

COMPARATIVE RELIGION

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COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Lesson I

What is Comparative Religion?

¹ Comparative religion is the study of the difference in the way in which each man and woman worships or seeks to be in contact with a power higher than himself. Although some people assert that there is no higher power than themselves a sudden emergency in their lives or overwhelming tragedy will bring about a cry for help from something, they know not what. At least they will question the purpose of everything that happens to them, and want to know if there is not a good reason for everything in life.

Many questions are asked. That is because all human beings have³ a sense of awareness we may call consciousness. Animals accept everything that happens to them without question but human beings do not. For instance, a tiger will strike a supposed foe without asking why he does it, but a man will normally feel a sense of guilt if he has committed a misdeed against his fellow man.⁴ His consciousness tells him that he has done something wrong.

² Our consciousness, or conscience if you want to call it that, makes us seek to find the power that governs all life and to make contact with it. That is how religions were born. An inner need had to be met.

Now, let us discover why religions in some form have been a necessary part of the life of each man, woman, and child from the very beginning of time.

Lesson II

Religion Is Necessary

Our consciousness, of which I have spoken, is our link with the Supreme Power or God. One might speak of it as our Soul or Immortal Quality. It is this part of us which is permanent. Our physical bodies are used for the⁶ purpose of living here on earth. We, as Spiritualists, know that the individual consciousness, Soul, or Real Self⁵ continues to function in a lighter spirit-body after we leave the earth.

How do we know that we live after so-called death? We, who are Spiritualists, have talked to⁷ those whom we have known here on earth and who have passed into spirit life.

These people from Spiritland have discussed personal affairs and important events in our lives of which only they had any knowledge or interest. They have told us of conditions existing in Spiritland, and how they are the same individuals, only functioning in a different atmosphere. We can understand this when we consider what our heroic astronauts tell us about living in space.

§ No matter what takes place we are the same individuals with our own Souls or Consciousness. Each person wants assurance of this because it is natural and right. All of us want to find and understand a Power that governs us and by whose laws we live now and in the future. Because of this natural desire the idea of religion grew and developed, assuming many different forms and shapes according to our Consciousness.

Lesson III

Changing Ideas of God

Man's ideas about a Supreme Power or God have assumed many different forms and shapes as the human mind has become more alert and has learned to absorb the lessons of experience. In the days before history was recorded, all men had very crude ideas about the earth, their daily lives, and the Power that put them here.

Many thousands of years ago, when all men lived in caves and moved about in tribes for their own safety and protection, the walls of their dwellings were decorated with crude paintings or drawings representing forces in nature such as fire, water, or storms over the earth, or animals, or fantastic, half-human or super-human beings. These drawings were attempts to express the power controlling all human actions. Some of this crude art may still be seen in several parts of the world, one notable example being a cave found in southern France. Gradually ideas began to change. Each tribe had its own Gods. These often took the form of superhuman men and women, each God having dominion over some part of nature such as the earth, the sea, and the air, or a God may represent an important part of life, for example, protection of the home, hunting (for necessary food), planting of seed for crops, and victory over their enemies in battle.

All these ideas did not develop at the same time. One idea

merged into another. Even today cows are still considered sacred in India. Old ideas were not discarded, but out of them came new forms and new thoughts to indicate what God meant to men as human minds expanded and daily life became more complicated. ¹² New ideas enabled men to approach God in completely different ways.

Lesson IV

How God Is Approached

Along with developing ideas about God came changes in the methods of approach to God. He had to be reached in some way or other, directly or indirectly. When all men were very crude in their thinking God was a mighty being or group of beings who had to be placated by one means or another. Offerings of all kinds had to be made, even to the extent of human sacrifice, to enable human beings to live without suffering illness, disaster and worst of all, death. ¹³ Rituals were performed, incantations sung, and sacrifices offered to ¹⁴ appease a supposedly angry God and ward off disaster. God was assumed to have all the anger, jealousy, hatred and capriciousness that men possessed. In other words, people thought of a God as a being like themselves, only more powerful and awesome.

So the myriad of Gods had to be appeased. Gradually, one mighty, supreme God emerged from the vast array of super-beings receiving the humble petitions and offerings of an ignorant and frightened people. A popular method of approach was through the use of "oracles" or persons able to transmit God's words (mediums) as well as by means of visions experienced by individuals.

The concept of one mighty Jehovah who would "have no other Gods before me" was the product of the minds of the ¹⁵ ancient Jewish people who were emerging from the old tribal ways. Thus, humanity took a step forward. Although Jehovah had all the human qualities, an element of ¹⁶ spiritual power began to creep into the minds of the worshippers. God became a little more than superhuman.

Now, let us investigate some of the methods of worship which have existed since the beginning of history. We shall discuss a number of religions, beginning with the earliest.

Lesson V

Questions on Lessons I-IV

1. What is meant by comparative religion?
2. Why does man need a religion?
3. What is meant by man's consciousness?
4. What power does man's consciousness have?
5. How does our consciousness serve as a link between us and God?
6. Of what use are our physical bodies?
7. Who are Spirit people?
8. What assurance does each of us want?
9. What forms has God assumed in the minds of men?
10. What was man expressing in his early art forms?
11. Discuss some early ideas of God.
12. How did mental growth influence ideas of God?
13. Name some methods of approaching God.
14. What was man trying to express in his rituals?
15. Where did the concept of Jehovah originate?
16. Why was this a step forward?

Lesson VI

Anu

History begins with the invention of writing which took place in ancient Babylonia about 3500 B.C. It is in this region (the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers) and in Persia (Iran of today) where some of man's earliest religious ideas developed.

Let us start our investigations with the early Babylonian deity, Anu.² Anu was regarded by his adherents as the father and King of Gods. He was the first figure in the triad of Gods, namely: Anu, Enlil and Ea.³ Anu was the God of the atmospheric region above the earth and controlled the heavens. Enlil, the second God, controlled the earth, while Ea, the third God, controlled the waters. This represents the summing up of the three divine powers of the universe.

43- Anu's daughter was Innini-Ishtar, the Heaven Goddess. On the theory that every deity must have a female associate, Anu had a consort called Antum or Anatum. However, this is considered to be the name of the daughter, Ishtar, the Queen of Heaven. The names of Anu and Antum appear in Hittite treaties of the sixteenth to fourteenth centuries B.C.

44- Anu was a non-personal, theoretical figure and was not an active force for personal appeal. His name stood for the heavens in general. Schools of speculative theory were attached to temples devoted to the cult of Anu. Worship was conducted by means of votive inscriptions, incantations, and hymns.

Lesson VII

Baal

Baal was the general name for God in several ancient Near Eastern countries. In the semitic language the name of Baal meant⁵ "Lord of the Pantheon." This name appears on ancient tablets discovered in present-day Syria in 1929. The name represents the ancient Caananite belief. Baal was the God of the fertility of the fields and of cattle. He was the ruler of the clouds, the deity of rain. Baal's consort and sister was the warrior Goddess called Anat. The chief temple of Baal was in the city of Ugarit.

Baal's chief enemy was Mot, God of the rainless season.

