfect interpenetration of the physical body by astral matter, the exact corre-

spondence between the two vehicles, and the fact that every physical object has necessarily its astral counterpart.

Now all these statements are true, and yet it is quite possible for people who do not normally see astrally to misunderstand them. Every order of physical matter has its corresponding order of astral matter in constant association with it—not to be separated from it except by a very considerable exertion of occult force, and even then only to be held apart from it as long as force is being definitely exerted to that end. But for all that the relation of the astral particles one to another is far looser than is the case with their physical correspondences.

In a bar of iron, for example, we have a mass of physical molecules in the solid condition—that is to say, capable of comparatively little change in their relative positions, though each vibrating with immense rapidity in its own sphere. The astral counterpart of this consists of what we often call solid astral matter—that is, matter of the lowest and densest sub-plane of the astral ; but, nevertheless, its particles are constantly and rapidly changing their relative position, moving among one another as easily as those of a liquid on the physical plane might do. So that there is no permanent association between any one physical particle and that amount of astral matter which happens at any given moment to be acting as its counterpart.

This is equally true with respect to the astral body of man, which, for our purpose at the moment, we may regard as consisting of two parts—the denser aggregation which occupies the exact position of the physical body, and the cloud of rarer astral matter which surrounds that aggregation. In both these parts, and between them both, there is going on at every moment of time the rapid inter-circulation of the particles which has been described, so that as one watches the movement of the molecules in the astral body, one is reminded of the appearance of those in fiercely boiling water.

This being so, it will be readily understood that though any given organ of the physical body must always have as its counterpart a certain amount of astral matter, it does not retain the same particles for more than a few seconds at a time, and consequently there is nothing corresponding to the specialisation of physical nerve-matter into optic or auditory nerves, and so on. So that though the physical eye or ear has undoubtedly always its counterpart of astral matter, that particular fragment of astral matter is no

more (and no less) capable of responding to the vibrations which produce astral sight or astral hearing than any other part of the vehicle.

It must never be forgotten, that though we constantly have to speak of "astral sight" or "astral hearing" in order to make ourselves intelligible, all that we mean by those expressions is the faculty of responding to such vibrations as convey to the man's consciousness, when he is functioning in his astral body, information of the same character as that conveyed to him by his eyes and ears while he is in the physical body. But in the entirely different astral conditions, specialised organs are not necessary for the attainment of this result; there is matter in every part of the astral body which is capable of such response, and consequently the man functioning in that vehicle sees equally well objects behind him, beneath him, above him, without needing to turn his head.

There is, however, another point which it would hardly be fair to the questioner to leave entirely out of account. Theosophical students are familiar with the idea of the existence in both the astral and the etheric bodies of man of certain centres, sometimes called *chakrams*, which have to be vivified in turn by the sacred serpent-fire as the man advances in evolution. Though these cannot be described as organs in the ordinary sense of the word, since it is not through them that the man sees or hears, as he does here through eyes and ears, yet it is apparently very largely upon their vivification that the power of exercising these astral senses depends, each of them as it is developed giving to the whole astral body the power of response to a new set of vibrations.

Neither have these centres, however, any permanent collection of astral matter connected with them. They are simply vortices in the matter of the body—vortices through which all the particles pass in turn—points, perhaps, at which the higher force from planes above impinges upon the astral body. Even this description gives but a very partial idea of their appearance, for they are in reality four-dimensional vortices, so that the force which comes through them and is the cause of their existence seems to well up from nowhere. But, at any rate, since all particles in turn pass through each of them, it will be clear that it is thus possible for each in turn to evoke in all the particles of the body the power of receptivity to a certain set of vibrations, so that all the astral senses are equally active in all parts of the body. Nevertheless, as has

been said above, these cannot justly be described as organs, and so the reply to the question must be a negative one.

QUESTION 247.

*It is stated that astral bodies can interpenetrate one another (as indeed they must do when two persons stand or sit close together); why is not astral matter an obstacle to other matter of the same order, just as would be the case on the physical plane? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—The reason appears to be that the molecules of astral matter are not only exceedingly minute, but are much further apart in proportion to their size than are physical molecules as ordinarily known to the chemist, so that there is no difficulty in the way of the interpenetration of two or three astral bodies, or even a larger number.

They do, however, affect one another considerably in such a case, and if their vibrations are not harmonious, a very unpleasant sensation is produced, and serious inconvenience and even great harm may result from such undesirable propinquity, when one of the astral bodies is gross and impure. For that, among other reasons, it is well to avoid crowded places or crowded vehicles as much as possible.

QUESTION 248.

*Does the arrangements of atoms or particles in a well-developed astral body through which the Ego functions in the physical waking state, differ from their arrangement in that astral body in which he functions during sleep, as it is separated from the physical? If so, is this re-arrangement in any way similar to the re-arrangement of the particles of the astral body after death? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—No difference in the arrangement of the particles of the astral body is produced by departure from the physical body during sleep, and consequently there is no resemblance to the condition after death. A certain difference in the *appearance* (though not of the arrangement) of the astral particles is visible when the man is away from his physical sheath, owing to the fact that in one case most of the force and energy of the man is passing

*through* those astral particles to act upon their physical counterparts, whereas in the other the astral particle is for the time the terminus and special field of its activity. Probably the querent has clairvoyantly caught some glimpse of this difference, and that is what has caused him to ask this question.

## QUESTION 249.

*Do the senses of hearing and sound belong to the activities of mind, and those of touch, taste, and smell to the kâmic body? There does not seem much of the kâmic nature in the pleasure given by form and sound unassociated with the grosser senses. (1899.)*

A. P. S.—Is not the clue to this problem to be found in the idea that, after all, the senses are merely avenues of perception—nothing in themselves but machinery for producing perceptions? It is in the conscious being that the perception is evoked. The kâmic body can have no consciousness in itself (of the kind which we are thinking of when we talk, as waking human beings, of consciousness) unless it is animated by the Ego. Much confusion of thought has, it seems to me, sprung from the assignment of different classes of feelings, desires, or emotions, to different vehicles of the Ego. The coarsest desires of the flesh would not be developed in any “kâmic body” unless there were latent attributes in the Ego, which in physical manifestation gave rise to those desires. They are not present to the consciousness of the Ego on higher planes, because there they have no scope for manifestation, because there the Ego has no fulcrum to lean upon which can subserve that manifestation.

The states of perception represented by the two higher senses are clearly compatible with the surroundings of the mental plane, while it is less likely that the states of perception represented by the three lower senses would be called into activity in a centre of consciousness merely, for the time being, animating a mental body; but consciousness in any of its aspects is an attribute of the real spiritual entity, not of any of the organisms in which from time to time he may be functioning. It has been frequently explained that on the mental plane one faculty of perception supersedes all the faculties which we call senses down here, but in superseding it must embrace and include them. Thus I should be disinclined to regard any of the senses as the appanage exclusively of the

kâmic body. The problem brings us to the confines of many others far higher in importance than itself. My position—that any state of consciousness developed in physical life must be traceable to characteristics of the Ego—is the only justification for all the pains taken on the upward path to ennoble and dignify the desires. If we could shake them off (those which are ignoble), by merely getting rid of the kâmic body, there would be no reason why we should take the trouble to go through life after life of effort and suffering in the struggle to become perfect. Nature is evidently of opinion that a man can only be considered perfect when he is perfect *in incarnation*, with both kâmic and physical bodies to give expression to all that is in him.

B. K.—All the separated or differentiated senses belong to the astral or kâmic body and not to the mental.

The characteristic mode of perception belonging to the mental body is that all is perceived on that plane by a single unitary act, which includes, as partial moments, all that we know as the separated modes of sense perception on the physical and astral planes, and gives one in addition, in a manner peculiar to itself, knowledge—more or less complete and perfect according to the development of the power—of all that can be known about the object on which the attention is focussed, regarded as separate from the knower or perceiver. But though the power of mental perception includes all varieties of sense perception, it must be remembered that there are no special senses, or sense organs, in the mental body, and that perception takes place by one single undivided act.

Pleasure and pain belong purely to the kâmic body, and only combine with the mental perceptions by association and contact. For in its own pure nature mental perception brings to consciousness knowledge quite apart and free from any question of pain and pleasure.

#### QUESTION 250.

*What is the form of the mental body on its own plane? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—Not long ago I answered a similar question as to the astral body, and much of what I then said will apply in this case also. In the mind body, as in the astral body, there is a reproduction of the physical form within the outer ovoid whose



shape is determined by that of the causal body, so that it has somewhat the appearance of a form of denser mist surrounded by a lighter mist. It must be remembered that all through the devachanic period the personality of the last physical life is distinctly preserved, and that it is only when the consciousness is finally withdrawn into the causal body that this feeling of personality is merged in the individuality, and the man, for the first time since this descent into incarnation, realises himself as the true and comparatively permanent Ego.

## QUESTION 251.

*Do the mental and causal bodies, when on their corresponding planes, retain any semblance of the human form? At all events such semblance seems to disappear at a certain stage of the Ego's ascent, for in "Dreams" (Lucifer, vol. xvii., p. 237) the causal body of an Adept is described as "a magnificent sphere of living light, whose radiant glory no words can ever tell."*

*Would it be possible to give an idea what the appearance of the "divine beings" can be likened to? (1898.)*

A. B.—The mental and causal bodies are not in the human form when working with the physical body; they interpenetrate it, and, extending beyond it in every direction, surround it with a "sphere of living light." This sphere-like appearance of the invisible bodies—the parts outside the physical body forming the aura—has given rise to the name "auric egg," applied by some to the aura. The shape is really ovoid, the human form standing in the centre. Needless to say that these bodies are on their own planes always, as the planes interpenetrate each other. When the soul withdraws from the physical and astral bodies, and shapes the mental body into a Mâyâvi Rûpa, or body of illusion, to serve as an independent vehicle of consciousness, it is usual, but not necessary, to mould it into a likeness of the physical body, the causal body still surrounding this glorified human form as a sphere of light.

It is practically impossible to describe the causal body, or to give any idea of the appearance of the "divine beings" alluded to. Many attempts to do so have been made in many Scriptures, but when the writer has departed from the "likeness of a man,"

the Sanskrit term *kāraṇa śarīra* which rendered *causal body* in the English and gave an *auric* sense in regard to the *auric*.

## SECTION 12

In some of our previous lectures we have seen the *auric* *sharīra* and the *causal* *sharīra* and how they are related to the *Ego*. *Sharīra* was a Sanskrit word and the *auric* was a term which I introduced for the *Ego*.

It is, however, most important to remember that in earlier philosophical literature and even in Madame Blavatsky's own works many of the terms were used much more loosely than they have been just lately. We are even now only gradually arriving at any approach to a definite terminology, and some even of what we have will probably need adaptation as our knowledge increases. It is, for instance, a student grasps the general facts of the case, so far as they are yet known to us, it will not be difficult for him to arrive at an author's meaning, even through the fog which is *caused* by the confusion of terms.

An account which I wrote in the *VAHANA* of July, 1897, gives what *more* information we possess as to the genesis of the *causal* *body*, and it is repeated in substance in my little book on *The Christian Creed*. I must refer the enquirer to one or other of these publications, as our space is too limited to admit of the reproduction of the whole statement. Briefly, it shows the *causal* *body* to have been itself the ensouling principle of the kingdoms below humanity, but to be now only the vehicle on a certain plane of the true human *Ego*.

It is wiser on the whole to avoid altogether the use of the Sanskrit term *kāraṇa śarīra*, for while it means nothing more than our English term "causal body," and so has no sort of advantage over it, it has been used in Hindu philosophy with a connotation so entirely different from ours that much confusion is liable to arise.

As to the *auric* *egg*, that is another term which has decidedly been used in various senses. Sometimes it has been employed to signify the entire aura of man, including apparently all his vehicles up to the *causal*; sometimes it has been restricted to the *causal* *body*, and sometimes I think it has been intended to bear a significance higher still.

Once more I say, learn the facts of the case. Get clearly into your mind a list of the principles which really do exist in man, and learn what the function of each of them is; call them by whatever names you please, so long as you understand them, and you will have little difficulty in sorting out and arranging the apparently contradictory statements of various theosophical writers. When you come across a remark about a certain principle locate it in your mental scheme according to the qualities predicated of it, *not* according to the name with which it happens to be labelled, and you will find that difficulties vanish, and order comes out of chaos.

## DIVISION LXII

### THE AURA

#### QUESTION 253.

*It has been stated that the colours to be seen in a man's aura are infallible indications of his disposition ; would it be possible to give a list of the colours observable, and of the qualities respectively assigned to them ? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—The most important and easily observable characteristics of the aura are as follows :

Thick black clouds usually indicate hatred and malice.

Deep red flashes on a black ground show anger, but in the case of what is often called “noble indignation” on behalf of someone oppressed or injured, the flashes are brilliant scarlet on the ordinary background of the aura.

Lurid, flaming red—a quite unmistakable colour, though difficult to describe—indicates animal passions.

Dull brown-red—a sort of dirty rust-colour—shows avarice.

Dull, hard brown-grey usually indicates selfishness, and is unfortunately one of the very commonest auric colours.

Heavy leaden grey expresses deep depression, and where this is habitual the aura is sometimes indescribably gloomy and saddening.

Livid grey (a most hideous and frightful hue) shows overmastering terror.

Grey-green—a peculiar shade of it which can hardly be described otherwise than by the epithet “slimy”—shows deceit.

Brownish-green, with occasional dull red flashes, seems to betoken jealousy.

Crimson indicates love. This is often a beautifully clear colour, but naturally it varies very greatly with the nature of the love. It may be quite a dull, heavy crimson, or may vary through all the

shades up to a most lovely rose-colour, as it becomes more and more unselfish and pure. If this rose-colour is brilliant and tinged with lilac, it shows the more spiritual love for humanity.

Orange, if clear, seems to indicate ambition; if tinged with brown, it shows pride. But in this colour also the varieties are so numerous, according to the nature of the pride or ambition, that it is impossible to give more than a general description.

Yellow expresses intellectuality—a darker and duller colour if the intellect is directed chiefly into lower channels; brilliantly golden, rising to a beautiful clear lemon-yellow, as it is addressed to higher and more unselfish objects.

Bright green seems to show ingenuity and quickness of resource, and often implies strong vitality.

Dark, clear blue usually indicates religious feeling, and naturally varies very much, to indigo in the one direction and to rich deep violet in the other, according to the nature of the feeling, and especially according to the proportion of selfishness with which it is tinged.

Light blue (ultramarine or cobalt) shows devotion to a noble spiritual ideal, and gradually rises to luminous lilac-blue, which indicates higher spirituality, and is almost always accompanied by sparkling golden stars, which appear to represent spiritual aspirations.

It will be understood that all the colours are subject to almost infinite combinations and modifications, so that to read the detailed indications of an aura perfectly is a very difficult task. Then, of course, the general brilliancy of the aura, the comparative definiteness or indefiniteness of its outline, and the relative brightness of the *chakrams* or centres of force—all these points and many more have to be taken into consideration. It should, perhaps, be mentioned that developed or developing psychical faculties seem always to be shown by the colours which lie beyond the visible spectrum — by the ultra-violet when used solely for unselfish purposes, but with gruesome combinations of the ultra-red in the case of the intentional dabblers in black magic. Occult advancement shows itself not only by colours, but also by the greater luminosity of the aura, by its increased size and more definite outline.

## QUESTION 254.

*Having attended a recent address delivered by a prominent theosophist, four friends found, on comparing notes afterwards, that they had all observed a distinct luminosity all round the head of the lecturer, from the shoulders upwards. This was, of course, some part of the aura ; but why should it be visible only then ? Would it be because the lecturer was then putting out more force, or would it be only that the listeners were in a state of greater tension than usual ? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—No doubt both hypotheses are true. The auditors had probably put themselves into an eminently receptive condition, and were straining every capacity in order to understand and to receive as much spiritual help and influence as they could. They would thus come very closely into *rapport* with the lecturer, and if that person's faculties were more developed than their own, they would find themselves for the time greatly stimulated by the vibrations pouring forth so vigorously upon them, and would quite probably be able just then to see much more clearly than they would under ordinary conditions.

It will be remembered that in the human aura the higher intellectual powers are denoted by a brilliant yellow colour which shows itself chiefly round the head. When in the effort of delivering a lecture those powers are roused to their maximum activity, that yellow matter would vibrate more vehemently, and would consequently glow much more brightly ; so that under such conditions it might very well become visible to sight that could not discern it in its normal state of comparative quietude.

There are many people now, especially among students of occultism, who are drawing very near to the development of psychic faculty, and though it may not yet be strong enough to manifest under quite ordinary conditions, it does not need much to bring it from potentiality into temporary actuality. When therefore such a coincidence occurs as is above described—when a strong stimulation of the faintly dawning faculty happens to synchronise with the presence of some unusually vivid and brilliant object—partial vision is attained, and the student experiences a very slight foretaste of what will presently be his normal condition of consciousness.

It was probably an occasional glimpse of an exactly similar

phenomenon that led mediæval painters to represent the saints invariably with a nimbus or glory around their heads—not that it is in the least likely that all the artists saw astrally, but that a tradition of the appearance was handed down from some person or persons who *had* seen. It will further be remembered that such a nimbus is almost always shown in the pictures as yellow or golden, simply because that is the easiest of all the auric colours to see, and because when present in an aura, its place is always chiefly round the head.

## QUESTION 255.

*What is the length of the emanation of the aura of an average man—six or eight feet or so many inches? According to Zoroastrianism, “three steps” at least are considered enough to prevent defilement under certain conditions. (18)6.)*

C. J.—Trained psychics seem to agree that the aura of an “ordinary person” extends about a foot and a half all round. Then about three feet from a person might just prevent the two auras from touching, but would not prevent intermingling of their emanations; while the “three steps” or their equivalent of seven feet mentioned in Zoroastrianism would certainly ensure freedom from “pollution.”

This it must be remembered is only in the case of the average man; as people progress the size of their auras increases, and we have it actually stated in the sacred books of the Buddhists that the aura of Gautama Buddha extended three miles on either side, that is, that those who could see astrally knew of his presence at that distance by the appearance of the peculiar and characteristic colours in His aura among them.

## QUESTION 256.

*Does luminosity of the aura increase with the mental development only when love and unselfishness grow in proportion? Or if there is any luminosity in the aura of a conscious black magician, how does it differ from the luminosity of the white magician or of an Initiate? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—Luminosity, whether in an aura or in anything else, is caused surely by intensity of vibration, not by love and unselfish-

ness. Some of the colours most prominent in the aura of an Initiate would certainly be absent from that of a purely selfish student of occultism, but there is no reason why certain qualities should not be sufficiently highly developed in the latter case to show very considerable luminosity. I have myself seen a gentleman of the type described who exhibited quite a gorgeous glow of deep orange and lurid red, indicating the intensity of his passion along certain lines, and the amount of intellect which he exerted in procuring its satisfaction.

Mere luminosity, therefore, would hardly be a safe guide as to moral development or the lack of it; the questioner (who is presumably clairvoyant, as otherwise there would be no point in the enquiry) will find that colour and purity of light are far more trustworthy indications. He may as well also bear in mind that the "conscious black magician" is not exactly a common object even on the astral plane.

#### QUESTION 257.

*In 'The Human Aura' (Marques), it is said that books possess an aura according to their material, language, and subject; is this statement generally accepted? If so, supposing a book read frequently and exclusively by one person, would its aura change or gain from contact with the aura of the reader? Again, how would its use, say in a public library, by all and sundry, affect its aura, or affect the casual reader if sensitive? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—The statement as it stands is incorrect. The aura of a perfectly new book would differ in no respect from that of any other collection of printing-ink, paper and binding materials, except that it would bear traces of the workmen through whose hands it had passed. A *manuscript* is, of course, strongly impregnated with the aura of the writer, but the book printed from it has no direct connection with him; and it has no aura beyond that ordinarily appertaining to its materials, except what it acquires from those who handle it.

The language and subject of the book could not possibly make the slightest difference to its aura while it is new; but it is true that after it has been long in use, they have indirectly produced an effect upon it, for a book written upon a special subject would most likely be read chiefly by a particular type of person, and



these readers would leave their impress upon the aura of the volume. Thus a book violently advocating some sectarian religious views would not be read except by persons who sympathised with its narrowness, and so would soon develop a decidedly unpleasant aura ; and in the same way a book of an indecent or prurient nature would quickly become loathsome beyond description. Old books containing magical formulæ are often for this reason most uncomfortable neighbours.

In the same way the language in which a book is printed may indirectly affect its aura, by limiting its readers largely to men of a certain nationality, and so by degrees enduing it with some of the prominent characteristics of that nationality ; but directly and of itself it could have no influence whatever.

A book read frequently or exclusively by one person would, of course, be impregnated with his influence, just as would any other article which was constantly in close connection with him. A book used in a public library is not infrequently as unpleasant psychically as it usually is physically, for it becomes loaded with all kinds of mixed magnetisms, many of them of a most unsavoury character. The sensitive person will do well to avoid such books, or if necessity compels him to use them, he will be wise to touch them as little as may be, and rather to let them lie upon a table than to hold them in his hand.

#### QUESTION 258.

*On looking keenly at any exposed portion of the human body (say the face or hand) I frequently see multitudes of tiny forms, such as dice, stars, double pyramids, etc., pouring rapidly out from it ; surely these can hardly be thought-forms, yet if not, where am I to place them, as they do not seem to correspond with anything on the astral plane of which I have read ?*  
(1897.)

C. W. L.—Such forms certainly belong neither to the thought-plane nor to the astral, but are purely physical, though of exceeding minuteness. What the questioner sees is simply the physical emanation from the body which is always taking place—the waste matter, consisting largely of finely-divided salts, which is constantly being thrown out in this manner. The cubic, octohedral, and star-like shapes mentioned are readily recognisable

by any one who possesses what has sometimes, though perhaps inaccurately, been called "etheric sight"—that is to say, sight capable of observing physical matter in a state of exceedingly fine subdivision, though not yet capable of discerning the still subtler matter of the astral plane.

These emanations constitute what has been referred to as the health-aura, for in the case of a healthy man as they leave the body they are combed out into straight lines by the outrush of the spare prāna or vitality which he is constantly radiating from himself in all directions, in the same kind of way as river-weeds are held rigid in parallel lines by the strength of the current. In illness, extreme fatigue, or weakness, the man's stock of vitality falls lower, and, consequently, such emanations hang about the man in a chaotic cloud, since the outpouring of prāna is insufficient to reduce them to order and sweep them away with it as usual.

The character of these tiny particles varies however from many other causes than loss of health ; any wave of emotion will affect them to a greater or less extent, and they even respond to the influence of any definite train of thought. In a recent publication by Dr. Marques, Professor Gates is reported as saying :

(a) That the material emanations of the living body differ according to the states of the mind, as well as the conditions of the physical health.

(b) That these emanations can be tested by the chemical reactions of some salts of selenium.

(c) That these reactions are characterised by various tints or colours, according to the nature of the mental impressions.

(d) That forty different "emotion products," as he calls them, have already been thus obtained.

If the questioner will endeavour to systematise her observations she will no doubt find herself able to confirm some of these discoveries, which have been made by a method of investigation so entirely different from that which she is using, and results of very considerable interest might be obtained by work along that line.

A fuller and more detailed work upon the aura, including some study of thought-forms and cognate subjects, will presently be issued, and no doubt the questioner will find in that very much that will be of deep interest to her in connection with her own observations.

## QUESTION 259.

*I also frequently see animated particles of some kind quivering with intense rapidity, and dashing about in the air before me, and these seem to be of several different kinds, some of the most active being tiny serpentine forms; is this a dawning perception of the elemental essence of the astral plane? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—This question, like the one preceding it, shows the possession of much increased physical power, not of astral. The description given is by no means a bad one, and quite sufficiently proves that what the questioner has seen are realities, and not figments of the imagination, but it applies to physical molecules of gas, and not to astral elemental essence. The active serpentine forms, for example, are obviously molecules (though a chemist would call them atoms) of oxygen, and if the questioner will refer to *Lucifer* for November, 1895, she will no doubt recognise in the drawings there given an attempt to represent what she has seen. Very probably the other molecules there shown would prove recognisable also, while she can hardly have failed to notice the curious corded-bale-like molecule of carbon, or some of the very complicated and ingenious combinations which represent the heavier metals.

It is eminently desirable that those who are still in the earlier stages of the development of the higher sight should be exceedingly careful in their observations, and should compare and test them in every possible way, in order to avoid serious mistake. It is, unfortunately, only too common for a person who gains for the first time a glimpse of astral or even of etheric matter to jump at once to the conclusion that he is at least upon the devachanic level, and holds in his hand the key to all the mysteries of the entire solar system. All that will come in good time, and those grander vistas will assuredly open before him one day; but he will hasten the coming of that desirable consummation if he makes sure of each step as he takes it, and tries fully to understand and make the best of what he has before desiring more. Those who begin their experiences with devachanic vision are few and far between; for most of us progress must be slow and steady, and the safest motto for us is *festina lente*.

DIVISION LXIII  
THE "AURIC SHELL"

QUESTION 260.

*In the answer to Question 63 relating to dreams, "A. B." states that impressions impinging on the mind and brain, coming from without, can be shut out by forming an auric shell around the bodies. What is this shell composed of, and how can it best be formed? In sleep, does it surround both the physical and astral bodies? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—The shell referred to may be formed in several different ways, and of various kinds of material, according to the special purpose for which it is designed. A man who passes out of the body in full consciousness in the Mâyâvi Rûpa leaves his astral as well as his physical vehicle behind him, and therefore it would, perhaps, be most natural for him to protect his bodies by densifying the surface of the astral sufficiently to make it impenetrable, though he could with equal ease throw round it an exterior shell of whatever strength or thickness he desired, drawing his materials from the ocean of astral matter around him. The latter plan might also be adopted by a man who passed out consciously in the astral body, though in such a case a shell of etheric physical matter would probably be sufficient for his purpose. A method equally common and equally effective is, to form by a concentrated effort of will, an artificial elemental for the purpose of guarding the body, an elemental so created being a vigilant and extremely efficient watchdog. For the man who, though conscious and active on the astral plane, is unable as yet to carry his consciousness through without break from one plane to the other, there is also a choice of two methods. He may either form an artificial elemental before going to sleep, as previously suggested; or before

he starts on his travels after leaving his physical body, he may throw round it a shell of compressed astral matter. The man who has not yet developed much consciousness on the astral plane, and is therefore not likely to wander away from his body, will probably find that the easiest way to protect himself is to think when he lies down to sleep of the aura which surrounds him, and to will strongly that the outer surface of that aura shall become a shell to protect him from the impingement of influences from without. In that case the auric matter will obey his thought; a shell will really be formed around him, and its condition will not be materially altered when the man in his astral vehicle withdraws from the body, for while he still floats close above it his shell will surround it as well as himself. People who have not specially studied the subject always fail to realise the tremendous power—the all but omnipotence—of thought; if men could but grasp the extent to which they have it in their power to mould themselves and their surroundings by steady persistent thought, they would not long be content to remain the undeveloped vacillating beings which we so often find them now. More important even than the formation of a shell before going to sleep is the acquirement of absolute control over the thought, so that the mind may thereby become impervious to casual currents from the surrounding thought-ocean, and may be responsive only to the promptings of the higher Ego of its owner.

## QUESTION 261.

*Does not the continuous forming of an auric shell, a process so often recommended, make a person unsympathetic and repellent to others who must feel the barrier, and prevent him responding to the thoughts of others? Is it not possible to be positive to any evil influence without such a shell? (1897.)*

S. M. S.—An answer to this question will, I think, be more easily arrived at if we consider for a moment the nature of the protective “shell” to which reference is made, and what it is that we mean by “sympathy.”

It seems to be the case that the shell is formed of astral matter, out of material supplied from the astral body or aura of the man. That being so, such a shell, supposing it to be effectively made, would shut out evil influences coming to the man from its own

plane, the astral, and from the plane below it, the physical. But it does not seem to be possible that it could shut out influences and impressions coming from a higher plane than its own, any more than a brick wall could impede an astral body; and for the same reason—that denser matter is not able to “block” matter that is finer than itself. So that a protective shell formed of *astral* matter would not prevent our “responding to the thoughts of others,” because thoughts are generated on the *mental* plane by the mind-body of the man, however much they may be mixed with emotions of various kinds on their journey downwards.

Again, sympathy, which is the quality which makes it possible for us to respond to the thoughts of others, comes, in its essence, from a plane higher still than the mental, and whatever the extent of its unwisdom in the case of most of us when it comes to practise, it is none the less the germ of that which will, in the future, make all things possible. That, surely, cannot be bounded by a shell formed of astral matter.

There is, undoubtedly, a way of putting up a barrier between ourselves and others, of damming up within ourselves, as it were, the tiny rivulet of compassion which is to grow and grow till it is wider than the sea; but here comes in that ever-recurring question of motive, and such a course would hardly be possible to one who is anxious to avoid becoming thoughtless and indifferent.

With regard to the last section of the question, as to whether it is not possible to be positive to evil influences without the formation of a shell, we must always remember that this process does not render the *man* invulnerable, but only helps to ward off evil influences coming to him by way of his physical and astral bodies. Undoubtedly the strongest, as well as the safest shield, is purity of body and of mind in its very widest sense; but until this is attained, these lower aids are valuable to those who are able to make use of them. They do help to break down some of the lesser obstacles which so thickly beset our path towards the goal which, though very dimly as yet, we all are seeking—the privilege of being helpers in a way which at present is beyond our realisation.

There is also, I think, a slight misapprehension shown by the questioner. The “continuous forming of an auric shell” is not recommended. This would be quite inconsistent with that absence of the thought of self, which, after all, is the chief qualification needed.

## QUESTION 262.

*The more perfect the being, the more complete will be the sympathy he gives, and this is due to the expansion of his consciousness; will not this expansion be hindered if he continually makes a shell around himself in the manner which has been so often recommended? (1898.)*

A. B.—There seems to be a little confusion here with reference to the word “shell.” It is usually applied to a wall formed by checking the outpouring prāna (or specialised jīva) from the human body, using this prāna as a defence against the entrance of germs or evil influences belonging to the etheric world, magnetic, and other. This service is normally rendered by the radiating waves of prāna poured forth by the healthy body; as they rush outwards they repel, carrying away in their outward flow, all finely-divided physical substances with which they come into contact, not so heavy as to resist their tide. A healthy person is thus rendered impervious to microbe-diseases disseminated by microscopic germs. This state is what is called “the positive,” and is one eminently desirable. “Forming a shell” is increasing the defence, usually where the magnetic influences are very bad, by checking the radiating waves at the surface of the auric egg, and at some intermediate distance from the body, and holding successive layers of them there as a shield. Such a prānic defence has nothing to do with sympathy or with the expansion of consciousness; emotional and mental waves pass freely through it, utterly unimpeded by its presence, either in their out-going or in their incoming. We are not rendered more fit to help others by allowing bad magnetism to play havoc with our own organism; on the contrary, the physical distress thus caused diminishes our usefulness, and is apt to cause a nervous whirl which makes us incapable of rendering efficient aid. If anyone builds round himself a wall isolating his emotions and thoughts from others, shutting out their consciousness and shutting in his own, he would certainly then become unsympathetic, and would stunt his own growth as well as repel those he ought to help. But the harmless and often necessary prānic shell is quite innocent of such ill-doings, and does not make anyone more unsympathetic than would the wearing of a respirator in a fog, or a damp handkerchief in rushing through smoke to save a person in a burning

house. This question is, it may be added, a very useful one, as the answer may clear away a difficulty that may have been present in many conscientious minds.

QUESTION 263.

*Are there any other means, besides the hardening of the outer surface of the aura, by which extraneous thoughts can be prevented from entering the brain and so blurring the impression that might be made by the astral brain? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—The formation of the shell is always an effort of the will, though that will may be applied in various ways. The thought of hardening the outer surface of the aura is simply one of the easiest ways of directing this will. Another though more difficult method would be to manufacture an artificial elemental who would act as a kind of watch-dog, to prevent the entrance of extraneous thought. But even then recollections will well slowly up into the physical brain.



## DIVISION LXIV

### THE ÂKÂSHIC RECORDS

#### QUESTION 264.

*The following questions have been put in regard to the âkâshic records and other points, the answers to which may be of general interest.*

- (a) *Are the âkâshic records imprinted everywhere, eternally (as long at least as the âkâsha itself lasts); and why does not the heaping up of the successive pictures produce confusion?  
Or*
- (b) *Are the records localised, on the other hand, around their place of origin, and must the investigator mentally transport himself thither in order to find them?*
- (c) *Are the astral images or pictures localised at the spot where they have been produced?*
- (d) *Do the astral auric impressions which give rise to ordinary memory possess great durability?*
- (e) *Is forgetfulness due to the disintegration of these images or to some disturbance or difficulty of vibration in the physical brain cell which corresponds to them?*
- (f) *Do good psychometrists read the âkâshic records or merely see astral pictures? (1897.)*

B. K.—(a) This question seems to imply some little confusion in the mind of the questioner, very probably due to taking the similes which have been used to illustrate the facts as literal representations of the facts themselves. The fundamental point which must be grasped in relation to the âkâshic records is that, when studied, as they usually are by investigators on the mânâsic plane, they are merely the reflections or reproductions in the matter of that plane of something from a much higher one; that

something, we have reason to believe, being really *the conscious memory of the Logos of our system*. The âkâshic records therefore must not be thought of as a series of pictures or reproductions of events existing continually either on the astral or on the mânasic plane, superposed one upon the other or following each other in succession, like a stack of photographs or the ribbon of the cinematograph. But if not of this nature, what then are these "records"? Here one is confronted by the ever-recurring difficulty of in any, even the smallest, degree making intelligible the facts of a higher plane in terms of the experience of a lower. Hence these phrases, "records," "âkâshic pictures," etc., etc., already applied in our present instance, and the misunderstandings which have arisen through the materialising of these similes. So another attempt must be made, and this time under safe-guard of a most emphatic declaration that whatever may be said can, in the very nature of things, be at best but the very faintest and remotest shadow of the living actuality.

In the first place then it seems, in investigating the past by means of the so-called âkâshic records, that it is the conscious memory of the Logos which forms their ultimate source. At any rate what the investigator appears to do is—by some action on his part which it is literally impossible to describe down here—to allow the memory of the Logos to reflect itself in the matter of the mânasic plane, and so reproduce before his vision, not only all that happened on the physical plane, but all that accompanied it on the astral or mânasic planes as well. When the investigator ceases his action, the whole thing disappears and the matter of the mânasic plane resumes its ordinary condition. It should, however, be stated that the scenes as reproduced in the matter of the mânasic plane from the memory of the Logos are *objective* and will be as clearly visible and tangible to any other entity, self-conscious on that plane, who happens to turn his attention to what is going on as to the original investigator himself.

As to the latter part of this question it will be obvious from what has been said that, since the records do not exist as "pictures" or "images" in the matter of the mânasic plane, there can be no heaping up or consequent confusion among them.

(b) This question is also answered by the above; since the system *is* the Logos and lives in Him, His memory is everywhere, and locality has nothing to do with the investigator's getting at any special matter he is in search of.

Thus far we have been considering the âkâshic records proper, those which have been used in the various investigations from which so much of our more recent theosophical information has been derived. But to prevent misapprehension it is perhaps well to say a word about certain other orders of memory, quite at the other end of the scale to that of the Logos, which have attracted attention and which may in a certain sense be also made use of as "records," and which indeed do seem to play that part in some classes at least of psychometric experiments. To begin with, the broad general law is that which is of necessity involved in the very possibility of "experience," namely that the outpoured life of the Logos in its every state and phase is capable of receiving and retaining impressions, *i.e.*, of acquiring experience. This being true of all, is true of the atom which is merely a centre of life, so that we have an "atomic" memory. Next, since the combinations of the atoms into the molecular structures which form the various sub-planes of our plane are produced by the action of the out-poured life—the first out-pouring of the Logos—we shall have a "molecular memory," distinct from the atomic. And the bearer or carrier, the seat and storehouse of this molecular memory, will be the life-wave of the first out-pouring. Further on, again, we shall have a cellular memory and various phases and degrees of memory associated with more and more complex organic structures, up to and including the physical body of man, the carriers or seats of which will be the various kinds of monadic essence belonging to the second out-pouring; while higher still we have the human memory, *i.e.*, the memory of the causal body, *ultimately* dependent on the third outpouring of the Logos as its seat or carrier.

Now, hard though it may be to realise the fact, it must be borne in mind that all these are *actual* memories, each retaining the impress of all that has reached it from its surroundings. Thus, for instance, we shall—can, indeed—find in the essence which constitutes the ensoulment of (say) a vegetable cell forming part of the trunk of a tree, the impressions more or less clear or ghostly of all that ever occurred within a certain range of that cell since it came into existence as a cell. And these impressions or memories would be and are practically recoverable from each cell of that tree so long as the cell holds together. But when the cell ceases to exist as such, *i.e.*, when broken up by fire or actual decay, then the monadic essence ensouling it is set free and

returns to the block to which it belongs, and that set of memories or records could then only be found as part of the whole series which had been stored up in that block of essence ; though short of the possibilities of adept vision such recovery is hardly possible.

Now it is with these cellular or molecular memories that psychometrists often get in touch, and it is the pictures or memories impressed upon the cellular or molecular monadic essence which often furnish them with their visions. But in such cases it is *not* with the true âkâshic records in any sense that we are concerned.

(c) As regards the astral pictures often seen by clairvoyants, some rather careful distinctions must be drawn. In the case of any given vision at least four possibilities present themselves : (1) What the clairvoyant sees may be a more or less distorted reproduction on the astral plane of some scene, or fragment of a scene, from the true âkâshic records, *i.e.*, from the memory of the Logos. How and why such reproductions, or "reflections" as they are sometimes called, occur, it would lead us too far to enquire at present, as a very large range of possibilities is involved. (2) The vision may be due to unintentional, almost unconscious psychometry, *i.e.*, to the clairvoyant getting momentarily into touch with some phase or other of the molecular or other orders of memory already referred to. (3) It may be due to reflection or refraction in the astral light analogous to the physical processes by which the scenes and objects visible in a mirage are produced. (4) Lastly, it may be a case of the following type. We have all read of houses, rooms and even places in which sensitive people are almost invariably haunted by scenes of horror which seem to reproduce themselves before their eyes. These scenes are reproductions of events which have actually occurred at the place in question, and on investigation it appears that the impressions which give rise to them have been made on the astral counterparts of the *solid objects* around, *e.g.*, the walls and furniture of a room, the materials of a house, the rocks, earth, trees, etc., of a place. This appears to be a case of impression where the images are superposed and confused, and require careful attention and sorting out, if accuracy of detail and succession is to be attained. Images of this class are, of course, very definitely localised, and to investigate them the seer must transport himself, physically or otherwise, to the spot in question.

(d) In ordinary memory several factors are more or less con-

joined. First, we have the molecular and cellular memories belonging to each of our bodies ; those of the mind body forming practically the main element in our "personal" memory. It is by means of these that we "recall" the past in most cases. But *we, i.e.*, our Egos clothed in the mind body, are also in direct touch with the true records, *i.e.*, with the memory of the Logos since *we*, in a very special sense, are rays or facets of Him. This element also plays a part even in ordinary memory, which, however, it is impossible to describe now in more detail.

As to the durability of the various impressions, it must be borne in mind that, speaking with strict accuracy, every impression made on the life of the Logos is *eternal* ; *i.e.*, whether made on that life in its atomic, molecular, cellular, or some higher phase, it is as undying and unfading as is that divine life itself. But though this is true, yet for our *practical* purposes it need not be taken into consideration, further than to bear in mind that if this were not so, all the rest would be not only impossible but mere nonsense. Practically then, from our point of view, the impressions of any order of memory are available, *i.e.*, recoverable, *so long as that form persists, i.e.*, those of the atomic memory so long as that particular atom exists ; of the molecular so long as that particular molecule persists ; of the cell so long as that particular cell is not disintegrated ; of an organism so long as that organism endures as a unit ; of our mind bodies as long as these last, *i.e.*, until they disintegrate after the devachanic period following each life is completed ; of our causal bodies for the whole duration of the Manvantara and beyond.

It may be well to bear in mind that the expression "astral auric impressions" in the question, is misleading, and though very often employed, must not be taken materially and literally, or it will lead to serious misconception.

(e) Forgetfulness has many causes, of which a few may here be mentioned. (1) Failure in transmission from the mental body to the physical brain, due to some defect or obstruction, either in the astral body, in the etheric body, or in the dense brain. This is generally the case where we feel that we know something, say a familiar name, word, or face, but cannot "recall" it, *i.e.*, bring it through into our physical consciousness. (2) Failure of the Ego to recover or recall the matter on the mental plane, due either to some defect in the mind body, to lack of attention, or to feebleness of the original impression.

As there are no "images" in the ordinary sense to disintegrate, the theory on which the question seems based fails. The nearest approximation in fact would seem to be the disintegration and death of some particular cell on whose memory the event in question had been very vividly impressed, so that the recovering of it along that particular line would be impossible, and the difficulty of picking it up from the memory of some other cell almost insuperably great. This would mean that unless the individual in question could raise his consciousness so as to bring through the memory from his touch with that of the Logos, he could not succeed in recalling that particular incident.

(f) Outside the ranks of actually instructed students of occultism, no psychic or psychometer, however "good," can read the true "ākāshic records," because, unless taught, he cannot know *how* to go to work in order to do so. But a good psychometer can get at past history by putting himself *en rapport* with some molecular or cellular memory containing the impressions in question, though, of course, his visions are apt to be far from reliable or trustworthy, owing to his inability to control, guide, or check what he sees.

#### QUESTION 265.

*On which plane of the universe are the ākāshic mental images recorded? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—If they are ākāshic, and if they are mental, they must be upon the devachanic plane, since that is the plane of the mind, and it is to its matter that the term ākāsha has generally been applied in our literature—though sometimes it has been used in the sense of primordial matter, which is, of course, at an infinitely higher level still.

But the questioner probably wishes to know on what plane is kept the permanent record or impression of every event which takes place—that which has been spoken of as the memory of Nature, and is in our books called indifferently the ākāshic record or the record of the astral light. In the present very elementary condition of our knowledge, it is impossible to say upon how many planes this record is made, or whether it has any special habitat at all. This much is known—that upon the astral plane all that can be seen is a reflection of the record, sometimes fairly perfect, but also sometimes quite fragmentary and misleading

while the record upon the devachanic plane is clear, perfect, and impossible to be mistaken. But since the record can be read with, if possible, even more instantaneous facility on the Buddhist plane, it is evidently not in any way confined to that level upon which we first come definitely into touch with it; and as the consciousness upon higher planes must obviously be still more extended, it seems certain that it must always include these records.

It must be noted, however, that a person who reads the record upon the devachanic plane, and therefore sees it fully and accurately, may nevertheless distort the recollection of it in bringing it down into the physical body, unless he has been specially trained to avoid this danger.

Be it understood that in everything written above I am referring to the planes of our own solar system; of the far vaster planes of the universe mentioned in the question I know nothing whatever.

#### QUESTION 266.

*When a picture of the far-distant past is disinterred by an investigator from the âkâshic records, how is it possible for him to fix its date accurately? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—It is sometimes rather tedious work to find an exact date, but the thing can usually be done if it is worth while to spend the time and trouble over it. If we are dealing with Greek or Roman times the simplest method is usually to look into the mind of the most intelligent person present in the picture, and see what date he supposes it to be; or the investigator might watch him writing a letter or other document and observe what date, if any, was included in what was written. When once the Roman or Greek date is thus obtained, to reduce it to our own system of chronology is merely a matter of calculation.

Another way which is frequently adopted is to turn from the scene under examination to a contemporary picture in some great and well-known city such as Rome, and note what monarch is reigning there, or who are the consuls for the year; and when such data are discovered, a glance at any good history will give the rest. Sometimes a date can be obtained by examining some public proclamation or some legal document; in fact in the times of which we are speaking the difficulty is easily surmounted.

The matter is by no means so simple, however, when we come to deal with periods much earlier than this—with a scene from early Egypt, Chaldæa, or China, or, to go further back still, from Atlantis itself or any of its numerous colonies. A date can still be obtained easily enough from the mind of any educated man, but there is no longer any means of relating it to our own system of dates, since the man will be reckoning by eras of which we know nothing, or by the reigns of kings whose history is lost in the night of time.

Our methods, nevertheless, are not yet exhausted. It will be remembered by those who have studied the subject of âkâshic records, that it is possible for the investigator to pass them before him at any speed that he may desire—at the rate of a year in a second if he will, or even far faster still. Now there are one or two events in ancient history whose dates have already been accurately fixed—as, for example, the sinking of Poseidonis in the year 9564 B.C. It is therefore obvious that if from the general appearance of the surroundings it seems probable that a picture seen is within measurable distance of one of these events, it can be related to that event by the simple process of running through the record rapidly, and counting the years between the two as they pass.

Still, if those years ran into thousands, as they might sometimes do, this plan would be insufferably tedious. In that case we are driven back upon the astronomical method. In consequence of the movement which is commonly called the precession of the equinoxes, though it might more accurately be described as a kind of second rotation of the earth, the angle between the equator and the ecliptic steadily, but very slowly, varies. Thus, after long intervals of time we find the pole of the earth no longer pointing towards the same spot in the apparent sphere of the heavens, or, in other words, our pole-star is not, as at present, *α Ursæ Minoris*, but some other celestial body; and from this position of the pole of the earth, which can easily be ascertained by careful observation of the night-sky of the picture under consideration, an approximate date can be calculated without difficulty.

In estimating the date of occurrences which took place millions of years ago in earlier races, the period of a secondary rotation (or the precession of the equinoxes) is frequently used as a unit, but of course absolute accuracy is not usually required in such cases, round numbers being sufficient for all practical purposes in dealing with epochs so remote.



## QUESTION 267.

*Referring to the answer to Question 266, would it be possible to ask "the most intelligent person present in the picture" a question that may never have been actually asked of the person represented in life, and to obtain an answer? In other words, can the ākāshic record be regarded as in touch with any current consciousness? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—It is obviously impossible to obtain an answer from a figure in a picture. The questioner should remember that we are dealing with a record of what has happened. One may see in the mind of the person under examination the impression of all the thoughts that passed through it during life; whether they were ever definitely formulated in words or not does not matter in the least. But it would be absurd to suppose that we can now put new thoughts into a mind the particles of which were dissipated thousands of years ago.

## QUESTION 268.

*Is it possible to identify any particular portion of the organism as the place where the subconscious memories often evoked in trance or somnambulism have been preserved? Are recollections in all cases drawn from what has been described as the memory of the Logos, or may it be that the sense-organs retain an impression of all which has ever touched them (even without reaching the consciousness at all), in the way which the phenomena of psychometry and certain photographic experiments suggest that all physical objects do; an impression which the mind may read off when in states of special lucidity, from its own organs? (1901.)*

A. P. S.—The whole problem, "What is Memory?" is involved in this question. None of us "down here" (to use a favourite expression of Mr. Leadbeater's) can possibly answer it confidently. Certainly, in my opinion, no impressions linger in the sense organisms. These are merely subservient to consciousness on this plane. Memory must be an attribute of consciousness, and all consciousness is derived from that of the Logos. The manner in which it vibrates back and forwards between the primeval

consciousness and that of the offspring of the Logos, is a profound mystery. But one fact emerges clearly from the experiences of mesmerism and trance. When consciousness is working on a higher plane than that to which it is bound down during the waking state of an ordinary person, it is enormously more effective, more capable of remembering things, than in the normal state. There seems to be no limit to the power of recollection on the part of a mesmeric subject in trance, assuming that such subject is spiritually advanced to the point of being able to function on the mânasic plane. Great things and small, trifling and important, are equally at command if called for. The power of recalling them is clearly an attribute of the "Higher Self," not in any way of the lower, still less of the organism of the lower.

## QUESTION 269.

*How is Mr. Leadbeater's luminous information in The Christian Creed—as to the Passion of Christ having never been real, physical and historical—to be looked at when compared with such realistic visions as those of the Catholic seeress Anne Catherine Emmerich, concerning "the sorrowful Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ"? Can some explanation of those visions be vouchsafed from the standpoint of occult investigation? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—I suppose that different people will look very differently at the information given in the book mentioned. Like all other information obtained by clairvoyant vision, it stands entirely on its own merits, and the author has never expected his readers to accept any of his statements unless they commend themselves to the reason and common-sense of those who peruse them. What he has seen he describes; whether others find themselves able to believe that he has seen rightly is their own affair.

Certainly such visions as those of the Catholic seeress can be explained from the occult stand-point. I should myself have no doubt that her statements were perfectly genuine; she was not labouring under a hallucination, but only under a mistake as to the nature of what she saw.

It must be remembered that to read the âkâshic records clearly and correctly needs a special training; it is not a matter

of faith or of goodness, but of a special kind of knowledge. There is nothing whatever to show that the saint in question had this particular form of knowledge; on the contrary, she probably never heard of such records at all. She would, therefore, most likely be quite incapable of reading a record clearly, and certainly unable to distinguish one, if she did happen to see it, from any other kind of vision.

What she in all probability saw was a phenomenon familiar to all practical occultists. It is well known to such investigators that any great historical scene, upon which much is supposed to depend, has been constantly thought of and vividly imaged to themselves by successive generations of people. Such scenes would be, say, for the English the signing of Magna Charta by King John, and for the Americans the signing of the declaration of independence.

Now, these vivid images which people make are very real things, and are very clearly to be seen by any one who possesses some psychic development. They are real, definite forms existing on the mental plane, and are perpetually strengthened by all the new thoughts which are ever being turned upon them. Of course, different people image scenes differently, and the eventual result is often something like a composite photograph; but the form in which such an imagination was originally cast very largely influences the thought of all sensitives upon the subject, and tends to make them image it as others have done.

This product of thought (often, be it observed, of quite ignorant thought) is very much easier to see than the true record, for while, as we have said, the latter feat requires training, the former needs nothing but a glimpse of the mental plane, such as frequently comes to almost all pure and high-minded ecstasies.