Lesson X

Questions on Lessons VI, VII, VIII and IX

1. Why was the invention of writing important?
2. Who was the deity who was regarded as the father and King of Gods?
3. Name and describe the triad of deities of which Anu was the first.
4. Why was Anu a theoretical figure and what was the theory about female Goddesses?
5. What did the name of Baal stand for?
6. What do you understand from the story of Baal and Mot?
7. What was symbolic of Baal and how does that relate to the Greeks?
8. What does the tablet found in Marseilles indicate?
9. Who was Mithra and whom did his followers worship?
10. What is meant by a "mystery cult"?
11. To whom did the cult of Mithraism appeal and where were the meetings held?
12. To what ceremony of Mithraism may the Christian Eucharist be linked and what did it indicate?
13. Who was Zoroaster and who was the one God he worshipped?
14. What is the source of Zoroaster's teachings?
15. Describe Zoroastrianism as contained in the Avesta?
16. Discuss Zoroaster's ideas about the righteous and the partaking of "food for immortality."

Lesson XI

The Gods of Egypt

The roots of Egyptian religion go back to primeval times. Ancient Egypt had a multiplicity of divinities. The earliest gods were frequently represented in animal form and presided over various human occupations. Because of the many deities and overlapping personalities, there was great tolerance among Egyptians as to which god was worshipped.

✓ *Khnum*, one of the gods associated with creation was portrayed as a ram. *Khnum* fashioned humans on a potter's wheel. *Anubis*, god of the dead and guardian of the tombs, was represented as a recumbent jackal. *Thoth* was the god of learning and wisdom, and was the inventor of writing. He was symbolized as an ibis and as a baboon.

Egyptians were in³ awe of all manifestations of nature. Symbolizing the sun as a source of life was the sun god, *Re* or *Ra*. He was always depicted as a falcon or hawk. Also shown as a hawk was *Horus*, the sky god. The king or pharaoh of Egypt ruled on earth as *Horus*, becoming *Osiris* at death and traveling through the sky. *Osiris* was the god of vegetation and ruler of the nether regions. His consort was *Isis*.

The Egyptians did not abolish or eliminate, they assimilated. Myths began to grow combining and bringing together the personalities of several gods.

✓ Religion permeated every aspect of an Egyptian's life. Every man expected to become *Osiris* when he passed from earth life. Gradually, the conception of gods in human form found its way into the minds of men. Temples were erected in their honor and tombs were built, so that the dead might have everything that was needed for an afterlife, which resembled the one on earth.

Lesson XII

Egypt—Temples and Tombs

After the reign of the Pharaoh *Akhenaton* the gods were looked upon less as impersonal deities and became more personal, with a greater response to human pleas and needs. Thus some sort of relationship developed between man and gods besides that of abject pleading. }

Upon his return to Mecca Mohammed converted the temple from a pagan shrine to a Muslim sanctuary. This temple is the place where the Black Stone stands today. Upon this stone Mohammed had made his ascent and escape to Medina. It is the spot to which all good Muslims must make a pilgrimage at least once during their lifetime.

At Mecca Islam took shape as a distinct religion. Relations with Christians were satisfactory, since Mohammed preached that "our God and your God are one." However, the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ was not accepted.

¹³ The Muslim religion consists of five principal beliefs. (1) Belief in one God; (2) in His angels; (3) in the revealed books; (4) in the prophets; (5) in the Day of Judgment. In addition, there are five obligatory duties every Muslim must perform: (1) Reciting the profession of faith; (2) Prayers; (3) ¹⁴ paying the tax; (4) fasting; (5) pilgrimage to Mecca.

¹⁵ In his last sermon Mohammed urged his followers not to split up; he affirmed the unity of God and the brotherhood of the faithful; he enjoined the community to watch over the rights of women; and he proclaimed the abolition of blood feuds and usury. Mohammed returned to Medina where he passed away in 632.

Under the elective system of succession which had been agreed upon, Abu Bakr was chosen as the successor and first caliph.

The teachings of Mohammed remain a living faith and a doctrine observed by nearly one seventh of the world's population. In less than twenty years the movement had toppled two great powers, namely the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire of Persia. A new civilization arose, and became an important element in the world. Today, ¹⁶ Islam is recognized as one of the leading modern religions.

Lesson XV

Questions on Lessons XI-XIV

1. Describe some of the earliest gods of Egypt.
2. What is the story of the god, Khnum?
3. How did Egyptians regard natural manifestations?
4. What part did religion play in every Egyptian's life?
5. What was the relationship between man and gods?
6. Who was looked upon as an everpresent spirit?
7. What did all Egyptians believe?
8. What was the importance of the tombs?
9. Who was Mohammed?
10. What is Islam?
11. How was the word of God revealed to Mohammed?
12. What is the Hegira?
13. What are the five principal beliefs of Islam and the five duties?
14. Why is Islam a religion and a community organization?
15. What did Mohammed urge in his last sermon?
16. What recognition does the Muslim religion have to-day?

ing. Moral striving is governed by the law of *karma*. This is the doctrine of rebirth into a succession of physical bodies. In this way individuals have repeated opportunities for spiritual growth and achievement of the ultimate bliss desired by all.

Lesson XVIII

The Epic Period (600 B.C.-A.D. 200)

The philosophical systems of materialism and Jainism belong to the Epic period. This is considered the age of reconstruction.

According to the doctrine of materialism only this world is real, matter being the only reality. Therefore, the soul is an attribute of the body; there is no future life; and God is a myth. One can easily grasp the great difference from the idea of the Absolute which still existed among Hindus.

Vardhamana was the founder of Jainism. He did not introduce a new religion but systematized the faith held by other wise men. According to Jainism truth is relative to our standpoints. This is illustrated by the story of three blind men, each touching a different part of an elephant (trunk, side, tail) and each giving a different description. Because of this doctrine of the relativity of thought (*nayas*) and ideas nothing can be affirmed or denied absolutely. Since the individual soul (*jiva*) is a composite of consciousness and matter or body it can never be destroyed. Souls and world are self-existent and eternal, there being no personal God.

Now, we are ready to discuss the Bhagavad Gita, one of the religious classics of the world forming Book VI of the Indian epic, the Mahabharata. This epic takes the form of a dialogue between Arjuna, the hero, and Krishna, his friend and charioteer, who is believed to be an incarnation of God (Vishnu). As a battle is about to begin at Kurukshetra, Arjuna is tempted to desert his post by allowing himself to be killed. Krishna reprimands Arjuna, pointing out that he has a higher duty which he must discharge with faith in God and regardless of consequences. The discourse is a philosophical and religious stream of thought giving a synopsis of the religious thinking of India throughout the ages.

In the Bhagavad Gita three paths leading to the means of realization (mystic union with God) are pointed out. These

paths are: The Way of Works (Karma yoga), the Way of Love (Bhakti yoga), and the Way of Knowledge (Jnana yoga).

Lessons XIX

The Six Systems

The Six Systems of India dated from the year 200 A.D. These different systems are not antagonistic to each other; rather they are complementary and form an evolutionary chain of thought. Each is a metaphysics and a religion.

(1). *Nyaya*—This system analyzes the different ways in which knowledge is acquired. These ways are by intuition, by inference, by comparison, and by verbal testimony. Truth may be discovered by the test of action.

(2). The *Vaisheshika*—According to this system true individuality lies in the particular, meaning the imperceptible souls and atoms. The things that we experience are made up of parts which are non-eternal. The atom marks the limit of division. Therefore, atoms abide forever.

(3). *Sankhya*—This is a belief in the reality of matter and an infinite plurality of individual souls which are not emanations of a single world soul. This is kin to the theory of evolution. It teaches that a subtle, psychical body is the basis of rebirth and identity in various existences.

(4). *Yoga*—This emphasizes mental discipline and acceptance of theism (belief in one God). Yoga consists of suppression of all mental activities, conscious and unconscious, and the following of the Eightfold path. Through concentration we may get into touch with the reality of things.