Another point to be borne in mind is, that it is not in the least necessary for the creation of such a thought-form, that the scenes should ever have had any real existence. Few scenes from real history have been so strongly depicted by popular fancy in this country as have some situations from Shakespeare's plays, from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and from various fairy stories, such as Cinderella or Aladdin's Lamp. A clairvoyant obtaining a glimpse of one of these collective thought-forms might very easily suppose that he had come across the real foundation of the story; but since he knows these tales to be fiction, he would be more likely to think that he had simply dreamed of them.

Now ever since the Christian religion materialised the glorious conceptions originally committed to its charge, and tried to represent them as a series of events in a human life, devout souls in all countries under its sway have been striving as a pious exercise to picture the supposed events as vividly as possible. Consequently we are here provided with a set of thought-forms of quite exceptional strength and permanence—a set which could hardly fail to attract the attention of any ecstatic, the bent of whose mind was at all in their direction. No doubt they *were* seen by the seeress referred to in the question, and by many another. But when such clairvoyants come in the course of their progress to deal with the realities of life, they will be taught, as are those who have the inestimable privilege of the guidance of the Masters of Wisdom, how to distinguish between the result of devout but ignorant thought, and the imperishable record which is the true memory of nature; and then they will find that these scenes, to which they have devoted so much attention, were but symbols of truths higher and wider and grander far than they had ever dreamed, even in the highest flights which were made possible for them by their splendid purity and piety.

## DIVISION LXV

### THE RELIGION OF THE ARUNTAS.

#### QUESTION 270.

*In the "Watch Tower" of the Theosophical Review for April, there is a reference to the account given by Messrs. Spencer and Gillen concerning the Aruntas of Central Australia. I should like to learn something more of the interesting beliefs of these people. (1900.)*

I. H.—The Arunta conception of the soul is very complex ; it may be sketched as follows : Every man is the reincarnation of an *Alcheringa* ancestor. The *Alcheringas* were a race possessed of remarkable powers, and able to do many things which their descendants have forgotten. Nevertheless, certain classes of *Alcheringa* are now incarnate upon earth. But it is the "spirit part" of the *Alcheringa* that reincarnates ; and this spirit part is mysteriously linked, not only with the sacred amulet, the *Churinga*, but also with a certain order of *Iruntarinia* or gods. When a human being dies, this spirit part, or *Uthana*, withdraws to its totem centre, and there it dwells with its *Arumbaringa*, until its former physical body has entirely disintegrated, when it reincarnates. A man therefore consists of : the physical body ; the spirit part of the *Alcheringa* ; the *Uthana*, which is practically the same as the *Alcheringa* ; this reincarnates, and it is this which is linked with the *Churinga* ; finally there is the *Arumbaringa*, which is, like the *Uthana*, immortal. But the *Arumbaringa* is changeless, which the *Uthana* is not ; the *Arumbaringa* never fully incarnates ; it is a kind of Guardian Spirit which sometimes warns the man of impending danger (like the S.P.R. subliminal self), and sometimes, very rarely, can be seen by him. In short, the *Arumbaringa* appears to be the higher self, and its occasional appearance seems

to suggest the same idea as that indicated by the statements concerning the *Augooides*. The beliefs of the Aruntas respecting their totems are very interesting; as I have said elsewhere, I think the belief in Totemism may be traced to a more or less distorted reminiscence of teaching concerning the Rays, or streams of tendency. The Aruntas teach a sort of Darwinian theory of the evolution of form; their myths deal largely with the transformation of animals into men; and of *Inapertwa* creatures into human beings. These *Inapertwa* were shapeless, rounded masses which were gradually carved into shape. All these forms of life, *Inapertwas* plants, animals, and men, are believed to belong to totems; the *Inuntarinia*, or gods, also have their totems. A man's tribe may change; he is not necessarily born in the same tribe as that into which he incarnated in his previous life; but his totem never, or very rarely, changes. There are certain totem centres which are held sacred, and to these the discarnate *Uthana* withdraws at the death of the physical body; when a woman becomes aware of her pregnancy she observes carefully which is the nearest totem centre, for from that centre the reincarnating Ego is believed to have been drawn. This determines the totem of the unborn child.

The belief in the complexity of the human soul, or rather, perhaps, the complexity and multiplicity of its vehicles of consciousness, is very generally diffused among semi-civilised peoples. Readers of Miss Mary Kingsley's book respecting the tribes of the West Coast of Africa will remember that they have a very remarkable and interesting theory respecting the bush soul, the shadow soul, etc. Reincarnation is also believed in among these people, as it is among the Australian tribes. It is a very noteworthy fact that a certain theory advanced by Miss Kingsley touching the African tribes will not hold good with regard to the Aruntas. Miss Kingsley, commenting upon the sincerity of the people when they asserted that they had seen the various apparitions, portions of the soul, etc., in which they "powerfully and potently believe," said in a lecture delivered at the Westminster Town Hall, that the African was always a degree nearer delirium than was the European—in short he was very excitable; but the Arunta is an exceedingly stolid and unimaginative person, if we may trust the very elaborate report of him with which Messrs. Spencer and Gillen have furnished the folk-lorist and anthropologist. It appears to me that the theories which are accepted by the majority of theologians receive no small nor unimportant amount of support from

the beliefs found among these simple peoples ; the beliefs are too elaborate to have been made by savages ; moreover they agree so marvellously in trifling details, as to render it highly improbable that such beliefs originated independently of each other. If they are linked, as they certainly seem to be, where is the link ? Why have human beings, so widely separated by space, by time, by degree of civilisation, by intellectual advancement, evolved theories which are alike not only in broad conception but in minute detail ? They are linked, not by general similarity of thought, but by innumerable subtle touches ; the means by which these links were forged are more deeply hidden than are the links themselves.

## DIVISION LXVI

### THE SHAKERS

#### QUESTION 271.

*Is there anything occult or mystical in the religion of the sect generally known as Shakers? (1898.)*

A. M. G.—A religious sect could hardly be religious without having something mystical in its teachings. Many a sect has, however, been formed for reasons which to the profane appeared almost frivolous, but this accusation cannot be brought against the Shakers. They at least have an idea at the back of them, and, divested of some absurdities which appear more in the past than in the present, there is a good deal of sound and sensible religion in their creed and practice. "Shakers" is, of course, a term of ridicule, the proper title being "The United Society of Believers," that is, believers in the second coming of Christ in a woman's form. The term of "Shaker" has, however, been adopted by themselves, as they saw nothing ridiculous in it and were not ashamed to have it known that when "moved by the Spirit" they shook in body.

Like many another sect, it has its origin in a Divine revelation, a special manifestation of God in these latter days. They are the beginning of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and attempt practically to found that kingdom by forming themselves into "families" in which the members live according to the instructions of their new revelation. Although now the sect is practically an American one, it arose in England, its founder, "Mother" Ann Lee, leaving England for America in 1774, with seven converts. They first formed a community in 1787, and have very slowly but steadily grown, until now there are, as I see stated in one of their pamphlets, some fifteen societies. The Shakers arose



within a small religious community of French origin, somewhat similar to the Quakers, the members of whom were inspired in their meetings by what they regarded as a Divine power which shook their bodies. They prophesied, had visions and "spiritual gifts," and confessed their sins one to another. They are regarded by the present Shakers as the forerunners of Ann Lee, in whom Christ appeared for the second time.

Both in this first and second appearing, Christ is regarded as different from the person in whom He appeared. His was a spiritual and not a physical appearance. Jesus received the Christ spirit at His baptism, and in a similar sense Ann Lee received Him when she reached purification. Only at the second coming was the redemption of woman achieved, and the work thus completed.

All who join the Shaker community must lead a life of celibacy and perfect purity, for in the Kingdom of Heaven there is to be no marriage. When all people have arrived at such a condition, the time for the present world to cease will have come. In the meantime, of course, only those few who have adopted the new life will cease to bring forth offspring, so that there is no immediate likelihood of a lack of fresh Egos on the earth. Those who do not receive the new Gospel now, must work out their salvation in the next world or Hades, for the Gospel is also preached there. There are two creations recognised, the old creation with marriage and generation as its law, and the new or spiritual, with purity and regeneration as its characteristics. Besides a life of celibacy, one of the most essential features is the open confession of sin. Only after free confession before others can the spirit come upon a man or woman.

In the communities all work, and men and women are regarded as equal in every way, having equal responsibilities in the governing of the family, which is, of course, organised and with chosen heads.

One of the most singular incidents in the earlier history of the sect was the alleged reappearance of Ann Lee many years after her death, for the further instruction of the believers. She is said to have continued to communicate for some sixty years after her death with some to whom she had promised spiritual vision. There was also a special effort, continuing for several years, to stimulate the various societies, Ann Lee and some of her co-workers who had passed into the spiritual world returning to minister to them. Another curious period in their history was about the year 1843,

which had been previously regarded by prophecy interpreters as a date of peculiar importance. In a Shaker pamphlet before me the writer says: "This date was remarkable for a wonderful influx of spirits from Hades, into the bodies of believers in Christ's second appearing. They were of various nationalities, and of all classes and conditions when in earth-life, except the wilfully vile and criminal. . . . Done by permission of those in authority and conducted with a degree of order, both for our learning and for the benefit of the invisibles who were awaking to the judgment, and returned for a brief visit to the rudimental sphere to increase knowledge and to gain instruction in the gospel of eternal life. Teachers I have known preached in our meetings to multitudes in the world of spirits, whom our Seers told us had come, and that some had been sent to us for that purpose. Moreover, entranced mediums, attended with guides, preached to spirits assembled to receive instruction in places they visited in the spirit world." This "influx from Hades" occurred, it may be noticed, a few years before modern Spiritualism arose.

Into the actual doctrines, beyond what is indicated in the account given above, there is no need to go here, as for the most part they do not bear upon this question. But I have quoted enough I think to show that the occult and mystical side of nature is recognised by this curious community. A life of perfect purity for those who seek the higher state, the continuous inspiration from Divine sources, communion with dwellers in another world, and the helping of "spirits in prison," are all familiar ideas to us, and show that the Shakers may be ranked with many another mystical body of the past and the present which has claimed acquaintance with things beyond the earth.

## DIVISION LXVII

### PIRIT

#### QUESTION 272.

*In a recent work on Ceylon I see a reference made to "a Buddhist religious ceremony called Pirit"; is there any truth in such a statement, as I always understood that the Southern Buddhist church had no religious ceremonies? and if it be true, of what nature is this rite? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—It is quite true that there is such a ceremony; I have frequently seen it myself when in Ceylon, and it is of a very interesting nature. In essence it is, as the name implies, simply a recitation of blessings and invocations for the purpose of warding off evil influences—the chanting of those verses from the sacred books of the Buddhists in which the Buddha declares that blessing follows upon certain actions, and also of certain hymns from the same books invoking the benevolent attention of the sun-god and of the Arhats and Buddhas. The principal of these is the beautiful hymn of the peacock-king from the Jâtaka stories. These *Pirit* verses are chanted by the Buddhist monks on various occasions, alike of sorrow and of rejoicing. We may divide the occasions roughly into two classes—public and private.

The most common example of the latter is, that in case of serious sickness or the approach of death one or two monks from the nearest temple are often invited to come and chant these verses of benediction by the bedside of the sufferer, keeping in mind all the time an earnest wish for his recovery—or, if that is considered hopeless, for his welfare in the condition after death. The monks do not *pray* for the sick man in our sense of the word, for that is no part of their faith; they simply chant their verses

with the will to help, and to avert any evil influence ever strongly present in their minds.

Of course no remuneration is offered to the monks, for their rules forbid them to touch money under any circumstances ; a meal may, perhaps, be given to them, if the ceremony be performed in the morning, but later than noon they cannot accept even that, as they eat nothing after the middle of the day.

The public ceremony is a more imposing affair, and lasts much longer. It takes place usually on some festival, such as the celebration of the dedication of a temple. On such an occasion the simple festivities and processions will sometimes last for a week or even a fortnight ; and during the whole of this time the recitation of *Pirit* is going on. Just as in connection with some churches and convents, there is a "Confraternity of Perpetual Adoration," whose members relieve one another in regular watches, in order to keep up night and day continuous worship before the altar, so from the beginning to the end of this Buddhist festival the monotonous chant of the recitations from the sacred books never ceases.

Attached to most of the temples is a *Dharmasalāwa* or preaching-hall, and it is in this that the *Pirit* is chanted. This preaching-hall is so entirely different from any building used for similar purposes in the West, that perhaps a description of it may not be uninteresting to European readers.

Its size varies with the means at the disposal of the builder, but its shape is invariably square. The lofty roof is supported simply by pillars, and it has no walls of any sort—nor does it contain any seats, the people disposing themselves on mats on the earthen floor.

In the centre is a large raised square platform, having pillars at its corners and a low railing round it ; and round the edge of this, inside the railing, runs a low seat—often scarcely more than a step—on which (facing inwards) the members of the *sangha* or monastic order sit, while one of their number addresses the people, who are thus, it will be seen, not grouped in front of the speaker only, as is usual in the West, but surround him on all sides. On the platform, in the centre of the hollow square thus formed by the monks, is usually a small table with flowers upon it, or sometimes a relic, if the temple happens to possess one.

Where no permanent building of this sort exists, a temporary one (but always on exactly the same plan) is put up for the

festival; and a stranger is surprised to see how substantial these temporary erections of bamboo, palm-leaves, and coloured paper can be made to appear under the skilful hands of native workmen.

It is in this preaching-hall then, whether permanent or temporary, that the constant recitation of the *Pirit* goes on; and there also three times in each day the whole available band of monks assembles to chant the more imposing *Mahâ Pirit*—an interesting mesmeric ceremony which merits special description. It should be premised that before the festival commences a huge pot of water, carefully covered, has been placed in the centre of the platform, and numerous threads or strings have been arranged to run from pillar to pillar above the heads of the monks as they sit—this system of threads being connected by several converging lines, with the pot of water in the centre.

At the time of the *Mahâ Pirit*, when all the monks are seated in a hollow square as above described, a piece of rope, about the thickness of an ordinary clothes-line, is produced and laid on the knees of the monks, each of whom holds it in his hands all through the ceremony, thus establishing a connection with his fellows not unlike that of the circle at a spiritualistic *séance*. Care is taken that after the circle is completed one of the ends of the rope shall be carried up and connected with the threads and strings above, so that the whole arrangement in reality converges on the pot of water.

This being done the *Mahâ Pirit* commences, and the whole body of monks, with the united will to bless, recite for some forty minutes a series of benedictions from the sacred books. As this ceremony is performed three times daily for seven days, and the influence kept up in the interval by the ceaseless chanting of the ordinary *Pirit*, the student of mesmerism will have no difficulty in believing that by the end of that time the cord, the connected threads, and the pot of water in the centre of the circle are all pretty thoroughly magnetised.

On the last day comes the crowning glory of the festival—the distribution of the mesmerised water. First of all the principal men and honoured guests go up to the steps of the platform, and the chief monk, uttering a form of benediction, pours three times a few drops of the water into their out-stretched palms, they bending reverently the while. At the conclusion of the benediction the recipient drinks a little of the water and applies the rest to his forehead, the whole ceremony to a Western

mind strangely suggesting a combination of two well-known Christian rites.

The rest of the water is then poured into smaller vessels and distributed by the assistants among the crowd, each person receiving it in the same manner. The mesmerised thread is cut into pieces and distributed amongst the people, who wear it round the arm or neck as a talisman.

It is not uncommon to attach special threads to the circle, and allow them to hang down outside the platform, so that any who are suffering from fever, rheumatism or other ailments, may hold the ends in their hands during the chanting of the *Mahā Pīrit*, and the patient frequently seems to derive advantage from thus "tapping" the mesmeric battery.

This much of ceremony, at any rate, the Southern Church of Buddhism possesses; but I think we must all agree that it is a harmless and interesting one.

## DIVISION LXVIII

### DIET

#### QUESTION 273.

*What are the sattvic, rājasic and tāmasic qualities of food spoken of by Mrs. A. Besant in her Building of the Kosmos, when dealing with Yoga; how do they act on the body, and what kinds of food have them? Can treatises dealing with this subject be found among theosophical writings? (1896.)*

E. G.—The characteristics of these different kinds of food are given in the seventeenth discourse of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Thus we read in Mrs. Besant's translation, p. 147: "The foods that augment vitality, energy, vigour, health, joy and relish, savoury, oleaginous, solid and agreeable, are dear to the Sattvic.

"The Rājasic desire bitter, sour, saline, over-hot, pungent, dry and burning foods, producing pain, grief, and sickness.

"That which is stale and tasteless, putrid and corrupt, leavings also and filth, is the food dear to the Tāmasic."

I do not know any special treatises on this subject, but in the Appendix to Professor Dvivedi's translation of the Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali there is reference made to the food that should accompany the practice of Yoga. "Bitter, acid, pungent, saltish, and hot things, as well as green vegetables, oil, intoxicating drugs, animal food of every description, curds, whey, etc., are to be strictly avoided. Wheat, rice, barley, milk, ghee, sugar, butter, sugar-candy, honey, dry ginger, the fine vegetables, beginning with Patel oats (muga) and natural waters, are most agreeable."

All roots, I believe, such as potatoes, etc., have the tāmasic quality, also fungi, such as mushrooms. Animal food is characterised by the rājasic quality. All fruits are of a sattvic nature.

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is hardly to be believed. It is as difficult to believe as is the doctrine of the resurrection of the actual physical body. The Christ is certainly the greatest teacher known to the West ; but the documents ascribed to "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke," and "John," beautiful as they are in parts, can never be taken as literal historical records by the theosophical student, and in this he is supported by the critical work of the best thought of Christendom during the last century.

## QUESTION 275.

*What are the theosophical arguments in favour of vegetarianism ?*  
(1896.)

L. L.—From a theosophical standpoint the chief objections to flesh-eating are :

(a) Its inhumanity.

(b) Its impurity.

(a) Theosophy teaches that none has the right to destroy or to injure others. The mission of man is to promote the welfare of every creature, and to help forward the evolution of the whole world. Since a flesh diet cannot be procured without taking life, and causing widely-spread sufferings, since he who consciously profits by an ill deed is as guilty as he who commits it, a theosophist must have recourse to a vegetarian diet.

(b) The testimony of ages has established, and patient personal experiment will conclusively prove, the value of a vegetarian diet in rendering the personality responsive to impulse from intellectual and spiritual sources. A flesh diet, by bringing coarse materials into the physical, etheric and astral bodies, so retards the vibrations of these vehicles as to make them not only insensitive, but even opposed, to the demands of the Higher Ego.

The task of man is to obtain such perfect control over all his instruments that he may use them to the full in the service of the world. A theosophist, then, dares not hamper himself in the discharge of his duty to humanity by the use of any means that may cloud his faculties, that may blunt the tools with which he has to accomplish the release of his brothers.

E. A. B.—To the theosophist the question of vegetarianism has two aspects. First, he considers that man has a distinct duty to animals—that of the higher to the lower, of the stronger to the

weaker. If instead of destroying them, he would win their trust by kindness, he would be able more or less to train their higher instincts, and so by his own intelligence become a helper in the slow evolution of these lower forms of life; whereas by the constant killing of them for food their natural evolution is as constantly retarded. This does not apply to the vegetable kingdom, because that still lower form of life has not yet become individualised, and there is abundance of it to supply our needs without injuring it. Secondly, the theosophist, considering the body as the vehicle through which the higher "principles" in man must work, desires to make it as pure as possible. Animal food coarsens the particles of the body, and adds to the difficulty of its response to the higher nature. The ideal of the theosophist is to become a co-worker with the Logos by helping on evolution in harmony with His will; therefore he must purify himself in every way, trying to help all, to hinder none. The fear of a vegetarian diet impairing health and strength is generally found to be groundless by those who perseveringly try it, and probably the *will* has more to do with the matter than is generally imagined; but in this, as in all things, there is need of common sense. In Mrs. Besant's article on "Man's Place and Function in Nature" in *Lucifer* for December 1895, and in her Manual, *Man and His Bodies*, these subjects are explained in detail.

G. R. S. M.—It is impossible to sift out any peculiarly "theosophical arguments" from the mass of reasons urged for a purer form of diet. The theosophical arguments should be the arguments of fact as a contribution to theoretical knowledge on the subject, and the theosophical practice should be an attempt to follow in the track of such facts as rapidly as the drag of common-sense will allow.

Those who are anxious to argue the subject on the basis of the chemical analysis of foods will find a number of works on the subject, the names and prices of which can be procured from the T. P. S.

Those who feel that they can take no part directly or indirectly in the slaughter of animals will have an all-sufficient argument of the heart which will save them the labour of much head research.

If, however, the subject is simply treated from the point of view of the physical body, it will be found to be involved in so many pros and cons that there is danger of general bewilderment; and the deciding argument, in such a case, is almost invariably

the appeal to the emotions, which fortunately in this case, now seldom falls on deaf ears.

But although most of us would refrain from flesh-eating if we had to slaughter the poor brutes ourselves, our physical heredity has bred such a blood-loving monster for our physical envelope, that it can now in many cases hardly assimilate any other form of nutriment. In such cases, we can only try to wean it from its flesh-pots by slow degrees. Perhaps in this life some of us, many of us, may never be able to break the beast of its long ingrained habits, and will have to submit to ensoul a carnivore until death parts us from it.

This is especially the case with those whose animals are now old; souls with younger beasts to start on have an easier task.

No doubt it sounds strange to the ears of some of my readers to hear me speak of man as a human soul attached to a beast—his physical body and animal nature; but that is the great fact round which the whole question revolves.

It is because of the general ignorance of this fact that the main argument for students of occultism is of no avail for the ordinary person. Although the coarsening effects of meat-eating are not so easily discernible in the physical body—indeed, in the majority of cases, are almost non-apparent—in the case of the etheric double and subtle body, the effects are immediately visible to the trained seer. The “incrassation” or densification of the subtle body was the reason given by the Pythagoreans and Platonists for refraining from flesh-eating. Unless the subtle envelope is pure, the facts of the higher consciousness cannot reflect themselves clearly in the mirror of the physical brain.

And if flesh-diet densifies the subtle vehicle, and strengthens the animal passions, which are the main impurities which darken and cloud it, much more a thousand-fold does alcohol ruin the texture of our psychic vesture, and change it from a bridal garment to sackcloth and ashes.

So much then for the occult facts, which are, of course, non-existent for the vast majority; accordingly, very many members of the Society, convinced of the desirability of a purer mode of diet, from one or the other of the above reasons, have tried to become strict vegetarians, or at any rate refrain from flesh. But success has by no means universally attended their efforts. Some have changed suddenly from three meat-meals a day to pure vegetarianism. This was, of course, the reverse of common-sense. The

animal naturally objected strongly, and in fact became very ill. Others have tried intermediate stages with greater success. Fish and eggs are still thrown by some to appease the animal. The rule is this, that if you want to continue your work here, you must use your physical body; if your physical body is weak and suffering all your work suffers; if you find that vegetarianism wrecks your physical instrument, and stops your work, you philosophically bow to the inevitable and go back to beef-steaks.

After all it is not that which goes into the mouth which defiles a "man"—though it may defile his garments. Vegetarianism will not give us wisdom; but though one instantly accepts so self-evident a proposition, to conclude that therefore flesh-eating is the more desirable thing, is the construction of a syllogism of Cloud-cookoo land.

But enough of what Carlyle, wittily but improperly, called that "d—d potato gospel."

#### QUESTION 276.

*What special course of diet and regimen may be recommended as most favourable to the building up of a healthy astral body in one who is actively engaged in business affairs? (1899.)*

A. P. S.—About nothing which touches Theosophy do opinions differ more widely than on this subject. Putting out of the question all thoughts concerning excess in gluttony or drunkenness—people liable to err in that way do not come within the scope of our deliberations—my belief is that no course of diet has any effect or bearing on the constitution of the astral body one way or the other, nor on the development of psychic faculties. People actively engaged in business will be wise to eat and drink whatever promotes their physical health, and for the rest to feel sure that if their minds are nourished on healthy food, if they have lofty purposes in view and an intelligent understanding of the evolution to which they belong, a healthy astral body and higher vehicles still, will undoubtedly be theirs in due course of time, though not necessarily in the current life.

Closely related to this question another follows in reference to smoking. My view, based on a tolerably long experience, is that tobacco, in reasonable quantity, has no bad effect on the physical vehicle of man, while to me the notion that it can have

any effect whatever on higher vehicles, appears the acme of absurdity. But as for smoking considered in the light of a habit—and one says the same of any other habit—the sound doctrine was, I think, expressed once by a friend in my hearing who said: “If I found I had a habit that I could not give up, I would give it up next day.”

K. B.—If it were possible to give the questioner a cut-and-dried answer applicable to the case of all “actively engaged in business affairs” how joyfully would that answer be welcomed. But it is as difficult to prescribe a regimen for the astral dyspeptic as for the physical. There is nothing intrinsically virtuous in abstaining from meat or wine, neither is there anything intrinsically wrong in partaking of them. Broadly speaking, the more simple and refined the food with which we repair the waste of our bodies, the fewer coarse influences shall we have to withstand and eliminate. But we of the West have been placed by karmic necessity in a climate where more heat-giving food is required to maintain a condition of active efficiency than is the case with those born in countries where the direct action of the sun vivifies and warms. It would be difficult to get comfortably through an English winter clad in the light muslins of India, and it is equally difficult to satisfy our hunger with a diet of rice and clarified butter. The questioner will find, as all those who have entered seriously on the struggle towards the higher life have found before him, that he is himself the best judge in such matters. Circumstances and surroundings differ in each individual case. Much harm has been done by over-zealous beginners running away with the idea that the ordinary fare of an English household is to be avoided at any cost; and the cost has frequently been the estrangement of the student from the family circle, the setting up of constant petty irritations and difficulties over meals, and the branding of the budding theosophist as a “crank,” thus stopping for the time being the action of those harmonious currents which might have attracted and swept onwards some other members of the family.

In many cases the real self-sacrifice would be the eating of an un-appetising beef-steak to avoid giving trouble or attracting attention. And it is self-sacrifice which is the cause of all true growth, whether astral or spiritual.

Did not a Divine Teacher tell His disciples, when the same question disturbed and puzzled them 2000 years ago, that it

is not what enters, but what comes out of his mouth which defiles a man?

W. H. T.—If the building of a “healthy astral body” were mainly a question of diet and regimen, the aspirant would have a comparatively light task before him, but it is surely the regulation of the desire nature by the mind that is of first and most vital importance. When this is accomplished, the demand for the coarser constituents of food ceases, and only those parts are assimilated which are congenial to the requirements of the physical body. The kind of food necessary for the healthy working of the physical body would naturally depend upon its constitution, so that food suitable for one person would be injurious to the health of another. It is, I think, impossible to construct a theosophical *menu* that would suit all constitutions, but each person from a knowledge of the peculiarities of his own digestive organism should choose just those foods which he finds from experience keep his body in a healthy state, avoiding, of course, those which his reason and conscience tell him should be avoided. Between a healthy body and a healthy mind “the astral” must perforce be healthy too. The following precept from the *Bhagavad Gītā* might also be kept in mind: “Verily Yoga is not for him who eateth too much, nor who abstaineth to excess, nor who is addicted to too much sleep, or even to wakefulness. The Yoga that is pain destroying is for him who is regulated in eating and amusement, regulated in performing actions, regulated in sleeping and waking.”

C. W. L.—This question has so often been answered, both implicitly and explicitly, in theosophical literature, that it seems strange that any student should need to ask it now. A reference to any of the more elementary works, such as *The Ancient Wisdom* or *Man and His Bodies*, would have saved our querent the trouble of writing. It has frequently been explained that the astral body is acted upon directly by the desires and passions which a man allows to take hold of his nature, and indirectly by the condition of the mental and physical bodies which are so closely related to it. Of these two influences that of the mental body is much the more powerful, and the thoughts in which a man habitually indulges affect his astral body almost as much as they do that with which they are more closely connected.

The influence of the physical body, however, is also very great, and by no means to be neglected by any one who is at all in

earnest in his desire for progress ; and this is evidently the part of the work that the questioner has specially in mind. The rules are simple enough, and have been frequently stated. All that is necessary is to keep the body pure and clean, uncontaminated by anything that coarsens or degrades it, as, for example, alcohol, meat, opium, haschish, or tobacco would do.

Even so modest a demand as this is sometimes considered too great by men who are not yet prepared to throw themselves whole-heartedly into the life which occultism prescribes ; but we are writing here only for students who mean business, and consequently do not hesitate to check their physical desires when they find them delaying their advance. That all these things have that effect in various degrees cannot be doubted by anyone who has ever seen astral bodies sufficiently clearly to compare one with another. Nor does the knowledge that this is so depend upon the unsupported statements of modern clairvoyants ; the ancient teaching has always enjoined abstinence at any rate from meat and alcohol, and Zoroastrianism forbids tobacco also. But, indeed, when once the cleaner life is suggested, it needs no arguments to recommend it ; its advantages are so obvious that it appeals at once to the student's common-sense.

These undeniable facts must not, however, discourage those few (and they are *very* few) who, with the best will in the world, find after repeated and prolonged trials that their physical bodies cannot be kept in reasonable health without the use of some of these pernicious stimulants. Such persons are the victims of a very undesirable heredity ; but the position in which they find themselves is after all karmic, and there is nothing to be done but make the best of an unfortunate situation, and minimise the inevitable evil as far as possible. Such a man, doing the best that is within his power, and yielding only when he is absolutely compelled to do so, will assuredly find himself in his next incarnation furnished with a more useful and creditable physical body, in which he will be able to make outward purity of vehicle correspond with inward purity of spirit.

#### QUESTION 277.

*Can an astral worker who uses meat, wine, tobacco, and other stimulants, which coarsen and darken the materials of the astral body, work on the higher planes of the astral world side*

*by side with those who eat pure vegetable food, and have fine, delicate astral bodies, or are they confined to the lower planes only?*

*Also, does it not make it more difficult for one using flesh or mixed diet, to control one's thoughts—having the elementals which are attracted by unclean food to fight? (1901.)*

A. P. S.—As a fact within my knowledge the answer to the first part of this enquiry is unequivocally, Yes. I do not want to recommend “unclean food,” whatever that may be, as preferable to clean. Most assuredly I do not want to perpetuate the cruelty of killing animals for food, but when we come to the fancy which some people have that the growth of the Soul depends on what you eat and drink (always assuming you are neither glutton nor drunkard), I protest against that idea as in my humble opinion—nonsense. Nothing on this earth that feeds at all, feeds upon such unclean food as a vegetable, but by the time the chemistry of nature has changed manure and carbonic acid into a peach, I find the product very clean indeed, as in a loftier sense may be the souls of those who are reared on kindly thoughts, on loving aspirations, on generous and unselfish action, even though beef and claret may have contributed some of their constituents to the formation of their temporary physical vehicles.

M. C. L.—I find my experience at variance with that of A. P. S. in his reply to this question; certainly the growth of the soul cannot *depend* on what we eat and drink, nevertheless as the upward path is so hard to tread and beset with so many difficulties we should do nothing to weight us in that upward course.

In studying the highest examples of past ages, we find them to be ascetics in their lives and absolutely abstainers from flesh. Certainly those who occasionally indulge in flesh and alcohol, even though moderately, can never understand how the perceptions of their souls are thereby veiled. For myself it is a matter of certain assurance that we must leave all those things if we would press *quickly* on the upward way. We must by degrees detach our bodies from every earthly desire; conquering in little things, and growing stronger to allay our passions, the little light that shines on our path will grow and become a radiant flame.

F. M. M. R.—One theosophist would not like to be so uncharitable or so unjust to another as to say that one cannot attain to purity of heart and life on a mixed diet, but that is not



the point at issue. Earnest-minded students of Theosophy of two or three years' standing are just a little puzzled at A. P. S.'s generalisation on the subject. It would certainly be intolerant to say that the "growth of the soul" depends entirely on what we eat and drink, but the quickening of its evolution does depend on removing every conceivable obstacle to that growth. "Let us lay aside every weight," saith St. Paul. If it be admitted that meat, wine, tobacco, and other stimulants do "coarsen and darken the materials of the astral body," then why do theosophists deliberately take these things, or if they believe it necessary to their well-being to do so, why mention it in the pages of the VĀHAN, to the probable detriment of weaker brethren who want helping—not hindering—on the Path?

M. E. G.—I would like to say a few words upon the constantly recurring subject of food, as once more brought to the front by the above questions. Many years ago, I heard the following words from a Scottish pulpit, and somehow they seem to fit in with the discussion in point. The preacher was describing the various reasons that lay at the bottom of men calling themselves Christians—religious conviction, policy, and such like, were reviewed in turn; then he burst out in his strong vernacular, "and some men are Christians from a geographical necessity!" May we not say that some men eat animal food from a karmic necessity? Somehow, it seems to me that the attitude of mind most needed *at this stage of evolution*, is a quiet and simple acceptance at the hands of the Lords of Karma of the body they have prepared for one, and a loyal resolve to make the best of it. If perfect health can be attained without the use of animal food, then by all means let us refrain from it; but if, on the contrary, a half-nourished, ill-regulated, nervous system is the result, surely, from the astral point of view, such an one would fall an easier prey to the elemental and passional forces, than if he were in a perfectly healthful body, even though attained by the eating of meat and such-like aids; whilst on the physical plane, his condition would be such as largely to magnify "self" in his mental horizon, and certainly would militate against his powers of service.

The old adage of "plain living and high thinking" is an excellent watchword, and a certain characteristic best described by the term *abstemiousness* should, I think, be the keynote of life. The man who, on an occasion, eats his ill-done chop and says nothing about it for fear of worrying his wife, has climbed higher

than he who grumbles if his vegetable repast is not quite to his liking. The Kingdom of God is not only in meat and drink, and the law of abstemiousness or moderation may be carried into every corner of life; but let it not be thought that it has anything to do with asceticism, for the products of the former are always strength, and balance, and calm. Nothing has been said in the foregoing remarks about compassion to all that lives—the most cogent reason it seems to me against the use of animal food. Therefore it is, that even those who are bound to its use by karmic necessity may joyfully look forward to the time when the lion shall lie down with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them—when the reign of slaughter shall have gone for ever.

S. M. S.—It would be so much better if on this question of food, as on every other, we could each make up our mind as to what is best for ourselves, go our own way, and leave others to go theirs—in peace.

As a vegetarian of very many years' standing I may perhaps appeal to my fellow-vegetarians to show less intolerance than is now and then to be noticed towards those who do not think with them on this subject, or who for some reason may not be able, even while agreeing, to follow their example.

There is a tendency sometimes to elevate vegetarianism into a dogma, and even to identify it with Theosophy. If we do this we degrade the loftiest philosophy to the level of a party catch-word. And surely we do not achieve any object if on the one hand we preach Theosophy—which, if it is anything, is all-inclusive—while on the other, on the plea of our one-ness with the animal kingdom, we make our abstention from eating them a cause of separation between man and man. We have not so learned brotherhood.

So much has been written and spoken on this subject of food, and that on what for many of us is sufficiently high authority, that we are quite able to weigh the statements that have been made, and decide as to our course of action. Why then should we continue to collect opinions?

Incidentally, it may perhaps be suggested that after we have solved the question of vegetarianism or non-vegetarianism, and decided perhaps in favour of the former, there still remains the choosing of the right kinds of food. Few vegetarians are sufficiently careful in this, and the result is that vegetarianism from the point of view of health is an entire failure. But this is

not the fault of vegetarianism, but of our own foolishness. For example, lentils and haricot beans, which have been so much extolled, are probably the two forms of food most unsuited to the largely sedentary occupations—or want of occupation—of the majority in the west. Yet many think that if only they can eat sufficient of these, nothing more is required. It is, I believe, quite a question whether our present sub-race had not done better if it could have arisen, flourished and decayed without a knowledge of the existence of these two things.

But to return to the deeper question. We have never been told, so far as I know, that the growth of the soul depends upon what we eat. What we have been told is that certain foods make it easier or more difficult for us to control and purify our lower bodies, the instruments through which the soul works. Having regard to the fact that so few can speak with any authority on this, and seeing the interpretation which may be put upon such teaching—as shown for instance by this query—it may be that for the majority the humanitarian argument in support of vegetarianism is at once the safest and the strongest. A true love for animals is by no means confined to vegetarians, some of whom may quite well lack this genuine feeling for the animal kingdom. Where it exists it is unmistakable; and from personal observation and experience, I am inclined to think, that it would be difficult to feel quite so whole-hearted an affection for animals, not excluding even that frequent butt for scorn, the “silly sheep,” if one contributed one’s share in eating them.

We may do well to remember those words, which are very familiar to many, but too little considered. “And He called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” This is a clear statement, and appeals to us with the force of truth. It may, perhaps, serve as a reminder lest in pursuing a militant vegetarianism we fail in our loyalty to the deeper things to which Theosophy binds us.

[*Note.*—I have inserted the preceding answers, that all sides might have fair play, but cannot continue the discussion.

I find in one of our Indian exchanges a saying of Śrī Rāma-krishna, which seems to me to sum up the matter from the higher side—“He who eats the food of the Gods, but does not desire to attain God, for him that simple food is as bad as beef. But he

who eats beef, and desires to attain God, for him beef is as good as the food of the Gods." It is the desire to attain God, the "iron will" at all cost to rise in the spiritual life, which is the main thing; everything else is mere detail. St. Augustine's motto was "Love—and do what you will," for with true love you can will no wrong; and, in the same way, I think we may all agree that one who truly aspires, may be safely trusted to find out for himself what are the hindrances in his way. But the most elaborate clearing of the way is useless if we do not run. The question of questions is not "Do you eat the food of the gods?" but, "Are you striving your hardest to take your place amongst them?"—EDITOR.]

## DIVISION LXIX

### ASCETICISM AND CELIBACY

#### QUESTION 278.

*Is the practice of asceticism of any assistance in the progress of a student of occultism? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—The answer to this question depends entirely upon the meaning attached by the querent to the word asceticism. If it is to be taken as signifying what some people have called “the mortification of the flesh”—the doing of something unpleasant merely because it *is* unpleasant, and without reference to any ulterior result which it is expected to produce (such as, for example, the wearing of a hair shirt)—I should myself consider it as absolutely useless to the student of occultism. Such an action belongs to the same general category as those of the lower-class fakcer who lies on a bed of spikes, or holds up his arm until it becomes dry and stiff like wood; and while no doubt it tends to the development of will-power, it is certainly not advantageous to the general progress of the individual. The possession of a sound mind in a sound body is the condition desirable for the occultist, and the exercise of his own common-sense will soon show him whether any particular practice does or does not tend to promote that condition.

On the other hand, if our questioner takes asceticism to mean living a clean and simple life, abstaining from things which make the body impure, such as alcohol, meat, or tobacco—then assuredly not only is it helpful to progress but it is a necessary prerequisite to any kind of attempt at occult progress whatsoever. If a man is still so entirely under the dominion of the lower desires that he is not even ready to give up his bad habits and live a clean, pure life, he is not yet sufficiently in earnest to

as long as we gain by it, and when its virtue is exhausted for us, to leave it without any anxiety as to what others may think of us. But I think (though I have no right to set up as a teacher—being so young a learner) that as in Dante's vision, there is no escape from the Purgatory to the Paradise without first at least passing through the fire.

QUESTION 280.

*Is a theosophist, as such, justified in advocating celibacy? If so, when questioned as to where waiting Egos are to reincarnate, what must be the answer? (1898.)*

S. M. S.—The answer to this question must be a decided negative. To pursue such a course would be most unwise, and might lead to great mischief.

Our first duty as members of the Theosophical Society should be to make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the broad principles of Theosophy, and to distinguish these from the various details regarding the regulation of daily life which must be matters of personal choice and individual fitness. Our work should be, first of all, to train ourselves as best we may; and when we feel sure that we are fitted for it, to put before others such ideas as we think may be helpful to them. But do not let us mix up with the broad conceptions of Theosophy, or make Theosophy responsible for, the advocacy of narrow views of life and conduct which do not belong to it, and which have already done much injury. There is no doubt that when our knowledge of Theosophy shall have become clearer, we shall no longer need to ask such questions as the above.

As to the second part of the query, surely our own common sense will tell us at once that the problem is not a pressing one, nor likely to be so for many ages to come.

For our own comfort, however, we may assume that the Guardians of the race, who slumber not nor sleep, will see to it that "waiting Egos" do not wait in vain for an earthly tabernacle. For evolution is the Law, and there is most assuredly no power either in earth or in heaven or in the waters that are under the earth which is able to stay its progress.

A. A. W.—No one is justified in advocating celibacy, or monogamy, or polygamy, as a theosophical doctrine. A Catholic priest

is bound to celibacy; a Protestant missionary is bound to be married (at least it was so in my time), but either may be a theosophist. I do not think that even those most anxious to bring us down to the level of a sect have ventured to put forth celibacy as a matter of "theosophical orthodoxy." Considering that a very large percentage of theosophists belong to a religion which enjoins that a man *shall* marry and have a son before he is permitted to enter upon the Higher Life, I don't quite see how it is possible.

If we descend from general rules to particular cases, I think it is generally admitted in Society that unless a man has at least £300 a year he cannot marry, whatever becomes of the waiting Egos. There may be another case—one I have myself met with—in which a person may, after careful study of his nature, come to the conclusion that it is better for the world that *his* species should *not* be reproduced; and of this also the waiting Egos cannot complain. Again, there is much work to be done in the world which can only be done by an unmarried man, nor is this theosophical work only, or chiefly. I have spoken of the Catholic priest: *he* is liable at any moment of the day or night to be summoned to the bedside of a patient in the most malignant fever or smallpox, and instead of keeping his distance, as the doctor can, is forced by his duty to come into the closest physical contact in hearing the confession. You would not have him come home to a wife and children after it, even for the sake of the waiting Egos, would you?

But put all these cases together, and add the very few which our teachings really do contribute—the one here and there of the "few specially organised and peculiar natures" (in the words of Subba Row) who are found capable of entering the path of study in which celibacy is needful—does the querist seriously think that the supply of tabernacles for the waiting Egos is in any danger of falling short of the demand; or that if all the members of the Theosophical Society were suddenly to go crazy and make a general vow of celibacy, the risk would be seriously augmented? Our friend forgets, not only that the natural desires of human nature have abundantly provided against such an event, but—a matter of much more importance—that the exalted Beings who preside over reincarnation have full *power* to arrange this circumstance of re-birth, as all other ones. When an Ego is to be re-born, the parents are deliberately chosen and brought together; there is no

make it worth while to consider his chances of progress. But surely this living of a decent life is a matter of course to every right-feeling man, when he has once been brought face to face with the facts of existence, and so the word asceticism can scarcely be applied to such a life.

There is a third possibility. Our querent may be using the word asceticism, as so many people do, in the sense of chastity or celibacy. Certainly in this sense also it is desirable for occult progress ; but this again would be a matter of course for anyone who was at in all earnest. Every student who really means business takes himself in hand with regard to all these minor and outer matters, and makes his physical life as pure and clean as he knows how, before he even thinks of presenting himself as an aspirant for anything that can really be dignified by the name of occult progress at all.

#### QUESTION 279.

*Is ascetic life necessary at any stage of a man's upward progress ?*  
(1899.)

A. A. W.—The question can hardly be answered without preliminary definition. There are various kinds of asceticism, according as you come to it. If God be mainly regarded as a Law-giver, whose Law we have broken, tempted by the flesh, our repentance may take the shape of punishing the body for its fault. This is the root of a good deal of the Christian asceticism, and more than one of the saints, coming in later life to see that his sins were *not* the fault of the unlucky body, has asked its pardon for the causeless suffering he has inflicted upon it. Or we may starve it and ill-use it simply to weaken its power of temptation, as many others have done. Or lastly, we may do it as the ascetics amongst whom Buddha spent some years, under the idea that the mere suffering is something in itself meritorious or pleasing to God—that future reward is bought by it, the more pain here the more joy hereafter.

In all these cases we hold that there is either actual crime, or else—at best—that “blunder which is worse than a crime” ; but for all that the Christian Saint or the Haṭha Yogin is not without his reward. The suffering is wasted, with the body which has suffered ; but when the Ego comes into a new body, with (as we



## QUESTION 283.

*Cremation versus Burial.—The Theosophical Society, I believe, advocates the former, but would not the burying of, say, bodies of a pure type, help on the evolution of the lower forms of Nature, and therefore be preferable to cremation? (1898.)*

B. K.—The grounds on which Theosophy advocates cremation are manifold; but, I think, they may be briefly summarised under the following heads:

(1) *Sanitary.* Occult and ordinary physical science both agree that the products resulting from the putrefying processes in animal bodies are exceedingly dangerous and injurious to the living; the bacteria and microbes which multiply so enormously, and by which the process of decay is effected, are liable to do most serious injury to the living when, by means of water, air, or otherwise they gain access to the living body; while the germs of specific disease, typhus, small-pox, scarlet fever, consumption, diphtheria, etc., etc. (spread through the earth by the percolation of water through the soil of the cemetery in which the corpse of one dying of the disease in question has been buried), also carry the infection far and wide.

From the occult standpoint, the sanitation of these subtler influences, which play a far larger part in human life than is generally recognised, is most seriously impeded and hindered by the presence of decaying animal bodies and the subtle influences accompanying them. Every one of these dangers is entirely removed by cremating the dead body at a high temperature.

(2) *As affecting the soul.* The onward progress of the soul is more or less delayed, and the breaking up of the astral body retarded, by the slowness of ordinary decomposition; while the destruction of the corpse by fire causes the immediate break up of the etheric double, and thus severs the magnetic tie which otherwise tends to hold the soul back.

(3) As to the specific point raised, it seems to rest upon a complete misconception of what the process of decay involves. A distinction must be made between the chemical elements, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, of which the body ultimately consists, and the highly complex compounds of these which form the organic cells. Now the fact is that *none* of the lower forms of

life assimilate the cells themselves *as living cells*. These are first killed, broken up and chemically changed before assimilation, so that it is the chemical elements, *not* their organised compounds, which are taken up by the lower forms. And hence it does not in the least matter, so far as the evolution of these lower forms goes, whether the oxygen, nitrogen, etc., are supplied to them direct by the process of cremation, or through intermediate stages of chemical decomposition by burying the body.

*All* organic bodies are broken up into their chemical elements, either quickly or slowly; and though undoubtedly the body of a highly evolved and pure man is built of the finer orders of physical matter, that matter is just as available for other uses when set free by cremation, as when more slowly resolved by putrefication. Indeed, I myself believe that the finer and purer kinds of matter are much more likely to be kept available for the purposes they are needed for when a body is cremated than when it is buried. For on cremation, all the heavier and more complex forms of matter are first broken up and refined by the fire, and then set free to follow their natural affinities; while when burial is resorted to, a set of highly specialised conditions are set up which seem well calculated to force the purer and finer kinds of matter to enter into gross and complex combinations of lower orders, and so actually lessen the amount of fine and developed matter available for building the higher and purer types of body.

In chemistry, by means of specially adjusted conditions and the expenditure of energy, we can *force* chemical elements to enter into combinations which are "un-natural," *i.e.*, which are more or less repugnant to the nature of the elements in question; and I see no reason why a similar result should not be brought about in the case of burial. Certainly, when it is desired to purify and set free the various orders of matter in their present condition, fire is usually employed to effect that purpose. And it seems to me that this principle must hold good in the case of the human body.

But the case for cremation is so absolutely overwhelming in every aspect, that one can only wonder at the curious strength of a prejudice which delays the adoption of a method of disposing of the dead body that simply has everything in its favour, whether from the standpoint of the living or from that of the soul which has been set free from that encasement.

## QUESTION 284.

*In the case of those saints whose physical bodies have been preserved more or less from destruction for hundreds of years (e.g., St. Antonino in Florence, since mid-fifteenth century until now) would such condition of the physical body affect the preservation of the astral body? Would the man be forced to remain longer upon the astral plane himself in consequence? I ask in the interest of cremation versus burial or embalming. (1899.)*

C. W. L.—Nothing that is likely to be done in ordinary life to his physical corpse need make any difference whatever to the man living on the astral plane. I am obliged to make these two reservations, because, in the first place, outside of ordinary life there are certain horrible magical rites which would affect the condition of the man upon the other plane very seriously, and in the second, although the state of the physical corpse *need* not make any difference to the real man, it nevertheless sometimes does by reason of his ignorance or foolishness. Let me endeavour to explain.

The length of a man's astral life after he has put off his physical body depends mainly upon two factors—the nature of his past physical life, and his attitude of mind after what we call death. During his earth-life he is constantly influencing the building of matter into his astral body. He affects it directly by the passions, emotions, and desires which he allows to hold sway over him; he affects it indirectly by the action upon it of his thoughts from above, and of the details of his physical life—his continence or his debauchery, his cleanliness or his uncleanness, his food and his drink—from below. If by persistence in perversity along any of these lines he is so stupid as to build for himself a coarse and gross astral vehicle, habituated to responding only to the lower vibrations of the plane, he will find himself after death bound to that plane during the long and slow process of that body's disintegration. On the other hand if by decent and careful living he gives himself a vehicle mainly composed of finer material, he will have very much less *post-mortem* trouble and discomfort, and his evolution will proceed much more rapidly and easily.

This much is generally understood, but the second great factor—his attitude of mind after death—seems often to be forgotten.

The desirable thing is for him to realise his position on this particular little arc of his evolution—to learn that he is at this stage withdrawing steadily inward towards the plane of the true Ego, and that consequently it is his business to disengage his thought as far as may be from things physical, and fix his attention more and more upon those spiritual matters which will occupy him during his life upon devachanic levels. By doing this he will greatly facilitate the natural astral disintegration, and will avoid the sadly common mistake of unnecessarily delaying himself upon the lower levels of what should be so temporary a residence.

Very many people, however, simply will not turn their thoughts upwards, but spend their time in struggling with all their might to keep in full touch with the physical plane which they have left, thus causing great trouble to anyone who may be trying to help them. Earthly matters are the only ones in which they have ever had any living interest, and they cling to them with desperate tenacity even after death. Naturally as time passes on they find it increasingly difficult to keep hold of things down here, but instead of welcoming and encouraging this process of gradual refinement and spiritualisation they resist it vigorously by every means in their power. Of course the mighty force of evolution is eventually too strong for them, and they are swept on in its beneficent current, yet they fight every step of the way, thereby not only causing themselves a vast amount of entirely unnecessary pain and sorrow, but also very seriously delaying their upward progress.