(5). *Purva Mimamsa*—This represents an ascertainment of one's duty and a belief in the reality of the world and of individual souls. Ritual is especially important, since every act produces its effect.

(6). *The Vedanta Sutra*—This system sets forth the teachings of the Upanishads in a consistent way. The methods used are:

(a) *Shankara's non-dualism* (the self cannot be denied). This is the principle of consciousness which is unaffected when the body is reduced to ashes. The basic reality is Brahman. God is the Absolute cast through the molds of logic.

(b) *Maya*—The term Maya (appearance) registers

the imperfection and relativity of the world. Brahman is the basis of the apparent existence of the world.

- (c) *Ramanuja's theism*—This doctrine declares that God is a personal being. Freedom is communion with God to be reached by devotion and faith. The individual is not effaced when the goal is reached.
- (d) *Madhva's dualism*—Five great distinctions of God and soul are set forth: God is the only independent reality; matter and souls are dependent; God controls souls and matter; neither creating nor destroying; individual souls are active and responsible agents.

Lesson XX

Questions on Lessons XVI - XIX

1. How old is Hinduism? What is it?
2. What are the distinguishing features of Hinduism?
3. Describe the changes in the ideas of God.
4. What is shruti, and smriti, and what is samsara?
5. What is the Vedic Period?
6. Describe the Four Vedas.
7. Discuss the "reason immanent in the universe."
8. Discuss the Upanishads in detail.
9. What are the doctrines of the Epic period?
10. What is the Bhagavad Gita and what is the story that is told?
11. What is Arjuna's duty?
12. What are the three paths to realization?
13. Name and discuss the Six Systems.
14. Are they antagonistic?
15. Are they metaphysical? Can you explain why?
16. What are the common threads of thought among the Six Systems.

Lesson XXI

Buddhism

Siddharta Buddha was born in 563 B.C. in the country now called Nepal. Because his father was a ruling noble of the Gautama clan, the son has come to be known as Gautama Buddha.

The young man was of a serious, unworldly turn of mind. In his twenty-ninth year he renounced his home and family to seek the "supreme peace of Nirvana." To him this meant relief from the painful realities of a transitory life.

Through quiet meditation he gained what is called the Great Enlightenment. By this means he was able to detect the cause of all suffering to be a human craving due to ignorance. He considered the path of its removal to be through right living and mental discipline.

Buddhism developed as a reaction to the formalized religion of Hinduism. It rejected the authority of the Vedas. Buddha began his teaching in Benares with a sermon known as "Turning the Wheel of Doctrine" which set forth his conviction that a worldly life cannot give final happiness. He told his disciples that they should not follow either a life of sensual indulgence or of self-mortification. The Middle Path or correct path to follow is the Enlightenment or Nirvana.

He taught that the four basic truths of Enlightenment are: 1. Pain or Suffering. 2. The Cause of Pain—lust for existence or non-existence. 3. The Cessation of Pain—release and detachment. 4. The Path that leads to the Cessation of Pain—or the Eightfold Path consisting of: Right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These teachings awakened a recognition that suffering is inherent in existence and pointed out a way of deliverance.

Buddha founded a monastic community (community of monks-sangha). His original collection of papers written in Pali is called the "Canon of the School of Elders." These Pali scriptures taught that a person is in process of continuous change with no fixed underlying entity. All is transitory and impermanent, taking place according to universal causality. Good deeds bring good results. Attainment of freedom from rebirth is Nirvana.

After Buddha's passing in 483 B.C. the monastic commu-

nity split up into a number of sects, causing a mixture of interpretations to be given to his teachings. After 500 A.D. Buddhism declined in India. A free interpretation of the religion was established in Japan about 594 A.D. and this survives today. During the eighth century A.D. a form of Buddhism appeared in Tibet. The belief became widespread in many parts of the Far East.

Today, the earliest and purest form of Buddhism is practiced in Burma and Southeast Asia. A strong tradition exists of holding Councils (six have been held) to uphold and continue the original faith flourishing at present in Burma, Ceylon, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

Lesson XXII

Chinese Taoism

For 2,000 years Taoism has influenced Chinese philosophy and life. Taoism actually consists of two distinct movements, one called Tao-chia or the Taoist school of philosophy, and the other called Tao-chiao or the Taoist religion.

The basic idea of the philosophy is one of naturalism which means taking no unnatural action. The natural way stands in direct opposition to all artificial ways, such as regulations, organizations, and ceremonies. All formalities and artificialities are vigorously attacked. The philosophy emphasizes "nonbeing" but it confirms both "eternal being" and "eternal nonbeing." Both come from the same source but appear in different names. They are called the *Tao* which is the universal principle of existence. Tao produces all things and forms a harmonious whole. The simple life is considered the most perfect life.

Chuang Tzu taught constant self-transformation without a Lord or God to direct it. Yang Chu, Taoist philosopher, taught the preservation of life and the keeping intact of the "essence of our being." Although the philosophy declined after the fourth century A.D., and later became assimilated with Buddhist ideas, Taoism has retained its hold on Chinese culture and life.

Together with the philosophy a religion was developed by priest-magicians who offered divination and magic as means to inward power, restored youth, superhuman ability, and immortality on earth. This movement came to be known in

the first century B.C. as the Way of the Yellow Emperor-Lao Tzu.

Taoism became an organized religion through the efforts of K'ou Ch'ien-chih and became a state cult in A.D. 440. Distinguishing features of the belief are:

1. Multiplicity of gods.
2. Search for blessings and long life.
3. Superstition.
4. Sects.
5. New societies.
6. Ethical teachings.

Buddhist and Confucian moral values are strongly intermingled with the religious teachings of Taoism.

Lesson XXIII

Confucius (551-479 B.C.)

Confucius is the most revered man in Chinese history. He advocated and worked for social reforms for the people. However, he did not have a rigid program. Rather, he promoted the Way of jen (love) beginning with love and respect for one's parents. Confucius wanted the individual to be a man of perfect virtue. He taught moral self-cultivation and the maintenance of social and political order. He emphasized that sincerity is the way of all existence.

During the ancient Han dynasty in China Tung Chung-shu added to Confucius' ideas the thought that everything is the product of the interaction of the negative cosmic force (yin) and the positive cosmic force (yang). In 136 B.C. Confucianism was proclaimed the state doctrine, but it was not regarded as a religion.

Even though various rites were instituted, musical systems were created, social and moral concepts were formulated, education was controlled, government was monopolized and histories were written and interpreted, Confucianism was overshadowed in the fields of metaphysics and religion by Taoism and Buddhism. Some Taoist and Buddhist tenets became incorporated into Confucianism. Confucius' moral and social teachings were given a metaphysical foundation. The tradition of rationalism distinguished Confucianism from the intuitive approach of Buddhism and Taoism.

In his teachings Confucius did not discuss spirits or the

possibility of communication. He taught a moral life and ethical precepts. These teachings have weathered all storms and are followed to this day.

Lao Tzu (Lao Tan)

Next to Confucius Lao Tzu is the most influential man in Chinese history. He is considered by many to be the actual founder of Taoism. His teachings are naturalistic and quietistic.

Lao Tzu was born about 600 B.C. in Honan Province of China. He is a shadowy figure. Tradition says that Confucius sought the advice of Lao Tzu and that he was the author of the treatise called Tao—the Way. Tao represents the First Principle. However, the authorship and language are obscure. Despite many interpretations of Lao Tzu's life and supposed writings, his influence on China has been very great indeed.

Lesson XXIV

Shinto

The word "Shinto" means "the way or teaching of the Gods." It represents a loosely organized religious cult of Japan. The name arose to distinguish the cult from Buddhism.

Shinto has no founder, no official sacred scriptures and no dogma. The origins of the cult are unknown; its myths are a legacy of the dominant Yamato clan.

No sharp distinction is drawn between the celestial and earthly domains; the religion is one of natural worship. Spirit and matter are considered to be equal and inseparable. Three kinds of persons were considered qualified to perform the necessary rites. These are: (1) Heads of families. (2) Men and women with occult powers. (3) Hereditary lines of priests.

The religious rites and political administration became inseparable. The ancient belief that the sun goddess sent her grandson, Jimmu, to rule the Japanese islands led to emperor worship and the creation of a hierarchy.

In the fifth century A.D. Confucianism had provided Japan with an ethical basis, and in the sixth century Buddhism became influential. A certain amount of coexistence and amalgamation with Shinto developed. Later, however,

a reaction against Buddhist influence took place. On the other hand, Confucian scholars allied themselves with Shinto, causing somewhat of a revival. Shinto, which had always been an aristocratic cult, developed in modified form a following among the peasants.

In modern times a Department of Shinto was set up by the Japanese government. An unsuccessful attempt was made to abolish the ancient ties with Buddhism. In 1872 the Department was replaced by the Ministry of Religion and Education. This, in turn, was abolished in 1877. In 1889 religious freedom was guaranteed for all. Nevertheless, Shinto was still favored by the government in many ways. After World War II the emperor cult was abolished and Shinto was no longer favored by the government which relinquished control of the shrines.

According to Shinto doctrine deities are present in the shrines. Today, because of the many separate shrines and deities to be worshipped in them, a number of splinter groups have sprung up within the cult.

Lesson XXV

Questions on Lessons XXI - XXIV

1. Who was Buddha and why did he renounce his home and family?
2. What was the Great Enlightenment?
3. What are the four basic truths of Enlightenment?
4. What did Buddha teach in his "Canon of the School of Elders?"
5. What are the two distinct movements of Taoism?
6. What is the basic idea of the philosophy of Taoism?
7. By whom was the religion of Taoism developed?
8. What are the distinguishing features of the religion?
9. What is the Way of jen promoted by Confucius?
10. What is the yin and the yang?
11. Is Confucianism considered a religion? What are its teachings?
12. Describe Lao Tzu and his teachings.
13. What is Shinto? Discuss its precepts.
14. Who could perform the rites of Shinto?
15. How did emperor worship originate?
16. What does Shinto doctrine say about its shrines?

Lesson XXVI

Greece—General Background

Greece is important to the Western World because Greek thought and assumptions are closely woven into the fabric of our lives. At the center of Greek belief is the unshakable conviction that the individual is important and worthy. For this reason he is entitled to freedom. Based on this idea Greek law aimed to improve the lot of ordinary mortals, not merely to carry out the will of a god or king. This thought was the starting point of the legal system of the Western World.

Ancient Greece had a creedless religion. It developed no authoritative writing such as the Bible or the Koran. No rigid traditions had to be observed. The religion varied from age to age according to the area of the country and the make-up of the population. Everywhere men were free to inquire and question. However, certain general characteristics were always retained.

First of all, Greek religion was polytheistic, meaning that a number of gods were worshipped and were thought of as being human in form and mind. The gods were the embodiment of power but they were not without moral faults. Ideas about the gods varied greatly during the 2,000 years and more of Greek history. Through the development of poetry, art, and an extensive mythology the gods became clear-cut figures.

Greek religion was centered on this world, not on another one; it was concerned with everyday life, the seeking of the material blessings of health and of living under peaceful conditions.

Religion was a government affair, even though family cults existed. During the fourth century B.C. the Greek city-states began to decline. (Greek cities had their own governments and each city was actually an independent country). As the power of government weakened individual religion developed strikingly.

Lesson XXVII

Origins of Greek Religion

The ancient Greeks (called Hellenes) were thought to have come to Greece by way of Asia Minor. These people brought with them only one deity whose name we know with

certainty, namely Zeus. Very likely there was also a corn goddess who may have been called Demeter. She supposedly had a daughter, Kore.

Another deity was Pluto, guardian of the earth's wealth, who later became identified with Hades. Since Hades was not a god of the living he was not worshipped by the living. Those who had passed from this earth were not under the charge of the gods worshipped on earth. So, presumably, the dead did not worship the same gods as the living.

People on earth were concerned with earthly matters. Zeus was a deity of the weather-sky (of concern to earth's inhabitants). Kronos, Apollo, Athena, Artemis, Hera, Hermes, Ares, Aphrodite, Persephone, Hecate, Hephaestus, Poseidon, and Dionysius were all gods and goddesses who dwelt on Mt. Olympus, each having his or her own sphere of activity. Some of these names were not of Greek origin. It is known that the ancient Greeks possessed great powers of adapting and naturalizing foreign influences, but there is little knowledge of the different origins of these gods.

The ancient Greek poet, Homer, relates stories of the gods and goddesses. These dwellers on Mt. Olympus sometimes assumed animal form for their own purposes. As a result of the oriental influence surrounding Greece, the myths and beliefs sometimes took on an oriental hue.

Popular local cults for the worship of heroes (literally "gentlemen") became established. By "heroes" were meant the powerful and worshipful ghosts of real and imaginary men and women. The most famous of these heroes about whom we read in our tales of mythology is Heracles.

Lesson XXVIII

Development of Greek Religion

In their earliest days the Greeks combined their gods into one divine clan headed by Zeus. Zeus, the son of Kronos, was supposed to be the father of most of the younger deities. Hera was his wife. Zeus was the chieftain of a heroic age. However, each community had its own chief god. In the city of Athens the festival honoring the goddess Athena was greater than the one for Zeus.

During the Archaic and Classical periods in history Greek worship was essentially communal. However, nothing pre-

vented an individual from approaching any deity he chose. Every family had its own observances. On the other hand the most important and impressive rites were conducted by the State. The nearest approach to a common governing religious body was the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. The oracle was an unseen voice that could be consulted at the sacred shrine. This oracle could not enforce its advice but strong measures were sometimes taken when the rights of the gods were at stake. For instance, four so-called sacred wars were fought to preserve the rights of the gods to certain disputed territories. In general, the oracle offered only advice and warnings which could be ignored at the peril of the inquirer.

Throughout the country generally, the nature of the cults and their kinship to outright savagery varied greatly. Rituals consisted of hymns, prayers and sacrifices. Next to Zeus, Apollo was considered to be most sympathetic to a developed and enlightened morality. Artemis developed into a personification of chastity. Athena became wisdom. The forms of worship tended to shed characteristics that advancing morality considered objectionable. For example, animals were substituted for humans in sacrificial offerings. The common attitude of the Greeks toward their gods was respectful but not servile. The ancient poems of Homer and the plays of Aristophanes are illustrations of these attitudes.

Lesson XXIX

Personal Religion

Because the government managed and controlled all the cults the rites and observances tended to be artificial and detached from real life. As an example, all festivals were regulated according to the official calendar rather than with regard to actual seasons of the year. Moreover, no moral code was involved in the ceremonies of worship.

In spite of the artificiality of the worship, the idea of the importance of the individual grew and spread; in fact State cults were considered to exist for the benefit of the community. Because of this feeling the cult of Asclepius became very popular about the end of the fifth century B.C. Asclepius' powers were exerted on behalf of individuals seeking cures for their diseases rather than to avert some public calamity. (The prevention of public calamities was the busi-

ness of Apollo).