Now in this ignorant and disastrous opposition to the cosmic will a man is very much assisted by the possession of his physical corpse as a kind of fulcrum on his plane. He is naturally in very close *rapport* with it, and if he is so misguided as to wish to do so, he can use it as an anchor to hold him down firmly to the mud until its decomposition is very far advanced indeed. Cremation saves the man from himself in this matter, for when the physical body has been thus properly disposed of, his boats are literally burnt behind him, and his power of holding back is happily greatly diminished.

We see, therefore, that while neither the burial nor the embalming of a corpse can in any way *force* the Ego to whom it once belonged to prolong his stay upon the astral plane against his will, either of those causes is a distinct temptation to him to delay, and it immensely facilitates his doing so if he should

unfortunately wish it. It is however, exceedingly unlikely that a person having any sort of pretensions to be called a saint would allow himself to be detained upon the astral plane even by a proceeding so foolish as the embalming of his corpse. Whether his physical vehicle was burnt, or allowed to decay slowly in the usual loathsome manner, or indefinitely preserved as an Egyptian mummy, his astral body would pursue its own line of quiet disintegration entirely unaffected.

Among the many advantages gained by cremation, the principal are that it entirely prevents any attempt at a partial and unnatural temporary reunion of the principles, or any endeavour to make use of the corpse for the purposes of the lower magic—to say nothing of the many dangers to the living which are avoided by its adoption.

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## DIVISION LXXI

### HASHISH

#### QUESTION 285.

*What is the effect of hashish upon (1) mental development, (2) the memory? (3) What states would it induce, and (4) what effect would it have upon real progress? (5) Would it induce or prohibit recollections of former lives? (1897.)*

B. K.—1. Upon mental development proper, *i.e.*, the mind-body, hashish produces a bad effect by re-action from the brain upon which it primarily acts. Upon the brain its action is partly stimulant, partly narcotic, the stimulating action showing itself first. The effect at first is to enormously enhance the sensitiveness of the brain, both to ordinary sense-stimuli and to physical processes in the body which usually fall below the level of intensity needed to attract our notice. It induces a state in many ways resembling the hyperæsthesia, or exalted sensibility, so often observed in certain mesmeric and hypnotic conditions. The faintest sound is heard as a mighty roar, a mere glimmer of light seems like a vivid flash of lightning; the sense of time and space is altered too, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, and the brain works with either enormous rapidity and vividness, or else with quite abnormal sluggishness and dullness, the occurrence of these contrasted states seeming to depend on the magnitude of the dose in relation to the specific idiosyncrasy of the taker at that time.

The next stage is the narcotic effect; sleep supervenes and the wasted brain tissues undergo repair, for the exaltation experienced in the former stage is attended with tremendous waste of brain substance and the tissues of the higher nerve centres. This waste is only repaired slowly, so that the result of habitual indulgence

made, as any attempts to induce them by control of breath or other similar methods are distinctly unsafe for most people unless undertaken under the direct guidance of a Master.

## QUESTION 288.

*It is, I understand, the theosophical teaching that the psychic faculties are dormant in everyone. We are told with reference to our moral nature and our minds that we should endeavour to build up and cultivate them, but that our latent psychic faculties should be left, as it were, to take care of themselves until such time as they naturally manifest. Why should this be so? (1900.)*

B. K.—There are several reasons which may be brought forward in answer, but perhaps it will be sufficient for the moment if one or two of the more important are here cited.

First, then, people are advised to build up and cultivate their intellectual and (above all) their moral natures, because without a well-developed intellect the psychic, just like the physical faculties would be of little or no service to their possessor. Rather they would on the contrary almost inevitably expose him to most serious dangers. The same applies to the moral nature, for we see only too many people around us whom karma has put in possession of great powers and opportunities, but who use them for the gratification of their own selfishness and to the injury of others, instead of for helpful and noble purposes. Only in the case of the psychic faculties the probability of misuse is far greater and the temptations far more subtle and searching.

Again—and this seems to me by far the most cogent reason—the purpose and goal of man's life is the development of his immortal spiritual nature. Now the accomplishment of this involves, as a necessary step, a high degree of intellectual as well as of moral development, but does *not* require any development of the so-called “psychic faculties.” For it must be remembered that what most people, and probably the questioner among them, mean by “developing psychic faculties,” is really the *bringing through* of the consciousness of the astral plane into the waking brain consciousness. This, however, depends almost wholly upon the structure and condition of the etheric part of the physical body, and hence its presence or absence in any given physical life is

East it a very different thing from what is called "hashish" in the West. The latter is usually an alcoholic extract of *cannabis indica* made according to the B. P. formula. Such a preparation, though sometimes used as a drug by our medical men here, is *not* "hashish," and one is not very likely to get any such results as those alluded to above from taking it, unless either a very heavy dose be taken, or the experimenter is unusually sensitive to the action of the drug; while its action on the brain—when taken in any quantity—is far more deleterious even than that of the Indian preparation, on account of the presence of the alcohol, which interferes with its normal action, and to the absence of other ingredients which regulate its operation and minimise the subsequent reaction.

astral world until his life is pure and his feelings well under control. A person of impure physical life—profligate, gluttonous, or intemperate, or with any of the passions which in their excess give rise to these vices having still any place in his astral body—draws about him in the astral world elementals of a terrifying and dangerous kind, and earth-bound souls who, during physical life, were addicted to evil ways. These throng round him when he enters the astral world, and, as the latter especially are of a malignant character, the astral visitant is likely to find himself in sore straits. If the person be of purified life but of uncontrolled feelings, he will create for himself formidable difficulties. When a gust of feeling sweeps over the physical body all that can be used for mischief is the residue of force left free after the astral energy has moved the dense matter of the body; by far the greater part of the force has been exhausted in setting in motion the heavy nervous apparatus. But a similar force set free on the astral plane loses but little of its energy in moving the fine matter of the astral body, and is almost entirely available for the production of external effects. Hence an ill-balanced uncontrolled person is dangerous in the astral world, and is likely to do much injury to himself and others. It is far better that he should remain on the physical plane, weighted by the cumbrous physical body, than that he should perambulate the astral plane as an active volcano.

## QUESTION 290.

*Do spirituality and progress in psychical powers, such as astral sight, always go together? Is it a sign of non-advancement, if ignorance of the astral plane continues, notwithstanding the existence of other interior experiences, and although we grow more spiritual in thought and feeling? (1901.)*

W. S.-E.—This is a question that can be answered without much difficulty.

Spirituality and progress in psychical powers do *not* necessarily go together, nor does ignorance of the astral plane constitute a sign of non-advancement. To build up character, to become less selfish and more spiritual in thought, feeling, and action is the one thing of importance. All the psychic faculties will follow in due time; indeed the development of occult powers without a corresponding progress in spirituality is more likely to be a curse than a

of fact they are simply astral drunkards who mop up every sweet-tasting and delicious beverage that is presented to them. H. P. B. used to say that in her own case her greatest struggle had been to overcome the slavery of the psychic faculties that she had in such an extraordinary degree in her youth. She further said that she had known high Adepts who had none of these ordinary psychic faculties. In fact her advice was always to develop the *higher* psychic faculties, such as right intuition and the rest, by living a pure and unselfish life and by entirely conquering the lower animal nature; then having arrived at such higher and "formless" states of consciousness, it was easy to bridge over the planes of "form," for the spiritual training passed through would provide the student with a "torch-light of truth" that would enable him to instantly distinguish the true from the false in the lower psychic planes of consciousness; for in them are found "the blossoms of life, but under every flower a serpent coiled."

QUESTION 287.

*I am somewhat puzzled in regard to our individual duty in the development of the psychic powers latent in each of us. Is it enough to study but not try to arouse these powers, letting them awaken in natural evolution? If we used the same reasoning in other things, there would be but little development for many of us. (1900.)*

C. W. L.—It is undoubtedly safer for the majority of people to devote themselves solely to the development of their moral character, and to wait for psychic powers until they come in the natural course. Most of us find that we have quite enough to do in trying to raise ourselves to the level indicated in such books as Mrs. Besant's *In the Outer Court* or *The Path of Discipleship*, and it is there stated that at a certain stage upon the Path these psychic powers must inevitably come if they have not been previously developed.

At the same time there can be no possible harm in any member devoting himself to meditation, concentration or contemplation to the fullest possible extent, and these exercises very frequently cause the unfolding of higher faculties in those for whom their development is reasonably near. This is indeed the only safe way in which any effort in that direction can be

## DIVISION LXXIII

### SPIRITUALISTIC SÉANCES

#### QUESTION 291.

*At séances infants often come to their relatives and appear as if grown up to full stature. If the Ego reincarnates at once, how is this? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—One often reads of cases in which infants dying young have continued to manifest at *séances* and have described themselves as growing; in some cases, it is stated, they have even shown themselves in materialised form as fully-grown persons. We do not know in Theosophy of any conditions under which such growth can really take place, and I should be inclined to believe that in the majority of such cases some other entity was personating the departed child.

#### QUESTION 292.

*So much reliable evidence (in my experience) exists to prove the apparition of the spirits of very young children—say from the tender age of from five to nine years—and also of one in the latter case grown to maidenhood, that I fail to grasp the theosophic teaching which would contradict such a possibility. Does Divine Wisdom admit of exceptional cases of infant spirit development in the "other world"? (1901.)*

A. A. W.—I have often been asked this question, and it may be well to set down the answer I have usually given. There is, in spiritualistic records, as the querist says, abundant evidence of the appearance at materialising *séances* of the forms of beloved relatives, sometimes at the age at which they died, and sometimes

chiefly a matter of karma, and even if developed by special practice, may again be lost when the body itself disintegrates at death.

Strictly speaking, the psychic faculties proper, *i.e.*, the powers of the astral body, grow and develop naturally and inevitably as the whole man himself grows and progresses, and that mainly—in a case of healthy growth—as a direct result of his growing intellectual and moral activities.

Such faculties, *i.e.*, the powers of work on the astral plane, therefore are inseparable accompaniments and results of the efforts made towards real spiritual progress, and these pass on and grow from life to life. While as to the bringing through into waking consciousness of astral and higher experiences, such bringing through is best left for the time when the Master sees it wise and right for his pupil to be called upon to face the far, far greater strain and the manifold difficulties which such “bringing through” involves.

#### QUESTION 289.

*If a person gives way to an involuntary tendency to slip into the astral world, is he likely to fall a prey to elementals, nature-spirits, and earth-bound souls, and to finally become their dupe? If there be any danger of this kind, what is the best way of resisting the tendency? (1898.)*

A. B.—This involuntary slipping into the astral world is generally preceded by a passive, dreamy state, during which the pulses of the physical life throb more and more languidly; the oncoming of this state can be prevented by the exercise of the will, and by setting up positive thought. It is not well to slip involuntarily into any state, least of all into the astral world, for if that world is to be trodden with safety, the will must be steadfast, firm, and strong. A person passing into it with the will semi-paralysed is certainly in danger of being affected by elementals and by earth-bound souls, who would be likely to play upon and delude him, and in the case of the second class of entities—even to obsess the physical body, left defenceless by the vagrant astral. Nature-spirits would not be likely to take much notice of the wanderer, save to keep out of his way, or, at the worst, to play some harmless Puck-like trick, if he seems likely to be easily frightened.

It may be well to remark that no one can pass safely into the



astral world until his life is pure and his feelings well under control. A person of impure physical life—profligate, gluttonous, or intemperate, or with any of the passions which in their excess give rise to these vices having still any place in his astral body—draws about him in the astral world elementals of a terrifying and dangerous kind, and earth-bound souls who, during physical life, were addicted to evil ways. These throng round him when he enters the astral world, and, as the latter especially are of a malignant character, the astral visitant is likely to find himself in sore straits. If the person be of purified life but of uncontrolled feelings, he will create for himself formidable difficulties. When a gust of feeling sweeps over the physical body all that can be used for mischief is the residue of force left free after the astral energy has moved the dense matter of the body; by far the greater part of the force has been exhausted in setting in motion the heavy nervous apparatus. But a similar force set free on the astral plane loses but little of its energy in moving the fine matter of the astral body, and is almost entirely available for the production of external effects. Hence an ill-balanced uncontrolled person is dangerous in the astral world, and is likely to do much injury to himself and others. It is far better that he should remain on the physical plane, weighted by the cumbrous physical body, than that he should perambulate the astral plane as an active volcano.

## QUESTION 290.

*Do spirituality and progress in psychical powers, such as astral sight, always go together? Is it a sign of non-advancement, if ignorance of the astral plane continues, notwithstanding the existence of other interior experiences, and although we grow more spiritual in thought and feeling? (1901.)*

W. S. E.—This is a question that can be answered without much difficulty.

Spirituality and progress in psychical powers do *not* necessarily go together, nor does ignorance of the astral plane constitute a sign of non-advancement. To build up character, to become less selfish and more spiritual in thought, feeling, and action is the one thing of importance. All the psychic faculties will follow in due time; indeed the development of occult powers without a corresponding progress in spirituality is more likely to be a curse than a

blessing, not only to their possessor, but to all who come in close contact with him. The natural development of the psychic nature is like the opening of a rose to the sunshine, while its premature forcing is like the tearing open of a bud before its petals are ready to unfold.

Far too much stress has been laid on this cultivation of psychic powers, and the Society has not yet entirely freed itself from the mistaken view.

If the teachings of the Society are, as we hope, to influence more and more the world's thinking through the coming century, they will dwell more on the steady building up of the character to the fulness of the stature of the ideal put before us than on *any* attainment of psychic power or astral vision.

matter as an intermediary to convey the vibrations from the one to the other—much in the same way as a fire cannot be lighted with paper and coals alone ; the wood is needed as an intermediary, otherwise the paper will all burn away without affecting the coal.

Now that which constitutes a man a physical medium is a want of cohesion between the etheric and physical vehicles, so that an astral entity can very easily withdraw a good deal of the man's etheric body, and use it for his own purposes. Of course he returns it—in fact, its constant tendency is to flow back to the medium, as may be seen from the action of the materialised form—but still the frequent withdrawal of part of a man's body in this way cannot but cause great disturbance and danger to health.

We must remember too that the etheric double is the vehicle of *prāna*, the life-principle which is perpetually circulating through our bodies, and that when any part of our etheric double is withdrawn, that life-circulation is checked and its current broken. A terrible drain of vitality is then set up, and that is why a medium is so often in a state of collapse after a *séance*, and also why so many of them in the long run become drunkards, having first taken to stimulants in order to satisfy the dreadful craving for support which is caused by this sudden loss of strength.

It can never under any circumstances be a good thing for the health to be constantly subjected to such a drain as this, even though in some cases the more intelligent and careful "spirits" try to pour strength into their medium after a *séance* in order to make up for the loss, and thus support him without absolute breakdown for a much longer period than would otherwise be possible.

In case of materialisation, dense physical matter, probably chiefly in the form of gas or liquid, seems frequently to be borrowed from the body of the medium, who perceptibly decreases in size and weight ; and, of course, that is a further source of serious disturbance to all the functions.

Of three mediums with whom I used to have sittings fifteen years ago, one is now blind, another died a confirmed drunkard, and the third, finding himself menaced by epilepsy and paralysis, escaped with his life only by giving up *séances* altogether.

no more force might be employed than was needed. Very often what is required is simply the appearance of a body, and under such circumstances it might well be a mere shell. Even on the physical plane we can produce movement and simulate speech in a marionette, and the resources of the astral plane are enormously greater than those at our command down here.

At the same time, a full materialisation, which was an accurate reproduction of a physical body in every respect, both externally and internally, could quite easily be produced if necessary. I have myself on more than one occasion felt the heart of a materialisation beating at a *séance*, though I did not investigate the chemical composition of its blood.

The body materialised for himself by a trained pupil should certainly not convey to the self any feeling of pain, and it would be entirely free from the action of what is commonly called repercussion. There *are* materialisations in connection with which such action might take place; the difference between the two types is fully explained in *Invisible Helpers*, pp. 56-59.

#### QUESTION 299.

*Can the astral body be solidified? and if so, would it be possible for a person to visit the antipodes in his astral body, solidify it, and spend say a week there, working in it, afterwards returning and taking up his physical life in the ordinary way? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—It is certainly possible temporarily to solidify the astral body; in point of fact to do so is only to produce in another form the phenomenon of materialisation, which is frequently seen at ordinary spiritualistic *séances*. There would, however, be a difference in the method employed. The controlling entity at a *séance* usually draws the materials for his materialisation from the etheric double of the medium, probably in many cases also borrowing from his physical body some of its gaseous and liquid particles—for the medium is sometimes found to weigh less by many pounds during this part of the *séance* than he does before and after it; and there is little doubt that the sitters also are heavily taxed to provide the necessary power and matter. The material so drawn, being already specialised, is more easily arranged into human form and more readily moulded and condensed than free ether would be; and the task of working with the latter would

such a case there must obviously be a partial materialisation, probably tangible though not visible, in order that vibrations of the atmospheric air may be produced. Where the sounds are purely astral, and real clairaudience is needed, they are simply similar vibrations of astral matter set up by astral entities, and there is no difficulty in understanding them.

## QUESTION 294.

*In cases of so-called "spirit control," what becomes of the medium? Is he forced out of the physical body, or could two astral bodies, that of the medium and "spirit," occupy one physical body at the same time? (1897.)*

A. M. G.—Judging from ordinary observation of mediums in the familiar trance condition, the state of the medium appears to differ greatly in different cases. There is a certain number of more or less clearly-defined classes of mediumship all to be placed under the general heading of "control." According to what is probably the most common case, the medium is unconscious during his trance state, and speaks and otherwise acts without having any recollection on awaking. One would naturally suppose that in this case the medium may actually leave the body, which is then occupied by some foreign intelligence, the astral body of the medium, perhaps, remaining partially connected with the physical, but not controlling it. Many alleged clairvoyants among spiritualists assert that they see the "spirit-body" of the medium outside the physical, generally standing beside it and apparently not doing anything in particular. Another observation not uncommonly made is that at the same time the "spirit" enters the body through the head—the appearance of the spirit being most frequently that of a cloudy light without definite form. In some cases also the medium has stated that he was conscious himself of being outside the body, but in close proximity. The reliability of any such statements would, of course, depend upon the character and intelligence of the medium, frequently a somewhat uncertain element.

It seems to me to be very questionable indeed as to whether there is any actual "control" in the form of an entirely independent entity in many cases of so-called mediumship, especially in those cases in which the medium has practised his "powers"

be requisite for some business confided to him that he should show himself to physical eyes at a distance. The answer to the second part of the question, therefore, would be that while perhaps such a proceeding might be possible, it could never be allowable, unless indeed it were undertaken under the direct orders of a Master.

QUESTION 300.

*Astral bodies are said to be connected with the physical by a "cord" which is visible to a clairvoyant. Does this exist only in the case of the etheric double or is it also found in connection with the true astral when projected? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—The cord described exists only in the case of the etheric double, and is simply a stream of etheric matter (sometimes holding particles of denser physical matter in suspension in it) connecting that part of the double which is drawn out by the obsessing spook with that which remains within the dense body. For, of course, in all materialisations some part of the medium's etheric double must remain within his physical body, as otherwise death would almost certainly supervene. Indeed, just as sleep might accurately be defined as the withdrawal of the man in his astral body from his physical vehicle (including, of course, in this case the etheric double, which is also left behind on the bed), so death might be defined as the complete withdrawal from the dense body of the man in his etheric double—this being the only occasion upon which this double is used as a vehicle. But in the case of a materialisation, the withdrawal of the etheric body is only partial, and consequently the connecting current is visible to anyone capable of seeing matter in the etheric condition. As above remarked, denser matter is sometimes also to be found in it, for a certain amount of both gas and liquid seems to be not infrequently withdrawn from the body of the medium to assist in materialisation—an idea which accounts for the loss of weight often noticed in that body, and sometimes, though more rarely, its absolute physical shrinkage.

In the case of the true astral body there is also an exceedingly close connection with the physical form, as is proved by the remarkable phenomenon called repercussion; but the method of that connection is entirely different, for nothing of the nature of a cord or current of astral matter joins the two forms. It is

difficult to express in terms of this plane the exact nature and the exceeding closeness of the sympathy between them ; perhaps the nearest approximation we can get to the idea is that of two instruments tuned to exactly the same pitch, so that whatever note is struck upon one of them instantly evokes a precisely corresponding sound from the other. Let it be supposed in addition, that every man has, as it were, a peculiar musical chord of his own, which is the expression of himself, his disposition, and his character—a chord to which his whole nature immediately responds whenever and wherever it is sounded—and the reader will have before his mind a very fair image of the facts of the case. Indeed, it would be accurate to say that the connection between the astral body and the physical, and also in turn between the mind-body and the astral, can be better expressed in terms of sympathetic vibration than in any other at present known to us on this physical plane.

## QUESTION 296.

*Is it wise, in order to extend one's knowledge of astral entities, or in order to become convinced that such entities do exist, to make the experiment of joining in spiritualistic investigations?*  
(1902.)

E. A. B.—This may partly depend on the individual character and temperament; some have doubtless found it help them to get beyond a purely materialistic view of life. But it should be remembered that any knowledge gained in this way is quite unreliable. So great are the illusions of the astral plane that, without definite training and the development of higher faculties in himself, such an investigator is liable to be the sport of any "astral entity" that he may meet, and has no means of judging between reality and illusion. In most cases it would seem wiser to wait for the natural development of these inner faculties, though the waiting may need long patience.



will be necessary to make a searching enquiry into the genesis of astrology, and replace the traditional rule of thumb astrologising by some more rational method. Hipparchus and his plagiarist Ptolemy, with the cheerful impudence of scholastic Alexandrians, hellenised the real Chaldæan art out of existence, and modern astrology is based on their misconceptions solely. Modern astrology is *not* the Chaldæan art, it is the superstition of a Greek burlesque of the true science of the stars. In the distant past, when the "Chaldæan" civilisation was at its height (though under a different name, for that time was prehistoric) "astrology" was the religion of the race, and *that* astrology was (and is) one of the root-rays of religion; but between this real science of the solar system and its inhabitants, and the modern caricature, there is as little connection as between the present-day conceptions of the death of Jesus and the real self-sacrifice of the Logos.

But even before the days of Hipparchus the true science had fallen from its purity; and so we find the Buddha strictly forbidding his followers to dabble with the art. The direct disciples of the spiritual Christ also, among the early Gnostics, knew the true state of affairs: and so we find one of the writers in the Pistis Sophia treatise declaring that the astrologers were all at sixes and sevens; that it was only by chance that they hit on a correct prediction; for that as soon as a man's nature contacted the Christ spirit, there was a revolution in the spheres, and the motion of half of them was entirely inverted; of this the ordinary astrologer knew nothing, and so his predictions were almost sure to be erroneous. This statement was based on a knowledge of the real Chaldæan art, which had been so materialised by the Greeks; on a knowledge of what the "planets" really are, and how many there are, and how placed, in fact, of the entire economy of the whole system. This economy is entirely unknown to modern astrology, and it is wonderful that with such false premises it ever succeeds in getting even a single correct prediction from the few old rules of thumb which have been handed down from the genuine Chaldæans.

Modern astrology, then, requires to be purified, and ancient astrology to be rediscovered. But in this vulgar and huckstering age, when the income of the professional astrologer comes mostly from ignorant servant girls, or stock-dealers, or book-makers, what chance is there of purification; and until what purification, what claim has mankind to rediscovery?

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a higher plane, in reality originally consisted of a number of vast spheres of influence (probably representing qualities or powers of the Logos of the system), and that, in the gradual condensation of the great glowing nebula, the location of the physical planets was determined by the formation of vortices at certain points of intersection of these spheres with one another and with a given plane. It seems impossible, with the knowledge at present at our disposal, to construct any mathematical figure which will satisfy the requirements of this hypothesis; but if anything like this theory be true, the planets would indicate by their position the arrangement of these great spheres at any given moment.

Now these spheres of influence appear to differ widely in quality, and one way in which this difference shows itself is in their action upon the elemental essence. It may have, and quite probably has, other and more important lines of action of which we know nothing; but this at least forces itself on our notice—that each such sphere produces its own special effect upon the manifold varieties of elemental essence. One will greatly stimulate the activity and vitality of certain kinds of essence, while apparently checking and controlling others; the influence of another sphere will be strong over quite a different set of essences, while not apparently affecting the previous set in the least. We may have all sorts of combinations and permutations of these influences, the action of one of them being in many cases either greatly intensified or almost neutralised by the presence of another.

But, it may be asked, how far can these influences affect human beings? How far can they dominate the will of man? The answer to the last question is emphatic; they cannot dominate man's will in the slightest degree, though they may in some cases make it easier or more difficult for that will to act along certain lines. It must be remembered that elemental essence enters very largely into the composition of both the astral and mental bodies of man; consequently any unusual excitation of one or more classes of such essence, or sudden increase in their activity, would undoubtedly affect to some extent either his emotions or his mind, or both.

It is obvious that these influences would work very differently on different men, because of the variety of elemental essence in their composition. In no case could a man be swept away by them into any course of action without the consent of his will; but he might evidently be helped or hindered by them in any effort.

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## DIVISION LXXV

### THE OCCULT ARTS

#### QUESTION 301.

*What is the attitude of Theosophy to astrology?* (1898.)

G. R. S. M.—As THE VĀHAN knows no one who has the authority to speak in the name of Theosophy, we will bring the question within the range of practical politics by re-wording it as follows: “What is the attitude of members of the Theosophical Society to astrology?” and so we shall be dealing with facts of knowledge and not with opinions merely. The members of the Society take up the most divergent and contradictory attitudes with regard to astrology; some believe in it with various qualifications, a few even make of it a religion, as it were; some ridicule it as an absurd superstition, and proclaim the astrologer a charlatan; the majority are inclined to think there *may be* something in it, but are content to admit their ignorance of the art, and what is more, their indifference to it even supposing there may be truth in it, being quite content to subscribe to the saying, “The wise man rules his stars; the fool obeys them,” and so be quit of the whole business. Each member, then, has his own opinion, and if I give mine on the subject, the questioner should remember that it is mine and not the Society’s, least of all Theosophy’s.

I must confess, then, that I never could get up much respect for modern astrology, in spite of the fact that *sometimes* extraordinarily accurate predictions are made by professed astrologers. I have never known astrology do any good to the character, and I have often known it do a great deal of harm. On the other hand, I know that some of our members are making an honest endeavour to turn the art to ethical service, and in that I wish them every success. But before any real good can be done, it

will be necessary to make a searching enquiry into the genesis of astrology, and replace the traditional rule of thumb astrologising by some more rational method. Hipparchus and his plagiarist Ptolemy, with the cheerful impudence of scholastic Alexandrians, hellenised the real Chaldæan art out of existence, and modern astrology is based on their misconceptions solely. Modern astrology is *not* the Chaldæan art, it is the superstition of a Greek burlesque of the true science of the stars. In the distant past, when the "Chaldæan" civilisation was at its height (though under a different name, for that time was prehistoric) "astrology" was the religion of the race, and *that* astrology was (and is) one of the root-rays of religion; but between this real science of the solar system and its inhabitants, and the modern caricature, there is as little connection as between the present-day conceptions of the death of Jesus and the real self-sacrifice of the Logos.

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## QUESTION 302.

*Is there any real astronomical basis for the assumption so universally made that the approaching conjunction of the planets must necessarily produce disastrous effects, or is it to be supposed that it will cause a conflict on higher planes? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—There is no astronomical basis whatever for any such assumption. When it is stated that a number of planets are in conjunction, what is meant is that, as seen from the earth, those planets are roughly in a line one behind the other—not absolutely in a line, of course, or a series of occultations would ensue, but all lying in the same general direction. It therefore follows that such attraction as they exert upon the earth will be acting in one direction instead of in many directions, as is usually the case; and it may seem at first sight that such action might be sufficient to produce considerable disturbance. But when we remember that the mass of all the planets taken together is less than one seven hundred and fortieth part of the mass of the sun, and further that all the great outer planets must, when in conjunction with the sun, be on the other side of him and consequently at their greatest distance from the earth, we shall realise that any effect that may be produced even by the attraction of all the planets combined must be absolutely infinitesimal. From the astronomical point of view, therefore, there is not the slightest reason for apprehension.

Turning to the astrological side of the question, the position is somewhat different. The idea that the planets themselves have any influence over human affairs may, of course, be dismissed as childish, but there is another theory of astrology which is entitled to more respect—that which regards these planets as merely indicators of the position of spheres of influence which may possibly produce certain effects in this world.

To the materialist such a suggestion would probably seem, if anything, rather more ridiculous than the other, but the student of occultism knows better than this, for he cannot but be aware that influences of some sort certainly do exist, which make his work easier or more difficult at one time than another. As to what these are, how they work, and in what way they are connected with the planets, we have no exact information; but some occultists have thought that the whole solar system, when looked at from



a higher plane, in reality originally consisted of a number of vast spheres of influence (probably representing qualities or powers of the Logos of the system), and that, in the gradual condensation of the great glowing nebula, the location of the physical planets was determined by the formation of vortices at certain points of intersection of these spheres with one another and with a given plane. It seems impossible, with the knowledge at present at our disposal, to construct any mathematical figure which will satisfy the requirements of this hypothesis; but if anything like this theory be true, the planets would indicate by their position the arrangement of these great spheres at any given moment.

Now these spheres of influence appear to differ widely in quality, and one way in which this difference shows itself is in their action upon the elemental essence. It may have, and quite probably has, other and more important lines of action of which we know nothing; but this at least forces itself on our notice—that each such sphere produces its own special effect upon the manifold varieties of elemental essence. One will greatly stimulate the activity and vitality of certain kinds of essence, while apparently checking and controlling others; the influence of another sphere will be strong over quite a different set of essences, while not apparently affecting the previous set in the least. We may have all sorts of combinations and permutations of these influences, the action of one of them being in many cases either greatly intensified or almost neutralised by the presence of another.

But, it may be asked, how far can these influences affect human beings? How far can they dominate the will of man? The answer to the last question is emphatic; they cannot dominate man's will in the slightest degree, though they may in some cases make it easier or more difficult for that will to act along certain lines. It must be remembered that elemental essence enters very largely into the composition of both the astral and mental bodies of man; consequently any unusual excitation of one or more classes of such essence, or sudden increase in their activity, would undoubtedly affect to some extent either his emotions or his mind, or both.

It is obvious that these influences would work very differently on different men, because of the variety of elemental essence in their composition. In no case could a man be swept away by them into any course of action without the consent of his will, but he might evidently be helped or hindered by them in any effort

that he chanced to be making. The strong man has little need to trouble himself as to the influences which happen to be in the ascendant; his weaker brother may find it worth his while to know at what moment this or that force can most advantageously be applied.

Clearly such an influence is in itself no more good or evil than is electricity or any other force of nature, but like electricity it may be helpful or hurtful according to the use that is made of it; and just as certain experiments would be more likely to be successful if undertaken when the air was heavily charged with electricity, while certain others under such conditions would most probably fail, so an effort involving the use of the forces of our mental or emotional nature would more or less readily achieve its object according to the influences which predominate when it is made.

These factors, therefore, may be put aside as *une quantité négligeable* by the man of determination; but since the majority of the human race still allow themselves to be the helpless sport of the forces of desire, and have not yet developed anything worth calling a will of their own, their feebleness permits these influences to assume an importance to which they have intrinsically no claim.

For example, they may occasionally bring about a condition of affairs in which all forms of nervous excitement are considerably intensified, and there is consequently a general sense of irritability abroad. Under such circumstances disputes would arise far more readily than usual, even on the most trifling pretexts, and the large number of people who are always on the verge of losing their temper would relinquish all control over themselves on even less than the ordinary provocation.

It may even sometimes happen that such influences, playing on the smouldering discontent of ignorant jealousy, may fan it into an outbreak of popular frenzy from which widespread disaster may ensue. So were the Parisians moved in 1870 to rush about the streets crying "A Berlin!" So has arisen many a time the fiendish yell of "Deen! deen!" which so easily arouses the mad fanaticism of a murderous Mohammedan crowd.

The ancient astrology of the early Chaldeans seems to have devoted itself chiefly to the calculation of the position and action of the spheres of influence, so that its principal function was rather to form a rule of life than to predict the future; or at least such predictions as it gave would be rather of tendencies than of special

events. Modern astrology appears to devote itself largely to the latter line of prophecy, but in so far as it is a true science, it must also be based upon the calculation of the position of these spheres. I have not made sufficient study of astrology to feel myself competent to write upon the subject, but I take it that no reasonable astrologer would deny the power of a man's will to modify the destiny marked out for him by his karma. Karma may throw a man into certain surroundings or bring him under certain influences, but it can never force him to commit a crime, though it may so place him that it requires great determination on his part to avoid that crime. Therefore it seems to me that all astrology could do would be to warn the man of the circumstances under which, at such and such a time, he would find himself, and that any definite prophecy of his action under those circumstances could only be based upon probabilities.

We have also to bear in mind that in astrology we are not, so far as I can see, dealing with assured laws of nature, whose action we can clearly comprehend, but are rather applying empirically certain traditional estimates of the quality of these various spheres of influence; so that we have here another possibility of inaccuracy introduced into any calculations that may be made.

So far as we can judge, there is no reason whatever in nature why a conjunction of planets in one particular sign of the zodiac should threaten us with unpleasant results, though the various exponents of astrological mysteries seem to agree in the statement that tradition has always regarded such an event as of evil omen. Whether that tradition has any foundation, we shall know better in two months' time; and since no effort of ours can alter the disposition of the stars, the best thing we can do in the meantime is to forget all about the matter. Far too often in history the dejected dwelling of the superstitious, and therefore cowardly populace on gloomy prognostications has itself brought about their fulfilment. If plague, pestilence and famine, battle, murder and sudden death are to come upon this unfortunate world, they must come, and it is assuredly unnecessary to add to their horror all the terrors of exaggerated anticipation; and since it is not suggested that we can do anything to avert the expected calamity, it seems hardly in good taste to insist upon it, and as it were gloat over it, in order that if it arrives the prophet may have such satisfaction as may be derived from remarking "I told you so," to say nothing of the danger which the prophet runs of having

essence of the plane ; and though it can hardly be described as intelligent, it has a very strong instinct of self-preservation which leads it to resist such extinction with all the force at its command.

In the case of all ordinary mortals it attains a certain measure of success in its efforts, for much of the mental faculty has during life been governed by the lower desires and prostituted to their service, or, in other words, the lower manas has been so seriously entangled by kâma that it is impossible for it to be entirely freed. The result of the struggle is therefore that some proportion of the mânasic matter is retained in the astral body after the Ego has completely broken away from it, and thus comes into existence what we call "the shade"—an entity which may have quite a considerable astral life before, by the final loss of its fragment of manas, it degenerates into the completely unconscious "shell." (See Manual V.)

When a man has during life completely conquered his lower desires and succeeded in absolutely freeing the lower manas from the kâma, there is practically no struggle, and the Ego reclaims in full both principal and interest ; but, unfortunately, there is also an opposite extreme where he is able to reclaim neither. It is possible (though happily not easy) for a man so to intensify the lower part of his nature that the *whole* of the manas put down into incarnation is entangled by kâma and torn away from the real Ego. Of course no ordinary wickedness could compass this result ; it can be achieved only by a man who deliberately kills out all the higher impulses of his nature, and makes himself a monster of selfishness.

Now that the central point of our immersion in matter is past, the whole force of evolution is pressing upwards towards unity, and the man who is willing to make all his life an intelligent co-operation with nature gains as part of his reward an ever-increasing perception of the reality of this unity. But, on the other hand, it is obvious that men may set themselves in opposition to nature, and instead of working unselfishly for the good of all, may debase every faculty they possess to purely selfish ends ; and of them also, as of the others, the old saying is true : "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They spend their lives in striving for separateness, and for a time they attain it ; and no more awful fate than such attainment can ever befall any human being.

This extraordinary development of selfishness is the character-

istic of the black magicians, and it is practically among their ranks only that men can be found who are in danger either of avîchi or the eighth sphere. Many and loathsome are their varieties, but they may all be classed in one or other of two great divisions. They both use such occult arts as they possess for purely selfish purposes, but these purposes differ. In the commoner and less formidable type, the object pursued is the gratification of sensual desire, and naturally the result of a life devoted to nothing but that is to centre the man's energy entirely in the desire-body; so that if the man who works on these lines has succeeded in killing out from himself every unselfish or affectionate feeling, every spark of higher impulse, until nothing is left but a remorseless ruthless monster of lust, he finds himself after death neither able nor desirous to rise above the very lowest subdivision of the astral plane. The whole of such manas as he has is absolutely in the grip of kâma, and when the struggle takes place the Ego can recover none of it, and finds himself very seriously weakened in consequence.

But what is left upon the astral plane in this case is no feeble and colourless shade; it is the entire personality of the man, intelligent, active and strong for evil—a demon of the most terrible type—a monster for which there is no permanent place in the scheme of evolution to which we belong. The natural tendency of such a creature is therefore to drift *out* of this evolution, and to be drawn by the irresistible force of law into that astral cesspool which in earlier theosophical writing was called the eighth sphere, because what passed into it stood outside the ring of seven worlds, and could not return into their evolution. There, surrounded by loathsome relics of all the concentrated vileness of the ages that are past, burning ever with desire, yet without possibility of satisfaction, this monstrosity slowly decays, its mânasic matter being thus at last set free—never, indeed, to rejoin the Ego from which it has torn itself, but to be dissipated among the other matter of the plane, to enter gradually into fresh combinations, and so to be put to better uses.

The creature may indeed postpone its terrible fate, but only by methods even more detestable—by the awful living death of the vampire, or by seizing upon and obsessing the body of some very degraded human being. But fortunately for the world such expedients are only temporary.

Meanwhile the Ego—the real man through whose weakness this monster has been formed—is so enfeebled that he is thrown far

a matter of fact the apparent analogy does not hold good. The elemental essence which informs the key would be dissipated by the alteration in its condition—not that the essence itself can be affected by the action of heat, but that when its temporary body is destroyed (as a solid) it pours back into the great reservoir of such essence, much as the higher principles of a man, though entirely unaffected by heat or cold, are yet forced out of a physical body when it is destroyed by fire. Consequently, when what had been the key cooled down into solid condition again, the elemental essence (of the “earth” or solid class) which poured into it would not be in any way the same as that which it contained before, and there would be no reason why the same shape should be retained. But a man who disintegrated a key for the purpose of removing it by astral currents from one place to another would be very careful to hold the same elemental essence in exactly the same shape until the transfer was completed, and then, when his will-force was removed, it would act as a mould into which the solidifying particles would flow, or rather round which they would be re-aggregated. Thus, unless the operator’s power of concentration failed, the shape would be accurately preserved.

## DIVISION LXXVI

### THE EIGHTH SPHERE

#### QUESTION 307.

*Is the eighth sphere identical with Avichi, and how far do they correspond with the ordinary western conceptions of hell?*  
(1897.)

C. W. L.—They are by no means identical, since one is a state and the other a place, but though they are connected with different planes they may be said to be in a certain way complementary the one to the other. It is difficult to see why these horrors should exercise such a fascination over the minds of students, but since questions upon them are continually coming in, it is as well that an endeavour should be made to lessen the confusion which appears to exist in connection with this gruesome subject.

All who have even an elementary acquaintance with theosophical literature are aware that when after death the man is withdrawing to himself, a certain amount of struggle takes place at the conclusion of his astral existence. The Ego endeavours to draw back into himself all that he put down into incarnation at the beginning of the life which has just closed—to recover, as it were, the principal which he has invested *plus* the interest of the experience which has been gained and the qualities which have been developed during that life; as we sometimes put it more technically, to merge the lower manas entirely in the higher.

But when he attempts to do this he is met with very determined opposition from his own lower nature—from the karmic elemental which he himself has created and fed. With the final disintegration of his astral body, that creature (for it may certainly be regarded as a quite definite though temporary creature) ceases to exist as a separate entity, and becomes merged in the elemental

## DIVISION LXXVII

### PREMATURE DEATH

#### QUESTION 308.

*Why do we die prematurely? If the Ego, being spiritual, is stronger than matter, why does it not drive out disease and overcome accidents? As it is, disease seems to drive out the Ego, which is an ignominious position. (1903.)*

S. C.—Cases of “premature” death appear to arise from two very different causes:—

(1) The Ego has made all the progress it is possible to make in one particular body, and therefore voluntarily gives it up in order to take a body more suited to his needs. This may happen in middle age or even in early life, and to a casual observer it will then appear that there is a mistake somewhere, though this is not really so. The disease of the body may be the Ego’s instrument, not his foe; it may be a means by which he rids himself of a form which has become an impediment to evolution.

(2) The other case is where the Ego has not yet learned to use disease as an instrument. The object of our lives on earth is to learn to gain control of evil, of matter and of disease; and this power only comes by slow degrees after many fierce conflicts. The Ego by entering upon a series of earth-lives deliberately places himself in an “ignominious” position, in order that he may ultimately attain to a position of power. Repeated failure is the necessary preliminary to success.

I. H.—Do we die prematurely? That is to say, is not an apparently premature death the dropping of an instrument which has ceased to serve the needs of the Ego? Is spirit stronger than matter? Is not the office of matter to show the possibilities of spirit? Are not both spirit and matter the twins that show the



Levitation is by no means an uncommon phenomenon, and the power which levitates could also carry through the air.

But it seems probable that the questioner means more than this, and wishes to ask whether a person can be so transported invisibly. This again is perfectly possible for those who know how to do it, and it can be managed in more ways than one. For example, occult science is acquainted with a method of bending the rays of light which is as yet undiscovered by the physicists of the West; and by means of that power alone any object may at once be rendered invisible, since the rays can be bent round it so that it will apparently cause no obstruction to them. If the number of spectators is small, a still simpler method would be to throw what is technically called a *mâyā* over them—a collective hallucination—so that they would for the time be in the condition of mesmerised subjects, and would see only what the operator wished them to see. By either of these methods a person might be temporarily rendered invisible, and could then be removed in any way that seemed most convenient.

The possibility of this has never, so far as I am aware, been denied in theosophical literature; what *has* been said is that no method of completely disintegrating a living person and then restoring him to his previous condition is as yet known to any of our students. Therefore if the physical body of a man suddenly appears in a room to which it would have been impossible for it to obtain access in any ordinary way, supposing the phenomenon to be an absolutely genuine one, it is most probably not the human body that has been disintegrated, but a part of the wall or the ceiling to permit its passage.

#### QUESTION 306.

*Why should a body which has been reduced by will-power to an etheric condition, return when the force is removed, to its original shape, and not simply to an irregular mass of the material of which it is composed? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—The questioner further elucidates his meaning by putting forward as an example the fact that if a key be melted and raised to a vaporous state by heat, when the heat is withdrawn it will certainly return to the solid state, but it will be no longer a key, but merely a lump of metal. The point is well taken, though as

essence of the plane ; and though it can hardly be described as intelligent, it has a very strong instinct of self-preservation which leads it to resist such extinction with all the force at its command.

In the case of all ordinary mortals it attains a certain measure of success in its efforts, for much of the mental faculty has during life been governed by the lower desires and prostituted to their service, or, in other words, the lower manas has been so seriously entangled by kâma that it is impossible for it to be entirely freed. The result of the struggle is therefore that some proportion of the mânasic matter is retained in the astral body after the Ego has completely broken away from it, and thus comes into existence what we call "the shade"—an entity which may have quite a considerable astral life before, by the final loss of its fragment of manas, it degenerates into the completely unconscious "shell." (See Manual V.)

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In Timbs' *Popular Errors Explained and Illustrated* (p. 131) we read that "Columella, Cato, Vitruvius and Pliny all had their notion of the advantages of cutting timber at certain ages of the moon; a piece of mummery which is still preserved in the royal *ordonnances* of France to the conservators of the forest, who are directed to fell oaks only in the wane of the moon, and when the wind is at north."

Of course the modern writer must speak of the precaution as a "piece of mummery," never reflecting that, perhaps, the great men whose names he mentions were as well able as himself to judge of facts which came under their own notice. There is a calm assumption in the manner of the nineteenth-century scribbler which would really be amusing if it were not so sad. In both these cases the theory of the ancients evidently is that at the time of the full moon the sap in trees and plants flows more freely, and that there is less sap (and the tree or plant is consequently drier) when the moon is waning.

To come to more modern times, in quaint old Thomas Tusser's *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie*, published in London in 1580, we find this advice given, "Sowe peason and beanes in the wane of the moone (who soweth them sooner, he soweth too soone), that they with the planet may rest and arise and flourish, with bearing most plentiful wise." The last statement is somewhat obscure, but again the idea seems to be that if the seed were sown just before the full moon it would be drawn up too rapidly and prematurely developed; therefore we are advised to sow in the wane and let the seed rest awhile.

In Brinton's *Myths of the New World* (p. 132) we find it stated that "a description of the New Netherlands, written about 1650, remarks that the savages of that land ascribe to the moon great influence over crops. This venerable superstition, common to all races, still lingers among our own farmers, many of whom continue to observe the signs of the moon in sowing grain, setting out trees, cutting timber, and other rural avocations."

The author is speaking of America, but his remark holds good of England also, for Harley tells us, in *Moon Lore* (p. 179), that in

back in his evolution, and has to begin his next life at a much lower level. In some cases he might find himself once more in the savage life which he left behind many centuries ago; in others it has been stated that he might even be incapacitated from taking further part in this scheme of evolution, and might therefore have to wait in a kind of condition of suspended animation for the commencement of another.

But there is another type of the black magician, in outward appearance more respectable, yet really even more dangerous because more powerful. This is the man who, instead of giving himself up altogether to sensuality of one kind or another, sets before himself the goal of a more refined but not less unscrupulous selfishness. His object is the acquisition of an occult power, higher and wider indeed, but to be used always for his own gratification and advancement, to further his own ambition or satisfy his own revenge. In order to gain this he adopts the most rigid asceticism as regards mere fleshy desires, and starves out the grosser particles of his astral body as perseveringly as does the pupil of the Great White Brotherhood.

But though it is only with the higher kâmic matter that he allows his lower manas to become entangled, the centre of his energy is none the less entirely in the personality, and when after death the time of the separation comes, the Ego is able to recover no whit of his investment. For him, therefore, the result is much the same as in the former case; but the fate of the lost personality is very different. The comparatively tenuous kâmic integument is not strong enough to hold it for any length of time upon the astral plane, and yet it has entirely lost touch with the devachanic plane which should have been its habitat. An entity with no Ego behind it has no power to experience the ordinary devachan; and, besides, the whole effort of the man's life has been to kill out such thoughts as find their fruition in the devachanic state.

His one endeavour has been to oppose natural evolution, to separate himself from the great whole, and to war against it; and as far as the personality goes he has succeeded. It is cut off from the light and life of the solar system; all that is left to it is the sense of absolute isolation—of being alone in the universe. That is what for it takes the place of devachan; and it is said that in all the world there is no experience so appalling. This is the state of avichi—"the waveless"; for only by entering that state can a man be shut off from the great wave of the life of the Logos in

## QUESTION 310.

*What lines of investigation were pursued by the Trinidad committee mentioned above, and to what conclusions did they come? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—I am not in possession of the full accounts of the committee's proceedings, but only of extracts, so I cannot fully answer this question; but I know that the chairman put before it four queries, on the replies to which he considered that the entire question depended. These were :—

1. What is the moon's influence on the temperature ?
2. What is the action of the moon's light on vegetation ?
3. Has the moon any influence on the diurnal variation of electricity ?
4. What influence has the moon on gravitation in the process of vegetation ?

A fifth question, perhaps more important than all the others, would be, "What influence has the moon upon the astral currents?" But this the learned chairman of the committee did *not* ask, though perhaps science may find itself forced to move in that direction presently. Treating these questions from the data hitherto accumulated, it seems that to the first one (as to the moon's influence on temperature) a fairly accurate scientific answer—on the physical plane—can be given. The experiments of Melloni and Professor Forbes, and the later and much more elaborate ones of Piazzi Smythe, Lord Rosse, and M. Marie Davy, may be considered to have all but settled the question of the amount of purely physical heat that we receive from our satellite. Although it is computed that the actual temperature of that part of the surface of the moon which is opposite to us exceeds 500° Fahrenheit when the orb is full, yet its rays under the most favourable circumstances cannot raise the temperature on the surface of the earth by more than one five-thousandth part of a degree. So that any influence that the moon may exercise over vegetation can hardly be attributed to the amount of physical heat derived from it.

To the second question, as to the action of the moon's light, a satisfactory answer is not so readily obtained. Scientific men vary as to the exact proportion in strength of the light of the full moon to that of the sun; Dr. Wolastan puts it at one in eighty

thousand and Zöllner at one in six hundred and ten thousand ; but at any rate all agree in considering the former to be but an infinitesimal fraction of the latter, so it is evidently not the *amount* of light received from the moon that causes the difference said to be observable in its action at its various phases.

It is an axiom of physiological botany that the entire life of the plant depends on the action of light on the cells that contain chlorophyll, this being the essential condition under which new organic compounds are formed out of the elements of carbon dioxide and water, but I am not aware that the exact amount of light necessary to induce this action has ever been ascertained.

The coloration, however, is said to begin when the light is barely sufficient to read by, and as in the tropics at least it is quite possible to read ordinary type by the light of the full moon, there is evidently a possibility of some action here. But even then it is extremely difficult to estimate it, as most plants have the property of storing up chlorophyll energy, and therefore continue to grow and produce green leaves for more than twenty-four hours after being put into absolute darkness.

This, of course, shows that moonlight is not necessary for the life of plants, but when Sir William Robinson asserts that it can be of no benefit to them and produces no effect on them, I think he is going further than is strictly warranted by logic. Numerous well-attested facts tend to show that moonlight sometimes produces very decided effects upon men and animals who are exposed to it, and why may it not therefore affect plants also? But because scientific men cannot explain its exact mode of action, they are too often disposed to ignore or even deny the facts.

To the question whether the moon has any influence on the diurnal variation of electricity, science can only reply that no connection has yet been traced between the two ; but the subject of vital electricity is so imperfectly understood as yet that it is unsafe to dogmatise. The life-processes going on in a vegetable—the movements of fluids of different chemical properties in adjoining cells, the diffusion of salt from cell to cell, their decomposition, the evolution of oxygen from cells containing chlorophyll, the formation of carbon dioxide in growing organs, and the process of transformation—must all produce electric currents, but to get at these and estimate their variations is at present practically impossible ; so no action can be proved here.

The fourth question, "What influence has the moon on gravitation in the process of vegetation?" might better have been preceded by another enquiry, "Has gravitation any influence upon the process of vegetation?"

The reader will recollect the experiment of Schultz and Molat, who by an ingenious arrangement of mirrors reflected solar rays directly from *below* on to damp moss on which seeds were sown in a room from which all other light was carefully excluded. The result seemed to show that the action of plants is governed entirely by light, and not at all by gravitation, for the roots grew upwards into the dark, while the stems grew downwards towards the light. To those who have studied occult physics, and therefore know how utterly the laws of what is generally called gravitation have been misunderstood, this result will not appear surprising.

But it seems probable that in reality the influence of the moon upon both vegetable and animal life depends almost entirely upon its effect upon the various forms of ether, and upon the reaction on to the physical plane of the various astral influences which it sets in motion; and these have not yet been sufficiently studied in the West to enable us to give an answer on the subject with anything like scientific accuracy.

## DIVISION LXXIX

### SOUND

#### QUESTION 311.

*Is there any evidence of the alleged mysterious potency of sound; any proof that the belief in the efficacy of mantrams is other than a superstition? (1894.)*

J. C. S.—Leaving aside the Keely experiments as being still *sub judice*, and the scientific experiment of shivering a glass by the production of a musical note, the vibrations of which bear a certain relation to the normal vibrations of the glass, as being sufficiently explained on “scientific” principles, it is certain that sound, as such, has a distinct and marked physiological effect on some natures.

Most people who have a turn for introspective analysis can recognise that the tramp of soldiers, accompanied by martial music, sets up a disturbance in the epigastric region sometimes almost amounting to pain, and a surging in the head and a humming in the ears. Association of ideas does not explain this, for the warlike ideas without the sound, however vividly they may be realised, do not produce the effect.

An experience of my own, but not by any means peculiar to myself, is to the point. The reading *aloud* of certain passages of prose or verse will produce an irritation of the lachrymal glands—my eyes fill with tears, a spasm of the throat occurs that renders the voice unmanageable, and the characteristic disturbance in the epigastric or solar region that I have already alluded to is felt. It is not pathetic passages that produce the effect, nor the emotions, for I can stand beside a death-bed without experiencing any of these *sensations*, but only calm pity and a desire to alleviate pain. It is simply the tone and rhythm of the spoken words;



the better from being fustie, and continue the longer; whereas come which is inned and laied up at the full of the moone, by reason of the softnesse and overmuch moisture, of all other doth most crack and burst. It is commonly said also that if a leaven be laied in the ful-moone, the paste will rise and take leaven better."

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seen, heard, felt, and much more, by an all-round sentiency, that receives at one and the same time, from one and the same group of vibrations, that complete impression, which, repeating itself on the lower planes—where the senses are separate—is differentiated by the action of these separate senses into a sound, a colour, a form, and so on. Our senses are the channels by which, on these lower planes, the one sense perceives, and it is shut out down here from all the vibrations of this impression which cannot enter through one or other of these gateways ; it receives through one gateway as sound certain results of these vibrations acting on the matter of this plane called air, while it receives as colour certain other results of the same vibrations acting on ether. Hence the imperfection of all impressions as received down here ; that which is received is only such fragments of the great whole as the senses are capable of transmitting—the whole vibrating down here, but our senses being adapted to receive only a very narrow range of the vibrations set up by it on our plane.

B. K.—In connection with the preceding answer, it may be of some interest to recall the investigations and experiments of Sir Francis Galton upon “Coloured Hearing,” “Coloured Form,” etc.

By careful and very accurate enquiries carried on over a number of years, Sir Francis has thoroughly established the fact that quite a considerable percentage of people invariably see certain definite colours whenever they hear certain sounds—especially musical notes. Thus several people always see a flash of red accompanying the sound of any *brass* instrument, the quality and shade of red varying according to the *note* heard. Others again are found to see a regular, and in some cases very extensive, gamut of colours accompanying the notes of the musical scale, and so on.

In another class of cases, colour is invariably associated with certain numbers, the figures when visualised always appearing to the mind's eye in colour, each figure having its own invariable colour. The colours in which particular numbers appear vary with different persons ; but the same person always sees the same number in the same colour.

Yet again, Sir Francis found form similarly associated with number in a very curious way, details of which will be found in his work, but which cannot readily be explained here without numerous diagrams.

Writing as I do from memory, I am uncertain whether these investigations have been extended to odour as associated with the other forms of sense perception. But anyone who has experienced the extreme and intense vividness with which an odour will call up a scene in memory, a scene often replete with vivid colour and stirring sound, can hardly fail to recognise that the sense of smell is quite as intimately associated with the other senses as sight is with sound.

The importance of these and similar investigations to students of Theosophy lies in the fact that they afford strong evidence in corroboration of the occult teaching as to the sense-faculties, and thus give to those who have no waking personal experience of non-physical states of consciousness a safe foundation for the faith that is in them; and a somewhat closer acquaintance with the best scientific work of the time would not unfrequently be of great use both to ourselves and those whom it is our duty and our privilege to help.

C. W. L.—There seems to be some confusion of thought here. That which appeals to our physical ear as sound is simply a vibration of the particles of the atmosphere, therefore it certainly does not pervade all space, and it could hardly be rationally described as a creative agency. What has often, and quite correctly, been so described in theosophic teaching is the VĀCH, that Divine WORD “through Whom all things were made and without Whom was not anything made that was made”; but though no doubt this wondrous Power acts also by means of the vibrations It sets up, and has therefore so far a certain correspondence with sound, it would be a great mistake to be led by this into confusing the two. The symbolical sense in which alone they can be treated as one is well expressed by the late Mr. T. Subba Row: “Our old writers said that Vāch is of four kinds. (See the *Rig Veda* and the Upanishads.) Vaikharī Vāch is what we utter. Every kind of Vaikharī Vāch exists in its Madhyamā, further in its Pashyantī, and ultimately in its Parā form. The reason why this Pranava is called Vāch is this, that the four principles of the great cosmos *correspond* to these four forms of Vāch. Now the whole manifested solar system exists in its Sūkshma form in the light or energy of the LOGOS, because its energy is caught up and transferred to cosmic matter. The whole cosmos in its objective form is Vaikharī Vāch, the Light of the LOGOS is the Madhyamā form, and the

thousand and Zöllner at one in six hundred and ten thousand; but at any rate all agree in considering the former to be but an infinitesimal fraction of the latter, so it is evidently not the *amount* of light received from the moon that causes the difference said to be observable in its action at its various phases.

It is an axiom of physiological botany that the entire life of the plant depends on the action of light on the cells that contain chlorophyll, this being the essential condition under which new organic compounds are formed out of the elements of carbon dioxide and water, but I am not aware that the exact amount of light necessary to induce this action has ever been ascertained.

The coloration, however, is said to begin when the light is barely sufficient to read by, and as in the tropics at least it is quite possible to read ordinary type by the light of the full moon, there is evidently a possibility of some action here. But even then it is extremely difficult to estimate it, as most plants have the property of storing up chlorophyll energy, and therefore continue to grow and produce green leaves for more than twenty-four hours after being put into absolute darkness.

This, of course, shows that moonlight is not necessary for the life of plants, but when Sir William Robinson asserts that it can be of no benefit to them and produces no effect on them, I think he is going further than is strictly warranted by logic. Numerous well-attested facts tend to show that moonlight sometimes produces very decided effects upon men and animals who are exposed to it, and why may it not therefore affect plants also? But because scientific men cannot explain its exact mode of action, they are too often disposed to ignore or even deny the facts.

To the question whether the moon has any influence on the diurnal variation of electricity, science can only reply that no connection has yet been traced between the two; but the subject of vital electricity is so imperfectly understood as yet that it is unsafe to dogmatise. The life-processes going on in a vegetable—the movements of fluids of different chemical properties in adjoining cells, the diffusion of salt from cell to cell, their decomposition, the evolution of oxygen from cells containing chlorophyll, the formation of carbon dioxide in growing organs, and the process of transformation—must all produce electric currents, but to get at these and estimate their variations is at present practically impossible; so no action can be proved here.

## DIVISION LXXX

### TWIN SOULS

#### QUESTION 313.

*I have heard that spiritualists have what they term twin souls, which they believe appear on earth as two different persons, and finally, after passing through various other stages on other planes, become one complete being. Others speak of something similar under the name of companion souls, or counterparts. There must be some fundamental truth underlying all these ideas; what is this truth? (1901.)*

G. R. S. M.—Long, long before “spiritualists” were heard of, or Lake Harris’ “sympneumata” theory was popularised by the genius of Laurence Oliphant, the mystic Greeks of the Orphic tradition had some theory that the original male-female soul, as a punishment for its daring, had been divided by God, and now each part went about in the cycle of necessity seeking for its fellow. This theory, when worked out on the lines of the Gnostic Sophia-mythus and applied to spiritual things, explains in admirable fashion the passion of the individual soul, its salvation, and much else, but when taken in its grossest form and applied to the mystery of sex, it simply exalts that impermanency from the rank of the Lesser to that of the Greater Mysteries, and so degrades the “Divine Marriage” to a psychic debauch of the most insidious nature.

A. W.—The beautiful allegory of the twin souls is found under many forms in much of the best literature of the world. Most of us are familiar with its presentation in the writings of Plato and in the *Upanishads*.

We are all more or less conscious of the duality of the contending interests of the Higher and the Lower Self, of the

## DIVISION LXXIX

### SOUND

#### QUESTION 311.

*Is there any evidence of the alleged mysterious potency of sound ; any proof that the belief in the efficacy of mantrams is other than a superstition ? (1894.)*

J. C. S.—Leaving aside the Keely experiments as being still *sub judice*, and the scientific experiment of shivering a glass by the production of a musical note, the vibrations of which bear a certain relation to the normal vibrations of the glass, as being sufficiently explained on “scientific” principles, it is certain that sound, as such, has a distinct and marked physiological effect on some natures.

Most people who have a turn for introspective analysis can recognise that the tramp of soldiers, accompanied by martial music, sets up a disturbance in the epigastric region sometimes almost amounting to pain, and a surging in the head and a humming in the ears. Association of ideas does not explain this, for the warlike ideas without the sound, however vividly they may be realised, do not produce the effect.

An experience of my own, but not by any means peculiar to myself, is to the point. The reading *aloud* of certain passages of prose or verse will produce an irritation of the lachrymal glands—my eyes fill with tears, a spasm of the throat occurs that renders the voice unmanageable, and the characteristic disturbance in the epigastric or solar region that I have already alluded to is felt. It is not pathetic passages that produce the effect, nor the emotions, for I can stand beside a death-bed without experiencing any of these *sensations*, but only calm pity and a desire to alleviate pain. It is simply the tone and rhythm of the spoken words ;

night-man of Leibnitz, the self and the not-self that makes for righteousness, of Matthew Arnold. The Subject or sub-conscious mind is the deeper of the two selves, the home of the will and the perfect memory; but it is incapable of inductive reasoning, it can only make itself felt as an imperious autocrat, it cannot argue, and can never be fully expressed or made evident on the physical plane.

Therefore it is easy to see how in the case of a medium this other-self would appear as a distinct personality, for a medium dramatises unconsciously, and being generally an uneducated member of humanity, he would be utterly ignorant of his psychical anatomy, if one may so put it. He would be unversed in self-analysis, in philosophical terms, and he would *picture* this department of his own mind to himself as his guardian spirit or his soul-love, or if he were so inclined would give it the opposite sex, and it would become, as it often is, the spirit-bride, and so forth.

But there is no authority worthy the name for the idea that the Ego has sex, and therefore each soul is looking about through all infinity for its complementary soul.

The true complement is to be found in our own "buried Self," with its undying will and powers, and its god-like possibilities.

This it is which is, in a most literal sense, our better-half,  
And

We shall one day gain, life past,  
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole;  
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last  
Our true affinities of soul.

## DIVISION LXXXI

### OVER-PRODUCTION IN NATURE

#### QUESTION 314.

*What is the karmic cause of the vast number of premature deaths that occur in infancy and childhood? (1899.)*

A. P. S.—I do not see the necessity for supposing any karmic cause to be in operation at all, except, of course, in so far as there must be a cause behind any occurrence, so that in a mathematical sense there is karma at work if a cat sneezes, just as, mathematically, you move the earth if you throw a stone. Ignoring these refinements, however, there is practically no karma at work as regards the entities concerned when children die in infancy. There is karma at work as far as the parents are concerned, no doubt, but from the point of view of the incarnating entity the premature death is a very insignificant circumstance. If we treat it as an accident of Nature, it is at least one that admits of a very easy readjustment.

In our first enthusiasm for the idea that justly directed cause and effect are invariably linked throughout Nature, we often fail to make adequate allowance for the accidents of Nature, a phrase which might (or might not) be inapplicable if Nature is regarded from the Nirvânic standpoint, but is certainly highly applicable within the limits of ordinary thinking. Human free-will, even under the limitations that circumscribe it, is continually giving rise to results that are practically outside the karmic programme of the persons concerned. As continually, those programmes are readjusted by the agencies of the great law. But this is only saying in other words that at any given moment there are multitudes of irregularities in most people's karmic account with Nature, products of accident which have not yet been readjusted.



It may be that such readjustment will only be possible in another life. What we may be sure of is that in the long run perfect justice will be asserted. And it should be remembered that what are called accidents in ordinary life—being run over or coming in for some unexpected slice of good luck—are probably not accidents of Nature at all. They are almost assuredly karmic, but the suffering that may ensue, for example, from the misconduct of some one loved, might be outside the original karmic programme of the sufferer, and thus an accident that would need ultimate readjustment.

A. A. W.—I have very lately spoken of this question from the side of the “waiting Egos,” as the phrase goes. There is, however, another side—that of the parents. It is easy, of course, to lay down, as a “moralist” would, that in all cases they must have done something to incur this penalty from karma—and leave it there; but for my part I don’t feel quite easy in doing this. Not only the death, but also the life of a child may be a very effective karmic penalty; and without the insight of a Buddha no one can prove that it is not so. I fancy many of these premature deaths are simply “failures of Nature”—cases in which outside circumstances have so far interfered as to make the body unsuitable for its purpose. Then, of course, others are simply not wanted as vehicles for a soul at all; and, failing to be ensouled, die out. I take it that the Lords of Birth are not to be considered as interfering with human actions *beyond* the securing of the due vehicles actually needed for the souls under their charge. But when one considers the vast “slaughter of the innocents” due to national karma and not to individual karma at all—for example, the actually countable thousands of infants yearly starved to death in London or Manchester by the conditions under which their mothers have to get their living—children as distinctly slain by the nation as if the police had been ordered to pick them up and put them into the “lethal chamber” like the dogs and cats—why, I am inclined to ask another and more serious question than the above: “What is the karmic *penalty* of the vast number of premature deaths that occur in infancy and childhood?”

#### QUESTION 315.

*Does Theosophy offer any explanation of the enormous prodigality of Nature in providing for the perpetuation of species? Physics shows that for every germ that matures, myriads upon myriads*

LOGOS itself the Pashyanti form, and Parabrahman the Parâ aspect of that Vâch. It is by the light of this explanation that we must try to understand certain statements made by various philosophers to the effect that the manifested cosmos is the VERBUM manifested as cosmos."

in which their elements can be raised to their higher life, and made fit to rise in the scale. "That which thou sowest cannot be quickened except it die" is the universal rule; and the physical life-system is not without its counterpart in the moral and political world. That matter should come to be organised in so high a type as "spermatozoa and ova" is in itself, without *anything* following from it, a very considerable progress. It is true that if nothing follows, the matter falls back to the lower type, but we were not long ago assured that even then the advance is only rendered latent, as it were; it is much easier to renew it than it was at first to cause it.

Thus we see that the "prodigality of Nature" has its own ends to serve. In referring to human reincarnation we turn to quite another set of considerations. We are not now dealing with a practically unlimited Nature, but with a certain fixed and determined number of entities, who, living habitually on another plane of existence, find it needful at long intervals and for very short periods to "manifest" themselves in the physical world. It is evidently convenient that the normal course of nature should furnish them with the means of so doing, when required; but there can be no question of "lost opportunities," when these are *not* required. Even at our present stage, men and women are not earth-dwellers, continually pressing to get back, if by what we call "death" temporarily removed; and complaining of "lost opportunities" each time what might have been a body for one of them fails to come to perfection. When, in the words of the question, possible human forms fail to come into being, the reason is simply that at that moment there is no Ego requiring such a body, and hence the preparation for one is utilised by Nature in her ordinary way, as so much raw material for other new forms. This may happen, as we are taught, not only to single forms but to whole races of mankind. As they fall behind the needs of the ever-advancing humanity, the Egos decline to utilise bodies so inefficient for their purpose; and the prodigality of Nature at least prevents their being forced into unsuitable bodies, by abundantly providing for their choice, or rather for that of the Lords of Karma who make it for them. Thus the relics of worn-out races which we call "savages" are dying out, and not savages only. Many of the highest names and what are mistakenly called the highest families have died out in our own country, as in others during the past century. To say that this is simply because t

members have deliberately set themselves to make their offspring such as no human Ego, even the very lowest, could possibly live in, may sound somewhat startling, but is true.

B. K.—This question, so far as the essential idea is concerned, seems to me to be a very plain and simple one, since it involves one of those fundamental truths in its most obvious and striking form which ought to be thoroughly familiar to every student of Theosophy.

In the working out of details no doubt difficulties will be met with; but in its broad outline the conception in question is so simple, and on a little reflection so obvious, that there ought to be no difficulty in grasping it.

This conception is the oft-repeated and frequently-elaborated distinction between Life and Form, a distinction which forms one of the key-notes of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, as indeed of all the great scriptures of the world. Forms are ever changing, being built up, destroyed, and re-shaped incessantly. Life alone is eternal, continuous, unbroken.

In evolution, it is true, we seem to deal mainly with the evolution of Form, or rather, to speak accurately, with the ladder or succession of forms in which the evolving life expresses itself, and gains fuller unfoldment and a more perfect expression and realisation of the innumerable possibilities which are latent therein. But in truth and accuracy, it is the Life which evolves—not the Form. For the forms are not, strictly speaking, continuous, but successive.

In other words a wolf, say, does not evolve into a dog; that is, no single wolf form passes through a series of changes and becomes a dog form. But if we arrange all the various wolf-like and dog-like forms in ordered sequence, we find a series of small and gradual changes by which the typical wolf-form is linked to the typical dog-form. But it is not, in strictness, the form which has "evolved," it is the Life which finds expression through these forms which as it evolves causes these gradual changes, and gives us in the series of its expressions on the physical plane a history of what has been going on in the, to us, imperceptible Life itself.

It is the Life, therefore, which is of paramount importance, the forms being merely its expression and the instruments by means of which its unfoldment and evolution are carried on. Hence the importance of the forms is merely as a means to an end, and they exist only for the sake of the evolving Life. Therefore, too, it follows that the moment a form has ceased to assist and further

night-man of Leibnitz, the self and the not-self that makes for righteousness, of Matthew Arnold. The Subject or sub-conscious mind is the deeper of the two selves, the home of the will and the perfect memory; but it is incapable of inductive reasoning, it can only make itself felt as an imperious autocrat, it cannot argue, and can never be fully expressed or made evident on the physical plane.

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## DIVISION LXXXII

### DOGMATISM

#### QUESTION 316.

*To what extent can one give earnest support to Theosophy before becoming dogmatic? In other words: Can one who knows the verity of, say, reincarnation, teach the same as Truth? (1902.)*

A. A. W.—The question as it stands is an illustration of the well-known fact that the American and English are languages which, though closely allied, are fundamentally different, and I am by no means sure that my acquaintance with the American tongue is sufficient to enable me correctly to translate it. I should be inclined to answer that the querist's best support to Theosophy will be given before he has the misfortune to become dogmatic, and that I hope he will succeed in avoiding that fate altogether. But this cannot be his real meaning. I fancy that what he has in his mind must be the difficulty we all of us have often felt in dealing with others. We have convinced ourselves of the truth of reincarnation—so completely as to be able to say, as he says, that we *know* its verity; whilst yet we are conscious that the process has been a long one—one which no short form of words or arguments can convey to anyone else. We cannot give a brief and overwhelming *demonstration* of it, as if it were a proposition in Euclid; and yet we feel that this is what will be demanded of us if we undertake to teach it.

Well, a careful study of such books as the little treatise on reincarnation in our series of theosophical Manuals, or any of our larger works, will show the querist that there is a much closer approximation to actual *proof* of reincarnation than he is, perhaps, aware of. But he must remember that there are but comparatively

*of spermatozoa and ova fail of development and pass out of physical existence without having accomplished any known purpose. Having reference to the human kingdom—are entities awaiting reincarnation in any way concerned with what would seem to be lost opportunity for re-embodiment, in that so many possible human forms fail to come into being? (1899.)*

A. A. W.—The difficulty of this question arises from our forgetfulness of the very simple fact that the universe exists for a great many other purposes than merely to make men—such as we are here and now. We need do no more than remind the querist that it has been stated that our earth is at this present time the seat of evolutionary processes which have no relationship to man at all; for even in what is taught us of our own there is sufficient to suggest the direction in which we have to look for the explanation of what *does* at first sight seem strange. We are told that in the process of our own evolution there are first three kingdoms of matter imperceptible to our bodily senses, then mineral, vegetable, and animal, and so up to man; and from him upwards again. Now it has perhaps not been made sufficiently clear that *all* these inferior kingdoms are, to a very considerable extent, dependent upon *us* for their advance. We think a vast number of thoughts—entertain a vast number of desires—in themselves indifferent or even injurious to our own development, but all these, good and bad alike (considered from *our* point of view), are movements by which the appropriate elemental essence is stirred and its development advanced. We have been informed indeed that this is true to so large an extent as to form a real danger to us; the blind “elemental” within us becoming an actual tempter to actions which are good for it, but *not* for us. Nor does this action cease when we come down to the physical world. We are taught that the physical atom itself is in process of evolution and needs (so to speak) ensouling; that it has to learn new and higher combinations—to form new and more complicated “elements” as the chemist calls them. So with the atoms which form part of all living beings; all have to make their own advance, and this is done by their becoming successively portions of ever higher organisations. Hence there is, in reality, no action in the world which does not give to *something* its next step upwards. As each being in its turn breaks up the forms beneath it, it is no blind “destruction of life,” as we are apt to call it, but the only way



right time in the right place, and is known only in the unwearying attempt at this self-purification. You may reassert the assertions of others with all intensity, but so at best you will be nothing but a loud-screaming parrot, and the "men" who hear you will stop their ears to escape deafness. The voice of truth is a "still small voice," and has no need of formal dogmas.

## DIVISION LXXXIII

### THE MEANING OF LIMITATION

#### QUESTION 317.

*If the human monad was all-wise and all-good in starting on its long journey through matter, why was it necessary for it to experience sorrow and suffering for millions of ages that it might return to its source? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—We must remember that when what is here called the human monad came forth from the divine, it was not a monad at all—still less an all-wise and all-good one. There was no sort of individualisation in it—it was simply a mass of monadic essence. The difference between its condition when issuing forth and when returning is exactly like that between a great mass of shining nebulous matter and the solar system which is eventually formed out of it. The nebula is beautiful, no doubt, but vague and useless; the sun formed from it by slow evolution pours life and heat and light upon many worlds and their evolutions.

Or we may take another analogy. The human body is composed of countless millions of tiny particles, and some of them are constantly being thrown off from it. Suppose that it were possible for each of these particles to go through some kind of evolution by means of which it would in time become a human being, we should not say that because it had been in a certain sense human at the beginning of that evolution, it had, therefore, not gained anything when it reached the end. The essence comes forth as a mere outpouring of force, even though it be divine force; it returns in the form of thousands of millions of mighty adepts, each capable of himself developing into a Logos.

Besides, we should remember that it is not *necessary* for any entity to experience sorrow or suffering: that comes only when he breaks the divine laws, and consequently it is invariably his own doing. If he will always obey the law, his evolution will take place much more rapidly and without any suffering. Reference is made to this subject in the little book on *The Christian Creed*, so that I need not repeat what I have there said, but will refer the questioner to that work.

## QUESTION 318.

*If the First Cause is omnipotent, all-wise and all-good, why is not the Being below Him and immediately derived from Him all-wise and all-good, and so on down the whole chain, to the Ego? If there is no "evil" in the whole, there can be none in the part. (1901.)*

A. A. W.—In this case there is no need to go so high as the Causeless Cause. The Logos whose thought contains the whole of our universe from its first inception to its final consummation sees thus past, present, and future in one eternal Now; all that on our plane is Becoming as pure Existence. He is the Being usually thought of and by Christians called God, and to His vision there *is* no evil, either in the whole or its parts. There is nothing new in this statement; I could give endless quotations from Christian writers to this effect. He, and He only, knows His own plan for our evolution, and sees it even now finally worked out to its full completion, as it will be at the end of the millions of years of *our* time, which to Him "are one day." The whole life of the universe is His life, and nothing can, in the end, go any way but as He has ordained from the beginning. What *we* call the struggle between good and evil is simply the meeting of the opposing forces by which that evolution is carried out, and without which progress is impossible. For us the "evil" of modern Christian theology, which successfully *opposes* God and draws souls to external destruction, does not exist, never has existed, never will, and we must leave those who believe in it to discover its origin. We say, as a Christian saint has said, "He has all power, all wisdom, and all love—how then *can* anything be amiss?"

Evil, as *pain and sorrow*, is another matter altogether.

and that the needs and interests of the very lowest and most imperfectly unfolded drop of the divine life are by His wisdom and love cared for no less than those of the highest man or God.

If we confine our attention to one part alone, say to the human kingdom, it may seem to us that there is enormous waste of ova and spermatozoa. But that is due merely to our ignorance and narrowness of outlook. Regarded as a part of the whole, we should see that there is no waste at all, but that all this making and disintegration of forms is merely the expression of the unfolding and expansion of lower grades in the divine life.

Much more might be said on so fertile a subject as this, but for the Vāhan enough, I hope, has been done at least to indicate where the clue lies which we must steadfastly follow if we desire to unravel such mysteries of life as those with which this question is concerned.

M. E. G.—Will A. A. W. kindly explain more fully the words used above, “the blind elemental within us becoming an actual tempter to actions, which are good for it, but not for us”?

A. A. W.—I cannot do better than refer to a short paper by Mr. B. Keightley in *Lucifer* (vol. xvii. p. 53), which is what I had in my mind as I wrote. The elemental essence of the desire-body requires for its development *sensation*—the more energetic and the more frequently recurring the better. What that sensation may be is quite indifferent for its purpose; pleasant or painful, right or wrong, are ideas entirely beyond its reach. When it happens (as it does more or less with us all) that it contrives to persuade a part of the manas to leave its own development to help *it* to gain more and stronger sensations, there results (as I say) an actual tempter—the very thing symbolised in the ancient myth of the snake in Paradise. For it is the business of manas to transcend the knowledge of good and evil, as the desire-body feels them; it is as true for the mind now as when Genesis was written, that “in the day *thou* eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” And as, day by day, we suffer our mind to be more inextricably entangled in the meshes of the lower nature which must die with the body, vainly dreaming we can take the pleasure of the body and yet keep the life of the soul, there comes once more the tempter’s mocking voice. “Yea—*hath* God said . . . ?” and we, like Eve, look upon the sense-world and see that it is delightful to the eye and good to the taste, and . . . we *all* do it!

within *our own nature, all contained in us.*" *I should be glad to have an explanation of this.* (1900.)

G. R. S. M.—"The Kingdom of God is within you." This Kingdom is the ideal eternal universe, the thought of the Logos. It is a state out of time and space, and therefore *is* now and within, if we can use such terms of time to express realities that transcend it. There is Only one Reality, the old books teach—Brahman, the secondless, the Logos, the One and Only one. The "many" are but partial reflections in time and space of the One. "In him we live and move and have our being"; and not only we, but all globes, planets, systems, and universes. "That art thou," again says another great logion of the Wisdom. Therefore all universes, systems, planets and globes are within *us*, if we could but realise it, for our ultimate goal in time and space is to become one with the Father. This stupendous conception lay at the back of one mode of yoga—perhaps the most difficult—in the ancient world. It was the method of ecstasis of Plotinus and those of the great revival of the Wisdom-tradition called Neo-platonism. The "philosopher" of that school strove by every means in his power to think himself the universe; that is to say, to think into his aura the type of the ideal world, with its harmonies and powers, its beauties and virtues, its spheres and energies; and then, having prepared a temple fit for the God, having made himself like unto the great cosmos or order, out of his previous chaotic or disordered state—and thus having placed himself in "sympathetic vibration" with the "whole"—the body of the Heavenly Man—he prayed for the God, the Logos, to descend into the shrine. This was ecstasy.

#### QUESTION 321.

*We say that matter is unreal on account of its ever-changing phases and forms, but are not these very changes attributes of life, evidence of reality?* (1895.)

A. B.—Matter is "unreal" only as everything is unreal which is an expression of the One Existence rather than the One Existence considered in Itself; but every degree of matter is real on its own plane in relation to that plane. Matter and spirit are co-relatives, and the one is as real as the other, being — stations in

Space and Time of the One Existence, Its two manifested aspect during a Manvantara. The attributes of matter shown on any plane are unreal to entities functioning on a higher plane, because these attributes are the relations between matter and the recipients of impressions from it—the “contacts of matter.” Thus the “solidity” of a material object on this plane is real enough for other material objects of similiar destiny; one cannot be passed through the other in an ordinary way; but to a person in an astral body the solidity is quite an “illusion,” as he can pass readily through such an object. Matter in itself we know not; we know it only as it affects our senses on different planes of existence; and as on each plane it affects them differently, these differences cause the feeling of unreality in the lower forms experienced by the student. The word unreal is also sometimes used as indicating the transitory nature of all forms as compared with the Eternal Existence, but the impermanence of the forms does not imply the unreality of the forms of which the matters are composed, such unreality being only true, in the sense noted above, when matter is distinguished from the One Reality of which it is the temporary and incomplete expression. In any case we ought not to say that “matter is unreal on account of its ever-changing phases and forms,” for its reality or unreality is not dependent on these changes; rather, we ought to say, it seems to me, that these ever-changing forms are the evidence of the infinite variety in the Life that clothes in a material form each of its impulses in this world, and puts forth matter as the limiting principle, that separates and thus defines each impulse, giving to each its body, and bringing thus into manifestation that which else has remained sleeping in “the Eternal Parent.”

## QUESTION 322.

*With reference to the lecture of Mr. Mead on the Hermetic subject:*

*“In God alone is Good and elsewhere nowhere,” I venture to say that this statement implies two things: either that there is no evil at all, or that there is evil everywhere.*

*In God alone is Good.*

*God is everywhere.*

*Therefore Good is everywhere.*

*But where there is Good there cannot be Evil (taking now Evil and Good as opposites), hence there is no Evil at all.*

*This is the point of view of the optimist, the pessimist would say :*

*Good is everywhere.*

*Evil is the hidden side of Good.*

*Therefore Evil is everywhere.*

*Should we not rather say that God is beyond both ?*

*He is not Good ; He is not Evil ; He is not revengeful ; He is not merciful.*

*This conclusion is, I suppose, the hint which Mr. Mead gave us, saying we should go out into the cold and not shrink from it. It may look somewhat like atheism, yet it is none. (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—As I pointed out in my lecture, the sermon that “in God alone is Good and elsewhere nowhere” is one of such beauty, and makes so strong an appeal to our love of the Beautiful and Good, that most of us are content to bask in its sunshine and cease to enquire further. I, however, further pointed out that this sermon was addressed to one of the outer circles of pupils, and was not the teaching of the innermost groups, who had to face the terrible mystery of evil and not turn their backs upon it. I said that the term Good was beautiful as applied to God, but insufficient. Good is one of the terms of a pair of opposites, and That which is beyond all names not only transcends but also includes all pairs. The mystery of so-called “evil” has never been really revealed; the dark face of the Deity has never been unveiled as yet for the many. I, therefore, warned my hearers against being deceived into thinking that they had arrived at a solution of the ultimate mystery which is in the hand of God alone, and which is the supreme Reason of reasons, known only to the Logos, and to those who have become one with Him. God is *all* and *none* of these things ; and “all” includes Good and Evil, and “none” forbids our naming Him by either title. This is a “cold” outlook for the many ; but for the few it is so transcendent a vision that they are dumb in utter helplessness to voice the faintest echo of that Ineffable.

#### QUESTION 323.

*If, as Theosophy asserts, no actual personal “Devil” or Spirit of Evil exists, how does it account for the frequent allusions by Christ to such an individuality (as “Prince of Darkness,” “Satan,” etc.), which are so constantly made throughout all*

innermost being or the Self. Not only this, but whatever we can possibly know in the future of, or as, the universe will and can only be aspects of the innermost subjectivity.

If we have understood so far, we can easily understand how this innermost subjectivity or the Self must be the smallest, the mathematical point, in so far as It is the subject, and nothing else. It is also the largest, the universe, in so far as It is known as the object. Thus it is that the Self is described in apparently contradictory terms.

So far with regard to a brief intellectual explanation of the problem. Another hint, helpful in the understanding of the question, may also be derived from a practical observation which is within the reach of many, if not all.

It is well known that people having well-developed and highly-trained powers of clairvoyance can see around men what are called their auras. These auras, it is also well known, are, so to say, the outlying parts of the emotional and mental organs or bodies, as they are sometimes called. That is to say, when the clairvoyant sees the aura of a person with the mental vision, he sees the mind of the person observed, and he sees it extended in space, as larger than his physical body. But what does the man himself see or know of his mind? He, if he be not a clairvoyant too, knows and thinks of his mind as a small and tiny something situated somewhere or nowhere, or even everywhere, in his body. Here is a case where the man identifies himself or his innermost nature, the Self with the mind, or, to coin a phrase, subjectifies the mind and knows it as a point. But if he be clairvoyant and can objectify the mind, he will see it as extended in space as larger than the physical body and smaller than something else, say the mind of another person.

Apply this idea to the Self, and it will be seen how It is the smallest, the mathematical point, when subjectified, and how It is the largest, the universe, when objectified.

These few hints, among many others which might also be given, might help the questioner in understanding a problem which is certainly not an easy one.



## DIVISION LXXXIV

### RACES

#### QUESTION 325.

*A new root-race must physically be descended from one of those previously existing; how, then, are the very decided physical differences produced, since they are so much greater than could be accounted for by the mere influence of environment? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—This subject of the foundation of a new root-race is an exceedingly interesting one. The information which we have received is to the effect that this commencement involves something much more than the mere physical change, though, as it is with the latter that the question is chiefly concerned, it would be well to consider it first.

When the time comes for the formation of the nucleus of a new race, which usually happens soon after the middle of the period of the previous race, the great Adept (called in *The Secret Doctrine* the Root-Manu), who has charge of this important business, first selects his material from the best-developed sub-race then existing on earth—not necessarily, be it observed, from the most civilised sub-race, but from that one which he considers best adapted to supply physical bodies capable of development into what he wishes his new race to be. In the case of our own Aryan race, for example, the selection was made not from among the magnificent civilisations of the mighty Toltec sub-race, but from the newer and more virile blood of the fifth Atlantean sub-race (called in our books the original Semite), which had its origin in that northern and more mountainous part of the great continent which in those early days was considerably its least desirable portion.

From the very flower, then, of this selected sub-race he chooses a comparatively small number—it may be only a few families—

whom he considers most suitable for his purpose; then by some means or other he contrives to segregate these from the rest of their countrymen and establish them in some remote position where they will be undisturbed for generations. This might obviously be done in various ways; sometimes a great prophet might arise whom a few of the noblest spirits of the time might follow into the desert; religious or political persecutions might compel the chosen few to seek a foreign asylum; revolution or conquest might drive them from their ancestral home. However it may have been formed, he watches this new colony with jealous care, guarding it as far as may be from any admixture with lower races, and surrounding it with such conditions as he considers best suited to develop the qualities required.

Then, if after some generations of this isolation the experiment proves satisfactory, the Manu himself incarnates among them as the founder of the new root-race. It must be remembered that the image or model of this race is already before him, for it has existed from the beginning of the system in the mind of its Logos. Now it would be impossible for any ordinary man in taking birth to approximate himself to that model, because his etheric double would have to be formed in accordance with his past karma, and would therefore certainly fall far short of the new and grander type. But the Manu has of course no evil karma behind him to compel the interference of the Lipika, and is therefore able to build for himself a practically perfect etheric body exactly in accordance with the proposed pattern. Thus he is born, and probably arranges to become chief or high-priest of the tribe over which he still exercises the same watchful care.

All his direct descendants will then belong to the new race, and though they naturally cannot be as physically perfect as their progenitor, yet by judicious selection, in the course of several generations the type of this new people is clearly established. As thousands of years roll by, the tribe grows into a mighty nation, which eventually spreads out in all directions, absorbing or driving before it the effete races in its path. In connection with such expansions and migration it must be remembered that all lineal descendants of the Manu count as members of the new race for the purposes of the reincarnating Ego; and when once the new strain is thoroughly differentiated, no admixture with lower races can entirely blot out its special characteristics.

But all this care is expended upon the physical development of

the new race only in order to provide fitting vehicles for those individualities which have already so far advanced as to be incapable of finding suitable expression in any of the existing nations; and since the new race usually commences when the previous one has but half run its course, it is obvious that the small number of Egos who have then already exhausted its capabilities must be far in advance of the main body. Although this is naturally a subject on which no detailed information has been given, it is stated that the Egos which first incarnate as the direct descendants of the Manu require and receive special treatment on their own plane by the very highest adept power, in order to quicken into activity in them that latent capacity, the unfolding of which is the special business of the new race. When the currents directing the race are fairly set in motion—when it gets into full swing, as it were—this special interposition seems no longer to be necessary, though the Manu still watches over and guides its development.

## QUESTION 326.

*What representatives are now left on earth of the different sub-races of the fourth Root-Race? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—For a fuller account of the different sub-divisions of the fourth root-race than it is possible to give in these columns the questioner is referred to Mr. Scott-Elliot's *Story of Atlantis*. The list of the sub-races given in that most valuable work is as follows:

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Rmoahal.        | 5. Original Semitic. |
| 2. Tlavatli.       | 6. Akkadian.         |
| 3. Toltec.         | 7. Mongolian.        |
| 4. First Turanian. |                      |

Some explanation is necessary as to the principle on which these names are applied. Wherever modern ethnology has discovered traces of one of these sub-races, or even identified a small part of one, the name which it has given to it is used for the sake of simplicity; but in the case of the first and second sub-divisions there are hardly any traces left for science to seize upon, so the names by which they called themselves are given. Remnants of some of their branches still exist in various parts of the world; the Lapps, for instance, have Rmoahal blood in their veins, and there are

some among the tribes of South American Indians who are almost pure Tlavatli ; but they must not be taken as representatives of the races at their best.

The third sub-race was a magnificent development, and ruled for thousands of years in great material power and glory both in Atlantis and in South America. To it belong the earliest of the highly-civilised empires of Mexico and Peru, which existed for long ages before their degenerate descendants were conquered by the fiercer tribes from the north whom the Spaniards found in possession. Here again no living race at all accurately represents them, though the noblest of the Red Indians faintly suggest their colour and build. The Rmoahal, Tlavatli and Toltec are indeed often spoken of as the red races, while the four following, though they differed considerably, may all be called yellow.

It is said that far in the interior of China there are still to be found men of almost unadulterated "First Turanian" blood ; but this fourth sub-race does not seem to have been a very pleasant one even at its best, and its chief claim upon our attention is as an awful warning in respect to some of the absurd political and social experiments which it tried—all of which is duly set forth in Mr. Scott-Elliot's book. From it, at a much later period, the Mongolian sub-race was derived.

The fifth sub-race, as was indicated in the answer to a previous question, has a special interest for us as being that from which the material for our own Aryan race was selected by the Manu. It grew and flourished for centuries in the northern part of the great continent of Atlantis, successfully maintaining its independence against aggressive southern kings, until the time came for it in turn to spread abroad and colonise. A very fair representative of it at this period, as far as physical appearance goes, still survives in the lighter-coloured Kabyle of the Algerian mountains, though its civilisation was of course far more advanced than his. A sketch of the history of the segregation made from it, and the very interesting events connected therewith, will be found in Transaction No. 31 of the London Lodge. As will be seen from the account there given, the majority of the Semitic tribes of the present day have another and larger factor in their blood than this Atlantean descent.

The sixth sub-race was a great commercial and colonising people—the ancestors probably of the Etruscan, Phœnician, and Carthaginian civilisations. The early inhabitants of Assyria also were

within our own nature, all contained in us." *I should be glad to have an explanation of this.* (1900.)

G. R. S. M.—“The Kingdom of God is within you.” This Kingdom is the ideal eternal universe, the thought of the Logos. It is a state out of time and space, and therefore *is* now and within, if we can use such terms of time to express realities that transcend it. There is Only one Reality, the old books teach—Brahman, the secondless, the Logos, the One and Only one. The “many” are but partial reflections in time and space of the One. “In him we live and move and have our being”; and not only we, but all globes, planets, systems, and universes. “That art thou,” again says another great logion of the Wisdom. Therefore all universes, systems, planets and globes are within *us*, if we could but realise it, for our ultimate goal in time and space is to become one with the Father. This stupendous conception lay at the back of one mode of yoga—perhaps the most difficult—in the ancient world. It was the method of ecstasis of Plotinus and those of the great revival of the Wisdom-tradition called Neo-platonism. The “philosopher” of that school strove by every means in his power to think himself the universe; that is to say, to think into his aura the type of the ideal world, with its harmonies and powers, its beauties and virtues, its spheres and energies; and then, having prepared a temple fit for the God, having made himself like unto the great cosmos or order, out of his previous chaotic or disordered state—and thus having placed himself in “sympathetic vibration” with the “whole”—the body of the Heavenly Man—he prayed for the God, the Logos, to descend into the shrine. This was ecstasy.

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A. B.—Matter is “unreal” only as everything is unreal which is an expression of the One Existence, rather than the One Existence considered in Itself; but every degree of matter is real on its own plane in relation to that plane. Matter and spirit are co-relatives, and the one is as real as the other, both being manifestations in

In studying this question we must not suppose that a new root-race or a sub-race invariably swoops down upon its predecessors as the Goths and Vandals did upon Rome, or migrates in a body as the Helvetii tried to do; quite as often it spreads slowly by emigration and colonisation, as the Anglo-Saxon race is spreading now, so that the transition of any particular nation from one race or sub-race to another is often a very gradual process extending over many centuries, during which it would be impossible to decide from mere physical characteristics under which head it should be classed. In fact, it may be taken for granted that absolute exactitude in regard to details in this study is only attainable by the use of psychic power in examining the auric surroundings of each nation or tribe—almost of each individual.

QUESTION 328.

*In the Story of Atlantis, p. 2, the Kelts and Germans are spoken of as the fourth and fifth sub-races, but it is said that "five only have so far come into existence," and that the sixth and seventh will be developed in North and South America. No mention is made of the great Slavic race, numbering more than 100 millions of Aryans. Is not the Slav the sixth sub-race, and following the Teutonic race as Teutons followed Kelts? Does it not in some qualities already rank above both the Keltic and Germanic sub-races? (1900.)*

W. S. E.—In answer to this question it may be definitely stated that the Slavs are *not* the sixth sub-race. This race is now in process of development on the Continent of North America.

Beyond this it is impossible to speak with complete assurance, for no authoritative statement that I am aware of has been made on the subject. I believe, however, that the origin of the Slavs may be traced to a mixture of the Celtic and Iranian sub-races, and the strongly-marked characteristics of the Slav race would seem to justify this conclusion. There is, too, a future before them, for the Russian people, who are their chief representative, form a "family race" which has not yet reached its zenith.

## QUESTION 329.

*To what Root-Race and what sub-race do the African negroes belong ?  
(1900.)*

C. W. L.—We usually group together under the name negro a number of races which in reality differ very widely. The negroid type always indicates the presence of at least some Lemurian blood; but there are very few people now left upon earth that could be taken as at all fair representatives of even the later sub-plane of that third root-race. Perhaps the nearest now existing are the less-developed of the Australian aborigines, the Andaman Islanders, the pygmies whom Stanley found in Central Africa, and some of the lowest of the Digger Indians.

It seems to be a curious law that the belated fragments of a dying race invariably diminish in stature; so that although the Lemurians were men of enormous size, these relics of them are all considerably below the normal height.

On the other hand some of the inhabitants of Africa, such as the Zulus and the Masai, have a very large admixture of Atlantean or Semitic blood, and would therefore have to be classed as belonging to later races. Races are now in most cases so inextricably mingled all over the world that it is frequently exceedingly difficult to indicate with any precision their place in our lists. The nearest approach, then, that we can give to an answer to this question is to say that while all negroes have third-race blood in them, the proportion of that blood varies very greatly in the case of different tribes.

## QUESTION 330.

*To which Root-Race and sub-race do the Japanese belong? and are we the first or the second incarnation of the last sub-race of the fifth Root-Race? (1897.)*

A. B.—The Japanese belong to the seventh sub-race, the Mongolian, of the fourth Root-Race, the Atlantean. The English belong chiefly to the fifth sub-race, the Teutonic of the fifth Root-Race, the Aryan. The sub-races of this fifth Root-Race run: Hindu, Aryan-Semite, Iranian, Keltic, Teutonic. It is not clear what the questioner means by "the first or the second incarnation."

next. That is to say, instead of taking, say, a dozen births in the first sub-race, and then a dozen in the second, and so on, he would but take one in the first, and would then pass on to the second, third, fourth and fifth in turn.

But when he has thus gone the round of all the sub-races which happen to be in existence at the moment, he returns to the first of them, and begins his course over again, so that, except for his much longer periods of devachan he might get as many births into a given time as the second-class pitris, but would take them in an entirely different order. It is evident that his method would be more likely to tend to the even evolution of the different sides of his character, and so his progress would be on the whole more balanced, and he would less easily fall into the serious difficulties which are inseparable from unequal development.

Just as the sub-races offer modifications of the general tendency of a great root-race, so they in their turn are modified in various ways by difference of surroundings into numerous branch races. Birth into every branch-race, however, does not appear to be a necessity, in the case at any rate of the first-class pitri, and it is probable that the particular branch selected for his incarnation depends not only upon the general conditions offered, but also upon the extent to which his individual karma is entangled with that of others who are taking birth in the same nation. Cases differ so widely that no general rule can yet be laid down, but it is hoped that the few considerations offered above may to some extent help the questioner in his difficulties.

#### QUESTION 332.

*What is the reason for difference of colour in races? Is colour the result of past thinking, and is the lighter colour a sign of greater advancement? (1902.)*

F. A.—From some of the theosophical teachings it seems reasonable to conclude that there is a distinct connection between the stages of evolution in man and his colour, for it is said in *The Secret Doctrine* that there are three great divisions of the human race—the red-yellow, the black, and the brown-white—and that the evolution of these races went on *pari passu* with the developments of geological strata, from which, as well as by climate, human complexion was derived. It is difficult to understand the connec-



pleasures of the physical world; the lost souls whose sole happiness is to drag others into the same abyss—all these gather round the man to whom such things are still an attraction, the man who is not protected by perfect purity of soul and body. For a preacher like the Buddha or the Christ, there is nothing more natural than to sum up all these under one name, as the Indian Kâma, the Buddhist Mâra, or the Christian Satan; in each case implying, not a person, but the complex of all the powers and attractions which tend to draw men back from their duty to press forwards to the true Life. I am not sufficiently familiar with Buddhist literature to venture positively to deny that (in the querist's words) Buddha ever *asserted* that Mâra had personally appeared to tempt him, but I myself have only met with the statement as a story told of him by later chroniclers—an exceedingly beautiful and poetic story, but not anything to be appealed to as an authority. It should be remembered that the crude, dualistic ideal always tends to reappear as civilisation relapses into barbarism; and the tales of the Buddha and the Christ were copied and recopied in times which were "dark ages" indeed as compared with those in which they had lived. It cannot be a matter of wonder if the eclipse of learning which followed the crash of the Roman Empire—that eclipse to which we owe the introduction of the Devil into the creeds and formulas of Church Doctrine—should have introduced into the Gospels here and there words which Jesus did not say, or omitted qualifications which were needful to prevent the misunderstanding which has, in fact, arisen. It would be an interesting study if someone qualified for the undertaking would discuss the various texts contained in the Gospels as they now stand, to which the querist refers; but it is certain that Jesus, "a Teacher sent from God," could never have really said anything which implied belief in what He knew was wholly untrue. It is the fundamental doctrine of the Wisdom that each man is his own Angel, his own Devil; that he can hope for no Heaven he has not made for himself, and needs fear no Hell but such as his own life has framed. In a story quoted in Lafcadio Hearn's *In Ghostly Japan*, the demon torturer in Hell says to his victim, "Blame not me! I am only the creation of your own deeds and thoughts; *you made me for this!*" And if anyone should be inclined to say that our view removes some of the safeguards against evil-doing, let him only think for a while what *this* means!

## DIVISION LXXXV

### MĀNASAPUTRAS

#### QUESTION 333.

*There seems to be a great deal of confusion in The Secret Doctrine respecting the Mānasaputras, some of the statements being apparently contradictory. In some parts they appear to be ordinary human beings, in others spiritual entities who have already reached nirvānic levels. Is the term always used for the same class of entity, or does it refer to different beings in different parts of the book? (1897.)*

B. K.—It appears that the term “Mānasaputra,” which means merely “son of mind,” is used in *The Secret Doctrine* to denote any intellectually self-conscious entity, from the level of true human individuality up to that of a planetary spirit. The name is, of course, derived from the Paurānic literature of India, in which, however, it seems to bear a narrower and more definite meaning on the whole, though until a larger number of these works are made accessible in reliable English renderings, we cannot define exactly its scope and usage. In *The Secret Doctrine*, at any rate, it is certainly applied to several very different classes of entities, including, for instance, (1) the first or highest class of the Lunar Pitris (those, that is, who did not come into manifestation on this earth chain until the middle point of the fourth Round had been reached); (2) the great Adepts evolved on the Venus Chain, who came over to help and guide our humanity; (3) certain of the higher Devas, who fulfil an analogous function, and possibly other classes of entities as well. But in all cases the use of the term seems restricted to such entities as are intellectually self-conscious. In short, as used in *The Secret Doctrine*, the term Mānasaputra is a generic term, like the word “man,”

including a number of clearly distinguishable classes which, however, agree in the possession of one or more definite characteristics. We speak of the Australian black, the African negro, the yellow Chinaman, the red American Indian, and the white Caucasian, as equally "men," though the difference, say, between the Australian black who cannot count as far as five, and a Newton, is surely wide enough.