Schools of philosophy speculated with ethical ideas, the government of the universe, and the destiny of the soul. Thought tended toward a deeper regard for the individual. Any system of religion promising relief to man's helplessness was sure of adherents. However, there were no fixed ideas about death.

Supernatural religious revelations were called mysteries. The mystery religions were oriental in origin; for special purposes the favor of a particular god was sought. This deity would care for the worshipper, especially after death. Forms of magic were used to compel the deity to help the petitioner. Thus, we understand that magic, superstition, and myths were used to aid humans in their trials, just as they have been used in many religions.

Change occurred in religious concepts as the Greek mind developed. It was the people themselves who "picked man up and set him on his feet." It then became man's task to make the proper use of what the gods had provided. In this way, the Greeks became responsible for the development of democratic government. A man could accept his responsibilities in life and become noble in standing on his own feet.

Lesson XXX

Questions on Lessons XXVI - XXIX

1. What was the place of the individual in Greek religion?
2. What authoritative writings or creeds did the religion have?
3. What is meant by "polytheistic?"
4. Did Greek worship center on this world or on another one?
5. Who was the chief deity? Discuss him.
6. Where did the gods and goddesses live and what type of people were they?
7. Why was Pluto not worshipped by the living?
8. What powers of adaptation did the Greeks possess?
9. What was the role of the community in Greek worship?
10. Discuss the oracle at Delphi.
11. How did methods of worship change with advancing morality?
12. What was the attitude of the Greeks toward their gods?
13. For what purposes were the powers of Asclepius used?
14. What regard was shown for the individual in Greek thought? What ideas did the people have about death?
15. What are "mysteries"?
16. What is meant by the statement that "the Greek people picked man up and set him on his feet?"

Lesson XXXI

Rome—A Borrowed Religion

The Romans were greatly influenced by the Greeks in their religion as in other areas of their lives. In fact, the statement of Horace, the Roman poet, illustrates the importance of Greek thought to Rome. Horace said: "Captive Greece took Rome captive."

Other influences also entered into their beliefs. As Rome became master of the Mediterranean world the empire absorbed the ideas of the newly conquered peoples. For this reason considerable tolerance prevailed. Despite much that was borrowed certain unchanging qualities are apparent.

At first the religion was pure animism. (This is the belief that animals, trees, rocks and other natural objects have souls). The gods were considered impersonal spirits residing in everything. These gods were totally amoral. The early Romans sought to make a compact with them in an attempt to gain personal benefit.

It was a religion of form and ritual with little emphasis on the spiritual. Worship was an external, communal affair, beginning with the village and spreading to the city, the state, and finally to the whole empire. The object was to induce the gods to benefit man. This could be accomplished if the right approach was used. The average Roman's interest was in this world, and he called upon his gods for their help in gaining what he wanted here. Little attention was paid to a life beyond this one.

In other words, Roman religion began like all other religions, to fulfill a need to have a sustaining power which could uphold men in all their worldly desires. Now, let us inquire into the nature of the gods, the religious practices and forms of worship used, and the detectable trends in thinking and in modes of life.

Lesson XXXII

Rome—Nature of the Gods

Great similarity exists between the Greek and Roman gods. The chief sky and weather god was changed from Zeus to Jupiter. Mars (formerly Ares—god of war) and Quirinus appeared in the Roman pantheon of gods. Hera, the Greek

wife of Zeus, was changed to Juno, although the Romans were not inclined to pair off their gods and goddesses as the Greeks had done. Janus was the god of beginnings. Vesta represented the hearth and home while Terra Mater was mother earth; Ceres was the corn goddess. Each Roman had his divine double called a *genius*. Athena became Minerva (wisdom). Hercules was the god of the market; Dionysius was the god of wine. Poseidon became Neptune, presiding over the waters. Aphrodite was transformed into Venus (beauty). Apollo retained his name while Artemis became Diana (the hunt). Hermes became Mercury (messenger).

The Romans did not indulge in hero worship. The gods were at first regarded impersonally, but later became highly personal beings, human in form and emotion and having human adventures although possessing superhuman powers. Personal favorites were even developed among them without bringing upon the worshipper some terrible calamity.

Although Romans were incuriously pious about their gods and did not imagine strange tales, myths inevitably began to arise as contacts with other peoples increased. Forms had to be invented by which the gods could be worshipped and honored, enabling the proud empire and its citizens to maintain their power and live with all the honor and glory to which they felt they were entitled.

Lesson XXXIII

Religious Forms and Practices

All dealings with the gods were in the beginning handled by the head of the individual household. Later, the leader of the community controlled local affairs. In very important religious matters the emperor's advice was sought; as a symbol of the empire he was considered a quasi-deity.

The emperor was advised on religious questions by a college of pontiffs. (This reminds us of the present day Roman Catholic College of Cardinals). At the head of the college was a Pontifex Maximus (somewhat resembling the Pope). Outside the college of pontiffs stood the *augurs* who were specialists in divination. These augurs made their predictions and gave advice after observing the behavior of birds.

An elaborate priesthood developed. Formal rites were conducted in beautiful temples and festivals were held at

various times of the year. The priests were neither especially moral or spiritual. All that was required was that he should know the liturgy and proper ritual.

In addition to the priests in the temples we find the Vestal Virgins and the Sibylline Oracles. The Vestal Virgins guarded the sacred fire of Vesta. The Oracles consulted ancient, unknown writings as handed down by the prophetess, Sibyll. The cult of Sibyll was supposedly inspired by Apollo.

Elaborate funeral rites were conducted by the priests, even though no fixed ideas existed about the hereafter. There was a general belief that a dead Roman joined the company of good people.

We can understand that religion in Rome was formal, with elaborate ceremonies. There was ample opportunity to choose among the gods the one who could best answer the needs of the petitioner. The material glory of the empire came before anything else. All in all, it might be said that the religion of Rome was Rome itself.

Lesson XXXIV

Trend of the East

When the public observances became overly formal and mechanical they became meaningless. The people turned to a more intimate and emotional religion. This led to increased influence from the religions and beliefs of the East, as Rome came into contact with new ideas.

These new influences were essentially decent and expressive of religious feeling. As an illustration of this we refer to the Sibylline Oracles which we have already mentioned. The Oracles were originally an importation from the orient. Although Rome officially maintained a stern but severely restricted justice and ethics in its religious practices, wild and offensive cults sometimes arose. An example of this is the Bacchanalia—a cult of Dionysius which indulged in unrestricted orgies. This became so blatant that the rites were suppressed by the Roman Senate.

The trend to the East continued. Epicureanism and Stoicism came from Greece. Mithraism was introduced from Persia, and was strongly felt. Astrology gained ground and the study of the Mysteries grew. Cults multiplied until the age of the Emperor Augustus found Rome a tolerant center

of widely varying beliefs.

All this was changed, however, with the advent of Christianity. Ancient Rome was afraid of it, and of all religions it alone was banned.

Today, the great city with so much history behind it is the center of the Roman Catholic church, a leading symbol of orthodox, organized Christianity. As mankind's mental outlook develops, so do new ideas and conceptions take root and grow.

Lesson XXXV

Questions on Lessons XXXI - XXXIV

1. Why was there considerable tolerance? Explain Horace's statement.
2. Explain "pure animism" and why compacts were made with the gods?
3. Describe Roman worship.
4. What was the average Roman's interest?
5. What similarity exists between Greek and Roman gods? Mention some changes in names.
6. Did the Romans indulge in hero worship? Explain.
7. Did Romans have personal favorites among the gods?
8. Why did myths arise?
9. What was the role of the head of the household in religious affairs, of the community, of the emperor?
10. What was the college of pontiffs? Who were the augurs?
11. Describe the priesthood. Who were the Vestal Virgins? The Sibylline Oracles?
12. What is meant by: "the religion of Rome was Rome itself?"
13. What caused Rome to turn to the East?
14. Did Rome have a type of justice and ethics?
15. Name some of the influential Eastern beliefs.
16. How did Christianity change the situation?