The student of *The Secret Doctrine* must ever remember that the writer of that work was forced to begin the creation of a new nomenclature, a new technical terminology for a science new to the Western world, and that, as in every other science, this nomenclature must be a thing of slow and gradual growth, as our knowledge expands and becomes more detailed and accurate. And even within the last two or three years close students of Theosophy, who have followed and assimilated the recent additions to our knowledge, will have noted a not insensible advance in this important task.

A. M. G.—For any student of *The Secret Doctrine* there can be no question as to the confusion existing in that book with regard to the Mānasaputras. So puzzling was the subject, indeed, that there was formerly an idea widely held that the ordinary human Egos before incarnation on this earth were themselves the Mānasaputras. That *The Secret Doctrine* is not entirely responsible for this conception must be apparent to anyone who has carefully collected the various, and it must be said contradictory, statements. There are one or two remarks that might be construed into that view, but as they absolutely contradict other more definite ones, it would perhaps be better to seek for an explanation on the lines that two (or more) different things are referred to by the same terms.

Later information on the subject given in the pamphlet, *The Lunar Pitris*, provides us with a scheme differing in many ways from that contained in *The Secret Doctrine*, but still the points of difference are really minor ones, and there is one feature at least which throws light on one of the most obscure parts of the older scheme. We are told (*Secret Doctrine*, vol. ii. p. 81) that the Pitris are divided into seven classes—three incorporeal and four corporeal. The first three are sometimes called the Agnishvāta or Asuras. On p. 98 these three classes are said to have been compelled to be reborn on earth. The language used in connection with these Pitris could certainly not apply to the other bei

innermost being or the Self. Not only this, but whatever we can possibly know in the future of, or as, the universe will and can only be aspects of the innermost subjectivity.

If we have understood so far, we can easily understand how this innermost subjectivity or the Self must be the smallest, the mathematical point, in so far as It is the subject, and nothing else. It is also the largest, the universe, in so far as It is known as the object. Thus it is that the Self is described in apparently contradictory terms.

So far with regard to a brief intellectual explanation of the problem. Another hint, helpful in the understanding of the question, may also be derived from a practical observation which is within the reach of many, if not all.

It is well known that people having well-developed and highly-trained powers of clairvoyance can see around men what are called their auras. These auras, it is also well known, are, so to say, the outlying parts of the emotional and mental organs or bodies, as they are sometimes called. That is to say, when the clairvoyant sees the aura of a person with the mental vision, he sees the mind of the person observed, and he sees it extended in space, as larger than his physical body. But what does the man himself see or know of his mind? He, if he be not a clairvoyant too, knows and thinks of his mind as a small and tiny something situated somewhere or nowhere, or even everywhere, in his body. Here is a case where the man identifies himself or his innermost nature, the Self with the mind, or, to coin a phrase, subjectifies the mind and knows it as a point. But if he be clairvoyant and can objectify the mind, he will see it as extended in space as larger than the physical body and smaller than something else, say the mind of another person.

Apply this idea to the Self, and it will be seen how It is the smallest, the mathematical point, when subjectified, and how It is the largest, the universe, when objectified.

These few hints, among many others which might also be given, might help the questioner in understanding a problem which is certainly not an easy one.

with Pitris and Mânasaputras. We might take it for granted that where the Mânasaputras are referred to as our own Egos (only one or two passages giving that conception), what is now regarded as the highest class of Lunar Pitris is meant, Madame Blavatsky confining the term Lunar Pitri or Lunar Monad to the lower classes. In a work so huge and complicated as *The Secret Doctrine*, put together in so loose a manner, it would be unreasonable to expect to find everything planned out so as to fit, and all the terms confined within proper limits. It seems also quite unnecessary to assume an omniscience on the part of the writer, with respect to the great scheme of evolution pictured in the volume. It may well be that with regard to many details the information received was not enough to form a consistent plan, and the different detached parts were connected together in an erroneous order.

whom he considers most suitable for his purpose; then by some means or other he contrives to segregate these from the rest of their countrymen and establish them in some remote position where they will be undisturbed for generations. This might obviously be done in various ways; sometimes a great prophet might arise whom a few of the noblest spirits of the time might follow into the desert; religious or political persecutions might compel the chosen few to seek a foreign asylum; revolution or conquest might drive them from their ancestral home. However it may have been formed, he watches this new colony with jealous care, guarding it as far as may be from any admixture with lower races, and surrounding it with such conditions as he considers best suited to develop the qualities required.

Then, if after some generations of this isolation the experiment proves satisfactory, the *Manu* himself incarnates among them as the founder of the new root-race. It must be remembered that the image or model of this race is already before him, for it has existed from the beginning of the system in the mind of its *Logos*. Now it would be impossible for any ordinary man in taking birth to approximate himself to that model, because his etheric double would have to be formed in accordance with his past karma, and would therefore certainly fall far short of the new and grander type. But the *Manu* has of course no evil karma behind him to compel the interference of the *Lipika*, and is therefore able to build for himself a practically perfect etheric body exactly in accordance with the proposed pattern. Thus he is born, and probably arranges to become chief or high-priest of the tribe over which he still exercises the same watchful care.

All his direct descendants will then belong to the new race, and though they naturally cannot be as physically perfect as their progenitor, yet by judicious selection, in the course of several generations the type of this new people is clearly established. As thousands of years roll by, the tribe grows into a mighty nation, which eventually spreads out in all directions, absorbing or driving before it the effete races in its path. In connection with such expansions and migration it must be remembered that all lineal descendants of the *Manu* count as members of the new race for the purposes of the reincarnating *Ego*; and when once the new strain is thoroughly differentiated, no admixture with lower races can entirely blot out its special characteristics.

But all this care is expended upon the physical development of

the new race only in order to provide fitting vehicles for those individualities which have already so far advanced as to be incapable of finding suitable expression in any of the existing nations; and since the new race usually commences when the previous one has but half run its course, it is obvious that the small number of Egos who have then already exhausted its capabilities must be far in advance of the main body. Although this is naturally a subject on which no detailed information has been given, it is stated that the Egos which first incarnate as the direct descendants of the Manu require and receive special treatment on their own plane by the very highest adept power, in order to quicken into activity in them that latent capacity, the unfolding of which is the special business of the new race. When the currents directing the race are fairly set in motion—when it gets into full swing, as it were—this special interposition seems no longer to be necessary, though the Manu still watches over and guides its development.

## QUESTION 326.

*What representatives are now left on earth of the different sub-races of the fourth Root-Race? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—For a fuller account of the different sub-divisions of the fourth root-race than it is possible to give in these columns the questioner is referred to Mr. Scott-Elliot's *Story of Atlantis*. The list of the sub-races given in that most valuable work is as follows :

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Rmoahal.        | 5. Original Semitic. |
| 2. Tlavatli.       | 6. Akkadian.         |
| 3. Toltec.         | 7. Mongolian.        |
| 4. First Turanian. |                      |

Some explanation is necessary as to the principle on which these names are applied. Wherever modern ethnology has discovered traces of one of these sub-races, or even identified a small part of one, the name which it has given to it is used for the sake of simplicity; but in the case of the first and second sub-divisions there are hardly any traces left for science to seize upon, so the names by which they called themselves are given. Remnants of some of their branches still exist in various parts of the world; the Lapps, for instance, have Rmoahal blood in their veins, and there are

some among the tribes of South American Indians who are almost pure Tlavatli ; but they must not be taken as representatives of the races at their best.

The third sub-race was a magnificent development, and ruled for thousands of years in great material power and glory both in Atlantis and in South America. To it belong the earliest of the highly-civilised empires of Mexico and Peru, which existed for long ages before their degenerate descendants were conquered by the fiercer tribes from the north whom the Spaniards found in possession. Here again no living race at all accurately represents them, though the noblest of the Red Indians faintly suggest their colour and build. The Rmoahal, Tlavatli and Toltec are indeed often spoken of as the red races, while the four following, though they differed considerably, may all be called yellow.

It is said that far in the interior of China there are still to be found men of almost unadulterated "First Turanian" blood ; but this fourth sub-race does not seem to have been a very pleasant one even at its best, and its chief claim upon our attention is as an awful warning in respect to some of the absurd political and social experiments which it tried—all of which is duly set forth in Mr. Scott-Elliot's book. From it, at a much later period, the Mongolian sub-race was derived.

The fifth sub-race, as was indicated in the answer to a previous question, has a special interest for us as being that from which the material for our own Aryan race was selected by the Manu. It grew and flourished for centuries in the northern part of the great continent of Atlantis, successfully maintaining its independence against aggressive southern kings, until the time came for it in turn to spread abroad and colonise. A very fair representative of it at this period, as far as physical appearance goes, still survives in the lighter-coloured Kabyle of the Algerian mountains, though its civilisation was of course far more advanced than his. A sketch of the history of the segregation made from it, and the very interesting events connected therewith, will be found in Transaction No. 31 of the London Lodge. As will be seen from the account there given, the majority of the Semitic tribes of the present day have another and larger factor in their blood than this Atlantean descent.

The sixth sub-race was a great commercial and colonising people—the ancestors probably of the Etruscan, Phœnician, and Carthaginian civilisations. The early inhabitants of Assyria also were



very largely men of this sub-race; they are spoken of by ethnologists as the Shumiro-Akkads—a name which denotes accurately enough their mixed blood, the Shumirs being a tribe belonging to the First Turanian or fourth sub-race, while the Akkadians are simply this sixth sub-division. By way of Susiana they seem to have largely intermingled with the Bak tribes, who later became the principal factor in the ancestry of the hybrid race which we now call Chinese.

The seventh or Mongolian sub-race did not come from Atlantis proper at all, but was developed on the plains of Tartary, chiefly from descendants of the fourth or "First Turanian" sub-race, which it gradually supplanted over the greater part of Asia. This seventh sub-race multiplied exceedingly, and even at this moment a majority of the earth's inhabitants technically belong to it, though many of its divisions are so deeply coloured with the blood of earlier races as to be scarcely distinguishable from them. The vast hordes of Malays, for example, represent an intermixture between this sub-race and some of the latest and most developed of the Lemurian tribes; while, on the other hand, the Japanese show the race at its very best when strengthened by a dash of blood higher than its own.

More than once tribes of Mongolian descent have overflowed from Northern Asia into America across Behring Straits, and the last of such great migrations, that of the Khitans some thirteen hundred years ago, has left traces which some Western savants have been able to follow. The presence of Mongolian blood in some tribes of North American Indians has also been recognised by various writers on ethnology.

#### QUESTION 327.

*Are there any definite characteristics by which the present representatives of the different root-races may be certainly distinguished? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—The broad physical characteristics of the three main types are quite distinct, as scientific writers recognise, and they can generally be traced through two or three intermixtures; but it would not be safe to depend solely on any physical indication when dealing with the extremely mixed fragments of most of the earlier races, though an adept would at once classify them by an examination of their higher vehicles.

*be recognisable as such by people of the Fourth Round, assuming the latter to be acquainted with Theosophy? (1898.)*

B. K.—The term “Fifth-Rounder” was one employed in the very early days of the evolution of a theosophical nomenclature, to denote a person who in point of development had reached that stage which will be the average level of development in the Fifth Round. It does not necessarily imply that the individual so spoken of has actually made five complete circuits round the planetary chain while the rest of humanity is now only half-way through its fourth circuit. Thus it has been said that the general level attained by mankind on earth in the Fifth Round will be that now represented by the first great Initiation—the Sohan or Srotâpatti step of the Path. Hence all who reach this level now have attained the level of mankind in the Fifth Round, and may thus be spoken of as Fifth-Rounders.

But there is another sense which the term Fifth-Rounder might bear, though it seems rather doubtful whether, as it appears in *Esoteric Buddhism* or in the letters of the Master to Mr. Sinnett, it was ever actually used in that sense.

As matters now stand, it seems that many second-class Pitris (in the classification used in the *Lunar Pitris*, the London Lodge Transaction) are not sufficiently evolved to “enter the path” in this Round, and life on earth at present is inadequate to afford them the necessary conditions for rapidly making up this deficiency in experience, which amounts to the transformation from second into first-class Pitris. Hence special arrangements are needed to effect this, and it is accomplished by such a second-class Pitri being actually made to perform an extra circuit of the Planetary Chain, passing from globe to globe, incarnating on each one or more times, and eventually again catching up the humanity which he left, either on the same globe—say the earth—or on a subsequent one. But when he does so, he has overtaken, so to say, his deficiencies in experiences, and reappears among his fellows as a first-class Pitri, and as such qualified to attempt entrance upon the Path in the ordinary way.

This process has been spoken of as the “Inner Round,” and a hint of it may be found given in the Notes to the last editions of *Esoteric Buddhism*, in connection with what is there called the “Noah’s Ark” theory. The effect of it is that such an entity would have actually made one circuit of the chain more than his

fellows, though, since the second-class Pitris incarnated only in the *Third Round*, such an entity would have completed *two* whole Rounds, while his fellows would only have just entered upon the commencement of their second. So that it would seem not quite accurate to speak of such exceptional entities as "Fifth-Rounders," although, before the details concerning the various classes of Pitris were given, such a term might have been applied to them.

So far as is at present known, there is no very definite mark or peculiarity perceptible even to devachanic vision, which distinguishes an entity which has been through this Inner Round from others; and probably the fact could only be definitely ascertained by actually tracing back the evolution of that entity in the *ākāshic records*.

Of course one who has passed the Srotāpatti initiation, and thus has attained to the Fifth Round level of evolution, does exhibit definite marks and peculiarities in his aura which are at once recognisable by one of the same or a higher level, though probably not equally plain or significant to the non-initiated psychic. It is a question of actual development, not of intellectual knowledge, and a mere acquaintance with Theosophy in its intellectual aspect would not suffice to guide the judgment in such matters.

## DIVISION LXXXVII

### THE LOGOI

#### QUESTION 339

*Can you explain the difference between the Blessed Lord who speaks as "Me" in the Bhagavad Gitâ (xii. 1-3), and the Absolute, the Unmanifest, etc. ? (1901.)*

G. R. S. M.—As when the Christ declares, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," so when the Blessed One declares that all come unto Him, we are to suppose that the Teacher is speaking as the accredited representative of Him whose office it is to watch over this humanity of ours. But there are other humanities, other worlds, other systems, infinite in the boundless fields of space. Beyond Him who is for *us* the "One and Only mystery," the Logos of our humanity, there is an infinitude of glory unapproachable for us, except through Him; and not only so, but even for Him there is an "unapproachable," a Depth beyond His (to us) immeasurable profundity. To quote the words of a beautiful hymn of the Gnosis: "I praise Thee, O Unapproachable God, for that Thou didst shine forth in Thyself; Thou hast emanated Thy One and Only Mystery, Thou who art an unapproachable God even to these Logoi." The term **Absolute** must be kept for the idea of The Deity beyond being.

#### QUESTION 340.

*May I trouble you to give me your opinion concerning the use of the word "Logos"? How far down in the scale of being can a spiritual entity be spoken of as a Logos? Is the Logos of a Planetary Chain the lowest, or could the "Lord of the world" be so called, as used on p. 197 of The Gospels and the Gospel?*

*How is the line of distinction to be drawn between an entity who can be spoken of as a Logos and one who cannot? (1902.)*

G. R. S. M.—There is, of course, no authority which can compel us to abide by any formal definition or limitation of the use of the word. It must be a matter of convention and general agreement. If we go back to the earliest use of the word in Greek philosophy, we find that it was a general term for a faculty in man : subsequently we find it used in two ways ; still in the limited and general sense of the individual faculty of the reason of sense in man, but also in the universal sense of a principle in cosmos. Those uses we find common to the Platonic, Stoic and Hermetic traditions. If we come to the Early Christian use of the term, we find that the first philosophers of the faith speak of the Logos as one, as the Reason of God, combining this sense with its alternative meaning in Greek, the Word, which enabled them to connect it with the Jewish tradition of the Word and Spirit of God and the Wisdom teaching ; but at the same time they speak of the angels of God as *logoi*, and they further declare that there is a *logos* in every man, a son of the Logos. This usage gradually fades out in the development of General Christianity, and the term Logos is restricted to the second person of the Trinity, its meaning as the theological Word gradually forcing into the background its conception as the Divine Reason.

In the present revival of theosophic studies, we have recovered the original term Logos, so that it may carry the two meanings of Word and Reason, as it does in Greek, and so that the idea may not be limited theologically by the use of the term "Word" alone, nor yet divorced from a part of its heredity by the use of Reason alone. It has been brought into this prominence from the necessity felt for a term which should not confound the Divine Source of all universes with the God of a world-system or of a time-period. So used it is the equivalent of the Sanskrit general term *Īshvara*, the Lord—our Lord, not the Lord of Sirius, say, or the Lord of all Lords of systems. But this general use of the word has been gradually expanded. First of all we had the expressions Unmanifested and Manifested Logos ; then in connection with the "three outpourings" the three *Logoi* ; and again the seven *Logoi* to denote the Rulers of what have been called the Planetary Chains of our system. As far as I am aware, the use of the word has so far extended no further among our present-day writers. It is very

difficult to suggest terms that could be immediately comprehensible for all these conceptions, and the difficulty of naming the hierarchies and their Rulers may be at once seen by referring to the literature of antiquity on the subject. Let anyone turn to the elaborate nomenclature of the Gnostic traditions preserved in the Askew and Bruce Codices and he will at once see what I mean.

Now as we have not so far extended the use of the word *logos* to signify the divine mind in man and so made it a general term, it seems almost a pity that we have not restricted the word to the designation of the Source and Ruler of a system only, and so have made it a particular. As it is we seem to be somewhat arbitrary in our halting stage. But all this is a question of taste; the main thing is to get some comprehension of the ideas. Now I am bound to confess that so far I have personally, in the most literal sense of the words, not the *ghost* of an *idea* what the planetary chains really are. I believe they adumbrate some great mystery concerning the ordering of our system within and without, of which could we but once conceive the *idea*, we should find order in the chaos in a manner so marvellous that the intellect would be filled with utter satisfaction.

Of the physical details, and the more subjective externals which have been hazarded by some of our colleagues, I can form no consistent conception; the metaphysical side has hardly been touched upon by any but H. P. B., and only by her in a very confused fashion; the Stanzas of Dzian fascinate us by their stupendous grandeur, but their secret remains hidden. This being so, I prefer to think of our chain from the standpoint of our humanity and its consciousness solely. Our humanity lives and evolves in other spheres of consciousness besides the physical. About other humanities I know nothing.

When, then, I use the phrase "Lord of the world" in connection with the idea of the Great Economy according to which our evolution is guided by the Servants of the Lord, I mean generally the Ruler of our humanity. It may be that the term can be used in some more precise sense, and is consecrated to a special use by those who know directly of such high matters; but I have simply used it generally, not stopping to think whether I am to make this title synonymous with what some of my colleagues call our planetary Logos, or where exactly to place it between the grade of the present Ruler of our actual globe, the **Manu** (as

Indian tradition has it) and the Manu of all the Manus of our humanity's life-span ; much less to speculate on what may be the distinction at such sublime heights between Ruler and Teacher. I spoke generally ; there is, I believe, a Ruler of our humanity, a Lord of our "world," who impersonates the great plan of its being, and those who know Him as He is, speak in His name, and act with His power, when immediately expressing His will.

## QUESTION 341.

*Can anything be said as to the respective functions of the Three Logoi in the evolution of humanity and their correspondence to the Christian Trinity? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—This is a subject of which none of us can hope to attain perfect comprehension for many an æon to come, for he who grasps it thoroughly must be consciously one with the Highest. But some indications may be given which may perhaps help the enquirer in his thinking, though it is most emphatically necessary to bear in mind all the way through that since we are looking at the problem from below instead of from above, from the standpoint of our extreme ignorance instead of from that of omniscience, any conception that we may form of it *must* be imperfect and therefore inaccurate.

We are told that what happens at the beginning of a solar system (such as our own) is, allowing for certain obvious differences in the surrounding conditions, identical with what happens at the re-awakening after one of the great pralayas ; and it will probably be more possible for us not entirely to misunderstand if we endeavour to direct our attention to the former rather than to the latter. It should be realised to begin with that in the evolution of a solar system, three of the highest principles of the Logos of that system correspond to and respectively fulfil the functions of the three Great Logoi in cosmic evolution ; in point of fact, those three principles are identical with the three Great Logoi in a manner which to us down here is wholly incomprehensible, even though we may see that it must be so.

Yet we should be careful, while recognising this identity in essence, on no account to confuse the respective functions of beings differing so widely in their sphere of action. It should be remembered that from the First Logos, which stands next to the

In studying this question we must not suppose that a new root-race or a sub-race invariably swoops down upon its predecessors as the Goths and Vandals did upon Rome, or migrates in a body as the Helvetii tried to do; quite as often it spreads slowly by emigration and colonisation, as the Anglo-Saxon race is spreading now, so that the transition of any particular nation from one race or sub-race to another is often a very gradual process extending over many centuries, during which it would be impossible to decide from mere physical characteristics under which head it should be classed. In fact, it may be taken for granted that absolute exactitude in regard to details in this study is only attainable by the use of psychic power in examining the auric surroundings of each nation or tribe—almost of each individual.

QUESTION 328.

*In the Story of Atlantis, p. 2, the Kelts and Germans are spoken of as the fourth and fifth sub-races, but it is said that "five only have so far come into existence," and that the sixth and seventh will be developed in North and South America. No mention is made of the great Slavic race, numbering more than 100 millions of Aryans. Is not the Slav the sixth sub-race, and following the Teutonic race as Teutons followed Kelts? Does it not in some qualities already rank above both the Keltic and Germanic sub-races? (1900.)*

W. S. E.—In answer to this question it may be definitely stated that the Slavs are *not* the sixth sub-race. This race is now in process of development on the Continent of North America.

Beyond this it is impossible to speak with complete assurance, for no authoritative statement that I am aware of has been made on the subject. I believe, however, that the origin of the Slavs may be traced to a mixture of the Celtic and Iranian sub-races, and the strongly-marked characteristics of the Slav race would seem to justify this conclusion. There is, too, a future before them, for the Russian people, who are their chief representative, form a "family race" which has not yet reached its zenith.



## QUESTION 329.

*To what Root-Race and what sub-race do the African negroes belong ?*  
(1900.)

C. W. L.—We usually group together under the name negro a number of races which in reality differ very widely. The negroid type always indicates the presence of at least some Lemurian blood; but there are very few people now left upon earth that could be taken as at all fair representatives of even the later sub-plane of that third root-race. Perhaps the nearest now existing are the less-developed of the Australian aborigines, the Andaman Islanders, the pygmies whom Stanley found in Central Africa, and some of the lowest of the Digger Indians.

It seems to be a curious law that the belated fragments of a dying race invariably diminish in stature; so that although the Lemurians were men of enormous size, these relics of them are all considerably below the normal height.

On the other hand some of the inhabitants of Africa, such as the Zulus and the Masai, have a very large admixture of Atlantean or Semitic blood, and would therefore have to be classed as belonging to later races. Races are now in most cases so inextricably mingled all over the world that it is frequently exceedingly difficult to indicate with any precision their place in our lists. The nearest approach, then, that we can give to an answer to this question is to say that while all negroes have third-race blood in them, the proportion of that blood varies very greatly in the case of different tribes.

## QUESTION 330.

*To which Root-Race and sub-race do the Japanese belong? and are we the first or the second incarnation of the last sub-race of the fifth Root-Race? (1897.)*

A. B.—The Japanese belong to the seventh sub-race, the Mongolian, of the fourth Root-Race, the Atlantean. The English belong chiefly to the fifth sub-race, the Teutonic of the fifth Root-Race, the Aryan. The sub-races of this fifth Root-Race run: Hindu, Aryan-Semite, Iranian, Keltic, Teutonic. It is not clear what the questioner means by "the first or the second incarnation."

In any case we are connected with the fifth, not the last, sub-race. The sixth and seventh sub-races are as yet undifferentiated.

QUESTION 331.

*Is there any information available as to what it is that influences the race or nation in which a man is born, and why he need be born in more than one? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—Before we are able to speak with complete certainty about the order of race-incarnations for humanity in general, it will be necessary for us to collect a far greater number of instances than we have at present at our disposal. But a few broad principles are already obvious, and perhaps a brief statement of these will be at any rate of some help to the questioner.

It is, of course, clear that the ultimate object of human evolution is the production of the perfect man—the adept, the *all-round* man, so to speak. But manifestly, out of the hundreds of incarnations which seem needed to produce this result, some are devoted to the development of one side of the man's character only, while others are spent in the unfolding of quite different sides. It is therefore very natural that various races, each with its own special conditions so arranged as to be favourable to the production of a particular set of virtues, should be required to provide an appropriately varied series of surroundings for the evolving Ego.

Evidently the great root-races (and in a minor degree the sub-races also) are arranged with this object in view. In the earlier days of our theosophical study, noting the obvious coincidence between the number of races and the number of principles, we jumped to the conclusion that each race must be devoted to the unfolding of one of the principles. While fuller knowledge and closer study scarcely encourage us to hope that the scheme is so delightfully simple as that, they still give us evidence that with regard to some, at any rate, of the races the idea is broadly true. Such information as we have at our command about the Atlantean race goes to show that in it desire was rampant, and that the astral body was therefore the part of man's economy principally cultivated under its influence. It is fairly evident that in our Aryan race the attention of the powers guiding our evolution is chiefly directed to the unfolding and strengthening of the intel-

lectual faculties or manas, and it seems probable that when the great sixth race dominates the world it will be the buddhic vehicle of man that will occupy the principal place in their consideration.

Of course man is all the while making a certain amount of slow progress all along the line, and it is not intended to suggest that at any moment the possibilities open before him are confined to the development of one principle, but only that it is to that part of man that for the time special attention is being directed, and for its unfoldment special facilities are offered.

Even in the existing sub-races of our fifth root-race, there are signs of a similar arrangement, for undoubtedly the fourth or Keltic sub-race possesses a very sensitive astral body, and the emotions play a far larger part in its life than in that of the more phlegmatic Teuton; while the latter, though far less psychic, is certainly swayed more by reason and less by feeling than its predecessor. When, however, in the case either of root-races or sub-races, we come to deal with those before the fourth, we are on much less certain ground, and it will probably be well to await the result of further investigation, before definitely assigning to each of the earlier ones the office of evolving some one special principle selected from the seven usually mentioned in theosophical literature.

Be this as it may, there is no doubt that each root-race has its own special characteristics and offers its own special facilities, and that each sub-race has its own particular modifications of these. It now remains for us to consider how the incarnating Ego takes advantage of these varied opportunities.

As regards the vast majority of humanity, which belongs to the various lower classes of the lunar pitris, this is not yet fully known to us. The general principle clearly is to take the races and sub-races in their order, but how many incarnations might be considered as an average number in each sub-race we have not yet sufficient data to show. It seems clear that both second and third class pitris take a considerable number of successive births in each sub-race, differing therein entirely from the method of the first-class pitri, which appears to be peculiar to himself.

It may be that the first-class pitri, being on the whole a much further developed entity than the other classes, is able more readily to assimilate the teaching which the environment of each successive sub-race has to give him; at any rate, his usual custom seems to be to incarnate only once in each before passing to the

next. That is to say, instead of taking, say, a dozen births in the first sub-race, and then a dozen in the second, and so on, he would but take one in the first, and would then pass on to the second, third, fourth and fifth in turn.

But when he has thus gone the round of all the sub-races which happen to be in existence at the moment, he returns to the first of them, and begins his course over again, so that, except for his much longer periods of devachan he might get as many births into a given time as the second-class pitris, but would take them in an entirely different order. It is evident that his method would be more likely to tend to the even evolution of the different sides of his character, and so his progress would be on the whole more balanced, and he would less easily fall into the serious difficulties which are inseparable from unequal development.

Just as the sub-races offer modifications of the general tendency of a great root-race, so they in their turn are modified in various ways by difference of surroundings into numerous branch races. Birth into every branch-race, however, does not appear to be a necessity, in the case at any rate of the first-class pitri, and it is probable that the particular branch selected for his incarnation depends not only upon the general conditions offered, but also upon the extent to which his individual karma is entangled with that of others who are taking birth in the same nation. Cases differ so widely that no general rule can yet be laid down, but it is hoped that the few considerations offered above may to some extent help the questioner in his difficulties.

#### QUESTION 332.

*What is the reason for difference of colour in races? Is colour the result of past thinking, and is the lighter colour a sign of greater advancement? (1902.)*

F. A.—From some of the theosophical teachings it seems reasonable to conclude that there is a distinct connection between the stages of evolution in man and his colour, for it is said in *The Secret Doctrine* that there are three great divisions of the human race—the red-yellow, the black, and the brown-white—and that the evolution of these races went on *pari passu* with the developments of geological strata, from which, as well as by climate, human complexion was derived. It is difficult to understand the connec-

tion of geological strata with the human complexion, but we may gather that the physical conditions at the beginning of the evolution of the great root-races differed in some important respects.

The third race appears to have been the first to have definite colour, and the phrase "becoming black with sin" seems to refer to some change which took place when generation was connected with the separation of the sexes. The brown-white seems to be the distinctive mark of the Fifth Race, the Aryan, and in this race all shades may be found, from the almost black to the whitest creamy colour. It does not appear that the lighter colour is in any sense a sign of greater advancement, for, as far as we know anything of the process of reincarnation, Egos seem to proceed more than once through the various sub-races.

It would appear, from the teaching of the *Secret Doctrine*, that there is a certain type of colour for the root-races, but that the sub-races mix those colours, and it is certainly a fact that the *highest* type of man is to be found with a dark skin, while a very small amount of advancement may accompany the lighter colour.

## DIVISION LXXXV

### MĀNASAPUTRAS

#### QUESTION 333.

*There seems to be a great deal of confusion in The Secret Doctrine respecting the Mānasaputras, some of the statements being apparently contradictory. In some parts they appear to be ordinary human beings, in others spiritual entities who have already reached nirvānic levels. Is the term always used for the same class of entity, or does it refer to different beings in different parts of the book? (1897.)*

B. K.—It appears that the term “Mānasaputra,” which means merely “son of mind,” is used in *The Secret Doctrine* to denote any intellectually self-conscious entity, from the level of true human individuality up to that of a planetary spirit. The name is, of course, derived from the Paurānic literature of India, in which, however, it seems to bear a narrower and more definite meaning on the whole, though until a larger number of these works are made accessible in reliable English renderings, we cannot define exactly its scope and usage. In *The Secret Doctrine*, at any rate, it is certainly applied to several very different classes of entities, including, for instance, (1) the first or highest class of the Lunar Pitris (those, that is, who did not come into manifestation on this earth chain until the middle point of the fourth Round had been reached); (2) the great Adepts evolved on the Venus Chain, who came over to help and guide our humanity; (3) certain of the higher Devas, who fulfil an analogous function, and possibly other classes of entities as well. But in all cases the use of the term seems restricted to such entities as are intellectually self-conscious. In short, as used in *The Secret Doctrine*, the term Mānasaputra is a generic term, like the word “man,”

including a number of clearly distinguishable classes which, however, agree in the possession of one or more definite characteristics. We speak of the Australian black, the African negro, the yellow Chinaman, the red American Indian, and the white Caucasian, as equally "men," though the difference, say, between the Australian black who cannot count as far as five, and a Newton, is surely wide enough.

The student of *The Secret Doctrine* must ever remember that the writer of that work was forced to begin the creation of a new nomenclature, a new technical terminology for a science new to the Western world, and that, as in every other science, this nomenclature must be a thing of slow and gradual growth, as our knowledge expands and becomes more detailed and accurate. And even within the last two or three years close students of Theosophy, who have followed and assimilated the recent additions to our knowledge, will have noted a not insensible advance in this important task.

A. M. G.—For any student of *The Secret Doctrine* there can be no question as to the confusion existing in that book with regard to the Mānasaputras. So puzzling was the subject, indeed, that there was formerly an idea widely held that the ordinary human Egos before incarnation on this earth were themselves the Mānasaputras. That *The Secret Doctrine* is not entirely responsible for this conception must be apparent to anyone who has carefully collected the various, and it must be said contradictory, statements. There are one or two remarks that might be construed into that view, but as they absolutely contradict other more definite ones, it would perhaps be better to seek for an explanation on the lines that two (or more) different things are referred to by the same terms.

Later information on the subject given in the pamphlet, *The Lunar Pitris*, provides us with a scheme differing in many ways from that contained in *The Secret Doctrine*, but still the points of difference are really minor ones, and there is one feature at least which throws light on one of the most obscure parts of the older scheme. We are told (*Secret Doctrine*, vol. ii. p. 81) that the Pitris are divided into seven classes—three incorporeal and four corporeal. The first three are sometimes called the Agnishvāta or Asuras. On p. 98 these three classes are said to have been compelled to be reborn on earth. The language used in connection with these Pitris could certainly not apply to the other beings

sometimes called Mânasaputras, Lords of the Flame, and so on, although the terms are so loosely used that confusion is inevitable. It was formerly supposed, however, that these Pitris were one class of the Lords of the Flame, the beings who, we are elsewhere told, had already in past evolutions reached nirvânic levels. When we regard the Lunar Pitris from the standpoint of the London Lodge Transaction above referred to, we find that the appearance of contradiction was mainly due to a looseness of terms. The seven classes of Pitris are here divided into two groups, having three and four classes respectively, the two groups being clearly divided from each other by the stages which they had reached on the previous chain, the lower group not having attained to individuality. The highest class does not pass through the lower kingdoms at all on this chain, nor does it incarnate on the previous globes, but comes into incarnation in the third and fourth races on this globe. This class is said to form the most advanced division of ordinary humanity, but nevertheless belongs distinctly to our human evolution, and not to a higher or more advanced one on other planets. It obviously does not belong to the lower group generally called by Madame Blavatsky the Lunar Pitris or Monads, but the statements in *The Secret Doctrine* applied sometimes to the Agnishvâtta, Asuras, etc., apply exactly to these Pitris. It is therefore quite reasonable to suppose that when in *The Secret Doctrine* the Mânasaputras are referred to as though they were merely human Egos, the highest class of Pitris is meant.

But while the "arûpa" Pitris were compelled to incarnate on this globe, the same is not said of those beings more generally termed the Mânasaputras or Sons of Mind. Some only of these took on bodies and became the instructors of men and their rulers in the early races. The average humanity received "but a spark," without which it could have evolved, only much more slowly and without clear self-consciousness. The "spark" is thus an impulse from higher planes, which forced on the evolution of those beings who were struggling on the lower levels, and came from perfected entities who had already attained full consciousness and had no need to incarnate themselves. These are thus clearly to be distinguished from those who were *compelled* by karmic law to incarnate in physical bodies.

It would not be impossible, I think, to distinguish in *The Secret Doctrine* the classes referred to in the various passages dealing



with Pitris and Mānasaputras. We might take it for granted that where the Mānasaputras are referred to as our own Egos (only one or two passages giving that conception), what is now regarded as the highest class of Lunar Pitris is meant, Madame Blavatsky confining the term Lunar Pitri or Lunar Monad to the lower classes. In a work so huge and complicated as *The Secret Doctrine*, put together in so loose a manner, it would be unreasonable to expect to find everything planned out so as to fit, and all the terms confined within proper limits. It seems also quite unnecessary to assume an omniscience on the part of the writer, with respect to the great scheme of evolution pictured in the volume. It may well be that with regard to many details the information received was not enough to form a consistent plan, and the different detached parts were connected together in an erroneous order.

## DIVISION LXXXVI

### THE PLANETARY CHAIN

#### QUESTION 334.

*Why have some chains three planets on the physical plane while other chains have only one? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—It depends upon the stage of evolution at which they have arrived. Just as in the chain there are seven worlds, of which the second and sixth are more material than the first and seventh, while the third and fifth descend still lower in the scale, and the fourth is the most material of all—so there are in each scheme of evolution seven chains holding to one another a precisely similar relation. The fourth chain, then, is the most material, and has in it three physical globes; the only examples of this in our solar system at present are the Earth chain and the Neptune chain. In the third and fifth chain-periods, or manvantaras, the chain, being less material, has only one physical planet; the Lunar chain in the past and the Venus chain in the present give us examples of this, for the Lunar manvantara was of course our third, while the Venus evolution has reached its fifth chain. For further information on these heads, see a recent Transaction of the London Lodge of the T. S.—*The System to which we Belong.*

#### QUESTION 335.

*We are told in The Secret Doctrine that of each globe in the Planetary Chain the Lunar Monads pass through the three elemental kingdoms, then the mineral, vegetable, animal and human. We are also told in more recent books that the three elemental kingdoms belong to the two devachanic levels*

*and to the astral plane. How could all these kingdoms and the mineral exist on the higher globes of the Chain, which have no physical, and in two cases neither a physical nor an astral, basis? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—These kingdoms *do* all exist quite comfortably on those higher globes, but in truth the conditions there are so totally different in every way from any with which we are acquainted in this world that it is exceedingly difficult to make them at all comprehensible to those who are as yet unable to see them. This much, however, is clear—that we must think, in every case, of the evolution of the ensouling monadic essence, not merely of that of the encasement, whether that encasement is physical, astral, or mental. Take the case of what is sometimes, though rather misleadingly, described as the mineral monad. This consists of an enormous mass or flood of the force out-poured from the Logos, already divided into many different streams, and having already reached the lowest point of its descent into matter, so that it is able to manifest itself on the physical plane.

It must not, however, be forgotten that it has descended through all the other planes and retains what it has acquired in that descent, so that the monadic essence ensouling any particular mineral has also its own special expression on the astral, mental, and all other planes—hardly definite enough yet to be spoken of as its astral or mental *body*, but nevertheless fulfilling for it some of the functions which such bodies fulfil for more advanced entities.

The mineral monadic essence in passing from globe E to globe F must, of course, cast off its physical vehicle—that which we call the mineral; but the condition of the essence itself is no more affected by that than is the condition of the true man when *he* casts off for the time his physical body. It is still the same living essence, though manifesting now only in its astral vehicle, and no doubt it can still be acted upon through that vehicle in such manner as to assist its evolution, though the exact methods of such action are not clearly known to us.

The same truth holds good all the way through, and therefore every kingdom is fully represented on each globe. This much we can clearly see, although the processes through which each kingdom passes in those higher worlds are not readily comprehensible by the physical brain.

## QUESTION 336.

*Are globes B and F the astral plane dealt with in Manual V., and A and G the devachanic plane of Manual VI.? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—No. The first idea for the questioner to get clearly into his mind is that the seven globes of our chain are *real* globes occupying definite and separate positions in space, notwithstanding the fact that some of them are not upon the physical plane. The astral plane dealt with in Manual V. and the devachanic plane of Manual VI. are those of this earth only, and have nothing to do with these other planets at all.

It should be understood that none of the three lower planes of the solar system is co-extensive with it except as regards a particular condition of the highest or atomic subdivision of each. Each physical globe has its physical plane (including its atmosphere), its astral plane, and its devachanic plane, all interpenetrating one another, and therefore occupying the same position in space, but all quite apart from and not communicating with the corresponding planes of any other globe. It is only when we rise to the lofty levels of the buddhic plane that we find a condition common to, at any rate, all the planets of our chain.

Notwithstanding this, there is, as stated above, a condition of the atomic matter of each of these planes which is cosmic in its extent, so that the seven atomic sub-planes of our system, taken apart from the rest, may be said to constitute one cosmic plane—the lowest, sometimes called the cosmic-prākritic. The interplanetary ether, for example, which appears to extend through the whole of space—indeed, must do so, at least to the furthest visible star, otherwise our physical eyes could not perceive that star—is composed of physical ultimate atoms in their normal and uncompressed condition. But all the lower and more complex forms of ether exist only (so far as is at present known) in connection with the various heavenly bodies, aggregated round them precisely as their atmosphere is, though probably extending considerably further from their surface.

Precisely the same is true of the astral and devachanic planes; only the atomic matter of each, and even that only in an entirely free condition, is co-extensive with the interplanetary ether, and consequently a person can no more pass from planet to planet even of our own chain in his astral body or his mind-body than

ne can in his physical body. In the causal body, however, this achievement is possible, though even then by no means with the ease and rapidity with which it can be done upon the buddhic plane by those who have succeeded in raising their consciousness to that level.

It must be understood, then, that globes A, B, F and G are definite worlds separated in space, just in the same way as are Mars and the Earth, the only difference being that whereas the latter have physical, astral and devachanic planes of their own, globes B and F have nothing below the astral plane, and A and G nothing below the rūpa levels of the devachanic.

QUESTION 337.

*In the pamphlet The Lunar Pitris, it is said that Mars and Mercury belong to our chain, and, like the Earth, are physical planets. Is this the same Mercury which is referred to in The Secret Doctrine as the "Lord of Wisdom"? Or is the Mercury which astronomers know, merely used as a blind for one of the sacred planets as yet unknown by Western scientists? Some confusion arises by the placing of Mars and Mercury, hitherto regarded as two of the "Seven," as mere globes of our earth chain? Can this be explained away? (1901.)*

W. S. E.—The main fact to be stated in answer to this question is that the planet Mercury recognised by astronomers is one of the seven *actual globes* which form our Earth chain. There is no blind about the matter.

It is quite true also that this planet has been regarded as one of the seven so-called sacred planets of Ancient Religion and of Modern Astrology.

As to the expression used in *The Secret Doctrine*, however, the term "Lord of Wisdom," while referring to the Planetary Spirit presiding over Mercury, is really but a symbol with a still more occult meaning.

QUESTION 338.

*What would be the distinguishing characteristics of a "Fifth Rounder" living at the present time? Would such a person*

*be recognisable as such by people of the Fourth Round, assuming the latter to be acquainted with Theosophy? (1898.)*

B. K.—The term “Fifth-Rounder” was one employed in the very early days of the evolution of a theosophical nomenclature, to denote a person who in point of development had reached that stage which will be the average level of development in the Fifth Round. It does not necessarily imply that the individual so spoken of has actually made five complete circuits round the planetary chain while the rest of humanity is now only half-way through its fourth circuit. Thus it has been said that the general level attained by mankind on earth in the Fifth Round will be that now represented by the first great Initiation—the Sohan or Srotâpatti step of the Path. Hence all who reach this level now have attained the level of mankind in the Fifth Round, and may thus be spoken of as Fifth-Rounders.

But there is another sense which the term Fifth-Rounder might bear, though it seems rather doubtful whether, as it appears in *Esoteric Buddhism* or in the letters of the Master to Mr. Sinnett, it was ever actually used in that sense.

As matters now stand, it seems that many second-class Pitris (in the classification used in the *Lunar Pitris*, the London Lodge Transaction) are not sufficiently evolved to “enter the path” in this Round, and life on earth at present is inadequate to afford them the necessary conditions for rapidly making up this deficiency in experience, which amounts to the transformation from second into first-class Pitris. Hence special arrangements are needed to effect this, and it is accomplished by such a second-class Pitri being actually made to perform an extra circuit of the Planetary Chain, passing from globe to globe, incarnating on each one or more times, and eventually again catching up the humanity which he left, either on the same globe—say the earth—or on a subsequent one. But when he does so, he has overtaken, so to say, his deficiencies in experiences, and reappears among his fellows as a first-class Pitri, and as such qualified to attempt entrance upon the Path in the ordinary way.

This process has been spoken of as the “Inner Round,” and a hint of it may be found given in the Notes to the last editions of *Esoteric Buddhism*, in connection with what is there called the “Noah’s Ark” theory. The effect of it is that such an entity would have actually made one circuit of the chain more than his

fellows, though, since the second-class Pitris incarnated only in the *Third* Round, such an entity would have completed *two* whole Rounds, while his fellows would only have just entered upon the commencement of their second. So that it would seem not quite accurate to speak of such exceptional entities as "Fifth-Rounders," although, before the details concerning the various classes of Pitris were given, such a term might have been applied to them.

So far as is at present known, there is no very definite mark or peculiarity perceptible even to devachanic vision, which distinguishes an entity which has been through this Inner Round from others; and probably the fact could only be definitely ascertained by actually tracing back the evolution of that entity in the âkâshic records.

Of course one who has passed the Srotâpatti initiation, and thus has attained to the Fifth Round level of evolution, does exhibit definite marks and peculiarities in his aura which are at once recognisable by one of the same or a higher level, though probably not equally plain or significant to the non-initiated psychic. It is a question of actual development, not of intellectual knowledge, and a mere acquaintance with Theosophy in its intellectual aspect would not suffice to guide the judgment in such matters.

## DIVISION LXXXVII

### THE LOGOI

#### QUESTION 339

*Can you explain the difference between the Blessed Lord who speaks as "Me" in the Bhagavad Gitâ (xii. 1-3), and the Absolute, the Unmanifest, etc.? (1901.)*

G. R. S. M.—As when the Christ declares, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," so when the Blessed One declares that all come unto Him, we are to suppose that the Teacher is speaking as the accredited representative of Him whose office it is to watch over this humanity of ours. But there are other humanities, other worlds, other systems, infinite in the boundless fields of space. Beyond Him who is for *us* the "One and Only mystery," the Logos of our humanity, there is an infinitude of glory unapproachable for us, except through Him; and not only so, but even for Him there is an "unapproachable," a Depth beyond His (to us) immeasurable profundity. To quote the words of a beautiful hymn of the Gnosis: "I praise Thee, O Unapproachable God, for that Thou didst shine forth in Thyself; Thou hast emanated Thy One and Only Mystery, Thou who art an unapproachable God even to these Logoi." The term Absolute must be kept for the idea of The Deity beyond being.

#### QUESTION 340.

*May I trouble you to give me your opinion concerning the use of the word "Logos"? How far down in the scale of being can a spiritual entity be spoken of as a Logos? Is the Logos of a Planetary Chain the lowest, or could the "Lord of the world" be so called, as used on p. 197 of The Gospels and the Gospel?*



*How is the line of distinction to be drawn between an entity who can be spoken of as a Logos and one who cannot? (1902.)*

G. R. S. M.—There is, of course, no authority which can compel us to abide by any formal definition or limitation of the use of the word. It must be a matter of convention and general agreement. If we go back to the earliest use of the word in Greek philosophy, we find that it was a general term for a faculty in man : subsequently we find it used in two ways ; still in the limited and general sense of the individual faculty of the reason of sense in man, but also in the universal sense of a principle in cosmos. Those uses we find common to the Platonic, Stoic and Hermetic traditions. If we come to the Early Christian use of the term, we find that the first philosophers of the faith speak of the Logos as one, as the Reason of God, combining this sense with its alternative meaning in Greek, the Word, which enabled them to connect it with the Jewish tradition of the Word and Spirit of God and the Wisdom teaching ; but at the same time they speak of the angels of God as *logoi*, and they further declare that there is a *logos* in every man, a son of the Logos. This usage gradually fades out in the development of General Christianity, and the term Logos is restricted to the second person of the Trinity, its meaning as the theological Word gradually forcing into the background its conception as the Divine Reason.

In the present revival of theosophic studies, we have recovered the original term Logos, so that it may carry the two meanings of Word and Reason, as it does in Greek, and so that the idea may not be limited theologically by the use of the term "Word" alone, nor yet divorced from a part of its heredity by the use of Reason alone. It has been brought into this prominence from the necessity felt for a term which should not confound the Divine Source of all universes with the God of a world-system or of a time-period. So used it is the equivalent of the Sanskrit general term *Īshvara*, the Lord—our Lord, not the Lord of Sirius, say, or the Lord of all Lords of systems. But this general use of the word has been gradually expanded. First of all we had the expressions Unmanifested and Manifested Logos ; then in connection with the "three outpourings" the three *Logoi* ; and again the seven *Logoi* to denote the Rulers of what have been called the Planetary Chains of our system. As far as I am aware, the use of the word has so far extended no further among our present-day writers. It is very

difficult to suggest terms that could be immediately comprehensible for all these conceptions, and the difficulty of naming the hierarchies and their Rulers may be at once seen by referring to the literature of antiquity on the subject. Let anyone turn to the elaborate nomenclature of the Gnostic traditions preserved in the Askew and Bruce Codices and he will at once see what I mean.

Now as we have not so far extended the use of the word *logos* to signify the divine mind in man and so made it a general term, it seems almost a pity that we have not restricted the word to the designation of the Source and Ruler of a system only, and so have made it a particular. As it is we seem to be somewhat arbitrary in our halting stage. But all this is a question of taste; the main thing is to get some comprehension of the ideas. Now I am bound to confess that so far I have personally, in the most literal sense of the words, not the *ghost* of an *idea* what the planetary chains really are. I believe they adumbrate some great mystery concerning the ordering of our system within and without, of which could we but once conceive the *idea*, we should find order in the chaos in a manner so marvellous that the intellect would be filled with utter satisfaction.

Of the physical details, and the more subjective externals which have been hazarded by some of our colleagues, I can form no consistent conception; the metaphysical side has hardly been touched upon by any but H. P. B., and only by her in a very confused fashion; the Stanzas of Dzyan fascinate us by their stupendous grandeur, but their secret remains hidden. This being so, I prefer to think of our chain from the standpoint of our humanity and its consciousness solely. Our humanity lives and evolves in other spheres of consciousness besides the physical. About other humanities I know nothing.

When, then, I use the phrase "Lord of the world" in connection with the idea of the Great Economy according to which our evolution is guided by the Servants of the Lord, I mean generally the Ruler of our humanity. It may be that the term can be used in some more precise sense, and is consecrated to a special use by those who know directly of such high matters; but I have simply used it generally, not stopping to think whether I am to make this title synonymous with what some of my colleagues call our planetary Logos, or where exactly to place it between the grade of the present Ruler of our actual globe, the *Manu* (as

Indian tradition has it) and the Manu of all the Manus of our humanity's life-span ; much less to speculate on what may be the distinction at such sublime heights between Ruler and Teacher. I spoke generally ; there is, I believe, a Ruler of our humanity, a Lord of our "world," who impersonates the great plan of its being, and those who know Him as He is, speak in His name, and act with His power, when immediately expressing His will.