Lesson XXXVI

Basic Tenets of Judaism

The ancient Jewish tribes settled in what in modern times has been called Palestine. They believed that they were chosen to lead their people in worship of the true God and in observance of His laws. Two thoughts have formed the basis of their beliefs and actions throughout the ages. The first is that there is only one God (monotheism). The second is that the Covenant bestowed upon them by God makes them the bearers of the true belief.

In Judaism the relation between the deity and the worshippers is determined exclusively by an act of free choice whereby God discloses His presence and will to the elect (the Jewish people). The people are not tied to God by nature but by their free will. This fact distinguishes Judaism from all other religions.

Certain concepts have marked Jewish belief from the beginning:

1. God is conceived as unbounded by any form or manifestation of physical existence.
2. God is the ground of all existence, the sole creator of all things. The creative principle is in the enlivening spirit and the free will of God himself.
3. The conception of God is an ethical one; He is not force but Character, and is identified with the cause of ethical virtue itself.
4. Individual moral culture is of utmost importance. Conformity to the divine pattern is the supreme task of man.
5. All men are bound to seek God and obey His law (universalism).
6. The Jewish people are elected for service. This is the Hebrew doctrine that they are chosen for service to share with all men.
7. There is a unity of history in the purpose of God. All history is a universal seeking for the One and Only God.

Lesson XXXVII

Judaism—Its History

The Hebrew religion originated with Abraham. Archeological discoveries have confirmed many of the narratives told about Abraham. According to the story God entered into a Covenant with Abraham in the land of Canaan. This began the worship of the one, true God (monotheism). The Covenant was renewed with Isaac and Jacob who were the sons of Abraham. It later was renewed with their descendants.

At the time of the Exodus (the Jewish people were driven from their homeland) and the revelation at Sinai (the Ten Commandments), Moses was the dominant personality. He was instrumental in making Israel a nation. The religion he taught was based on the lives of the patriarchs with the ancient belief in the one God, Yahweh (Yhwh).

Yahweh, the God of Abraham, appeared to Moses at the burning bush. Yahweh renewed once again the Covenant with the people, being everpresent with them. The people followed Moses out of bondage to Sinai, where the original Covenant was ratified. Thus Moses, through Yahweh, brought about the deliverance of the Jewish people and forged them into a nation.

The Covenant rested on moral principles as revealed in the Ten Commandments. Thus morality and religion were interdependent. Further revelations to Moses became the Torah (Jewish doctrine or law), of which the Pentateuch was the written part. The object of this teaching was to train the people in holiness, not only to keep them from all that was abominable but to help them cultivate nobility in life. The Torah, then, provided an ethic of service to others.

Equally revered with the Torah was the Talmud which was a compilation of teachings and laws. This was considered a sacred book and has remained the foundation of Jewish life.

Lesson XXXVIII

The Hebrew Prophets

During critical times in Jewish history a line of prophets arose. First, we hear of Elijah with Elisha as his disciple. Then came Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah who were known as the literary prophets. According to the belief the failure of the

people to meet the standards of conduct set by the prophets would invoke divine punishment. The cry of the prophets was that Yahweh would restore his people to himself.

The book of Deuteronomy was written as a blending of ritual law and ethical precepts as taught by the prophets. Through this teaching Israel believed that it could rediscover the living God.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel continued the line of prophets in the sixth century B.C. They sought to restore a personal relationship of the people to God. Their thought was that Israel was called to high office.

The discipline imposed upon Israel by the Babylonian exile was conducive to a highly moral concept of God. Continuing the line of prophets were Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as well as Ezra. Due to Ezra's influence Israel survived its trials. It was Ezra's influence in putting into force the Book of the Law of God which saved Judaism from becoming a purely priestly religion. Ezra preached that the whole Torah was sovereign. He preached such concepts as the Kingdom of God, resurrection and immortality and belief in angels.

After Ezra a succession of teachers arose (sopherim-scribes). All upheld the authority of the Torah. The scribes sought to harmonize the spirit and the letter of holy writ.

Thus it can be seen that in Israel's eyes she had a special or messianic mission. The messianic idea was carried out by the Essenes, while the Pharisees and Sadducees argued over their interpretation of the Torah.

Lesson XXXIX

Judaism—Worship and Kings

Judaic religious observances extended to every aspect of life. Two important days of religious observance were and are today the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Passover) and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The feeling of holiness represented by the observances expressed itself in justice and righteousness. Justice meant to the Jewish people "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Because the divine will was considered the common source of all laws a violation of them was a sin against God.

The Hebrews had some notion of the hereafter, although

they hesitated to dwell upon it because they wanted to wean the people away from idolatry. To them, commandments should be obeyed for pure love of God.

The Hebrews needed a king to keep them on the right path as a nation. The first king was Saul, followed by David. David succeeded in unifying the tribes of Israel and Jerusalem became the capital. Solomon, David's son, built the great temple. Even though the temple became the center of spiritual life, many influences were present to threaten the purity of worship.

Obvious parallels existed between the teachings of Jesus and Judaism. One of these was a belief in immortality. However, a number of basic differences could not be set aside. Some of the differences are:

1. Rejection of traditional Jewish observances.
2. Repudiation of Israel as a national religious group.
3. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation.
4. Salvation by special act. (Christians believe that acceptance of Jesus saves, while Jews believe that salvation comes through obedience to the laws of the Torah).

Lesson XL

Questions on Lessons XXXVI - XXXIX

1. Where did the ancient Jewish tribes originate?
2. What two thoughts formed the basis of their belief?
3. What is the relationship between the deity and the worshippers?
4. Discuss the seven concepts of Judaism.
5. How did the Hebrew religion originate?
6. Who was the dominant personality at the time of the Exodus?
7. Discuss the Covenant.
8. What is the Torah?
9. Discuss the prophets.
10. Discuss the book of Deuteronomy.
11. What was Ezra's special influence on Israel?
12. Who were the scribes?
13. Discuss Jewish religious observances and their influences on the lives of the people.
14. What was their idea of the hereafter?
15. Discuss Jewish kings.
16. Name some of the differences between Judaism and Christianity.

Lesson XLI

Background of Christianity

Christianity was an outgrowth of conditions prevailing in ancient Palestine, and developed from several religions then already well known.

In Palestine during the time of Jesus' appearance conditions were chaotic. Rome controlled the area and the Jewish inhabitants were unhappy under the tyrannical yoke of a great power.

The Jewish people longed for a Messiah. The sayings of their prophets and their history were filled with predictions that a deliverer would come—a king who would free them from tyranny and rule the land according to Jewish precepts. A great ruler was awaited. The Kingdom of God to carry out the law would come into being according to the promises of the Old Testament.

On the other hand, many Gentiles had long been accustomed to the idea of a Saviour God. The ancient pagan religions had proclaimed their Gods who through sacrifice and death had achieved resurrection and eternal life.

So, when Jesus appeared on the scene it was natural for Jews to ask if he could be the expected Messiah. Members of the Sanhedrin (high Jewish priestly council), not believing in the possibility of such an humble Messiah, and fearful of trouble with Rome if the law should be broken, asked for the punishment of the new leader. Roman authorities, also wishing to avoid trouble, allowed the Crucifixion to take place.

All was not over. Word spread of the Resurrection. Saul (Paul) of Tarsus carried the message to the Gentiles that Jesus was a God man. Some Jews thought that the Messiah had actually lived. This was the background against which Christianity took root and developed.

Lesson XLII

What is Known About Jesus

Very little is actually known about the history and earth life of Jesus. The earliest traditions about Him were first written down in Aramaic and later translated into Greek. None of the Gospels containing the story of Jesus are original documents. The Gospel of Mark, considered the oldest, was

written about 70 A.D. The Gospel of Luke was written between 80 and 95 A.D.; Matthew about 100 A.D., and finally John about 110 A.D.

All of the stories are fragmentary. We are not even sure that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, nor do we know the exact date of his birth. Great liberties were taken in telling the stories about Jesus and no attention was paid to accuracy. The sole purpose of the Gospels was to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the expected Messiah.

Possibly, prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. certain sayings and teachings attributed to Jesus were circulated in a document now known as The Quelle. This was only for moral enlightenment and preparation for His return.

At the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D. the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were adopted for inclusion in the New Testament. This meant that they were to be considered the official and canonical accounts of the life of Jesus.

It was Paul of Tarsus who went about preaching to the Gentiles and building up the legend of Jesus as a God man. Paul never saw Jesus. All his beliefs were erected on the myths and stories he had heard. He did, however, have the psychic experience of hearing Jesus clairaudiently while on the road to Damascus. This caused him to feel that he had talked to God.

Now, we can understand that there is very little factual evidence pertaining to the life of Jesus. We can be satisfied, nevertheless, that the basic truths of His expressed philosophy could not have been given to us and His wonderful psychic power demonstrated in so many instances, unless a most powerful teacher and medium had lived on earth.

Lesson XLIII

How the Church Developed

Immediately after the Crucifixion the followers of Jesus were scattered and uncertain in their beliefs. Each group had its own ideas about the meaning of the reappearance of Jesus and His relationship to God.

In his letters to the Corinthians Paul had referred to psychic gifts. Early Christians believed in clairaudience, clairvoyance and trance utterances as a connecting link between earth and heaven. It was not until the rise of a priest-

hood that these gifts were frowned upon and mediumship ceased to be practiced in the churches. Gradually, a rigid doctrine arose, imposed by a priesthood for the unquestioned acceptance of all believers.

Finally, in 325 A.D., at the Council of Nicaea, the tenets of the Christian faith were formalized and set forth as divinely authorized. The doctrine that Jesus was God in human form as originally expressed by Paul, and that the Bible was the true and only word of God became the creed of all orthodox Christians. Those who deviated from this were heretics.

In a number of cities such as Alexandria, Rome and Carthage communities of Christians came into being, each community presided over by a bishop. In the third century A.D. the episcopal (form of organization) church hierarchy of priests began to be adopted throughout the numerous communities. This was the beginning of the real power of the priesthood and the imposition of rigid doctrines, creeds and dogmas. There was no place for mediumship as demonstrated by Jesus and the Apostles.

This change from the simple religion as practiced by the Apostles did not take place all at once. It was not until the reign of the Emperor Constantine that Christianity became a State organization with a code of beliefs and form of worship from which the Christian could not stray on penalty of severe punishment. Instead of being persecuted formal Christianity became the persecutor.

Lesson XLIV

Christianity Outgrown

Orthodox Christianity has changed greatly in the last few years. Although Jesus is worshipped as a God man, and the Bible is officially considered as the only divine revelation, people are doing much more thinking for themselves. No longer is the old version of Heaven and Hell accepted. Outlooks have broadened and unscientific precepts are simply looked upon as ideas bearing a moral lesson.

Today we read of prominent churchmen calling for unity among Christian churches. Councils have been held to attempt to overcome differences. Intolerance is breaking down as well as the idea that people who differ from the

official version of Christianity as set before them by their particular creed are sinners bound to suffer in hell.

Heaven and hell are not regarded as they once were. People are not living in fear and ignorance of what will happen to them. They are seeking answers to questions about what life really is; what is the real explanation of natural phenomena; and what is the motivating power back of it all.

In short, people are outgrowing traditions. Many are asking for logic rather than myths. Church ceremonies are still performed, but in the spirit of seeking to know what God is, and how to make the necessary contact with this power to attain a full and meaningful life.

In cutting ties with the old church many have not yet found themselves. Many do not know where they stand religiously, philosophically, or morally. However, on the whole Christians are developing their own concepts of the spiritual nature of man and the true meaning of the teachings of Jesus, considering Him to be the most spiritual and highly developed human being of whom we have any knowledge no matter how remote.

Lesson XLV

Questions on Lessons XLI - XLIV

1. What were the conditions in Palestine when Jesus appeared?
2. What was the longing of the Jewish people?
3. What caused the Sanhedrin and the Roman authorities to allow the death of Jesus?
4. What effect did the story of the Resurrection have on the people?
5. How much is actually known about the life of Jesus? What part does tradition play?
6. What happened at the Council of Carthage?
7. What did Paul of Tarsus believe and preach?
8. Do you think Jesus was a powerful teacher and medium? Why?
9. What happened immediately after the Crucifixion?
10. What part did mediumship play in early Christianity?
11. What happened at the Council of Nicaea?
12. How did the priesthood and a priestly hierarchy arise?
13. Discuss recent changes in orthodox Christianity.
14. Are attempts being made to unite?
15. Explain how traditions are being outgrown.
16. What are people looking for today?

Lesson XLVI

Beginnings of Modern Spiritualism

Spiritualism is as old as man. Psychic phenomena have occurred even before anyone was able to keep any records or relate any stories. The Bible is full of such occurrences, both in the Old and the New Testaments. Without the phenomena, the Bible would have very little meaning.

However, what we call Modern Spiritualism began in 1848 with the Hydesville Rappings. Here we touch upon the story of the Fox family and how the young Fox sisters, Margaretta and Katie, after repeatedly hearing strange rappings in their home, discovered that a spirit being was communicating with them; that he was a pedlar named Charles Rosna, and that he had been murdered in the home then occupied by the Fox family in Hydesville, New York.

The Fox sisters were mediums, and the investigation of the strange happenings in their presence was the beginning of Modern Spiritualism, in its phenomenal phase.

Even before the Fox sisters had their experiences there lived a man in New York State called Andrew Jackson Davis, the Poughkeepsie Seer. Mr. Davis, under inspiration and trance, wrote a number of books which are today the basis of our Spiritualist philosophy and religion. His principal work was *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations and a Voice to Mankind*. Another important work was the *Great Harmonia*. Mr. Davis was responsible for our modern Spiritualist philosophy and understanding of the Spirit World. He predicted the beginning of a new era not long before the Rappings at Hydesville. He also was able to diagnose diseases through his ability to see into the human body. For the children and young people the Spiritualist Lyceum was started under his direction.

From these beginnings Spiritualism has grown and spread to many countries. In 1893 the National Spiritualist Association of Churches was formed in Chicago. From this Association came the Declaration of Principles, serving as a guide to all Spiritualists. Today, we are a nationwide organization with churches in many states. Our Association is fully recognized as a religious body with all the privileges that similar groups enjoy.

Lesson XLVII

What is Spiritualism?

Spiritualism differs from other religions in several respects. First, we believe in God as a motivating force or activity serving as the source of all life. We do not accept a super-being wielding a scepter somewhere in heaven. We do accept an Infinite Creative Principle, or as the First Principle of our Declaration states: "We believe in Infinite Intelligence." This means that everything in the universe is governed by natural law. Nothing contradicts nature. Law, however, and all life has its physical and spiritual phases. On earth we are governed by physical laws. Physical science seeks to investigate and explore all physical laws.