QUESTION 341.

*Can anything be said as to the respective functions of the Three Logoi in the evolution of humanity and their correspondence to the Christian Trinity ? (1897.)*

C. W. L.—This is a subject of which none of us can hope to attain perfect comprehension for many an æon to come, for he who grasps it thoroughly must be consciously one with the Highest. But some indications may be given which may perhaps help the enquirer in his thinking, though it is most emphatically necessary to bear in mind all the way through that since we are looking at the problem from below instead of from above, from the standpoint of our extreme ignorance instead of from that of omniscience, any conception that we may form of it *must* be imperfect and therefore inaccurate.

We are told that what happens at the beginning of a solar system (such as our own) is, allowing for certain obvious differences in the surrounding conditions, identical with what happens at the re-awakening after one of the great pralayas ; and it will probably be more possible for us not entirely to misunderstand if we endeavour to direct our attention to the former rather than to the latter. It should be realised to begin with that in the evolution of a solar system, three of the highest principles of the Logos of that system correspond to and respectively fulfil the functions of the three Great Logoi in cosmic evolution ; in point of fact, those three principles are identical with the three Great Logoi in a manner which to us down here is wholly incomprehensible, even though we may see that it must be so.

Yet we should be careful, while recognising this identity in essence, on no account to confuse the respective functions of beings differing so widely in their sphere of action. It should be remembered that from the First Logos, which stands next to the

Absolute, emanates the Second or Dual Logos, from which in turn comes the Third. From that Third Logos come forth the Seven Great Logoi, called sometimes the Seven Spirits before the throne of God ; and as the divine outbreathing pours itself ever further outward and downward, from each of these we have upon the next plane seven Logoi also, together making up on that plane forty-nine. It will be observed that we have already passed through many stages on the great downward sweep towards matter ; yet, omitting the detail of intermediate hierarchies, it is said that to each of these forty-nine belong millions of solar systems, each energised and controlled by its own solar Logos. Though at levels so exalted as these, differences in glory and power can mean but little to us, we may yet to some extent realise how vast is the distance between the three Great Logoi and the Logos of a single system, and so avoid a mistake into which careless students are constantly falling.

It has often been stated that each of the planes of our system is divided into seven sub-planes, and that the matter of the highest sub-plane in each may be regarded as atomic *quâ* its particular plane—that is to say, that its atoms cannot be further subdivided without passing from that plane to the one next above it. Now these seven atomic sub-planes, taken by themselves and entirely without reference to any of the other sub-planes which are afterwards called into existence by the various combinations of their atoms, compose the lowest of the great cosmic planes, and are themselves its seven sub-divisions. So that before a solar system comes into existence, we have on its future site, so to speak, nothing but the ordinary conditions of interstellar space—that is to say, we have matter of the seven subdivisions of the lowest cosmic plane (sometimes called the cosmic-prākritic), and from our point of view this is simply the atomic matter of each of *our* sub-planes without the various combinations of which we are accustomed to think as linking them together and leading us gradually from one to the other.

Now in the evolution of a system the action of the three higher principles of its Logos (generally called the three Logoi of the system) upon this antecedent condition of affairs takes place in what we may call a reversed order. In the course of the great work, each of them pours out his influence, but the outpouring which comes first in time is that from that principle of our Logos which corresponds to the Manas in man, though of course on an

infinitely higher plane. This is usually spoken of as the Third Logos, or Mahat, corresponding to the Holy Ghost in the Christian system—the “Spirit of God which broods over the face of the waters” of space, and so brings the world into existence.

The result of this first great outpouring is the quickening of that wonderful and glorious vitality which pervades all matter (inert though it may seem to our dim physical eyes), so that the atoms of the various planes develop, when electrified by it, all sorts of previously latent attractions and repulsions, and enter into combinations of all kinds, thus by degrees bringing into existence all the lower subdivisions of each level, until we have before us in full action the marvellous complexity of the forty-nine sub-planes as we see them to-day. For this reason is it that in the Nicæan symbol the Holy Ghost is so beautifully described as “the Lord and Giver of Life”; and some clue as to the method of His working may be obtained by anyone who will study carefully Professor Crookes’ paper on *The Genesis of the Elements*, read before the Royal Institution of Great Britain on February 18th, 1887.

When matter of all the sub-planes of the system is already in existence, and the field has thus been prepared for its activity, the second great outpouring begins—the outflow of what we have sometimes called the monadic essence; and it comes this time from that higher principle corresponding in our system to the Second Logos, of whom the old theologians spoke truly enough in intention, however unfortunate they were in their choice of an expression, when they called Him “the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, by whom all things were made,” since He is indeed the only direct emanation of the First, the Unmanifested, and undoubtedly “without Him was not anything made which was made,” for this monadic essence is the ensouling and energising principle at the back of all life of which we know anything.

Slowly and steadily, but with resistless force, this great influence pours itself forth, each successive wave of it spending a whole manvantara in each of the kingdoms of nature—the three elemental, the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human. On the downward arc of its mighty curve it simply aggregates round itself the different kinds of matter on the various planes, so that all may be accustomed and adapted to act as its vehicles; but when it has reached the lowest point of its destined immeshing in matter, and turns to begin the grand upward sweep of evolution towards

divinity, its object is to develop consciousness in each of these grades of matter in turn, beginning, of course, with the lowest.

Thus it is that man, although possessing in a more or less latent condition so many higher principles, is yet for a long time at first fully conscious in his physical body only, and afterwards very gradually becomes so in his astral vehicle, and later still in his mind body. Thus also while we see in the mineral kingdom scarcely anything that we should call consciousness—nothing but the first faint beginnings of desire as shown in chemical affinity—in the vegetable kingdom we find likes and dislikes (desire, in fact) becoming very much more prominent; indeed, we have only to read any of the later works on botany to see that many plants exercise a great deal of ingenuity and sagacity in attaining their ends, limited though these ends may be. In the animal kingdom desire occupies a very prominent place, and there can be no doubt that the astral body is definitely beginning to function, though the animal has as yet nothing that can be called consciousness in it apart from the physical vehicle. In the higher domestic animals however, the astral body has sufficient development to be made after death into a *kāmarûpa* which persists for some days at least, or sometimes even for weeks, while a certain amount of *mānasic* activity is distinctly beginning to show itself.

When we come to the human kingdom we find that while with the lower types of men, desire is still emphatically the most prominent feature, the *mānasic* development has proceeded much further; during life the man has a dim consciousness in his astral vehicle while he is asleep, and after death his *kāmarûpa* is very fairly conscious and active, and endures for many years, though as yet he has practically nothing of the devachanic life. Coming to the ordinary cultured man of our own race, we find him showing high mental activity during life, and possessing qualities which give him the possibility of a very long devachanic existence after death. He is fully conscious in his astral body during sleep, though not usually able to carry through any memory from the one condition of existence to the other. The cases of the comparatively few men who have as yet undertaken the task of self-development along occult lines show us that the future course of evolution simply means the unfolding of consciousness on higher and higher planes, as humanity passes onward and becomes fit for such development.

But long before this period the third great outpouring of divine

life has taken place—that from the highest principle of the Logos of the system, corresponding to the Ātman in man, and holding the place filled in *cosmic* evolution by the First Logos, which has been called by Christianity “God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible,” because from Him all came, even the Second and Third Logoi themselves, and into Him one day all that came forth must return. An attempt has been made to indicate how the monadic essence in its upward course gradually unfolds consciousness first in the physical plane, then in the astral, and then in the lower *mānasic*. But it is only when in the highest of the domestic animals it reaches this latter stage that the possibility of the third outpouring comes within measurable distance. For this third wave of divine life can descend of itself no lower than our buddhic plane, and there it seems as it were to hover, waiting for the development of fit vehicles to enable it to come down one step further and be the individual souls of men. The phrase sounds strange, but it is difficult to express accurately in human words the mysteries of the higher life.

Imagine (to use an Eastern simile) the sea of monadic essence steadily pressed upward into the *mānasic* plane by the force of evolution inherent in it, and this third outpouring hovering above that plane like a cloud, constantly attracting and attracted by the waves below. Anyone who has ever seen the formation of a water-spout in tropical seas will grasp the idea of this Oriental illustration—will understand how the downward-pointing cone of cloud from above and the upward-pointing cone of water from below draw nearer and nearer by mutual attraction, until a moment comes when they suddenly leap together and the great column of mingled water and vapour is formed.

Similarly the blocks of animal monadic essence are constantly throwing parts of themselves into incarnation like temporary waves on the surface of a sea, and the process of differentiation goes on, until at last a time comes when one of these waves rises high enough to enable the hovering cloud to effect a junction with it, and it is then drawn up into a new existence neither in the cloud nor in the sea, but between the two, and partaking of the nature of both; and so it is separated from the block of which it has hitherto formed a part, and falls back into the sea no more. That is to say, an animal belonging to one of the more advanced blocks of essence may by his love for and devotion to his master, and by

the mental effort involved in the earnest endeavour to understand him and please him, so raise himself above his original level, that he becomes a fit vehicle for this third outpouring, the reception of which breaks him away from his block and starts him on his career of immortality as an individual.

If we remember that the consciousness of the monadic essence has been developed up to the lower mânasic level, and that the hovering influence of the divine life has descended to the buddhic plane, we shall be prepared to look on the higher mânasic levels, the arûpa division of the devachanic plane, for the resultant combination ; and that is truly the habitat of the causal body of man, the vehicle of the reincarnating Ego.

But here we note that a curious change has taken place in the position of the monadic essence. All the way through its long line of evolution in all the previous kingdoms it has invariably been the ensouling and energising principle, the force behind whatever forms it may have temporarily occupied. But now that which has hitherto been the ensouler becomes itself in turn the ensouled ; from that monadic essence is formed the causal body—that resplendent sphere of living light, into which the still more glorious light from above descends, and by means of which it is enabled to express itself as a human individuality.

Nor should any think that it is an unworthy goal to reach as the result of so long and weary an evolution, thus to become the vehicle of this last and grandest outpouring of the divine spirit ; for it must be remembered that without the preparation of this vehicle to act as a connecting link, the immortal individuality of man could never come into being, and that this upper triad thus formed becomes a transcendent unity—“ not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.” So that no fragment of the work that has been done through all these ages is lost, and nothing has been useless ; for without that work this final consummation could never have been reached, that man should become the equal of the Logos from whom he came forth, and that so that very Logos Himself should be perfected, in that He has of His own offspring those equal to Himself upon whom that love which is the essence of His divine nature can for the first time be fully lavished.

Be it remembered also that it is only in the presence within him of this third outpouring of the divine life that man possesses an absolute guarantee of his immortality ; for this is “ the spirit of



man that goeth upward" in contradistinction to "the spirit of the beast that goeth downward"—that is to say, which flows back again at the death of the animal into the block of monadic essence from which it came. A time will come—the time of the mĀhāpralaya—when "all things visible and invisible" will be reabsorbed into That from which they came; when even the Second and Third Logoi themselves, and all that is of their essence, must disappear. But even in that period of universal rest, there is one Entity who remains unaffected; the First, the Unmanifested Logos rests still, as ever, in the bosom of the Infinite. And since the direct essence of this, the divine Father of all, enters into the composition of the spirit of man, by that almighty power his immortality is absolutely assured.

## QUESTION 342.

*Is it not true that in each life-wave all three Logoi are present and active in certain degrees, but that in the first life-wave the mânasic quality is predominant, in the second wave the buddhic is predominant, and in the First Logos or third life-wave the âtmic is predominant, and further that the increase and decrease as to dominance is gradual and mutually interactive? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—I am not quite sure that I comprehend the last clause of this question, but the earlier part of it seems to me to be an endeavour to state one aspect of the great mystery of the Three in One. Perhaps the following suggestions may help to make the idea a little clearer to the mind of the querent.

It must never for a moment be forgotten that the Logos is fundamentally One as well as Three. If it were possible (which, of course, it is not) that any mere man could stand side by side with the Logos of our solar system upon His own plane, and look at Him with equal eye, as a brother Logos of some other system might, he would see that divine Power as *one*—unmistakably one and indivisible, yet possessing within Himself three aspects. Now supposing that the Logos wished to manifest Himself upon the plane next below that, it would be necessary for Him to descend to it and take upon himself a veil or body or vehicle of its matter. All these words are, of course, entirely inappropriate, for the planes of which we are now thinking are far above the level of

any kind of matter which we can at all conceive, but nevertheless the analogy suggested is a true one.

Now that which we call His first aspect is not capable of full expression or manifestation on any plane below His own, and consequently (in order to pass downward) it is necessary that He should, as it were, pour Himself forth by way of His second aspect. The manifestation of the Logos, wearing His second aspect, on a plane one stage lower than His own, is what we sometimes call the Second Logos of our solar system. If for any reason He wishes to manifest Himself directly upon a plane still one step lower, neither the first nor the second aspect will serve, but the third must be used; and that manifestation of the Logos, wearing His third aspect, on a plane two stages lower than His own, is what is sometimes called the Third Logos of our system. But it is nevertheless one and the same Great Being showing Himself in various aspects and on various planes.

It must also be remembered that His consciousness is capable not only of acting through every one of these aspects equally, but of acting in fullest perfection through all of them simultaneously. And in each and every such case it would appear to the spectator that the whole of His strength and life was equally working. There is little wonder, therefore, that the untrained mind regards as different entities aspects which differ so widely and are simultaneously in full activity.

Now from each and all of these aspects—the three aspects of the Triple Logos on His own plane, and the lower manifestation of two of those aspects—spiritual force is steadily pouring forth into the worlds which owe their existence to Him. As they descend through many planes to reach our level, these forces take many and varied forms, and are the fount of many and varied activities, and it often happens that some of these manifestations of energy appear to our minds to be warring one against the other, although in truth they are one and all come down from the same great “Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

The whole subject is, and cannot but be, far beyond human comprehension, and the most that any of us can do is to endeavour to indicate a line along which in meditation it may be possible for some to draw a little nearer to enlightenment.

## QUESTION 343.

*Mrs. Besant, in the Ancient Wisdom, speaks of the first act of the Logos as an act of self-sacrifice. Since we can only think of the Logos as absolute, without limitations or conditions, the All in All, would she explain why and for whom He sacrificed Himself? Surely there is nothing other than Himself. He must therefore sacrifice Himself for Himself, for His own improvement. Does not this imply relation, limitation, condition? That the Absolute, who is All in All, can benefit by experience when to Him there can nothing result from experience, which is not already a part of Himself, to me seems to be unthinkable. Can this paradox be explained? And have we as much warranty for assuming a knowledge of the attributes of the Universal Spirit as we have of the doctrines of karma, re-incarnation, etc.? Should we not admit that Agnosticism has the best of the argument in regard to the Ultimate of Ultimates? (1899.)*

G. R. S. M.—The questioner has made a very fundamental error in assuming that the Logos is the Absolute. It is one of the most elementary propositions of all theosophical doctrine throughout the ages that the Logos is that ray of the Absolute which is manifested in any particular universe or system. That is to say, the Logos is to the Absolute as the “personality” in man to the “individuality.” Moreover we are told that the Logos is a Being, the grandest Being or Person conceivable to the most evolved intelligence in our system, if you will, but still a Being. For there are countless Words on the “Tongue of the Ineffable.” Any doctrine concerning Him, our universal Father, must at best be tentative, for no human mind can sense His real greatness, much less know the reason and manner of His being, for He is the Reason of all reasons, and the Being of all existence *for us*. It is useless to speculate on the “Absolute”; the Logos must be for many an age the *Summum Bonum* for us little men. For not until we finally become one with the Logos, our Father, can we hope to hear the other Great Words of the Absolute Wisdom who are the direct utterances of the God over all, the Brethren of our Lord.

And so, as all the wise have taught, the “Absolute” is unspeakable, unutterable; no name can be given for That which

transcends all being. To call That "Absolute" even is a gross error. But the Logos is utterable; not that He has been uttered in all His Majesty. It requires the whole universe to do that. But He is utterable in part, according to the extent that we little men have realised Him. To describe His Goodness and His Love, His Power and His Greatness, then, we use the highest conceptions and ideals with which we are acquainted.

But in fact and reality all these are but very poor and miserable rags in which to deck His Loveliness, but it is all we have, and even the "widow's mite," we are told, is not rejected. Now one of the highest conceptions of humanity is self-sacrifice. It is an ideal, a necessary ideal for progress. Why, then, not use it to shadow forth, however dimly, the eternal outpouring of life and mind that comes from our Divine Father? If our questioner can use a better term, we should be glad to hear of it.

No, we cannot admit that Agnosticism has the better of the Lovers of the Gnosis; the positions the former is so proud of were taught in the infant classes of the Gnosis.

## DIVISION LXXXVIII

### THE FLEMENTAL ESSENCE

#### QUESTION 344.

*In the Astral Plane much mention is made of "elemental essence" from which the thought builds "elementals," and on p. 15 it is said that on looking at a stone there can be seen its astral counterpart, the Jiva flowing through it, its aura and its appropriate elemental essence. In what way is the last distinguished from the rest? Is it astral or other matter? (1896.)*

B. K.—“Elemental essence” is the name applied to the monadic essence, *i.e.*, *Âtma-Buddhi*, which is descending through the matter of the *mânasic* and astral planes into the mineral kingdom. *Âtma-Buddhi* clothes itself primarily in the atomic condition of each of these planes of matter in turn, but is of course distinguishable by the trained clairvoyant vision from the matter in which it thus vehicles itself, though without such a vehicle formed of the matter of the plane in question it could not manifest upon that plane at all. It thus constitutes the informing or ensouling life and sentiency of every form which can be built of the matter belonging to that plane. By this I mean the life and sentiency properly belonging to that form as such, whether or not that form is used as a vehicle by some conscious entity from the same or any higher plane. To take an instance. Suppose my thought builds a form out of the matter of the lowest astral sub-plane. In building it, my thought encloses in the shape made of this order of matter a portion of the “elemental essence” of the astral plane, *i.e.*, of that *Âtma-Buddhi* which has clothed itself in atomic astral matter. This elemental essence then becomes the life and sentiency of the form my thought has built, receiving from my thought its direction, character, and separate existence. When

transcends all being. To call That "Absolute" even is a gross error. But the Logos is utterable; not that He has been uttered in all His Majesty. It requires the whole universe to do that. But He is utterable in part, according to the extent that we little men have realised Him. To describe His Goodness and His Love, His Power and His Greatness, then, we use the highest conceptions and ideals with which we are acquainted.

But in fact and reality all these are but very poor and miserable rags in which to deck His Loveliness, but it is all we have, and even the "widow's mite," we are told, is not rejected. Now one of the highest conceptions of humanity is self-sacrifice. It is an ideal, a necessary ideal for progress. Why, then, not use it to shadow forth, however dimly, the eternal outpouring of life and mind that comes from our Divine Father? If our questioner can use a better term, we should be glad to hear of it.

No, we cannot admit that Agnosticism has the better of the Lovers of the Gnosis; the positions the former is so proud of were taught in the infant classes of the Gnosis.



the form breaks up, the elemental essence returns to the particular class of essence from which it was drawn. For although the astral elemental essence is *primarily* Âtma-Buddhi vehicled in atomic astral matter, yet as time proceeds it further differentiates itself, clothing itself in other orders of astral matter besides the atomic, and thus gives rise to the very numerous classes of astral elemental essence.

Speaking generally, there are three great realms of "elemental essence" which in earlier theosophic writing have been spoken of as the three "elemental kingdoms" which precede the mineral kingdom in order of evolution. These belong respectively to the arûpa levels of the mânasic plane, to the rûpa levels thereof, and to the astral plane; each again being sub-divided into many kinds, classes, and orders.

From the foregoing the answers to the questions put will be clear. The elemental essence informing a stone is distinguishable from the astral counterpart of the stone and from the Jîva flowing through it, by its own peculiar characteristics, which are just as plainly visible to the trained clairvoyant sight as the peculiarities of the stone itself. The nature of the elemental essence has been explained above as far as can be done in words. But this explanation must necessarily be very imperfect, and will probably convey but little to the reader; just as a written description of the flavour of a strawberry would give but little idea of what that fruit really tastes like.

C. W. L.—The elemental essence is very readily distinguishable from the rest by those who are able to see it, but it is not so easy to make the distinction clear in a verbal description on the physical plane. First, let it be understood that elemental essence is merely a name applied during certain stages of its evolution to monadic essence, which in its turn may be defined as the outpouring of Âtma-Buddhi into matter. We are all familiar with the idea that before this outpouring arrives at the stage of individualisation at which it ensouls man, it has passed through and ensouled in turn six lower phases of evolution—the animal, vegetable, mineral, and three elemental kingdoms. When energising through those respective stages, it has sometimes been called the animal, vegetable or mineral monad—though this term is distinctly misleading, since long before it arrives at any of these kingdoms it has become not *one* but *many* monads. The name was, however, adopted to convey the idea that, though



differentiation in the monadic essence had already long ago set in, it had not yet been carried to the extent of individualisation.

Now when this monadic essence is energising through the three great elemental kingdoms which precede the mineral, it is called by the name of "elemental essence." Before, however, its nature and the manner in which it manifests can be understood, the method in which Âtmâ enfolds itself in its descent into matter must be realised. Be it remembered, then, that when Âtmâ, resting on any plane (it matters not which—let us call it plane No. 1) wills to descend to the plane next below (let us call that plane No. 2), it must enfold itself in the matter of that plane—that is to say, it must draw round itself a veil of the matter of plane No. 2. Similarly when it continues its descent to plane No. 3 it must draw round itself the matter of that plane, and we shall then have, say, an atom whose body or outer covering consists of the matter of plane No. 3. The force energising in it—its soul, so to speak—will, however, not be Âtmâ in the condition in which it was on plane No. 1, but will be that Âtmâ *plus* the veil of the matter of plane No. 2. When a still further descent is made to plane No. 4, the atom becomes still more complex, for it will then have a body of No. 4 matter, ensouled by Âtmâ already twice veiled—in the matter of planes 2 and 3. It will be seen that, since this process repeats itself for every sub-plane of each plane of the solar system, by the time the original force reaches our physical level, it is so thoroughly veiled that it is small wonder men often fail to recognise Âtmâ at all.

Now suppose that the monadic essence has carried on this process of veiling itself down to the atomic level of the devachanic plane, and that, instead of descending through the various subdivisions of that plane, it plunges down directly into the astral plane, ensouling or aggregating round it a body of atomic astral matter; such a combination would be the elemental essence of the astral plane, belonging to the third of the great elemental kingdoms—the one immediately preceding the mineral. In the course of its two thousand four hundred differentiations on the astral plane it draws to itself many and various combinations of the matter of its several sub-divisions; but these are only temporary, and it still remains essentially one kingdom, whose characteristic is monadic essence involved down to the atomic level of the devachanic plane only, but manifesting through the atomic matter of the astral plane.

The two higher elemental kingdoms exist and function respectively upon the rûpa and the arûpa levels of the devachanic plane, but the question probably does not refer to them. It should, however, be remembered that in speaking of this phase of evolution, the word "higher" means, not, as usual, more advanced, but *less* advanced, since here we are dealing with the monadic essence on the downward sweep of its arc, and progress for the elemental essence therefore means descent into matter instead of ascent towards higher planes. Unless the student bears this fact constantly and clearly in mind, he will again and again find himself beset by perplexing anomalies.

QUESTION 345.

*On page 18 of Manual VI., Mr. Leadbeater mentions elemental essence as something "quite distinct" from the "mere matter of the plane." Monadic essence he does not speak of. I had thought elemental essence was the matter of the plane, and monadic essence the informing principle as it were—that the latter clothed itself in the former, and bore the same relation to it as the individuality does to the personality; that the elemental essence was the result of the first outpouring of the Logos, and the monadic essence that of the second. Is not this correct? (1899.)*

B. K.—The term "monadic essence" has been already defined in the *Vāhan*, but it may be well to repeat the explanation in other words, and try to make clear the distinction between the two terms, "monadic essence" and "elemental essence."

First, then, the "monadic essence" of any plane is the second outpouring or second Life Wave (*i.e.*, the outpoured Life of the Second Logos) *clothed in the atomic matter of the plane in question.* To elaborate: (a) the second Life Wave denotes the whole outpouring of life from the Second Logos irrespective of the kind or kinds of matter in which it may be clothed; (b) when this second Life Wave is clothed in the atomic matter of any plane and not in any of the other (molecular) conditions of the matter of that plane, it is called the monadic essence *of that plane.* It should further be remembered that, in its descent from the Logos, the second Life Wave clothes itself only in the atomic matter of the planes above that on which we may be tracing its further differentiation. Thus,

to take the monadic essence of the physical plane as an example, this physical plane monadic essence will have as its outermost garment the atomic matter only of the physical plane; within that its next sheath will be the atomic matter of the astral plane, but it will not have in its sheathing any of the various molecular combinations of the astral atoms which constitute the various sub-planes of the astral. Further, the next inner sheath of the monadic essence will be composed of the highest order of matter belonging to the uppermost of the four lower subdivisions of the mânasic plane (since this mânasic plane embraces two distinct evolutionary kingdoms). Then as its next sheath it will have atoms of the highest of the three arûpa mânasic levels, then atoms of the buddhic plane, and so on.

So far, then, for the meaning and use of the term "monadic essence"; now let us take up the other term, viz., "elemental essence." Its use and meaning are simple. When a portion of the monadic essence of any plane clothes itself in the molecular matter of that plane, in addition to its permanent sheath of the atomic matter, it is then called "elemental essence" of such and such a kind. Thus, to put this in the form of a definition: "elemental essence" is "monadic essence" sheathed in a further outer coating of molecular matter.

To deal now specifically with some of the subsidiary points mentioned in the question, on the basis of the above definitions and explanations:

1. "Elemental essence" is thus not the matter of the plane, but involves another and higher life, viz., the life of the Second Logos poured forth as the second Life Wave, since it consists of monadic essence sheathed in the molecular matter of the plane, and we thus have—

Elemental essence = monadic essence + sheathing of molecular matter of the plane = second Life Wave + atomic matter of plane in question and all planes above it + molecular sheathing.

2. Both monadic essence and elemental essence belong to the second Life Wave poured forth by the Second Logos, *not* to the first Life Wave which proceeds from the Third Logos.

C. W. L.—The questioner should study his Manuals more carefully. If he will read again pp. 74-79 of *Manual VI*, and p. 56 of *Manual V*, he will find a statement of the subject which, if

he had understood it, would have rendered his query unnecessary. Elemental essence *is* monadic essence at a certain stage of its descent into matter. Just as the name "mineral monad" or "mineral essence" is applied to that part of the monadic outpouring from the Second Logos which happens to be manifesting through the mineral kingdom, so is the name "elemental essence" applied to that part of the same outpouring which is as yet at an earlier stage of evolution and is manifesting through the elemental kingdoms on the astral or mental planes. The distinction between the essence and the matter of a plane is drawn in *Manual V.*, pp. 14, 15.

QUESTION 346.

*When elemental essence is moulded into a thought-form, it takes to itself a colour corresponding to the nature of the thought or feeling; does it carry with it any part of this colouring when it sinks back into the general mass of essence, when the thought-form disintegrates? (1902.)*

C. W. L.—It is undoubtedly true that the essence when moulded by thought adopts a certain colour—a colour which is expressive of the nature of the thought or feeling. But we must remember that a colour is, after all, nothing but a certain rate of vibration, so that all that we mean when we say that a thought-form is of a certain colour is that the essence composing it is for the time compelled to vibrate at a certain definite rate by the thought which is ensouling it.

Now the evolution of the elemental essence is to learn to respond to all possible rates of vibration; when, therefore, a thought holds it for a time vibrating at a certain rate, it is helped to this extent, that it has now become habituated to that particular rate of vibration, so that next time it comes within reach of a similar vibration it will respond to it very much more readily than before. Then presently those atoms of essence, having passed back again into the general mass of the elemental essence, will be caught up again by some other thought and will then have to vibrate at some totally different rate, and so will evolve a little further by acquiring the capacity to respond very readily to the second type of vibration. So by very slow degrees the thoughts not only of man but of nature spirits and devas, and even of

animals so far as they do think, are slowly evolving the elemental essence which surrounds them—slowly teaching, as it were, here a few atoms and there a few atoms to respond to this or that different rate of vibration, until at last a stage will be reached when all the particles of the essence shall be ready to answer at any moment to any possible rate of vibration, and that will be the completion of their evolution.

So that perhaps it would be more correct for us to say that what the essence carries with it back into the mass is not so much the colour itself as the power to assume that colour at any moment when required.

QUESTION 347.

*Is it possible to kill or to destroy elementals of an evil character so that they can do no further harm to ourselves or others? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—Undoubtedly it is possible to dissipate an artificial elemental by an exertion of will-power, if that is what is meant by the questioner. It is also possible on the physical plane to kill a poisonous snake in order that it may do no further harm; but neither course of action would commend itself to an occultist except under very unusual circumstances. It is perfectly justifiable for a man to defend himself or others from either the snake on the physical plane or the evil elemental on the astral: but in nearly all cases this can be done without employing any of the forces of destruction. In the case of the elemental the simple expedient of forming a shell round oneself or round anyone whom one is engaged in protecting will at once prevent the possibility of any unpleasant consequences.

In dealing with a matter such as this there are two points which must never be forgotten—first, that the elemental essence evolves through its connection with thought, and that unless circumstances absolutely compel us to do so, we shall do wrong to interfere with that evolution. Whether the thought ensouling it is evil or good makes no difference to the essence; all that is required for its development is to be used by thought of some kind. The difference between the good and the evil would be shown by the quality of essence which it affected, the evil thought or desire needing for its appropriate expression the coarser and denser matter, while the higher thought would require correspondingly finer and

more rapidly vibrating matter for its covering. There are plenty of undeveloped people always thinking the coarser, lower thoughts, and their very ignorance and crassness are made use of by the great law as evolutionary forces to help on a certain stage of the work that has to be done. It is for us, who have learnt a little more than they, to strive ever to think the high and holy thoughts, which cause the evolution of a finer kind of elemental matter, and so to work in a field where at present the labourers are all too few.

Secondly, we must remember that an astramental image of an evil character can never affect anyone unless they have in themselves something corresponding to it upon which it can fasten. Upon the aura of a pure and noble-hearted person these evil influences make absolutely no impression ; they are unable to find any entrance there, and they simply rebound from it like a missile from a dead wall. Most of all is this the case with a man who is full of loving thought, for he is ever pouring out from himself a constant stream of good wishes and benevolent feelings—a stream so strong that nothing evil can withstand it, but is swept far away before its outward rush. Thus it is plain that everyone may defend himself (and others) from evil by a method better far than any in which the idea of destruction has place.

## DIVISION LXXXIX

### THE MASTERS OF WISDOM

#### QUESTION 348.

*"A frequent objection to Theosophy is 'that it is immoral for Mahâtmas to lock up in their own breasts knowledge that might be used to alleviate the miseries of the East End.'"*  
(1891.)

A. B.—I often wish that people would turn critical eyes on themselves rather than on the Mahâtmas, for a little knowledge of themselves would enable them to reach a sounder judgment as to the conduct of the Adepts. The miseries of the East End are the inevitable results, under natural law, of the causes set going by ourselves and others: the organisation of Society is the body made for themselves by men and women, just as the pimples and blotches on a drunkard's face are the result of his intemperance. If the drunkard went to a doctor to cure his face, the doctor would tell him, "No cure can be permanent so long as the cause of the mischief is kept going." And so the miseries that grow out of our selfishness and brutality cannot be cured by any knowledge existing in the breasts of Mahâtmas. They can only help effectively by striking at the causes, and this They are doing by bringing to bear influences on the minds and hearts of men, that will make them better *men*, and therefore creators of a better society. To give, say, a sudden profusion of the comforts of life would but strengthen the carelessness and selfishness that already work such ruin, and would so perpetuate the evil. Our Elder Brothers are not like the foolish parents who give their children anything they cry for, to the destruction of their future welfare. There is another reason why much of Their knowledge is not, at present, published by the Masters to the world. The forces which

they have learned to control are as potent for working evil as for working good, and by teaching their manipulation They would arm the enemies of humanity with the most deadly weapons of destruction. Men must lead the Mahâtma's life before they can be trusted with the Mahâtma's powers.

QUESTION 349.

"An objection often put forward is: 'If the Mahâtmas are such spiritual giants as is claimed, how and why do they permit the conquest, degradation, etc., of their countries, India, Egypt, etc.?' " (1891.)

A. B.—Why should a "spiritual giant" interfere with material conquest? Mahâtmas are of many races, and seek to aid the progress of mankind without regard to race, and with a view always to spiritual progress rather than material gain. Further, the Mahâtma is, above all, obedient to law, and he cannot interfere with the karma of nations or of men. Each of us sets going certain causes, and with their working out no Mahâtma can interfere. A Mahâtma is not an irresponsible and arbitrary God: He is a wise, pure, highly-evolved human being, and all He can do is to help such of his brethren as will allow themselves to be helped, by suggestion, warning, and encouragement. He cannot take into his own hands the destiny of others, as much responsible human beings as Himself: the race is to develop into self-reliant, serviceable entities, not into a mob of puppets, pulled by strings in Mahâtmic hands. And to become a man instead of a doll, one must learn the lessons of experience for oneself. A tutor who said all the lessons of his pupils for them, with the object of saving them trouble and pain, would have a class of dunces at the end of the term.

I. C.-O.—If the questioner will turn to the *Occult World*, by A. P. Sinnett (p. 92), he will find a very full answer to his question given by one of the Masters, evidently in answer to a question of the same description. "The cycles must run their rounds. Periods of mental and moral light and darkness must succeed each other as day does night. The major or minor cycles must be accomplished according to the established order of things. . . . There have been times when a considerable portion of enlightened minds were taught in our schools. Such times there were in



India, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome." Now according to the law of evolution, the wave of growth and so-called civilisation passes every nation, and unfortunately brings evil as well as good. "Education enthrones scepticism, but imprisons spirituality. You can do immense good by helping to give the Western nations a secure basis upon which to reconstruct their crumbling faith." But this possibility of spiritual help, and life, can only come at certain times, according to evolutionary law; such a period of help is now here; let us make every opportunity of it, to the utmost extent of our power, for on the aid we give to the spreading of theosophic truth depends very greatly the future of our own nation, which is fast reaching its acme of materialisation, and which must inevitably follow the same law of semi-annihilation which has swept away those magnificent centres of education and civilisation in the Eastern world because they had materialised in their greatness and lost their spiritual life. "This is the moment to guide the recurrent impulse which must soon come, and which will push the age towards extreme Atheism, or drag it back to extreme sacerdotalism, if it is not led to the primitive, soul-satisfying philosophy of the Aryans." Here, then, is the work for Theosophists.

## QUESTION 350.

*May I ask if it is considered in the Society that the evidence in favour of the existence and the attributes of the Tibetan Mahâtmas is conclusive? (1903.)*

A. A. W.—Before directly answering this question I should like to point out that our views as to Mahâtmas have nothing in common with the old-fashioned style of Christian Apology, which is what the querist seems to have in his mind. The conception of a God coming down upon earth and working miracles for the express purpose of making people believe in His teaching is one which is natural at an early stage of mind, and, of course, requires strict demonstration of the actual fact of His having so come, and of His actually having worked the miracles, before we can be called upon so much as to take into consideration what it was He taught. The difficulties in the way of producing this "conclusive evidence" of the mission of Jesus Christ have caused the method to be by this time almost completely abandoned by all serious

thinkers and teachers of the Christian faith; and we theosophists have not the slightest intention of placing our belief in Mahâtmas in the false position from which Christians are even now engaged in disentangling *their* Teacher.

The difference is that the Beings who are engaged in the actual ruling of the world according to the design of the still Greater Being Who planned it and gave it its Laws of Life—the Mahâtmas, Great Souls, as they are called in India—the Brothers, as they are named in Tibet—have not the smallest interest in the question whether you or I believe in them or no. Their business is to *rule*—believers and unbelievers alike. A distinction H. P. B. draws is here of much value. She says that whilst it is part of the Doctrine that such Beings, far above us, there *must* be, still we are in no way bound to believe in any *particular* Master, A. B., C. D., or the like, with whom certain clairvoyants may believe themselves in communication. And the meaning of this statement is that to our mind nothing turns on the “conclusiveness of the evidence” on the point. Their existence is not postulated and their powers defined, as proof of the doctrines they have taught us—quite otherwise. What has happened is that a certain amount of information has been given us as to the way in which the world came into being, and the Powers by which it is ruled; information consistent with many things said in the Bible, but which could not be obtained by mere discussion of its texts; information which is not contrary to anything in the Bible—only to the prepossessions of the limited souls who cannot admit that God can have revealed anything but what they can find there. Thus the Bible speaks of various orders of Angels, Archangels, Powers, Thrones, and the like, and leaves the matter there, a mere piece of curious information, of no use to us as it stands. The theosophical teaching shows us the great Hierarchy—the Logos whose mind conceived the world and all things therein; then the Seven Spirits of God (named in the Bible) who are charged with the carrying out of the great plan. Each of these has His seven beneath Him and so on, dividing and sub-dividing till we come down to men—the lowest stage, but each charged with his own small share in the great Work of God, and each to become in time capable of higher work, rising from one step to another as the Godhead within him succeeds in more and more completely manifesting itself in him. For those who can take in this great and encouraging thought, it makes a new world of life

and joy ; but we do not press it upon those to whom it does not appeal as a "Gospel," to be preached "in season and out of season." The Teacher's word is always, as Jesus Christ's—"He that can perceive it, let him receive it"; the others will grow to it in time.

Now, in our view, the Mahâtmas are simply highly progressed men, who stand on a step far above our own, with others similarly above them. We, too, have to reach their level, and pass beyond it. That such exist needs no "conclusive evidence"; we take it for granted that every step above us, as below us, has its own occupants. The only question for us is whether we are satisfied that the Beings with whom our human teachers profess to be in communication are really such Masters as they describe them; and on this point we must judge by their teachings only. We are sure that the beings who speak at an ordinary spiritualistic *séance* are not Masters, because they have nothing to teach us. As we rise to the higher levels, to such, for example, as those of Mrs. Kingsford in *The Perfect Way*, we find a more perfect vision, though still mixed with much which comes, not from the Teacher, but from the mind of the Seer. Still, we may feel reasonably sure that the revelation contains something of the Truth, and is of value, as is said of the Christian scriptures, for instruction in righteousness. From this to the *Secret Doctrine* is but a question of degree. In H. P. B.'s writings we have a far larger horizon; there is much more Truth given to us, and the Seer through which it comes is conscious of her own imperfections and does not set up for herself the infallibility claimed for his colleague by Mr. Edward Maitland. Those who can receive it at all will, I venture to think, feel that the theosophical teaching is the highest which has, as a matter of fact, been given to us in these later centuries, and will have no difficulty in recognising as Masters those who have imparted it to us. But this conviction can only be obtained by intelligent and appreciative study of it, not forced upon an unwilling mind by "conclusive evidence." As to this, the language of all the world's teachers has ever been, and still is, that of Jesus of Nazareth: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it."

## QUESTION 351.

*Is it permitted to commune or talk with the Masters in loving, reverent familiarity, as with a revered parent, about trivial trials and temptations as they arise a hundred times throughout the day? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—All those who have ever come into contact with the Masters of Wisdom have been most deeply impressed with their exceeding kindness and readiness to help, but at the same time no one who really understands the magnificent and far-reaching work in which they are always engaged, upon planes far higher than these, would ever dream of intruding his own petty affairs upon their notice for a single moment.

It should be remembered that they know all that they feel it necessary or useful to know with regard to all those who aspire one day to become their pupils; it is far better therefore to leave the initiative to them, in reverent belief (and indeed certainty) that when they see it to be well for us that they should in any way communicate with us, they will assuredly do so.

The state of affairs of which the questioner is evidently thinking is that which is enjoyed by one who has been definitely accepted as their pupil, and has passed at least some stages of initiation on what is called the Path Proper—a condition, I need hardly say, enormously in advance of that of the ordinary student.

## QUESTION 352.

*It has sometimes been said that the Masters of Wisdom inhabit the same physical body for periods considerably exceeding the span of ordinary life; is this the case? (1896.)*

C. W. L.—This statement has constantly been made by those who are in a position to know something of such matters, and it seems a reasonable one. The physical body of an Adept is first of all always in absolutely perfect health, and the conditions under which it exists are naturally of the most favourable description. We are told that but little food, and that only of the simplest and purest kind, is usually taken by these great ones. But what is of far greater importance than these physical conditions in promoting longevity is the entire freedom from all anxiety and mental dis-

turbance which is one of the most prominent characteristics of the Adept; his face is stamped always with a holy calm, a joyous serenity, the peace which passeth all understanding. This mental and spiritual state reacts even upon the physical body, and reduces its wear and tear to the minimum. So that even apart from testimony it would seem likely that the body of the Adept would endure much longer than ours do. Many Indian stories proclaim that this which seems so probable is really so; and I have heard Madame Blavatsky say that her Master as he appears now does not look a day older than when she first saw him in her childhood sixty years ago.

## QUESTION 353.

*Do the saints of the Roman Catholic Church and other great spiritual beings who have incarnated in this world, such as Buddha, Zarathustra, etc., hear the prayers addressed to them? Has their consciousness expanded to such a degree that they are cognisant of all that takes place here, or at least of all that which concerns them? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—The form of this question shows an initial misconception which it will be well to clear out of the way before going further. The great world-teachers Buddha and Zarathustra are Adepts of an exceedingly high order, and æons of progress separate them from the mere saints of any church, great though these latter may be as compared with the ordinary unevolved human being. So that the answer naturally divides itself into two parts, referring to these very different levels.

So far as the founders of the Buddhist and Parsi religions are concerned, it has to be remembered that they never in any way encouraged their followers to pray to them, and that as a rule the latter have been far too enlightened to do anything of the kind. Whether a very strong thought directed towards them would reach them or not would depend upon the line of evolution which they have since followed—in fact, upon whether they still remain within touch of this earth or not. If they were still so within reach, and if such a thought did reach them, it is probable that if they saw that it would be good for the thinker that any notice should be taken, they would turn in his direction the attention of some of their pupils who are still upon earth.

But it is quite inconceivable that a man who had any sort of conception of the magnificent and far-reaching work done for evolution by these great Adepts on higher planes could dream of intruding his own petty concerns upon their notice ; he could not but know that any kind of help that he required would be far more fitly given to him by some one nearer to his own level. Even down here on this physical plane we are wiser than that, for we do not waste the time of the greatest scholars of our universities in helping babies over the difficulties of the alphabet.

As regards the saints of any of the churches the position is of course very different, though even with them the ability to hear prayers will depend upon their position in evolution. The ordinary saint, who is simply a very good and holy man, will of course take his Devachan as usual, and will probably have a very long one. His life on the astral plane would be likely to be but a short one, and it would be only during that that it would be possible for a prayer to reach him and attract his attention. If during that time it did so reach him, no doubt he would do anything that he could to satisfy the petitioner ; but it is by no means certain that it would attract his attention, for he would naturally be very fully occupied with his new surroundings.

When he entered upon his long rest in Devachan, he would be entirely beyond any possibility of being disturbed by earthly things ; yet even in such a case a prayer to him might not be without effect in connection with him. Such a man would almost certainly be pouring out a constant stream of loving thought towards humanity, and this thought would be a real and potent shower of blessing, tending generally towards the spiritual helping of those upon whom it fell ; and there is no doubt that the man who was earnestly thinking of or praying to that saint would come into *rappor*t with him, and draw down upon himself a great deal of that force, though of course entirely without the knowledge of the saint from whom it came.

If the saint were sufficiently advanced to be able to renounce Devachan and to enter upon a special series of births rapidly following one another, the case would be different again. He would then be all the time within reach of earth, either living on the astral plane or in incarnation upon the physical, and if the prayer were strong enough to attract his attention at any time when he was for the moment out of his body, he would probably give any help in his power.

But fortunately for the many thousands who are constantly pouring forth their souls in prayer—in the blindest ignorance, of course, but still in perfect good faith—there is something else to depend upon which is independent of all these considerations. Kṛiṣṇa tells us, in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, how all true prayers come to him, to whomsoever they may have been ignorantly offered; there is a Consciousness wide enough to comprehend all, which never fails in its response to any earnest effort in the direction of increased spirituality. It works through many means; sometimes perhaps by directing the attention of a deva to the suppliant, sometimes through the agency of those human helpers who work upon the astral or mental planes for the good of humanity. Such a deva or helper so used would, if he showed himself, inevitably be taken by the petitioner for the saint to whom he had prayed, and there are many stories which show this. In this connection I would refer the questioner to some articles on the subject of "Invisible Helpers" which I published in *Lucifer* two years ago, and which are soon to be issued in pamphlet form.

## QUESTION 354.

*Admitting that Jesus is only one of the Aspects of God, and that Kṛiṣṇa, Buddha and the like were also "Gods" in differing degrees; still, though we can no longer proclaim Him as the Universal Lord, may we not offer Him our special gratitude and love, as having lived and suffered to bring us back to the way, saying, "I belong to Him because He came to seek and to save the lost. I was lost and He found me, and loved me into happiness and hope again"?* (1901.)

A. A. W.—Our querist has touched very beautifully on a point often sadly misunderstood by our Christian friends. It is very hard for them to conceive a veneration, a love, for the Christ which does *not* proclaim him as the Universal Lord; and one who refuses this, as a theosophist must do, is instantly regarded as a disbeliever in Christianity, an Atheist. It was not so in the earlier ages of Christianity. In the Acts of the Apostles, in the speech attributed to S. Peter but a few days after the Crucifixion, we find only the simple and true statement that Jesus was a Man, a teacher sent from God. It is, as usual, controversy which has

hardened and materialised the truth. When the whole doctrine of Divine Teachers had been lost, men arose who, seeing that even now the New Testament does not speak of Christ as identical with the Father, hastily concluded that there was nothing for it but to say He was a man, *like ourselves*. Now *this*, beyond all question, He was *not*; a man, verily, but immeasurably different from, and higher than, ourselves. But the later and most defective Christian theology had no place for such a Being as He really was; the Christ could only be lifted above the pettifogging lawyer's disputes as to whether He were indeed "without sin," as regards fig-trees and swine and the like, by proclaiming Him Almighty God. The instinct was right, but the results of the ignorance deplorable. It has finally committed the popular theology to a position absolutely untenable in the present condition of history and science, and its work must be undone if religion (in the ordinary sense of the word) is to live through the century.

But whilst agreeing that the querist should himself think and explain to his friends that he thinks of Christ in the way suggested in his question, thus putting our doctrine in as pleasant a light as possible to the Christian people about him, I do not like to let the question pass without pointing out to him that a time will come when he will see for himself that this view also is a very limited one. The Masters are not, in actual fact, separate from each other in the sense that we, still members of the common herd as we are, have a right to think ourselves as belonging to this Master or that. It is not on their plane, as it is on the physical plane, where "one may be of Paul, another of Apollos, another of Christ." 'Till we come to the point (as yet far distant) where we shall be so raised above our fellows as to be possible *disciples* of a special Master, it is far better for us in our thoughts to group the whole of that great Hierarchy as "The Master" (as is done in our books) and to offer That the love and reverence our querist would fain still find some excuse for limiting to the Syrian Teacher. His thought shows him, to a certain extent, yet subject to the popular illusion that any reverence paid to others is so much *taken from* Jesus. It is not so, it is so much added to Him; for at that height it is already true of Them what is only a devout aspiration for us, "That they all may be one, even as thou, Father, art one with Me and I in Thee." It is to that Divine Love, of which all the Teachers are but the channels, we must lift our



eyes and hearts. Our friend forgets his New Testament ; it is the love of the Father which the Teacher came to show, not his own, it is the Father's love which loves in Him, even as it is the Father—not I—who teaches the wisdom and does the work—not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. And nothing could be so distasteful to a true Master—Jesus or any other—as that the disciple should let his love and reverence stop at *His* person and not pass forwards and higher to the Father whose love sent Him into the world to seek and save. And whether you call this higher Love which flows out through Masters and disciples alike, the Father, the Logos, or the Master, is all one. For in God's sight They, and we, are even now all one in Him.

## QUESTION 355.

*Does a highly-developed Ego, that of a Master, for instance, put on the limitations of the physical brain when it descends to work on the physical plane ? (1898.)*

C. W. L.—Undoubtedly when working on the physical plane such an Ego must be limited by his physical brain ; but if we in any way compare such limitation with that which we experience in connection with our own brains we shall be grievously mistaken. It should be remembered that the Master stands at least at the Asekha level—the position which humanity is intended to attain at the end of the seventh round—and that, therefore, even his physical body is far more highly evolved and far more sensitive than ours.

In addition to the evolution of the physical atom, to which reference has already been made, there is also visible in the adept a very striking development of the means of communication between the cells of the brain and the higher principles. It is very difficult to describe this clearly without the help of a diagram, but it may be possible to give some idea of it by calling in the aid of the reader's imagination.

Let us suppose the grey matter of the brain to be laid out upon a flat surface, so that the layer is only one particle thick—that is to say, let us suppose ourselves looking down upon it from the "fourth dimension," since that is exactly the appearance that it would present if regarded from that point of view. Let us suppose also that the corresponding particles of the astral body and

of the mind body are similarly arranged in layers on their respective planes, and that the lines of communication between them are represented by threads joining each physical particle to its astral counterpart, and each of those astral particles in turn to its counterpart in the mind body.

Now, if we imagine an ordinary man's brain and its counterparts to be thus arranged, we should see that surprisingly few of the lines of communication were perfect—probably not more than a score or two out of many thousands. In the case of the vast majority of the particles there would simply be no threads at all, and great areas of the brain matter could therefore never receive any direct communication from the higher bodies. In the case of other particles the thread might exist between the mind-body and the astral, but not be carried through to the physical, while yet others might have the thread complete between astral and physical, but no continuation of the line higher up.

Now since the various faculties of man express themselves down here only through their appropriate areas in the brain, it is obvious that the state of affairs which has been described entails some rather curious consequences. We are for the moment leaving entirely out of account the enormous differences which exist between the various Egos, and also the differences in the impressibility of their respective mind bodies; yet we see what infinite possibilities of variety we have, even in the arrangement of the threads of communication between the lower vehicles alone.

Take for example the power of metaphysical thought. We shall find many an Ego in whom such a faculty does not yet exist at all, but even when it is beginning to develop, it will be with the greatest difficulty that any connection can be established with the appropriate area of brain matter. Until the Ego can evolve the proper threads of communication, he will be able to operate that part of his physical brain only by the clumsy and roundabout expedient of sending his message down some other and quite inappropriate thread, and letting it spread out laterally, as it were by transference from one cell to another in the physical brain. We can see at once how different would be the position of the man who had developed even one of the threads especially belonging to that type of thought, and how infinitely better yet would be the condition in which all the threads which feed that section of the brain were in full working order. This last-mentioned state, of course, exemplifies the ideal condition of that part of the brain

in a seventh-round body, so it is needless to say that not even the highest philosophical thinkers among us are within anything like measurable distance of such a consummation as yet.

But that is the condition to which the Asekha has brought his physical brain, not as regards one part only, but the whole ; so that although it is undoubtedly true that he is limited by his physical brain, since he has vast stores of knowledge which are altogether beyond even *its* power of expression, we shall be making a mistake of the most colossal character if we suppose that that limitation is in any way comparable with those under which we constantly find ourselves labouring. We should remember that this fourth round is not the one specially intended for the development of Manas, and that we can at present have no conception of the glorious heights to which it will attain in its own fifth round, any more than we can realise how poor a thing the intellect of which we are so proud to-day will appear to us, when we look back upon it from the standpoint which we shall then have attained.

#### QUESTION 356.

*Why does it happen that when one ardently desires a manifestation of the assistance of the Masters, or seriously formulates a request before going to sleep to be enabled to retain on waking a clear impression of what he is to do under certain special circumstances, he frequently fails to obtain a reply? (1901.)*

R.—The higher a being stands on the scale of evolution, the nearer he is to the Divine, and the more completely does he act according to the Divine Law. The Masters are Divine, they work along with the Law, with God ; and (like God) they do not always answer the most fervent prayer, or, rather, they but rarely give *the reply we expect*. But what we think of as an *answer* is not the real answer : it is merely the impression made on the convolutions of the brain, on the physical consciousness by a higher vibration. Now, in nearly all cases the brain is far too undeveloped to respond to the vibrations which form the true answer, because these are of a rapidity quite beyond the brain's power to respond to them.

But the *real man*, the higher mental consciousness, receives this reply ; it receives it more completely as its evolution is more

advanced, and it is in this way the *true man* is assisted, it is thus that God and the Masters give answer to our prayers. A very few in their highest moments of prayer are able to receive the divine impression into their ordinary waking brain-consciousness, and these are able to see, to hear, to feel, as the case may require. All men will come to hear God in their bodily consciousness when their brain organisation, in the course of their evolution, becomes sufficiently spiritualised.

Until this takes place the physical consciousness will be insensitive to the answer which the *true man* (the deeper consciousness) receives each time it questions and prays. And this answer it is which gives the needful aid, unknown to the lower senses.

In order to manifest to the physical consciousness before this time, God (or the Masters) would have to work a wonder—to materialise in human form; and this needless expenditure of force would not be so effective a help as that which acts on the Higher Ego.

This is why the Masters, like God, so often *appear* to give no answer to our prayers.

A. A. W.—In copying, with due acknowledgment to the *Bulletin Théosophique* of June, the above interesting question and answer, I should like to add something our friend has not had the heart to say to his querist, well as he himself knows it. It is quite true that when the Masters *do* answer our appeal, it is seldom in a way comprehensible to our physical brain; but it must also be kept in mind that there are many things as to which that same physical brain and lower mind ardently desire a sign, and all the Master's answer can be is, in the words of the Master Jesus in such case, "there shall no sign be given them." And this for two reasons. We must never forget that the Higher Powers are interested in us solely in regard of our Higher Ego; the circumstances of our physical life—the questions as to what we are to do on this plane—in short, precisely the things about which we most anxiously appeal for guidance, are absolutely nothing to Them. They are not, indeed (again in Scripture phrase) incapable of "being touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but they look at them as the mother upon the baby frettings and tempers of her infant child—indulgently, but yet knowing that the time will come when we shall see for ourselves of how little consequence they are to the life of our individuality—the true Man. And still further—the growth and evolution of this Higher Self, the one thing for

which we manifest on this physical plane at all, is made precisely by our very struggles and mistakes, and by nothing else. It is not heartlessness which makes the watchers look on in silence as we blindly choose the course which may bring us pain and suffering. What is of consequence is, not that we should avoid suffering, but that we should learn its lesson; and the sharper the pain the quicker is the lesson learned. The popular doctrine of "Sin" as the one thing to be thought of or avoided has blinded us to the higher view of life. Jesus himself did not think or speak so. To Him, as to every Teacher sent from God, the one thing of importance was that the man should turn from seeking the gratification of the lower self, should lift up his eyes to the God within and above him. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛiṣṇa says that such a man, though of evil life, may be at once counted amidst the good—"he hath the right way chosen, he shall grow righteous ere long"; and in the Gospel, when Jesus finds a man who has "faith" (which is the same thing in other words), the assurance, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace," follows as a matter of course. By those past sins he had learned the lesson which only the going wrong *can* teach, that his true life lies in following the Higher Self and not his lower appetites; and this once learnt, what matter the troubles, the sorrows, and sufferings which have taught him?—"forgiven," "blotted out," done with for evermore. His deliverance is not from any fabled Hell for what he has done in the past, but from the necessity of going over again the weary round which *must* be repeated again and again until he learns that nothing is to be loved but God.

Considerations of this kind may perhaps soften the bluntness of the answer I should be inclined to give our querist. I should say to him: "You get no reply because you ask about things which are of no consequence to your true life, and because *that* grows by your free choice, unaided by any higher Powers, and by your experience of what follows. Choose for yourself, and, having chosen take the consequences like a man. If suffering follows, do not allow your foolish conscience to worry you as having done *wrong*, but set yourself to learn what was amiss and to do better next time. That is all which matters to you or anyone else. In all probability you are not sufficiently advanced to be trusted with the "pride of virtue"; and your lesson is to hold on, confidently and faithfully, through all the sin and failure which yet beset your path—"you have the right way chosen and shall grow righteous ere long,"

though that time may be short only as the gods measure it, and not by our mortal years and lives.

A. R. O.—In A. A. W.'s answer he says: "By those past sins he had learned the lesson which only the going wrong *can* teach." Should the "*can*" be so very definite? Ought it not rather to be "lessons which the going wrong *will* teach him, if he be able to learn in no other way?"

Otherwise the necessity for suffering is assumed; to which I should reply, as A. A. W. replied a while ago, that it is a disgrace for a man to have to be taught by pain. In other words, there *is* a path of joy, here and now, which consists in a man learning gladly, in being always in the front of the line of evolution, in being always on his *own* line. And surely this is the more inspiring idea, and the more necessary idea in these days. As Nietzsche said: "Since man came into existence he hath had too little joy. That alone, my brethren, is our original sin."

A. A. W.—It would hardly be needful for me to say more in answer to A. R. O.'s true and beautiful letter than that I heartily agree with every word of it, if it were not that he seems to think that the word I used indicates a real divergence of opinion. I assure him that in writing it my pen hesitated—from the precise feeling he so well expresses. If I had been writing a serious treatise, instead of an answer to a question, I should, of course, have had to take into account the *theoretical* possibility of a man's learning his lessons without anywhere going wrong. I hope I shall not characterise myself in his eyes as a hopeless pessimist if I say that, on consideration, it seemed to me needless to express such a qualification. As a matter of actual fact, I don't believe there is a single human being amongst us who has attained such an exalted development as this would imply. I shape my answers here as a preacher does his sermons, for the benefit of my immediate audience, and have no doubt they frequently contain careless statements which would not bear the scrutiny of one possessed of exact knowledge, and desirous of expressing it in formal shape. I might, were it advisable for my audience, make some show of defence for what I said; I might remind A. R. O. that Beings much higher than ourselves make mistakes and, presumably, learn by them; I might go so far as to suggest that the Universe itself has not gone precisely in the path its Maker laid out for it, and that (with all due reverence be it said) our Logos Himself may fairly be expected, like ourselves, to "do better next time." The

“necessity for suffering” exists wherever *limitation* exists, though in all probability the “suffering” of the higher would be happiness unimaginable to the lower. But it is better to let it pass, with the hearty wish that my correspondent may find for himself the “joy of learning gladly and being always in the front” of which he speaks.

## QUESTION 357.

*I have little difficulty in believing in the existence of Masters, of beings much more highly developed and further advanced in human evolution than we, but am in extreme difficulty in endeavouring to find evidence that these great ones are behind the work of the Theosophical Society. Briefly, here is the Theosophical Society and here are the Masters. Where is the “missing link” which connects the two? What, in short, is the evidence, or suggested course of study to pursue, to prove that the Theosophical Society is the medium of the teachings of these great souls? (1898.)*

B. K.—There are a number of distinct lines of evidence which a student may follow, all of which form links going to establish the fact of direct connection between the Masters—whose existence and reality are admitted in the question—and the Theosophical Society. The value of each of these converging lines of evidence is increased in geometrical ratio by the fact that they are cumulative and coincident, so that it seems to me irresistible by any logical and impartial mind which is not caught in the toils of materialism. I propose to indicate very briefly in outline some of these lines of evidence—those which most appeal to my own mind; but I feel confident that other students will be able to add not inconsiderably to their number, as well as greatly to elaborate them and strengthen their cogency.

(a) DIRECT TESTIMONY.—The existence of the Masters being admitted, the value of the personal evidence, and declaration of those by whom the great volume of modern theosophical teaching has been given to the world, becomes of great importance.

Madame Blavatsky—the first great modern exponent of Theosophy and the founder of the Theosophical Society—unswervingly asserted herself to be simply a humble pupil of the Masters, and maintained that she had founded the Society, and was devoting her whole life to its work, simply because her Master

had desired her to do so, and because he took an active interest in its development and progress. As Madame Blavatsky was the first in the latter part of our century to revive with new life and reality the ancient ideal of the Masters of Wisdom, her evidence is important, but needs corroboration. This was obtained in the early eighties in public print at the hands of the late Mr. T. Subba Row and various other gentlemen in India, who possessed independent and first-hand knowledge not only of the existence of Masters, but of the two definite individual Masters who have been so intimately connected with the Theosophical Society. Mr. Subba Row and others have testified that they joined the Theosophical Society under the advice and direction of their respective Masters.

Then we have Colonel Olcott's testimony, to be found at length in his *Old Diary Leaves*, while later on we have the frank personal affirmations repeatedly made in public by Mrs. Besant of her own direct personal knowledge of the Masters and of their continued interest in the Theosophical Society. Similar testimony has been given by others, especially by those to whom we owe by far the largest and most valuable part of modern theosophical literature, and as they one and all agree in asserting that all they have been enabled to give out of new teaching and illumination has come to them from the Masters, whom all alike identify and recognise, it seems to me that their statements as to the unbroken interest of these masters in the Theosophical Society and their connection with it are unassailable by anyone who admits the existence of Masters at all, since absolutely no reason can be suggested why they should thus all conspire together to deceive on such a matter.

In addition to those I have mentioned, who are well known both in the Theosophical Society and outside it, I may cite the concurrent and confirmatory testimony of at least six other persons privileged in the possession of intimate, direct personal knowledge of the Masters. These are well known to me personally, and can very possibly be identified by the closer students in the Society, though as circumstances have not hitherto made it needful for their names to be given in print, it is certainly undesirable to give them here.

We have thus a body of direct first-hand testimony to the connection of the Masters with the Theosophical Society, beginning with Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, coming down in an



ever-growing and widening stream right to the present moment, and still continually broadening and deepening and growing in volume. And it is certainly significant that all the most valuable of modern theosophic teaching has come to us from people who ascribe their own knowledge and power to help us invariably to these same Masters.

Lastly, as coming under this head of direct testimony, may be urged the personal experience of all those who have complied with the well-known conditions which the unvarying tradition of the ages has laid down as necessary for initiation. Each who has done so has found himself in direct relation with a Master, and has recognised that the Theosophical Society has been called into existence under the guidance of the Masters' Lodge in order to proclaim to the world and make less difficult of access the ancient and imperishable Pathway of Initiation.

(b) **IDENTITY OF TEACHING.**—The claim made on behalf of modern theosophical teaching that it is but the fuller, clearer, more systematical exposition of the truth underlying every world-faith is year by year receiving more complete and detailed proof at the hands of students. For instance, Mr. Mead is in course of demonstrating, on unimpeachable literary and documentary evidence, the absolute identity of the teaching given in the Ancient Mysteries of classical antiquity, in the schools of Pythagoras, the Later Platonists, and the Early Christian Gnostics, with that of our present Theosophy; while Mr. Chatterji is applying the same key to proving the harmonious agreement in fundamental thought between the great Brâhmanical and Buddhist systems of teaching.

Now, if the Masters exist at all and play any part in the world's evolution, it is surely in these great monuments of human religious and philosophical thought that, if anywhere, we must seek for traces of their handiwork. The fact that all these great systems, so widely divergent in outer form and environment, should yet be identical in all fundamental teachings, is in itself the strongest evidence of a common source, and plainly suggests the influence of the Masters in their origination. Granting this—and the proof is daily becoming more and more irresistible—and finding that our modern theosophic teaching gives the clue to a full explanation of all these older systems, can anyone resist the force of the inference that our modern teaching must come from the same source as that from which flowed the inspiration that has given such age-long

vitality and power to the older systems? If we recognise in the systems of the old world the handiwork of the Masters, how shall we deny its presence in the Theosophy of to-day, when that Theosophy is proving so potent a clue to the unravelling and understanding of those ancient monuments of thought and wisdom?

But, some one may urge, there is a great break from the last of the great Gnostics to our own time. Not so; that break is covered by a continuous and unbroken tradition, of which Mrs. Cooper-Oakley is at present fitting together and verifying the successive links, and through it all runs the same identical keynote, in it all are found the same essential and fundamental features of teaching.

(c) ARGUMENT FROM THE TEACHING ITSELF.—As to our modern theosophic teaching itself, we may argue as follows: either it is a mere product of the thought and imagination of Madame Blavatsky and her followers, or else it comes from some other source to which both she and they have access. But the latter alternative is equivalent to admitting that the teaching comes from the Masters, and hence that these Masters are directly interested in, and connected with, the Theosophical Society and movement. Let us then examine the former alternative a little more closely.

Subsequent to Madame Blavatsky, perhaps the persons mainly responsible for putting forward new teaching are three—Mrs. Besant, Mr. Sinnett, and Mr. Leadbeater. Now I am confident that among those who have the honour of personal intimacy with these three, one and all will agree with me that it would be difficult to find three people more completely divergent in type and cast of mind, in temperament and in character, in previous training, experience and environment. Further, it is well known that each writes and works independently, as is abundantly evidenced by their respective writings. Compare, for instance, Mrs. Besant's *Ancient Wisdom* with Mr. Sinnett's *Growth of the Soul* and Mr. Leadbeater's Manuals on the Astral and Devachanic Planes, and his articles in the *Theosophical Review*. Now, if each of these three were simply elaborating by his or her own thought and imagination the data to be found in Madame Blavatsky's writings, it is obvious that they must produce mutually divergent, inconsistent, and incompatible systems. But that, as matter of fact, is not the case. On the contrary, the most striking and remarkable feature in their respective work is the marvellous way

in which the work done by each dovetails and fits in with that of the others and harmonises into a consistent and coherent whole. I appeal on this to the judgment of every close and well-informed student of Theosophy, confident that he will endorse the above statement to the fullest extent.

Moreover, not one of the three is a "scholar"; not one of them has any classical knowledge or any special acquaintance with Later Platonism, Gnosticism, or the ancient traditions of the Mysteries in the Græco-Roman world. Yet a thorough and accurate scholar like Mr. Mead finds their results and work not only in agreement with, but throwing floods of light upon, these obscure and little-known subjects which he has made so especially his own.

Thus it seems to me wholly impossible to accept the theory that these three writers have simply expanded and elaborated by their own thought and imagination the data left by Madame Blavatsky; and hence we are reduced to the second of the above alternatives as an explanation, and can only find in a common source of teaching the basis for their agreements with each other, and for the illumination and usefulness which specialists like Messrs. Mead and Chatterji find therein in regard to their own particular lines of research.

This answer has gone to such a length that I must leave it to others to point out other lines of argument, and to elaborate the detail which adds so greatly to the cogency of those which I have all too briefly endeavoured to indicate.

## DIVISION XC

### THE LUNAR PITRIS

#### QUESTION 358.

*As regards the Lunar Pitris :*

- (a) *Did the second-class appear on earth in the second round or the third? There seems to be a contradiction here between Mrs. Besant's Ancient Wisdom and the very admirable London Lodge Transaction on the subject.*
- (b) *"Those who entered became Arhats." Are we to infer from this that some of the first-class lunar Pitris were already in the stage of discipleship when they first entered upon this world, and are these they who are now at the Asekha level?*
- (c) *Was it the solar or the lunar Pitris who became the reincarnating Egos of animal men, and which of them cast off the Chhâyas?*
- (d) *Is the "projection of the spark" anything more in reality than the quickening of the evolution of manas in the entity concerned?*
- (e) *Is not this whole question as stated in The Secret Doctrine exceedingly confused? (1900.)*

C. W. L.—None of us are in a position to describe fully the mysteries of these early days of evolution, and even what we can see we cannot express in words on the physical plane. But I will endeavour to throw out a few suggestions which may perhaps be of use to the questioner.

(a) As a general rule it is well to remember that the chapter in *The Ancient Wisdom* upon this subject is the latest publication, and consequently embodies further researches which were not included in the London Lodge Transaction.

The second-class Pitris seem to have appeared on globe D in the third round—not, I think, in the second.

(b) I do not think that we should be right in supposing that any of the first-class lunar Pitris were evolved to a stage anywhere near that of discipleship at the time of their entering upon this world. We must remember that the majority of them had only just come up out of the animal kingdom in the moon, and although it is no doubt true also that some of them were failures from among the lunar humanity, yet we must observe that one who (as it is put in the books) fails in the fifth round must be at a comparatively low stage of his evolution.

It is not stated how long those first-class Pitris have taken in becoming Arhats; most assuredly those who stand at the Asekha level now were not Arhats then, nor for millions of years afterwards. For example, it is known that one at least who is a Master now was a good man in ordinary life as lately as six thousand years ago.

(c) The Lords of the Flame from Venus did not incarnate in the bodies of animal men at all. Those who incarnated made for themselves bodies by Kriyashakti—bodies which, though exactly like ours in appearance, were not subject to decay or change. This would have been an achievement far beyond the powers of the first-class lunar Pitri. It is true that some of these latter seem to have cast off Chhāyas, but these were, after all, mere moulds of etheric matter.

The Sons of Wisdom who descended into incarnation did not turn out some other entity from the bodies which they took, nor did they seize upon a body which was already occupied. They were simply born from the already existing entities, and would no doubt appear to them to be exceedingly advanced and precocious children. To speak of them as becoming man's reincarnating Ego is perhaps somewhat misleading, but the questioner of course understands that it is only that third outpouring direct from the First Logos which makes the entity really a man at all, and that that Ego once formed is never displaced by any other.

(d) I think the querent is right in saying that the projection of the spark of mind is in reality the quickening of the evolution of manas in the entity concerned. It would be wrong to think of something thrown into the composition of the man from outside, excepting, of course, the third outpouring of which we have spoken. The principal effect of the presence of the higher entities among the young and undeveloped race would be to bring about in rapidly-increasing numbers the individualisation of

those who were gradually drawing near to the point at which this became possible.

(e) The whole question, as stated in *The Secret Doctrine*, may perhaps appear to us to be very confused, but it is certain that that is only because of the very scanty information which we at present possess on the subject, and because so much of the action connected with it took place upon higher planes, and cannot be clearly explained to physical comprehension. Only those who have themselves looked back at the records of these early processes can have any idea of the difficulty of describing them, or can justly appreciate the wonderful achievement of Madame Blavatsky in giving us such a picture as we now possess of the stupendous work which in those ages was being done for man.

QUESTION 359.

*What is the level of evolution now attained by a first-class, a second-class, and a third-class lunar Pitri? It is said that the study of occultism can only be effectively taken up by an Ego approaching the end of his evolutionary journey (i.e., presumably by an advanced first-class Pitri). Is it, then, inadvisable for a man like myself to pursue the study, though I have a desire for the pursuit? or is it to be understood that such desire itself is qualification enough to pursue the study?*

*Are the seven globes of our earth-chain formed once for all for a whole Manvantara, or are they different for each round? According to most theosophical text-books, the former would appear to be the fact, but in *Transaction of the London Lodge, No. 26, Lunar Pitris*, on page 5, it is said that Mercury is being prepared for our advent in this round, although we should have inhabited it three times before this. Which is the correct view? Or does the preparation spoken of in the quotation merely mean modification of the already existing planet? (1902.)*

A. P. S.—I think it has been explained in some of the theosophical books that the Pitri classification cannot be made to fit in with the evolutionary progress represented by the successive races. In all the sub-races of the fifth root race there may be Pitris of all three classes, and certainly there may be first-class Pitris among the surviving sub-races of the fourth root race,

though the proportion of that class, taking a sweeping average, would probably be less than in the fifth. In the absence of perfect adept insight, the Pitri class to which any particular person belongs can only be guessed by reference to the general level of intellectual development and spiritual aspiration he seems to have attained. As a broad rule, people whose karma has drifted them into social positions in which they acquire the advanced culture of the civilisation to which they belong may be regarded as probably first-class Pitris. I have heard of exceptions both ways, but probably they are not numerous.

Anyhow, there is no absolute rule that only first-class Pitris can get on "the Path" leading to the higher initiations—no rule putting the smallest impediment in the way of any second-class Pitri desirous of treading that path. All that has been suggested on the other hand is that taking broad averages into account you will not find so many per cent. of second-class Pitris desirous of treading the Path as you may expect to find among those who enjoy a more advanced mental development and better kârmic opportunities.

As for the condition of the planets of our family at earlier stages of the manvantara, most of what is generally known on that subject will be found in Transaction 30 of the London Lodge, *The System to which we Belong*. In one sense each planet of the series is created once for all at the beginning of the manvantara, but the creative process is rather set on foot than completed. During the first round the physical planets are still incandescent. Their geological development is a gradual process embodying continual change, and in the long intervals between world periods, such changes brought about in that way would naturally be very considerable. Such changes as those would be of the kind referred to in the *Lunar Pitris* Transaction as nearing completion on Mercury.

#### QUESTION 360.

*It is stated that there is no "individual" until the causal body is evolved, and that the causal body is the reincarnating Ego. It appears that the causal body was not formed until the descent of the Mānasaputra in the fourth round. How, then, can the Lunar Pitris be considered individuals? In what vehicle did they function in inter-physical and inter-manvantaric periods? (1898.)*

B. K.—The entire difficulty appears to be a question of words—the old story of our imperfect theosophical terminology.

As a rule in careful theosophical writing the term "individuality" implies the existence of the "causal body," and therefore, strictly speaking, no "individual" in this sense can be spoken of until the causal body has been formed. But in ordinary language the term "individual" is used with a very much wider signification, when, for instance, a scientist writes of the "individuals composing a species"—say of fish or insects. If this is borne in mind and it be remembered that theosophical writers are often forced to use a word both in its technical and its general sense, the difficulty will disappear.

Thus—to clear up at the same time a further confusion implied in the question—we are told that there are various classes of pitris developed as the outcome of the lunar evolution, among which one class only has developed the causal body; a second has reached an early and rudimentary stage in its formation; while in a third no causal body has yet even begun to be formed, but the differentiation of the evolving monadic essence of the second outpouring has reached a condition in which each physical form is ensouled by one single distinct block of essence, which can thus be considered as an "individual" in the popular, though not in the technical, sense of the term, since no causal body has been formed as yet, and the "block of essence" which constitutes the evolving entity, not yet having received the third outpouring, is to be found on the rupa and not the arupa levels of the manasic plane.

As far as is known, only the two first classes mentioned above can be said to "function" in any active sense during the "inter-manvantaric" period. That these did so is apparent from the fact that they exhibit marked development and progress when first they make their appearance on the earth-chain as compared with the condition they were in at the close of the lunar evolution. Their vehicle during the inter-manvantaric period most certainly was the newly-formed causal body, but whether or not during the whole or any part thereof they had in addition a mental body on the rupa levels has not yet been determined.

As regards the third-class—those which are re-incarnating entities, though not yet "individualised" in the technical sense—it may be doubted whether they had any "inter-manvantaric period" at all. For since the evolution of the earth-chain overlaps that of the lunar chain, as the successive root races do on earth, it is quite possible that they passed straight on with their evolution



without any break at all. This matter, however, has not yet been specially investigated, and hence this is merely put forward as a suggestion.

As regards the "inter-physical" or "inter-incarnation" periods on the moon, the first-class ceased incarnating there as soon as the formation of the causal body took place, just as an animal, as soon as it acquires a causal body now, ceases to incarnate any longer as an animal and awaits a chance to enter the human stream.

The other two classes would, during inter-incarnation periods, be inhabiting a vehicle formed of astral and mental matter possibly in the atomic condition, analogous to that which encases the various blocks of monadic essence whose evolution or differentiation has been observed in the various kingdoms around us. But it may be as well, perhaps, to guard against misconception by remarking that the passing of long periods out of incarnation appears to have been developed at a comparatively recent period—second round or perhaps third—at any rate on our own earth-chain. And seeing that the lunar evolution, as regards the pitris at any rate, was on a lower level still, it is perhaps allowable to infer that "Kamaloka" and "Devachan" as we know them did not form part of the order of things with which we were then concerned. We know that even the highest of our present animals, failing the actual formation of a causal body by the reception of the third outpouring, have but a very brief existence on the astral plane after death, before merging back into the collective soul to which they belong. And by all accounts the majority, at any rate among the pitris of the lunar evolution, do not seem to have attained even to the same level of intelligence and morality as a high-class domesticated animal of to-day. This, therefore, would seem to confirm the view suggested above, that all the details of incarnation and intervening periods for such entities on the moon must have been radically different from what we are familiar with at this stage of our own evolution.

## DIVISION XCI

### THE AUGOEIDES

#### QUESTION 361.

*What is the Augoeides? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—This is a question of more than ordinary interest, many people having a vague notion that the augoeides is somehow or other simply the product of Bulwer Lytton's imaginative brain in his interesting occult romance *Zanoni*. As I have already collected a number of notes on both the subtle body and augoeides for my essay on "Orpheus," now appearing in *Lucifer*, I cannot do better than transcribe them here for the benefit of the readers of the *Vâhan*.

For the following information I am mostly indebted to texts cited in Cudworth's *Intellectual System* (iii. 506 *seqq.*, ed. 1820). Philoponus (*Proem in Aristot. de An.*) tells us that the rational part of the soul can be separated from every kind of body, but the irrational part, although it is separable from the irrational body, has another subtle vehicle which is called the "spirituous body" (πνευματικὸν σῶμα). The irrational principle does not owe its existence to the physical body, for when the soul quits the physical body, the irrational part (Kâma-Manas) still retains the "spirituous body" as its vehicle and substratum (ὄχημα καὶ ὑποκείμενον), terms which closely resemble the Vedântic technical expressions Deha and Upâdhi. This "spirituous body" is composed of the "elements," but in it is a predominance of the "element" "air," just as in the physical body there is a predominance of "earth." It is therefore often called the aërial body.

This is the body which passes into the invisible world after death. Thus the same Philoponus writes: "Our soul, after its

exodus from the body, is believed, or rather is known, to go into the invisible world [Kāma Loka], there to pay the penalty for the evil of its past life. For providence (ἡ πρόνοια) is not only concerned with our being, but also with our well-being. And therefore a soul that has lapsed into a state [namely, earth-life] contrary to its [true] nature, is not neglected, but meets with fitting care. And since error arose in it on account of the desire for pleasurable sensation, of necessity it must be purified by pain. . . . But if the soul is without body it could not suffer. . . . It is absolutely necessary therefore that it should have a kind of body attached to it. . . . This is the spirituous body of which we speak, and in it as a ground, as it were, are rooted the passional and sensational nature of the soul.

“For if the soul were freed from these, it would be freed from generation, and be carried up aloft to the higher celestial regions” (Devachan).

Philoponus then proceeds to explain spectres, phantoms, etc., by means of this subtle body. He further adds that we should abstain from a foul and gross diet, for the ancient sages affirm that “thereby this subtle body is densified and incrassated, and the soul rendered more sensible to the passions.”

Of the next passage I give Cudworth's version, so that there may be no suspicion of twisting the text to suit any preconceived views.

“They further add that there is something of a plantal and plastic life (τῆς φυτικῆς ζωῆς) also, exercised by the soul, in these spirituous or airy bodies after death; they being nourished too, though not after the same manner, as these gross, earthly bodies of ours are here, but by vapours; and that not by parts or organs, but throughout the whole of them (as sponges) [endosmosis and exosmosis], they imbibing everywhere those vapours. For which cause they who are wise will in this life also take care of using a thinner and drier diet, that so that spirituous body (which we have also at this present time within our grosser body) may not be clogged and incrassated, but attenuated. Over and above which those ancients made use of catharms or purgations to the same end and purpose also; for as this earthly body is washed by water, so is that spirituous body cleansed by cathartic vapours—some of these vapours being nutritive, others purgative. [This explains the purgations and purifications in the Mysteries.] Moreover, these ancients further declared, concerning this

spirituous body, that it was not organised, but did the whole of it, in every part throughout, exercise all functions of sense, the soul hearing, and seeing, and perceiving, all sensibles, by it everywhere. [This is the 'common sensory' of the Vedānta, the Antahkarana, or 'inner organ.'] For which causes Aristotle himself affirmeth, in his *Metaphysics*, that there is properly but one sense, and but one sensory; he, by this sensory, meaning the spirit, or subtle airy body, in which the sensitive power doth all of it, through the whole, immediately apprehend all variety of sensibles. And if it be demanded, how it then comes to pass that this spirit appears organised in sepulchres most commonly of human form, but sometimes in the form of some other animals? To this these ancients replied, That their appearing so frequently in human form proceedeth from their being incrassated with evil diet, and then, as it were, stamped upon with the form of the exterior ambient body in which they are, as crystal is formed and coloured like to those things which it is fastened in, or reflects the image of them, and that their having sometimes other different forms proceedeth from the fantastic power of the soul itself, which can at pleasure transform this spirituous body into any shape: for being airy, when it is condensed and fixed, it becometh visible; and again invisible; and vanishing out of sight, when it is expanded and rarefied."

In the *Bhagavad Gītā* this "fantastic" or protean power of the soul is called *Kāma-Rūpa*, meaning a body that can take any form (*Rūpī* = ill (*Kāma*)).

These ancients further thought that the soul does not act directly upon the muscles, etc., of the body, but upon the "animal spirits" which are the "immediate instruments of sense and fancy," and therefore Porphyry tells us (*De Ant. Nymph.*, pp. 257, 259) that "the blood is the food and instrument of the spirit (that is the subtle body called the animal spirits), and that this spirit is the vehicle of the soul."

But besides the physical and subtle bodies, there is yet another kind of body or vestment of a far higher order "peculiarly belonging to such souls . . . as are purified and cleansed from corporeal affections, lusts and passions." This brings us to speak of

#### THE AUGOEIDES

The augoeides is described by the same Philoponus as follows :

The soul continues in its terrestrial body or in its aërial vehicle "until it has purified itself, and then it is carried aloft and is freed from generation. Then it is that it lays aside its passional and sensuous nature, together with the spirituous vehicle. For there is besides this vehicle another which is eternally united with the soul [the Kârana Deha or "causal body" of the Vedântins], a heavenly body which they call the radiant or starlike body (*αὐγοειδὲς ἢ ἀστροειδὲς*). For the soul being of a mundane (or cosmic) nature, must necessarily have some allotment which it manages, seeing that it is part of the cosmos. And since it is ever in motion, and must continue in activity, it must always have a body attached to it which it ever keeps alive. And so they declare that the soul has always [as long as it is in manifestation] a luciform or radiant body.

And so also Proclus (*Tim.*, p. 290): "The human soul has an ethereal vehicle (*ὄχημα αἰθέριον*) attached to it, as Plato tells us, affirming that the creator placed it in a vehicle (or chariot, *ὄχημα*). For necessarily every soul before these mortal bodies, uses eternal and rapidly-moving vehicles, in that its very essence is motion." And again (*ibid.*, p. 164): "While we are on high we have no need of these divided organs which we now have when descending into generation; but the radiant vehicle alone is sufficient, for it has all the senses united together in it."

Moreover Plato himself, in his *Epinomis*, writes of a good man after death: "I confidently assert, both in jest and in all seriousness, that such a one (if in death he hath worked out his own destiny) will no longer have many senses as we have now, but will possess a uniform body, and so having become one from many, will obtain happiness."

Hierocles, in his *Commentary* (pp. 214, 215) on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras, tells us that the Oracles call this *augooides* the "subtle vehicle" of the soul (*ψυχῆς λεπτόν ὄχημα*). The Oracles referred to are evidently the Chaldaic, and this is borne out by the fact that one of the Oracles still preserved refers to the two subtle vestures of the soul, in their usual enigmatical fashion, as follows: "Do not soil the spirit, nor turn the plane into the solid." The "spirit" is evidently the aëry body and the "plane" (*ἐπιπέδον*) the luciform, for, as we have learned from the Pythagorean mathematics, the point generated the line, the line the plane or superficies, and the plane the solid. This is also the opinion of Psellus, who, in his *Commentary* upon the Oracles,

writes : "The Chaldæans clothed the soul in two vestures ; the one they called the spirituous, which is woven for it (as it were) out of the sensible body ; the other the radiant, subtle, and impalpable, which they called the plane." And this is a very appropriate term, for it signifies that it is not subject to the laws of solid bodies. Hierocles further asserts that this luciform body is the spiritual vehicle of the rational part of the soul (Buddhi-Manas), whereas the aëry body is the vehicle of the irrational part (Kâma-Manas) ; he therefore calls the former the pneumatic (πνευματικὸν) and the latter the psychic body (σῶμα ψυχικόν), using the same nomenclature as Paul the Christian (1 Cor. xv. 44).

Synesius (*De Insomniis*, p. 140) calls the augoeides the "divine" body (θεσπέσιον σῶμα), and Virgil in his *Æneid* (vi.) speaks of it as the "pure ethereal sensory" (*purum . . . . æthereum sensum*) and a "pure fiery breath" (*aurai simplicis ignem*).

But not only does the soul possess this luciform body after death, but also during life, and thus Suidas, (*sub voc. αὐγοειδή*) writes : "The soul possesses a luciform vehicle, which is also called the 'starlike' and the 'everlasting.' Some say that this radiant body is shut in this physical body, within the head." And this agrees with Hierocles (p. 214, ed. Needham), that "the augoeides is in our mortal physical body, inspiring life into the inanimate body, and containing the harmony thereof"—that is to say, it is the "causal body" and karmic vesture of the soul, in which its destiny, or rather all the seeds of past causation, are stored. This is the "thread-soul," as it is sometimes called, the "body" that passes from one incarnation to another.

And just as the aërial or subtle body could be purified and separated from the physical body, so could the luciform or augoeides. These purgations were of a very high character and pertained to the telestic art and theurgy, as the same Hierocles informs us (*ibid.*). By this means the purification that takes place for the many after death is accomplished by the few here in the body on earth, and they can separate the luciform vehicle from the lower vehicles and be conscious of heavenly things while on earth. Therefore it is that Plato (*Phædo*, p. 378) defines "philosophy" as "a continual exercise of dying"—that is to say, firstly, a moral dying to corporeal lusts and passions, and secondly, consciously and voluntarily passing through all states of consciousness while still alive which the soul must pass through after death.

This "body" is the root of individuality (*individuitatis principium*), for just as the Egyptians thought that every entity consisted of an "essence" and an "envelope,"\* so Heirocles (p. 120) tells us that "the rational essence, together with its cognate vehicle, came into existence from the creator in such a fashion that it is neither itself body nor without body; and though it is incorporeal, yet its whole nature (*εἶδος*) is limited by a body."

He therefore defines the real man (p. 212) as a rational soul with a cognate immortal body or envelope (compare with this the symbology of the Orphic Egg in the essay from which this is extracted), and calls the enlivened physical body the "image of the man" (*εἶδωλον ἀνθρώπου*). Moreover, this is true of all other rational beings in the universe below Deity and above man. This, then, is the nature of the Daimones (angels), the difference between Daimones and men being that the former are "lapsable into aerial bodies only, and no further; but the latter into terrestrial" also (Porphyry, *De Abstin.*, ii. § 38).

Finally, Hierocles asserts that this was the genuine doctrine and sacred science of the Pythagoreans and Plato; and Proclus tells us that the line of teaching came originally through Orpheus.

\* See "The Vestures of the Soul" in my collection of Essays, entitled *The World-Mystery*.

## DIVISION XCII

### “HE WHO NEITHER LOVETH NOR HATETH”

#### QUESTION 362.

*In the Twelfth Discourse of the Bhagavad Gītā, 17 par., the words occur, “he who neither loveth nor hateth.” How can we reconcile this with Christ’s words, “thou shalt love,” etc. And John says, “let us love one another, for love is of God: and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God,” also 13, 1st Corinthians. Not being quite clear on the matter, I should be glad of an interpretation? (1902.)*

G. R. S. M.—The question is a good one, but it does not bring out all the difficulties which confront the student of comparative theology. For instance, Christian tradition preserves for us also the saying that if we “hate not father and mother” we cannot be disciples of the Christ. Further, in one passage it is implied that it is God who leads us into temptation, while in another it is squarely asserted that God tempts no man at any time. Nor is it only in the Christian scripture that we are confronted with absolutely contradictory propositions which completely baffle the intellect, it is equally the case in all scriptures of any compass. The difficulty involved in the first saying I have quoted was in early days met by a mystical exegesis which asserted that it did not refer to our physical parents but to the “parents” of our lower nature. It was believed by these early followers of the inner teaching that the soul fashioned for a man in any birth was a mixture of good and evil tendencies determined by his actions in past lives. They, however, were not content to leave the matter in the pure domain of philosophical speculation, and to talk about tendencies, but, being seers of the psychic life, they were strongly impressed with the living actuality of these “tendencies,”



which they saw as essences and substances. These tendencies which they considered of an evil nature they traced to an evil source : they were actual substances, or grades of matter, worked into the soul-plasm by certain intelligent powers to whom this function was assigned. These were the "parents" we were to hate.

There are, however, further difficulties evolved in this exegesis. If the view given above was the correct one, then the saying itself would seem to encourage a somewhat erroneous view of the matter, for surely the "parents," so far from being regarded as the sources of evil in us, should rather be regarded as the servants of the law. They are simply carrying out their appointed task ; they are not to blame, and therefore not to be hated ; we ourselves are the causes of the "evil" in us, for we are not our psychic vehicle, any more than a man is his coat ; we are of pneumatic or spiritual essence, and our psychic vesture is woven for us according to the pattern of our past good and evil deeds. We should not, then, hate these "parents," for it is really we ourselves who have given them the plan of the weaving. There is therefore some confusion in the above Gnostic interpretation of the matter ; it is, however, a step in the right direction. The next stage is the thought that the best use we can make of the force which in the natural man expresses itself as hate of persons and things, is to turn it against the doing of such deeds as past experience has taught us to be evil for us ; we shall thus avoid the foolishness of hating, in the literal sense of the words, either the flesh, or the world, or even the devil ! It is now only a question of following the right path to understanding, and avoiding the folly of expending our energies in useless directions.

But how shall we explain the mysterious words of the most general prayer of Christendom, which beseech God not to lead us into temptation ? Here we are face to face with the mystery of evil, the mystery of that insoluble riddle which made one of the old Hebrew prophets proclaim squarely in the name of his God, "I create evil," and which made the inspired author of the *Gita* state at great length that the deity, whose mouth-piece he was, was all things evil as well as good. We are elsewhere told that the wise man must see the Self in all things, both in the seemingly bad as well as in the seemingly good. These are hard sayings, and it is only for those who are winning towards the heart of things that a consideration of them is without danger. For the mass of

mankind instruction has ever been given in the form of exaggeration and in the intensification of the opposites. But here and there in the scriptures of the nations we come across a hint of a mysterious wisdom which seems to take away all our prior certainty. Nor is there any real danger in this ; for the man who has once experienced the enormous inner power and peace that comes to him who learns to love an enemy, will not hesitate to continue on that path, and will readily grasp the notion that perhaps after all the Devil is only man's Saviour in disguise, and that God is indeed one. Along this line of thought some explanation of the prayer "not to lead us into temptation" may be found ; but even so, it is a somewhat weak-kneed request compared with the glorious self-surrender when true manhood wakes, and the wisdom of the Self, even in apparent evil, is recognised with the words : "Not my will but Thine be done."

It is this idea of the Self, who alone knows His own purpose and His ways, which has led the Indian philosophers to refrain from definition. "Not this ; not this," they say in answer to every definition of what He is. So then, if it be said "God is love," they answer, "No ; he who would be the Self should neither love nor hate." We are, therefore, confronted with apparently contradictory assertions, and are thrown back on ourselves for a solution, if, indeed, any solution can be found. It would seem that the form of the teaching of a Master of Wisdom is determined by the nature of His pupils and their immediate needs. If it is addressed to those whose emotions are more active than their reason, then it is by the intensification of the higher emotions that their evolution is most easily advanced ; if, on the contrary, it is addressed to those whose reason is stronger than their emotions, then the effort seems to be to develop them along the line of the intensification of the reason. Perhaps some solution of the difficulty may be found along this line of thought. The positive command, "Love your enemies," carries with it the feeling of such an intensification of life that the negative *ahimsa* or "harmlessness" ideal, which teaches simply to refrain from doing injury, seems a poor thing ; but the doctrine that God is love, if God is to be taken as the Self, is so utterly inadequate to explain the existence of hate, that it is but consistent to eliminate all pairs of opposites in contemplation of the mystery, once the idea is grasped that all pairs are mutually self-determined. For if all hate ceases, what is left is not love, but something else of which both love and hate are equally manifesta-

tions. All of this accentuation of love, then, is exceedingly unsatisfactory to one who perceives that this line of thought is only begotten by the false supposition that the Self Itself is one of a pair of opposites. For by the gradual elimination of all pairs of opposites, we arrive at apparently the last of all opposites, the One Self, as opposed to the Not-One, not, mark you, to the One as opposed to the Many, that is a far cruder conception. Ah! will say the lover, that proves it, for the One is love and the Not-One hate. By no means, will say the philosopher, the One is wisdom and the Not-One is ignorance. And so others with different ideals—such as power, goodness, beauty—will claim that their ideal is the One and the opposite the Not-One. But reason says: May not the Self be the All?—a new point of view; and then it whispers: The opposite of All is nothing, and I can go no further. If, however, you love the play of words, you may say that as nothing is the opposite of All, All has no opposites; so, then, if you would joy in the fathomless ocean of wisdom, seek to exclude nothing from the Fulness of God. There is a mystery; nay, all is a mystery—to *me*; if you, my other self, learn this great lesson, you will be ready to go on to the next grade of instruction: I am that mystery; and finally to the solution of all doubts, where there is that Silence which becomes all sound.

A. H. W.—The writer thinks that there is perhaps still another way of reconciling the difficulty.

The contrasted pronouncements are as follows, in full: "He who neither loveth nor hateth, nor grieveth, nor desireth, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion, he is dear to me." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every-one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

The passage from the *Bhagavad Gitā* is part of a description of the condition of a man who is "best in Yoga," that is to say, one who has unified his consciousness with his Ego, and looks out on life from the impersonal point of view. Consequently he neither loves nor hates *personally*, because he can see the One Self in all selves, and through his knowledge and devotion has the goodwill to help everyone impartially.

The saying of the Christ was in reply to a lawyer who asked him a question tempting him. Hence the answer was directed to

a man shut up in his personality, a devotee of the law and the prophets. To such a man the idea of impersonal goodwill to all that lives would be unintelligible. Consequently a narrower ground was taken.

The passage from *St. John* is addressed to "little children" who had overcome the false prophets of the world; to disciples, therefore, who had attained some degree of the selfless attitude which carries with it the love to all that lives, the love that is truly "of God." For the idea that the All-Father can "love" in the sense of *favour* one of His manifestations more than another is incredible.

This ideal love is also the burden of St. Paul's magnificent description of charity which "never faileth." Such a love is again of the eternal impersonal world, for what personal love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things?

R. B.—The love meant here in the *Bhagavad Gītā* can only be the love of one alone, which is never free from selfishness. In Buddhistic writings the necessity of keeping free from this, of overcoming it, is frequently pointed out. For example, it says in verse 2 of the *Rhinoceros Song* (*Khaggavis-anasutta*): "In him who has intercourse (with others) affections arise (and then) the pain which follows affection: considering the misery that originates in affection let one wander alone. . . ."

And in verse 37: "Like a lotus not stained by water, let one wander alone. . . ."

In the *Questions of King Milinda*, iv. 2, 30 (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxv. p. 226), in the well-known weighty mode of expression, it says: "Attachment" (or love) "is a frame of mind put away by the Tathāgata, he has put away clinging, he is free from the delusion that 'This is mine,' *he lives only to be a help to others*. Just as the earth, O King, is a support to the beings in the world, and an asylum to them, and they depend upon it; but the broad earth has no longing after them in the idea that 'These belong to me'—just so is the Tathāgata a support and asylum to all beings, but has no longing after them in the idea that 'These belong to me.' And just as a mighty rain cloud, O King, pours out its rain, and gives nourishment to grass and trees, to cattle and to men, and maintains the lineage thereof, and all these creatures depend for their livelihood upon its rain, but the cloud has no feeling of longing in the idea that 'These are mine'—just so does the

Tathāgata give all beings to know what are good qualities and maintain them in goodness, and all beings have their life in him, but the Tathāgata has no feeling of longing in the idea that 'These are mine.' And why is it so? Because of his having abandoned all self-regard."

In Christian and Brāhmanical writings there is no lack of references to this distinction between the two kinds of love; for example, the much-discussed passage in St. Luke xiv. 26 can be thus taken: "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children," etc.; moreover, we have in the *Mahābhārata*, that richest treasure-trove of sacred wisdom, the legend of King Bhārata, who, after a long reign rich in blessing, leaves all his castles and followers to dedicate the evening of his life in solitude to his deliverance. Yet that affection which he withdrew from his dear ones he now turned upon a fawn that he had rescued from drowning in the river; his love for this wild animal became so strong that he neglected his daily religious exercises for it, lost control of himself, and continually directed his thoughts to the animal. This seemingly harmless but yet selfish attraction drew the great king irresistibly downwards and made him quite forget the aim for which he had left the world and his treasures. As before his death his mind was quite full of thoughts about the animal, we see him after death wandering through the forests as a beautiful roebuck, tasting the pleasures of the lower life until the Wheel of Karma drives him on, and his pious meditation and early aspirations towards a godly life make themselves felt, and in his next human life he attains at last that deliverance which he ought to have attained as King Bhārata. The love of God does not permit near it a love of individual beings. Universal love and compassion for all creation form a part, or result, of the love of God, in so far as God dwells in All and All in God; in other words, because of the mystic unity of all with God. In the preference for one lies a neglect of others. We may here remember the beautiful words of the still living Swabian peasant poet, Christian Wagner, in the *New Faith*:—Question: "What high purpose does the new Faith recognise in painful loss, in the death of those belonging to one? Answer: The universalisation of the love of the individual."

That giving up of the love of the one will frighten many away from theosophy, and, to the children of this world, seems to be the hardest requirement. The feeling that this teaching calls up

may, however, serve as a measure of how deeply they have penetrated into esotericism.

E. L.—It does not seem to be very essential that the *Gîtâ* and the Christian Scriptures should be made to fit in with each other, since presumably both have suffered much in the course of the long centuries of reproduction and translation which they have been subject to, this in many instances altering entirely the teachings which the Great Ones gave when on earth. But one thing should be clear to a thinker and one who has some acquaintance with theosophic writings, and it is this, that loving and hating, forming the two sides of evolution, would necessarily be imperfect where each was taken *alone*, and studied alone, and that the ideal position must necessarily be to see the use of both, and not to be swayed to either side if one would reach the true Yoga. The words, "He who neither loveth nor hateth," delineate such a Yogi; but the position and the ideal are only for those who appreciate the significance of them, and we begin by swaying continually between the two. If the attitude of perfect balance repels you as cold and undesirable, then it is not for you at present.

A. W.—It might be easy to give a wrong impression in answering this question, and either freeze aspirants into unripe isolation, or cause them to pretend to an expression of universal love before they are capable of understanding what it means. We find that love and hate, in the ordinary sense of both terms, equally bind us to earth, and it is perhaps an interesting sign of our stage of development that we have only one word for the ordinary love of man and for divine love. We may gather from the quotations given by the questioner, and from other passages in the world's scriptures, that the love of one human being to another—what we call selfish love—has a place in the evolution of the perfect being, and in its proper place is a virtue. It is only when a higher field of usefulness is opening out before us that we begin to find our virtue of the past fading into nothingness, our righteousnesses that we rejoiced to clothe ourselves in are seen to be but rags, and then, if we would advance, an expansion is required that will throw down the walls of mere personal attractions and take in all, instead of isolated fragments. It would seem to be not so much a question of giving up, though it bears that aspect viewed from below, as of growing strong enough to be able to give to all that which at first had to be jealously husbanded for the few.