Spiritualism looks upon man as a spiritual being functioning on earth in a physical body and thus subject to physical laws. We know, moreover, that there are spiritual laws which do not contradict the physical, but go beyond it into the mental and spiritual realms. This is because each man has a spark of the creative principle within him; it is his link to eternal life or God. We may call it the soul.

Although life has its physical and spiritual phases, it is continuous. It is as if we merely step from one room of a house into another. Death is change, not extinction. Because this is true, personalities who are in spirit and those on earth may communicate with one another under proper conditions.

Communication is a basic part of Spiritualism. Spiritualists seek to learn more about communication and the laws of mediumship through which it is accomplished. We do not accept the mere recitation of a creed or the repetition of a divine word as putting us in the presence of God. We grow to an understanding of what we are and what we may become. We are on the earth plane to develop a consciousness of our spiritual selves.

Lesson XLVIII

The Value of Spiritualism

The value of Spiritualism lies in the fact that it teaches each one of us to "Know Thyself." It helps to answer the question: "What is our true nature?" Rather than fostering unquestioned acceptance of man-made and unscientific creeds

laid down centuries ago, it encourages us to think for ourselves and to understand that all thought, all action, all life is governed by law or Creative Principle.

We, as units of this Principle, are indestructible. We change from the gross rate of vibration necessary to function on earth to the more refined vibrations of etheric planes. Never do we cease to exist, but we progress from one sphere of activity to another. Life involves many changes or stages of progression. As we learn and develop spiritually, so do we go forward.

It is beautiful and comforting to know that we, as individual personalities, may widen our own horizons and become better, more useful persons, achieving greater harmony and constructive purpose in our lives.

How inspiring it is to know that we have all eternity in which to achieve self-realization. Understanding this, we can lose fear—fear of the future, of what will happen to us and of what others can do to harm us.

All of these—self-realization, understanding of natural law, continuity of life and inevitability of progress—are the true values of Spiritualism. Mediumship and practice of communication help us to become better people. As we become more aware of the reality of spirit we become more willing to obey the simple law of treating others as we would wish to be treated. We learn to conduct ourselves in greater harmony with Infinite Intelligence, growing to a spiritual understanding we have not yet known.

Lesson XLIX

Practicing Spiritualism

Practicing Spiritualism involves much more than merely believing in mediumship or communication between this world and the spirit world. It is necessary to understand that life is unending and indivisible; there is no barrier against communication between one phase of life and another. Communication takes place in accordance with nature's physical and spiritual laws. For this reason there can be nothing mysterious or unnatural about it. The phenomena is perfectly natural and wholesome and the practice should be entered into in all sincerity and seriousness of purpose. Those who seek entertainment or are merely curious have no place in Spiritualism.

Mediumship should be used to demonstrate our teachings and philosophy. It is a means of enriching our way of life. When we understand the eternal nature of life and the continuity of each personality, then we can begin to put our houses in better order right here and now.

We should have full confidence in our ability to control our actions with the help and guidance of spirit, and to have a sense of true accomplishment and fulfillment. We do not need to fear what will happen to us. Having lost our fears and anxieties we need not hesitate to obey the law of treating others as we would want to be treated.

With this achievement of a measure of awareness of our spiritual nature and the power of which we are a part comes a better knowledge of how to conduct ourselves on the earth plane, how to be better men and women. To summarize, the proper practice of Spiritualism is the adoption of a way of life that enlarges our outlook and ensures a greater degree of fulfillment, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Lesson L

Questions on Lessons XLVI - XLIX

1. How old is Spiritualism?
2. When did Modern Spiritualism begin?
3. Discuss the Fox sisters and Andrew Jackson Davis.
4. When and where was the National Spiritualist Association of Churches founded, and what kind of organization is it?
5. How do Spiritualists look upon God?
6. What is the importance of natural law?
7. What is so-called death?
8. Discuss communication, its place in Spiritualism, and its purpose.
9. Discuss the values of Spiritualism.
10. Why are we indestructible?
11. How does Spiritualism help us to lose our fears?
12. How can we become better individuals?
13. What does the practice of Spiritualism involve?
14. How should mediumship be used?
15. Why should we have a sense of confidence?
16. Why is a sense of awareness of our spiritual nature important?

LESSON V

1. What is meant by comparative religions?

The study of the difference in the way each man worships or seeks to be in contact with a higher power than himself.

2. Why does man need a religion?

Our consciousness, or conscience, makes us seek to find what power that governs all life and to make contact with it--an inner need to be met.

3. What is meant by man's consciousness?

A sense of awareness

4. What power does man's consciousness have?

To tell him that he has done something wrong.

5. How does our consciousness serve as a link between us and God?

Our Soul, which is part of us, is immortal and that consciousness continues after death.

6. Of what use is our physical bodies?

Purpose of living here on earth

7. Who are the Spirit People?

People we have known here on earth who have passed into spirit life.

8. What assurance does each want?

No matter what takes place we are the same individuals with our own Souls or Consciousness.

9. What forms has God assumed in the minds of men?
Various forces of nature
10. What was man expressing in early art forms?
Attempts to express the power controlling human life.
11. Discuss some early ideas of God.
Superhuman men and women having dominion over some part of nature or as an important part of life.
12. How did mental growth influence ideas of God?
New ideas enabled men to approach God in completely different ways.
13. Name some methods of approaching God.
Offerings, rituals, incantations sung, sacrifices, and oracles.
14. What was man trying to express in his rituals?
Appeasement of an angry god to ward off disaster.
15. Where did the concept of Jehovah originate?
Minds of the ancient Jewish people
16. Why was this a step forward?
Spiritual power began to creep in the minds of worshippers - God became more than superhuman.

LESSON X

1. Why was the invention of writing important?
History began
2. Who was the diety who was regarded and the father and King of Gods?
Anu
3. Name and describe the triad of dieties of which Anu was the first.
ANU - God of the atmospheric region above the earth and controlled the heavens.
ENLIL - Controlled the earth
EA - Controlled the water
4. Why was Anu a theoretical figure and what was the theory about female Goddesses?
5. What did the name Baal stand for?
Lord of the Pantheon
6. What do you understand from the story of Baal and Mot?
The changes of the seasons or ressurection of the spirit.
7. What was symbolic of Baal and how does that relate to the Greeks?
A. Two pillars - one gold the other emerald
8. What does the tablet found in Marseilles indicate?
Charges (exchange system) were made by the priests of offering sacrafices.
9. Who was Mithra and whom did his followers worship?
A. God of Oaths, protector of the righteous, and archfoe of the powers of evil.
B. Ormazd, God of light

10. What is meant by a "mystery cult?"
Private secret societies
11. To whom did the cult of Mithraism appeal and where did they meet?
A. Humble people (strict probity and rigorous ethics)
B. Caves and grottos
12. To what ceremony of Mithraism may the Christian Eucharist be linked and what did it indicate?
A. Sacred meal of bread and water
B.
13. Who was Zoroaster and who was one of the Gods he worshipped?
A. Early teach in Persia
B. Ahura Mazda (Ormazd in Mathaism)
14. What is the source of Zoroaster's teachings?
Ancient writings call Gathas
15. Describe Zoroasterianism as contained in the Avesta.
Sacred ceremonies with fire sacrifice
16. Discuss Zoroaster's idea about the righteous and the partaking of food for immortality.
A. Righteous will shine like the sun
B. Something as communion of today even symbolic of immortality.