G. L. S.—In most English translations of the *Bhagavad Gītā* the passage in the Twelfth Discourse referred to is rendered “He who neither exalteth (rejoiceth) nor hateth.” To render it “He who neither loveth,” etc., does not seem advisable, and is apt to convey quite an erroneous impression. But in any case, if the questioner will look a little more closely at this discourse, he will find that the devotee is enjoined to be “full of brotherly love and compassionate.” This is not a strained quotation, but, on the contrary, breathes the spirit of the whole teaching of the *Gītā*, so that the necessity does not arise to reconcile that work with Christ’s words. If it be said that other passages in the *Gītā* seem to contradict the above injunction, what are we to say in like manner to the words of Christ: “If any man hate not his father, mother, etc., he cannot be my disciple?” The truth is, that if isolated texts be taken either from the *Gītā*, Bible, or any other sacred book, they may, as is well known, be made to prove anything. Secondly, the idea that the words of Christ embody the only gospel of love which has ever been given out to the world is not founded on fact. One has only to read the *Gītā* with an unprejudiced mind to perceive that this is so. Undoubtedly many Christians are unwilling to admit this, just as there are many unwilling to believe that there can be any “true” religion other than the Christian one. The advance of knowledge has rendered a modification of this opinion necessary, and so we find the assertion frequently made nowadays that Christianity is at all events the “highest” religion; and as proof of this we are as often told that the Eastern religions contain no teaching of love. But even this modified claim will have to be given up if Christians are to abandon sectarianism; and Christianity will lose nothing by such a surrender.

The idea insisted on in the *Bhagavad Gītā* in regard to the point raised is not that the devotee shall be devoid of love in the sense in which the questioner uses that word, but that he shall be “without attachment.” There is a difference between Divine Compassion and human loves, and the distinction lies in the fact that the latter in all their variety, from the highest—such as mother-love—to the lowest, are all more or less mixed with the alloy of self. It is this alloy which is meant by “attachment”; it is in this sense that the devotee must be without love as he is without hate; and it is in this sense that a man must “hate his father, mother, wife, brothers, sisters, and even his own life also,” if he would be a follower of the Christ.

F. S. P. T.—The difficulty raised by this question, and shown by G. R. S. M. to be of considerable extent, does not seem to have been satisfactorily elucidated. There is a view, however, which has not been mentioned, and as it appears to me to be of fundamental importance, perhaps I may be allowed to briefly outline it.

It seems to me that the teaching of Kṛiṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā* is, on this point, the negative view of what has been called the doctrine of the Middle, whilst that of Christ is the positive view of the same. The doctrine of the Middle, viewed negatively, seems to be the intermediate condition between love on one side and hate on the other, and which is neither entirely love nor entirely hate, but which seems to partake of both, and so to be neither considered separately. Viewed positively it is both, both love and hate existing simultaneously together. If what has been called the doctrine of the Middle were termed the doctrine of the Whole, then the difficulties as to having neither to love alone, nor hate alone, which is exclusive emotion, nor, on the other hand, to annihilate all emotion, and become like a stone, but to both love all and hate all, would be cleared up. The Whole may best be conceived under the symbol of the sphere. The sphere has a single centre and many parts surrounding that centre in the field of the circumference. Each one of us is a part of the sphere, a part which lies at its periphery. Each is a part of the Whole. But since the microcosm is a copy of the macrocosm, each one of us is a centre of consciousness, a centre, spectator, observer, thinker, of thought, emotion, and perception. The contents of consciousness, our states of consciousness, correspond to the contents or parts of the sphere, whilst our centre corresponds to its centre. Now we find that the centre of our consciousness, instead of being at the centre of the sphere which is the Whole, is only in the periphery of the sphere, forming part of the Whole. It is limited to one human form, and although this limitation has enabled us to attain to self-consciousness, to consciousness of ourselves as separate individuals distinct from all others, yet its purpose having been achieved, the time has come for dispensing with this limitation. The part having attained to consciousness of Itself as a whole, a unit, and as a part of a Greater Whole, its next step is to expand itself inwards and towards the centre of the Whole. From this position it will be within not only its own human form, but within that of all the rest of mankind.

From the point of view of the Centre of the Great Whole it is



obvious that there can be neither loving nor hating, for the simple reason that, the Whole being inclusive of all, there are none outside of it either to love or hate, and since it is one, its action with regard to itself can neither be designated loving alone nor hating alone, but both together. So that Kṛiṣṇa's advice is that of the Whole as a unit. Jesus' teaching is by analogy, the human family being the example. The Centre of the Whole is the Father in Heaven. This Centre is apart from all the part centres as being their common centre, and yet is in each and is each part centre as well.

Consequently, if we wish to be like the Father in Heaven, the Great Whole, we must love Him, and that means must desire to be one with Him. As the Centre of the Whole is the centre within each of us, getting to that centre means that we have got within each one of our brethren. But it is obvious that whilst we hate our brother as having nothing whatever to do with us, and simply want to be separated from him, we are unfit to come inside him.

So we must love our neighbour as ourself, because from the point of view of the Centre of the Great Whole he is ourself. On the other hand, since the Father is within each one of his children, and was also within his special peripheral manifestation, Jesus,—through Jesus the Father separates himself and keeps himself distinct and apart from all other men, and so from the point of view of God the Son we must hate all our brethren. As Sons of God we must all keep ourselves distinct and separate from each other and maintain the isolation and separation by hate. Our aim is to enable others to separate and distinctly recognise themselves as units. But from the point of view of the Father in Heaven which each one of us will become in time, all men are our children, and we separate ourselves from our children which are ourselves. But as each is himself the Father, and the Whole, we all love and are one with each other as the Whole.

The doctrine of the Whole is the Unity which exists in and through a difference, the love which is only maintained in and through separation or hate. It is not a doctrine of impassive, insensible, unconscious indifference.

## DIVISION XCIII

### SUFFERING

#### QUESTION 363.

*Why is suffering always assumed to be so much more beneficial to individual perfection than happiness? (1900.)*

G. R. S. M.—It seems to be laid down in the nature of things that happiness is the outcome of suffering, and that without this “passion” there could be no salvation—that is to say, perfection or gnosis. The soul, if she remained ever by herself in her own state and without change, would be practically non-existent, and unknowing of her own nature and bliss. To know herself she must descend into matter, seeking sensation and so suffering. When the lowest point of descent is reached, she turns upwards to ascend, stretching forth her hands to her lord, the spirit or true mind, who descends into her and becomes her Saviour, finally restoring her to her pristine condition, but with all the added gnosis of her long pilgrimage. Thus is it laid down in the Gnosis of the Christ, and we must receive it with all reverence from so high a source. Now this “suffering” is a mystery, for in her descent the soul goes forth in love, not to suffer but to enjoy; for her in her descent all is happiness, and only when she turns and “repents” and begins to re-ascend does she recognise her former happiness as suffering. What was the happiness of the soul is suffering to the spirit, and what is happiness to the spirit is suffering to the soul. But the soul has now to change from her former will to enjoy to a new will to know, and so once more to be. She must become the spirit, and so for her now her happiness is to unite herself with the spirit and free herself from her old nature of enjoying the things of sense, which now no longer satisfy. What was her former happiness becomes now her ignorance and misery; but

she has still to tread the path of happiness—a new and greater happiness—and not of woe, for she must now ascend and no longer descend, she must return to “those-who-are” once more—not no longer as a passive substance but as an active power.

Now the two most extremely opposed views of life with regard to suffering and happiness are the “Jewish” and the “Greek.” The Javehist fanaticism which rejoices in suffering as the chastisement of a God for sins committed against his jealous personality has led to a morose and melancholy Puritanism that sees sin in the most innocent pleasures—“sins” against the Almighty. It is responsible for the monstrous dogmas of “original sin” and unending torment which make this world grey and the world to come an inferno, and which portray the Deity in the loveless guise of a bloodthirsty and revengeful fiend. It is almost impossible to imagine a more distorted caricature of the doctrine of the Christ than is imagined by this (unfortunately very large) class of minds. It is the outcome of that “fear of Jahveh,” which has transformed the doctrine of the eternal “passion” of the soul into the blasphemy of the savage sacrifice and pitiful suffering of a son to appease the wrath of a bloodthirsty parent.

On the other hand, the laughter-loving “Greek” view that yearned after the ever-smiling soul of nature, and would make life one long holiday, was a great danger if its love were not turned to the higher soul. Still it was free from the paralysing sense of sin in all things and prevented life growing grey.

We want more colour in our lives in this mechanical age, a brighter view of things, and I for my part cannot see why in our theosophical life we should prefer the melancholy idea of the “path of woe” to the winsome comradeship of child Psyche who was the “conductor of souls” in certain mysteries of the rare remembered past.

#### QUESTION 364.

*Does suffering always evolve, or can extreme suffering injure the Ego or causal body, and do people who go insane through trouble, real or imaginary, regain their full powers upon the death of the physical body or at the next incarnation? (1902.)*

A. H. W.—The writer understands that suffering, inasmuch as it is a variety of experience, must always make for the evolution

of the Ego. He, the man for whom the hour never strikes, exists in the eternal "now," and the everlasting "here," and cannot be injured by any causes operating in the worlds of form and place and time. One thing alone can injure him, spiritual selfishness, the dragging down of the powers of abstract impersonal thought to serve the illusory ends of the personality. This is the great danger of the path of knowledge, and its effects on the Ego are analogous to the tearing away of the lower manas, which has become too closely attached to kâma ; but the injury when on the higher plane is infinitely more far-reaching. A tearing away of the lower buddhi, and its isolation by the mental vehicle, is, the writer thinks, the first step upon the left-hand path, a calamity which may be irrevocable for countless ages. But he entertains the hope that, since the Brothers of the Shadow supply the retarding forces by means of which others grow into the light, they, too, in the end, will so work out their gloomy karma, and at last find their path in the Eternal Mercy.

Great sorrow or suffering may indeed, if faced with fortitude and made the best of, be the occasion for a step in evolution. It may drive the consciousness to take refuge in the "inner fortress, where the personal man is viewed with impartiality." It is when the rains descend, and the winds blow, and the floods come, that a man realises that his house has been built upon the sands of emotion and desire.

Insanity, due to real or imaginary trouble, is, the writer thinks, fundamentally due to an enfeebled brain and nervous system. This is caused by excesses of some kind in the present or past lives. The regaining of the powers lost will depend on the exhaustion of the kârmic forces, which may or may not coincide with physical death.

E. A. B.—Suffering, as one side of experience, must always help in the evolution of the Ego, though *how much* may depend on the way in which it is met. No suffering, however great, can injure the causal body, as we learn that nothing can really injure it but evil so persistent and extreme that we need scarcely take it into account, though its *growth* may be greatly retarded by the refusal to make due use of our opportunities of progress. Nor would any mere "trouble" be the real cause of insanity, though it may seem, as its starting-point, to be so. The true cause lies deeper ; insanity is said to be *always* the result of some evil done in the past (which by no means implies that it must have been

done in the present earth-life). Insanity seems also to be of many degrees, differing according to the degree and kind of that past evil; sometimes affecting only the consciousness in the physical body, in which case the sufferer would be free and sane whenever the body was asleep, and of course after death; sometimes, in graver cases, the astral body is also affected, and even the mental; and cases have been known in which the terrible retribution has returned in more than one earth-life. These last, however, are probably rare, and in all cases the evil karma will of course be eventually worked out.

B. K.—The Ego—the self in the *causal* body—can only be affected by such vibrations as can set in motion the matter of the arûpa mental plane—the world of *abstract* thought. Suffering, whether physical or emotional, does not act directly upon this, and therefore cannot *injure* the Ego in any way. It can—at most—only develop it, by calling out its powers of response; for since the purpose of the Ego in seeking manifestation is the enfoldment of its powers and the becoming master and lord of all the three worlds, it must of necessity pass through every variety of experience, and among these the two contrasted poles of sensation, pleasure, and pain alike, since neither can be manifested without its opposite. And this development even takes place only indirectly, because during its human evolution the experience gathered by the Ego is modified by the mind before being taken up into the causal body. And it should be remembered that pain and pleasure belong in their nature to the astral plane primarily, where they appear as two of the forms under which the “feeling” aspect of the Self unfolds its powers.

As regards the problem of insanity, it is, I think, a very complex one. In many cases, perhaps the majority, insanity is simply a lesion of the physical (or etheric) brain, though I believe that some few instances have been noticed in which the astral body also seemed to be involved. Whether or not anything of the sort could be traced in very rare instances in the mental body I do not know; but since in all cases alike these three bodies—physical, astral, and mental—are disintegrated in the normal course after each incarnation, there could hardly be any carrying over of such lesions to the next incarnation; though, of course, if the karma producing insanity had not been exhausted in the one life, it would certainly operate till it was exhausted either in the next or some later life, though most probably it would then produce a

less marked effect, since, at any rate, some part, if not the whole, of its energy would have been already expended.

Such cases, however, must, I should think, be exceedingly rare ; for by far the larger number of cases now classed as insanity are due merely to injury, disorganisation, or malformation of the physical apparatus through which the consciousness must express itself if it is to manifest on the physical plane.

#### QUESTION 365.

*I have often read in theosophical books that the "Path" of occultism is one which brings increased suffering, in fact, it is sometimes spoken of as a "path of woe." Is there any foundation for such a belief? (1896.)*

A. B.—The aspect taken of the Path depends very much on the standpoint from which it is regarded, and on the nature of the things which exercise attraction over the spectator. To begin with, the man who treads the Path has definitely cast aside all the ordinary pleasures and ambitions of the world as mere worthless rubbish ; as these form the happiness of men of the world, their complete absence would convey to all such persons the idea of blankness and sadness. But the man on the Path has cast them away because he feels they can never satisfy him, they no longer afford him pleasure, and he does not therefore feel the blankness which the man of the world assigns to him in his imagination. All that he may occasionally suffer under this head would be from the temporary uprising of his lower nature, demanding the satisfaction of some, as yet, uneradicated desire, and this would give but a trivial suffering of a most transitory nature. More serious is the result of the quickening of karmic action ; if much unexhausted karma lies behind the disciple, its rapid working out involves aggravated suffering during a limited time, and although on the whole more is not suffered than must in any case be endured, its concentration into a short period means a much intensified, because briefer, pain. Here again the case seems worse to the onlooker than to the endurer, because the latter is upheld and encouraged by the knowledge that he is rapidly paying off his karmic liabilities. He knows that he is only paying in the lump a debt which would otherwise be paid in instalments extending over a long term of lives, and is ridding

himself of a burden that would hamper him as long as it lasted. Similarly there is an uprising of whatever evil is left in his nature, and this implies a bitter and unceasing warfare until all his mental and moral faults are destroyed, and with the expansion of his consciousness he finds himself obliged to meet and conquer on planes beyond the physical the subtler forms of the evils long since annihilated in their grosser aspects. The personality, as such, has to be totally killed out, and suffering will be experienced so long as any of it remains ; but here again the man who is on the Path recognises the suffering as the inevitable accompaniment of the destruction of the lower nature, and willing the destruction he wills the means. To the onlooker to whom the personality is the only self known, who sees the destruction and not the higher self set free, this process must inevitably give the idea of woe. Further, the disciple feels the sorrows of the world more keenly than does the ordinary man, and in training himself to respond to all human needs he increases his sensitiveness and suffers in the pain of others as, outside the Path, each suffers in his own ; this is a very constant source of suffering, and only disappears gradually in the light of fuller knowledge and deeper insight. Nor is this a suffering from which he can wisely try to escape until selfishness is completely eradicated, as any escape by not feeling another's pain while he still feels pain for his own personality would tend to callousness. There are keener forms of suffering voluntarily faced for the helping of the world by some on the Path, hinted at in *The Voice of the Silence*, under the simile of the snow that bears the icy blast in order that the seed beneath it may be protected ; but the nature and details of these are not matters for discussion in a public print. It may suffice to say that through all such sufferings there is a deep and abiding joy, for the suffering is of the lower nature and the joy of the higher. When the last shred of the personality has gone, all that can thus suffer has passed away, and in the perfected Adept, the Master, the Jivanmukta, there is unruffled peace and everlasting joy. He sees the end towards which all is working and rejoices in that end, knowing that earth's sorrow is but a passing phase in human evolution. That of which little has been said is the profound content which comes from being on the Path, from realising the goal and the way to it, from knowing that the power to be useful is increasing, and that the lower nature is being gradually extirpated.

And little has been said of the rays of joy which fall on the Path from loftier levels, the dazzling glimpses of the "glory to be revealed," the serenity which the storms of earth cannot ruffle. To anyone who has entered on the Path all other ways have lost their charm, and its sorrows have a keener bliss than the best joys of the lower world.

C. J.—If we are to take into consideration what those who are on the "Path" themselves say, it would seem that it is by no means a "path of woe." As the questioner puts it he appears to imply that the books describe the path of occultism, apart from any bad karma that the aspirant may have to work off, as by its very nature one which brings more suffering as he progresses. But whether the writers of the books meant this is doubtful—perhaps they meant only to point out that for the ordinary person who lives the life of the world, and has not freed himself from the lower desires, the path of progress might for a time be one of trouble and renunciation; and we can easily see how true this might be. But after a certain point, when the student realises for himself by actual experience that

"The soul of things is sweet,  
The Heart of Being is celestial rest,  
Stronger than woe is will: that which was Good  
Doth pass to Better—Best,"

to call his progress a "path of woe" is surely misleading. It is true that no rapid progress is possible without strenuous exertion, and this perhaps has given rise to such a misleading view, by leaving out of consideration the newer realms of nature that are opened up, and the glorious possibilities that lie before the student, of endless progress and opportunities to help in the great scheme of evolution of which he forms a part.

#### QUESTION 366.

*In an article in the February Review, entitled "Spiritual Darkness," Mrs. Besant writes: "Disciples are the crucibles of Nature, wherein compounds that are mischievous are dissociated, and are recombined into compounds that promote the general good. As the seething compounds break up with explosive violence, the sensitive human crucible quivers under the terrible strain, and little wonder that, at times, it breaks, unable to endure. By*



*such discipline, long continued, the disciple strengthens his powers, etc., etc.*

*Is it necessary for all disciples to become "crucibles"? Is there no other way of becoming strong for service? One had thought the life of a disciple must of necessity be so full of joy! (1900.)*

C. W. L.—The life of the disciple is full of joy—never doubt it for one instant. But it is not a life of ease. The work which he has to do is very hard, the struggle is a very real one. To compress into a few short lives the evolution of millions of years—the evolution for which the ordinary processes of nature allow *three rounds and a half*—is not a mere holiday task.

It is not *necessary* for anyone to become a "crucible"; perhaps it would be nearer the fact to say that to become one is a distinction eagerly sought after; nearer still to say that when once a man has *seen* the great sacrifice of the Logos, there is no other possibility for him but to throw himself into it—to do his tiny best to share in it and to help it, at whatever cost to his lower nature. And this is no child's play; it does, indeed, involve often a terrible strain. But an earnest student will be able to realise that one may so love one's work and may be so full of joy in it that outside of it there can be no pleasure worth considering, even although that work may tax, almost beyond bearing, every faculty and every vehicle—physical, astral, or mental—that one possesses.

It must be remembered that when humanity in general has this work to do, and this evolution to accomplish, it will be far better fitted for the effort than is the man who is trying now to take the shorter and steeper road. Many of his difficulties are due to the fact that he is attempting with a set of fourth-round bodies to achieve a result for the attainment of which nature will prepare her less adventurous children by supplying them in the course of the ages with the splendid vehicles of the seventh round. Of course even to gain those glorified vehicles these weaker souls will have to do the same work; but when it is spread over thousands of incarnations it naturally looks less formidable.

Yet behind and above all his struggle the pupil has ever an abiding joy, a peace, a certainty that nothing on earth can disturb. If he had not he would indeed be a faithless servant of his Master, for he would be allowing the temporary strain on the vehicle to overpower his perception of the Self within, and identifying himself with the lower instead of with the higher.

## DIVISION XCIV

### THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

#### QUESTION 367.

*In seeking our own true progress, should we try to become indifferent to the influence of other minds? (1896.)*

G. R. S. M.—Certainly not. A man might as well try to reconstruct the science of mathematics unaided. Such a reactionary would have to be content with counting on his fingers or worse. The law of nature has ever been that higher minds develop lower intelligences. A man, therefore, can be indifferent neither to the influence of higher minds than his own, nor yet to lower minds, for as he receives from the higher so is it his duty to give to the lower. Perhaps, however, the questioner means that a man should shield himself against the pernicious influences of other minds. This is undoubtedly right and proper, and one of the conditions of true progress.

F. A.—By becoming indifferent to the influence of other minds, we must understand the being willing to pursue any course of action which we believe to be right, without being disturbed by the praise or blame awarded to us by others. In this sense indifference to influence is a necessary condition of spiritual progress. It cannot, however, be supposed that we can wish to become indifferent to the influence of those who are farther advanced on the spiritual path than ourselves, and through whose influence we may be better able to progress, and in our turn help others forward. Neither should we seek to withdraw our minds from the influence that others may exercise upon us, if that influence takes the form of arousing our sympathy with their needs. Each one is part of the great unity of humanity, and we cannot become indifferent to the influences that are pouring forth from other

minds, without losing our power to sympathise and help. The indifference that we have the right to cultivate is only the indifference that leaves the mind free from desire for results, indifference that makes us strong to work the right, although we may suffer in so doing from the judgment of others, indifference that will bear with equal equanimity the pain or pleasure that such judgments bring. But the higher we progress in the spiritual life, the more fully shall we respond to the slightest touch of another human being, the more we shall feel that we are not isolated, indifferent entities, each pursuing a separate path, but a living unity in which the good of one influences the good of all.

## QUESTION 368.

*How can an aspirant best attract the attention of a Master?*  
(1900.)

C. W. L.—As a matter of fact, it is absolutely unnecessary to try to do this, for the Masters are ever watching for those whom they can help, and who will be of use to them in the great work which they have to do. We can do nothing on our side but work steadily at the improvement of our own character, and endeavour in every way possible by study of theosophical works and by self-development to fit ourselves for the honour which we desire. The regular practice of meditation and concentration will be of the utmost help to us in such an attempt; but we must remember that the regularity is an important factor in producing the result. It should be undertaken daily at the same hour, and steadily persevered in, even though no immediate effect should be produced.

## QUESTION 369.

*Is any spiritual progress possible to us before we have reached our ideal of perfection on the lower planes?* (1896.)

G. R. S. M.—In the first place what is the meaning of “our ideal”? A prize fighter’s ideal of perfection on the lower planes would undoubtedly not connote spiritual progress; nor would that of a millionaire whose ideal is to gain the greatest sum of money possible; nor again that of a professional man who merely wishes to make a “name for himself.” Spiritual progress depends on

spiritual aspirations, and to manifest on this plane must be persistently fed with such aspirations. It is therefore evident that spiritual progress is not only possible before we realise our "spiritual ideals" here, but that the reaching of such perfection "here" is solely dependent upon that same spiritual progress "elsewhere."

I. P. H.—If it be not possible, it appears to me that our chances of progress are small. A thing is physically perfect in so far as it is adapted to perform that for which it is intended. But if an animal is bred for—let us say—speed, the human being who breeds and rears that creature must first think of the physical attributes which will conduce to speed, *i.e.*, the physical creature starts as an *idea*. It appears to me that our action must be translations of spiritual and mental activities; thus to have translated these into an expression of perfection, on the lower planes—*i.e.*, into daily action and thought—consonant with a higher ideal, would argue very considerable spiritual progress.

F. A.—It is a little difficult to know what is meant by an "ideal of perfection on the lower planes," but if we are to understand by these the moral and intellectual, any ideal of perfection could hardly be attained without some spiritual progress. For it must be remembered that the progress of development on any plane involves a certain unfoldment of the plane next above, for there is the latent potentiality of all planes within our nature, which is many-sided, and development rarely proceeds entirely on one line. In most individuals we see that the emotional, intellectual and moral faculties bear a certain relation to each other, and that they accompany spiritual growth in a greater or less degree. It is true that we may observe a high standard of intellectual, with very little development of the spiritual nature; but this generally arises from the want of an ideal and the consequent limitation of development by the desire for personal gain. Whenever there is a true aspiration to an ideal of perfection on any plane, however humble may be the goal, the very fact that we place an ideal before us, as something to reach up to, is sufficient to call forth a certain development of the spiritual nature.

#### QUESTION 370.

*Manas is to be fully developed only in the fifth round; will then the struggle for morality, virtue and holiness be less hard than it is now that manas is only partially and abnormally developed?*

*Will the balance between the higher and lower manas cause a more equal condition between the good and evil in man?  
Does the fact of the development of the lower manas make the attainment of spiritual qualities more or less hard for man?  
Intellectuality often, as we see, means a more elaborate wickedness.  
(1900.)*

A. A. W.—The querist's difficulty seems to me to arise from his not having entirely freed himself from the popular mixing up of "higher and lower" with "good and evil." If he keeps it clearly in his mind that the lower manas is not, in its own nature, in any way more "evil" or less "good" than the higher, he will avoid many puzzles. The old Christian—and pre-Christian—blunder, that spirit is good and matter evil, has yet too much influencing on our thinking and our habitual use of language. Each stage of our development has its own powers, with the possibility of using them either for good—that is to say, to help ourselves and others onwards, or for evil—to hold back. The more the manas is developed the greater are our powers, for good and evil alike the fight is on a grander scale, corresponding to our own higher condition. There is nothing in the mere development to make the struggle easier—perhaps the contrary. But what *is* the struggle? Let us start from the beginning. The animal lives blamelessly according to his desire-nature, which is all he has. Whatever he does to gratify its desires is good for him at that stage. It *would* be evil for one who had mind. Now when the first gleams of mind dawn—that mind which is to draw him up *beyond* the desire-nature—the desires are at their fullest strength, and the imminent risk is that the new mind may be drawn aside to help them to fuller gratification, as we see and feel so constantly at our own stage of the Great Fight. Then he is brought under the influence of Man (who is, indeed, for the time, his god), and in his service he learns that there are higher duties than the mere gratification of his sense-appetites, and is taught (often by very painful lessons) the rudiments of self-control, of obedience, of unselfishness—the qualities which are hereafter to be the characteristics of the future man. In this domesticated state the creature's *faults* are simply reversions to the old habits and pleasures, once harmless, but now the deliberate falling back to a lower state—in short, *sins* calling for punishment.

Now we must understand that this, which is quite clear in the

animal, is precisely our own position in relation to the step we ourselves are leaving behind us; that, be the degree we have attained higher or lower, *evil* for us is the using our new power for the continuance of the old pleasures now behind and beneath us, *good* the "forgetting what is behind and reaching forth to that which is before." If we choose to misuse our new powers, our higher intellectuality will of course, as the querist says, mean only more elaborate wickedness. Our hope of final success in the struggle, repeated again and again on each plane of development as we rise to it, is not the growth of our *powers* but the growth of our *Selves*. It is by steady, persistent fighting that *we*—our wills, our higher Selves—grow; into every new life we come back stronger and better men, to wage a nobler warfare than ever before. We must not *wish* the struggle to be less hard; of the final victory we are assured. And of another thing we may be assured: the gifts we seek from the Powers, of insight, of advance beyond our fellows, are only given to those who fight on, undismayed by fall after fall. As in Bunyan's vision we have cried to the Man at the Gate to "set our names down," but *that* is useless unless we draw our swords and cut our way through the opposing hosts. Antæus-like, each time we are beaten to the earth we shall rise the stronger for it, and (sooner or later) entrance will be *gained*—never *given*! The Kingdom of Heaven can only be taken by force!

#### QUESTION 371.

*What am I to understand by the term "spirituality?" What qualities might one expect to find in a person regarded as a "spiritual man"?* It is very difficult for me to form any clear idea of the meaning of the term as applied to character. (1900.)

A. P. S.—If many answers are given to this question, I should expect to find them all at variance. Spiritual growth has so much to do with the condition of the higher vehicles of consciousness, which cannot be estimated from the physical point of view, that no answer would be complete which related merely to attributes of character on this plane. Within limits, men of very defective character may be more advanced spiritually than others who would be considered more spiritually-minded by the casual

observer. But in so far as character on this plane is a factor in making an entity ripe for a higher spiritual existence, the leading attribute to be thought about first of all is *not* that which is so often mistaken for spirituality—an inclination towards the observances of religion, a tendency to be “pious” in the commonplace signification of the term. That might be compatible with a very low development of the temperament which, in physical plane manifestation, would correspond with capacity for active consciousness on a spiritual plane. The one feeling which can find free expression in earth-life, and also free expression on the spiritual plane, is the love emotion, and though that is no doubt a very different feeling on the higher plane as compared with what it is down here, if it finds no expression down here one may entertain serious doubt as to whether it can do so elsewhere. Certainly for the common run of ordinary human beings a loving nature is that which gives rise to the most vivid consciousness during the devachanic period, and capacity for a rich devachanic period must be taken as forecasting true spiritual growth.

A. A. W.—It is true that the word spirituality is used very loosely in ordinary conversation, but even a slight acquaintance with our literature will show that Theosophists use it with a very distinct and well-defined meaning. If the general outline given in Mrs. Besant's *Ancient Wisdom* does not make it clear to the querist, a good deal will be found in the earlier part of her lecture, *Occultism, Semi-Occultism and Pseudo-Occultism*. In a more recent lecture, not yet separately republished, Mrs. Besant is reported as saying: “Spirituality means the identifying ourselves with the True Self within us, by meditation and unselfish work. . . .” “The life that is spiritual is the life of *giving*.”

To us the Spirit means the higher portion of man, which is “like a star and dwells apart” from all the pains and pleasures which affect the lower self which acts in our mortal bodies; and as a man passes through life after life, he learns by degrees of how little consequence to his Spirit are the details of any one particular life (even of the one he is now living). Such a one becomes a “Spiritual Man” in the proportion in which he has learned to treat everything which the ordinary man cares and labours for as only helps or hindrances, as the case may be, to his spiritual growth. The vagueness of the ordinary use of the word arises from the fact that so few, even of those who call themselves religious people, have any clear idea of anything higher in them

than the physical brain by whose aid they think and feel ; they do not know what the Spirit is—the true self in whose life their immortality consists. As St. Paul says of them, they are yet babes—we cannot speak to them as unto spiritual, only as unto carnal, and—“the carnal man understandeth not the things of the Spirit.”

A. H. W.—The writer understands that this term is used theosophically in the widest sense, to denote the working of the Divine Creative Energy in the human soul, no matter what form the manifestation may take. The Divine Light streaming through the buddhic plane is focussed in the ego, and there becomes the creative imagination ; the class of ideas evolved depends on the type of the individual mind thus illuminated. When it is one of the greatest, and in perfect accord with the Universal Mind, great systems of religion and philosophy are brought forth, like the Good Law of the Buddha, and the Evangel of the Christ. So the Divine Science, the Gnosis, is revealed to men. In other Great Ones, the Force evolves stupendous allegories, like the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and majestic cosmogonies, like the Stanzas of Dzyan. In saintly minds the Holy Fire awakes the psalms and hymns, the litanies and prayers which crystallise in words the piety of countless souls. In the poet the Divine Afflatus bursts into radiant beauty, lighting up the world and human nature with the glory of the Ideal. This it is that wings those deathless phrases which reach the heart of nations ; those “Jewels five words long, that on the stretched forefinger of all time sparkle for ever.” In the musician the Power expands in perfect harmonies and symphonies that hold us spellbound ; in the artist it is the Inspiration which drives him to translate into immortal marble his vision of the One Perfection. From the same fount the thinkers draw those theories which transform the thought of continents, and the men of science that eternal patience which consummates their labours. It is the motive which urges the philanthropist and the missionary, misguided though they often are, to toil unthanked and unappreciated. All that is wise, heroic or devoted, all that is lovely and of good report, has its root in the spiritual world ; thence too comes that unassuming quality called sweet reasonableness, too seldom cultivated in modern days. All this and more is the fruit of the Spirit, and the man who shows such qualities is by so much a spiritual man, for verily the tree is known by its fruit.



## QUESTION 372.

*It has been stated that "wisdom, not book-learning," is the qualification of the spiritual man. How are we to get wisdom? What is the best way? Need we always go to books to learn wisdom? (1900.)*

B. K.—The associations which the word "wisdom" seems to call up in the mind—especially when used as in the context referred to—distinctly points to something which is *not* intellectual knowledge, whether we think of intellectual knowledge as concerned with facts or with processes of reasoning and their results. Nor can it refer simply to the mere material of knowledge, observations and experiences, by whatever channels these may reach us. "Wisdom," therefore, means something super-intellectual, which at once brings to our minds the thought of man's spiritual nature. Indeed, I venture to think that a study of all the deepest writers and thinkers will show that they have regarded "wisdom" as involving the activity and guiding of that highest element in man. If that be so, it is at once obvious why "wisdom, not book-learning," is said to be the qualification of the spiritual man. For since "wisdom" involves the activity and influence of the spiritual nature upon the mind and life, it is clear that in a man who possesses wisdom the spiritual life must be active and strong enough to manifest its influence.

These considerations seem to me to suggest the truest and best, if not the most pleasant-sounding, answer to the actual question asked: "How are we to get wisdom?" Develop your spiritual nature, sounds perhaps too brief, but it *is*, I believe, the one and only real answer. But again, how? As *Light on the Path* teaches us, by renouncing selfishness, and dissolving the personality whose fetters prevent the unfoldment of the divine within us. It is the old, old answer again: Tread the path of holiness, forget self, live for all and in all, that the divine within you may have space and freedom to manifest its power and glory.

It sounds, doubtless, simple and elementary; it lacks the attractiveness of sensational effort or abnormal experiences, or strange practices? True; moreover, how hard, how unceasing the struggle is, none know but those who have faced it in earnest. But that road *does* bring to light the hidden light of the spirit, and with it "Wisdom." Other road there is none.

A. A. W.—The querist has asked a very large question, and one which, strictly speaking, cannot be answered at all. If we should meet again, say a million years hence, one might ask him how far he has progressed towards an answer; but he will by then be too wise to reply that he has got wisdom. For to get Wisdom is in truth the sole object of the monad's long pilgrimage through the worlds, and not until we are ready to be reabsorbed in the Logos at the end of the Manvantara shall ordinary people like us dare to say we have attained. There is a favourite triad of names all are familiarly acquainted with, usually running as Power, Wisdom, and Love, which may somewhat mislead the enquirer. The wisdom there named should rather be called Knowledge, for the true Wisdom contains all three. A soul may love, and yet have no power and no knowledge; it may have power and yet be ignorant and unloving; but it cannot be truly wise if it lacks anything. Wisdom is founded on knowledge, it grows by the intelligent exercise of power, but it misses its way and becomes a destroying fiend unless guided by the infinite sympathy which is the root of Love. Ultimately, Wisdom is the "Mind of the Master," the Logos who knows how to make all things well, has power to make all things well, and the "love which is the assurance that all things *shall be* made well," as he said to an English mystic of old time; and *we* approach Wisdom as we share in that Mind more and more, till we reach the full identification of ourselves with Him, which is the goal of our evolution.

How to get it? That is still more easily answered—if only anyone could understand the answer. To get Wisdom we have but to *live*. Our lives are planned by the Wisdom for that very purpose. It is not, truly, by reading of books; though without reading we shall hardly gain the knowledge which is one part, and an essential one, of the Wisdom we seek. But as we rise higher in the scale of being, more and more is included in that word "living." No longer is it enough for us to vegetate through life after life, learning nothing from what befalls us, as we see so many around us. The life which shall help us towards the Wisdom must be an *intelligent* life—the soul must ponder and brood over the lessons its daily life has for it—with rapid appreciation catching up the hints which the Lords of life are continually dropping in all sorts of unexpected ways of circumstances, speech, sermon, story, for those who have the quick eye which sees and the loving heart which responds. The Master (to

use the word which for us forms the summary of all the Powers who stand above us and are interested in our progress) has nothing so much at heart as that we should get Wisdom, and will give all the teaching to which we will respond. But this response is not the mere "opening of the windows to let the light shine into us," as is often said—we are not "mediums," to be developed in complete passivity; it must be the delighted reception and assimilation of the great Teacher's lessons which a bright and earnest student yields to his revered Master; our whole heart and mind set on not missing one least word or syllable of the treasure laid before us. To one who takes his life in this way the teacher will never fail; and his reward will be to feel as the years go by, not precisely that he grows wiser—he will more likely feel more and more his ignorance—but that in some strange mysterious way he is drawing closer to the heart of the Master in whom (for him) the Wisdom is incarnate; not yet knowing as He knows, but more and more distinctly feeling as he feels; and thus gaining the joyful assurance that he is in truth on the way which cannot fail to lead him at last to the Wisdom he seeks.

## QUESTION 373.

*What is the difference between "knowledge" and "wisdom"? How does the devachanic experience of the ego change the one into the other? (1898.)*

A. B.—"Knowledge" seems to be the result of making, comparing, and reflecting upon observations. We observe facts, and store them in our memories; we arrange and classify them by comparison; by reflection we reach conclusions upon them, and we often make inferences which lead to new observations. Thus a man may become learned, a walking encyclopædia. Of such gathering there is no end; were everything in the physical world within our knowledge, the astral and mânasic realms would remain to be studied; were these mastered, the nearest planet would offer a new field; and so on, on and on, through the immensities of space. "Wisdom" appears rather to be the result of the distilled essence of experience, assimilated by the soul. It does not depend on a knowledge of facts, but on an insight into the principles of nature. It is the fruit of profound reflection on causes rather than

on effects, and shows itself in ripened judgment, not in keen observation. It is a sign of maturity in the soul, and is always accompanied by peace and balance, whereas a feverish unrest generally characterises knowledge. It belongs to Buddhi, not to Manas, and uses intuition, not reasoning, for its growth. Knowledge increases in extent, wisdom in depth.

The devachanic experience of the ego cannot, it seems to me, as a general rule be regarded as changing knowledge into wisdom. In the latest stages of its growth this may indeed be done, but until these are reached it appears to be engaged in Devachan in building up faculties, capacities, and powers, in registering conclusions that appear at innate ideas as the next birth, thus forming the mental and moral character with which it returns to earth. The knowledge of facts is stored in the causal body, and the capacity to acquire knowledge of similar facts is formed for the next mental body. But the growth of wisdom must wait until the buddhic consciousness begins to stir into activity, and in its evolution love plays a greater part than knowledge.

#### QUESTION 374.

*There seems to be a great difference between spirituality and morality, so that a man may live a highly moral life, and yet be quite indifferent to religious matters. Would the ego, being spiritual, have any devachanic experience from such a life, and if not, what would be carried over to the next incarnation? (1896.)*

A. B.—It is well clearly to recognise what is meant severally by morality and spirituality, and then we can easily follow each in their post-mortem effects. A man is moral when he recognises his obligations to all around him, and fulfils them to the best of his ability. His accurate discernment of these obligations depends on the range and the use made of his past experiences by the Higher Ego, and on the receptivity of the personal Ego as regards impressions made on it by the higher. The mind, the lower Manas, in the moral man, exercises its powers to control the kâmic nature, and to impose on the body the discharge of all that is recognised as duty. The consciousness of the moral man is the personal consciousness, *i.e.*, he is not conscious of himself as an individual, he does not *realise* himself as a permanent entity; he is merely for a time clothed in a personality; he may intel-

lectually hold that such is the fact, but he does not consciously know it; he feels his higher nature by the help of the body, is conscious of its working in the body, and he so far identifies himself with it that he consciously rules the body, makes it perform the actions which he regards as right, and withholds it from performing the actions which he regards as wrong. His life is one, therefore, which is centred in the lower mind, and as that mind belongs in its constitution to the rūpa levels of the mânasic plane, it must inevitably gravitate thither when liberated from its physical and astral encasements, and it will thus "enter Devachan." His work on the rūpa levels of Devachan will very largely consist in the building of the moral nature, thus ensuring a better mental body for his next personality. The spiritual man has his centre of activity on the planes above these rūpa levels, in the individuality illumined from the plane above the mânasic, and he acts under the influences which flow from the plane of Buddhi. At an early stage he feels himself as the individual beyond the personality, and is conscious of acting under the influences which come from above; later, as the spiritual nature develops, he feels himself in union with the Self of all, and his actions are no longer the meeting of obligations but the free giving of himself in service to the limit of his ability. He recognises himself as the spiritualised Ego, Manas in union with developed Buddhi, and his motive power is from its plane.

## QUESTION 375.

*In the Raushitaki-Brâhmana Upanishad it is written: "Whoso knows Brahman, by no deed soever is his future bliss harmed"; not the most heinous crimes, the murder of a Brâham, of a mother, or father, can smirch him or endanger him howsoever. How may this be reconciled with the teaching that "according to deeds" a man attains either to rebirth or to liberation? (1901.)*

G. R. S. M.—It was also charged against one of the Schools of the Gnostics that they taught that the Perfect could commit any crime or indulge in any enormity, and yet suffer no taint. It has always seemed to me that there was a grain of truth hidden beneath this mass of pernicious error. "He who knows Brahman" and "he who is Perfect" are expressions connoting

one who has transcended all limitations and united himself with the will of the Lord of the Universe. He, therefore, on this hypothesis, is no longer a man, but a direct instrument of the Divine Will. The Divine Will destroys as well as it creates and preserves. This is the grain of truth in the chaos, as it seems to me. But when uninstructed and untrained people begin to talk of these high matters, when some of the mysterious facts connected with the working of this "face" of the Deity are imprudently hinted at, the result is that destruction speedily follows to the moral and intellectual nature of those who have approached the mystery unprepared. Poor fools, who imagine that they "know Brahman," or have become "Perfect" because they are members of some little occult school or metaphysical Bethel!

So also it is recorded of the Christ that He said: "Unless ye hate father and mother ye cannot be My disciples," a dark saying, which no literalist can explain. But the Gnostics, not the incarnate devils of Patristic fancy, but the mystics of the Christ, explained how that these "parents" were the makers of our passion nature, the "bastard spirit" which so continually usurped the place of the true heir in our kingdom. It may be, too, that the statement in the *R.-B. Upanishad* may have been originally based on some mystic saying of this kind. In any case we may be very sure that if we find a man committing such heinous crimes, he is so far from being a "knower of Brahman" that he does not yet know the conditions of knowing.

#### QUESTION 376.

*How far will devotion alone take a person who desires to advance in occultism? Can he develop himself on such lines without having evolved a good intellect on ordinary lines? (1896.)*

A. B.—The study of occultism is a pursuit that can only be effectively taken up when the ego has passed through a very large number of births and is approaching the end of his pilgrimage. During these births he will necessarily have developed his intellect "on ordinary lines," and will have built up a mature and well-formed thought-body. The very power of realising that there is such a thing as occultism, and of regarding it as desirable, implies the presence of mental capacity. But it is not necessary

for the pursuit of occultism that the lower mind—*i.e.*, such portion of the intellect as is afforded basis for manifestation by the physical organism—shall have been, in the incarnation in which occultism is first followed, crammed with the accumulation of facts which in the West stands for education. A man need not be a “learned man” in order to become an occultist, but he must be an experienced ego, and one who has profited by his experience, thus becoming wise. Again, the devotion that is needed is not the kind of devotion which expresses itself in vague yearnings after a crudely conceived ideal, seeks post-mortem happiness as the recompense for its services, or occupies a heart in common with various other feelings and ambitions; it is a devotion that is intense, irresistible, complete, and that cannot be turned aside from its object by any lower love; it has in itself the seed of wisdom, for its sole desire being to become a channel for the divine will and an instrument of the divine law, that intense desire gives insight into the nature of things and “love makes wise.” Also it brings about extreme purity, as such devotion cannot tolerate any uncleanness in the heart and the life that it offers as sacrifice to its Lord. A person who is full of such devotion, and in whom devotion has extirpated all the lower desires, may rise high on the Path in an incarnation in which very little external knowledge has been acquired. But it must be remembered that devotion of such quality as has been described is rare, far rarer than intellectual ability, and far more difficult to evolve, for it implies the evolution of Buddhi while the intellectual implies only the evolution of Manas. Nor can this devotion be developed until the ego has by long experience grown weary of all earthly objects and is “athirst for God,” turning aside from all beautiful things to That which is Beauty itself. Those who would develop it in the future must begin by unselfishly loving and serving the highest they can now conceive, performing every action as a sacrifice without thought of reward. Such love and service gradually evolve into true devotion, the highest and noblest of human qualities, and that which finally unites man and God.

In some notes of H. P. B.’s oral teaching, the following passage appears:—

“The white Adept is not always at first of powerful intellect. In fact H. P. B. had known Adepts whose intellectual powers were originally below the average. It is the Adept’s purity, his

equal love to all, his working with Nature, with Karma, with his 'Inner God,' that give him his power. Intellect by itself alone will make the Black Magician. For intellect alone is accompanied with pride and selfishness: it is the intellectual *plus* the spiritual that raises man. For spirituality prevents pride and vanity."

QUESTION 377.

*Remembering the rules laid down for the aspirant in First Steps in Occultism, as those conditions under which alone the study of Divine Wisdom can be pursued, how can the hopeful teaching given in our western theosophical books be reconciled with these rules? (1899.)*

C. W. L.—No difference will be found between the moral and spiritual qualifications described in the book above mentioned as necessary for the man who wishes to enter upon the path of occult development and those given in fuller detail in some of our later literature. It is not easy to see exactly what is meant by "hopeful teaching." All teaching is hopeful which explains the course of man's evolution and shows him how he may raise himself out of darkness into the light of life; yet no teaching can give him a royal road to the heights of adeptship, or enable him to dispense with the sustained and earnest effort necessary for self-culture.

The rules to which the questioner refers as requiring to be "reconciled" may perhaps be those for the conventual life of a band of disciples who have the good fortune to be able to reside and work together under the direction of a Master. No doubt such a life may be a great aid to rapid evolution, but for most people in the west it is absolutely out of reach—often because of kârmic ties which they themselves have formed before they became acquainted with the possibilities of the higher life. It is not, of course, expected that the student still living in the world amid ordinary family surroundings should keep such regulations in their entirety, though he must endeavour to approximate as closely as he can to the state of feeling towards his fellow-students which they indicate. When the time comes that the path is smoothed for him to leave the ordinary worldly life, he will undertake new obligations in various ways, and enter into closer relations with the real realities which underlie evolution.



## QUESTION 378.

*The idea of "taking short cuts," of "outstripping our fellows," has often been mentioned. Does any ego really outstrip those of his own block or batch who began their evolution together? Is not this rapid growth quite normal at a certain stage?*

*Why should one have that intense desire to progress? Are not those who feel this really in advance of the rest in incarnation around them, and is not their apparent outstripping the rest really quite normal evolution for them, the few advanced ones? (1901.)*

E. A. B.—I think the questioner is right in supposing that the swifter advance—the "outstripping our fellows," of which he speaks—is "really quite normal" for the few advanced ones. There are egos in incarnation at the same time of widely different ages and at all stages; but it is also true that when they have developed the power of conscious choice, of the inner will, this in itself implies a growing diversity, and they may hasten or retard their further progress by choosing to work with the Divine Will as it becomes gradually unfolded to their understanding or choosing to disregard it; or they may simply drift on without making any special effort. The first course means effort which probably none can steadfastly maintain till after many, many lessons of failure—and the last may be without blame; yet the difference in result after many lives would be so great, that what to these would seem but a possibility of some far-off future (or not even that), would be approaching realisation for the "advanced few," *i.e.*, such quickened evolution would thus have become "normal for them," as the result of their long-continued effort—though both classes may in the distant past have stood on the same level.

The "intense desire" for such swifter progress is a sign that the ego has at least begun to be conscious of its possibilities and to make some effort towards realising them.

## QUESTION 379.

*What is the meaning of the term "great renunciation"? One who reaches Nirvāna can surely have no "self" left. If this is the case, how can there be any self-denial? (1903.)*

B. K.—What is really meant by the "great renunciation" can only be dimly shadowed forth for us by those who possess

the deepest insight into "real" knowledge. But as a very humble contribution to at least some preliminary clearing up of what the question itself means, I may perhaps venture to point out, that like the corresponding word "Mukti," the term Nirvāna is used in a variety of senses and with very different implications.

For instance, if we take Nirvāna in the sense here used as implying the perfect, complete, absolute union of the individual with the Logos, such that no faintest, most remote shadow of difference remains between His will and that of the individual, then obviously there *can* be no renunciation whatever, simply because, since my will is absolutely one with His, there remains nothing to renounce.

But if we take Nirvāna in the sense of a Cosmic plane of consciousness, and the attainment of Nirvāna as meaning the establishment of consciousness on a certain most exalted, spiritual level, which can be and is attained as the result of evolution (as, for instance, in some of our books it is said that our present evolution is five-fold and that the highest plane concerned with that evolution is the Nirvānic), then obviously the above does *not* apply, and we find such statements as those of *The Secret Doctrine*, which speaks of "Nirvānees" from other systems being brought again into manifestation under the kârmic law in connection with their own evolution, as exercising choice and self-will, as acting in opposition to the law, and, in consequence, falling under kârmic penalties.

Objection may perhaps be taken to my using the word "obviously" above. But I think myself warranted in employing it by the facts, that on the one hand the whole range of the older Buddhist scriptures invariably speak of Nirvāna as a "place of no return," a condition from which there *can* be no compulsory return to manifestation or birth in any region of the manifested Universe; while on the other hand there stands the unanimous and concurrent testimony of the Hindu Scriptures and their most revered expounders to the effect that perfect or complete Mukti—Mukti from which there can be no compulsory return—can never under any circumstances be attained as the result of karma or action; or, in other words, as the outcome of evolution through whatever unimaginable sequence of systems and universes we regard that evolution as having been carried on, or whatever the stupendous heights of glory and knowledge which the Jiva may have attained in the course of that evolution.

As to the solution of these problems, it does not seem to me that we are in any position to give even an approximately definite answer; nor do I think it likely that we shall be so. For anything like a full solution must, it would seem almost certain, involve the mysteries of the higher initiations. But one point may perhaps be touched upon again to which brief reference has already been made. It is that such solution as we really need for our practical guidance would seem to lie in the identification of the individual will with the divine will; or to put the same thing in another form, in the elimination from the individual will of that element of self-seeking which is the essence of separativity. For, on its practical side, the attainment of Nirvāna or Mukti is always connected essentially with the final "putting an end to pain" or complete escape from suffering. And we can, I think, see, even here and now, that once the individual will has ceased utterly to seek aught for itself, or to move otherwise than as it is prompted by the divine will which forms its innermost heart, then the individual as such must have passed "beyond the pairs of opposites," and have finally entered into that perfect peace, for which all conditions, whether of manifestation or withdrawal, are alike.

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