

The Common Foundation of All Religions by H.S. Olcott

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BEFORE proceeding with my discourse I must first express the profound thanks of Madame Blavatsky - my learned colleague - and myself for the warm and distinguished welcome we have received, from your Committee on our landing, and this immense assemblage which embraces so large a number of the educated men of this Presidency. We have thus had one more proof of the fact that the progress of our work in India is being watched with affectionate interest by the intelligent classes of the Indian Peninsula. Once more, upon visiting for the first time a Presidency town, we find ourselves among friends the sincerity of whose welcome cannot be misunderstood, and which unmistakably proves that we are not received as strangers but as brethren are who return from a distant land to their own people. Let us hope that the fraternal ties now created between us may never be broken, but grow stronger and stronger as time makes us all to see the necessity for united effort on behalf of the sacred cause of Indian interests. I trust that you will give patient attention to the thoughts that I shall now offer for your consideration.

Religion is - according to Mr Herbert Spencer -

“a great (I should say the greatest) reality and a great truth - nothing less than an essential and indestructible element of human nature”. He holds that the religious institutions of the world represent a genuine and universal feeling in the race just as really as any other institution. The accessory superstitions which have overgrown and perverted the religious sentiment must not be confounded with the religious sentiment itself. That this is done is a mischievous mistake, alike of religionists and anti-religionists. Science in clearing away these excrescences brings us always nearer the underlying truth, and is therefore the handmaid and friend of true religion. The substratum of truth is the one broad plateau of rock upon which the world's theological superstructures are reared. It is - as the title of our lecture puts it - “the common foundation of all religions”.

And now what is it? What is this rock? It is a conglomerate, having more than one element in its composition. In the first place, of necessity, is the idea of a part of man's nature which is non-physical; next, the idea of a *post-mortem* continuation of this non-physical part; third, the existence of an Infinite Principle underlying all phenomena; fourth, a certain relationship between this Infinite Principle and the non-physical part of man.

The evolution of the grander from the lower intellectual conception in this graded sequence is now conceded, alike by the scientist and the theologian. This evolution is accompanied by an elimination, for in religion, as in all other departments of thought, the light cannot be seen until the clouds are cleared away. Primitive truth is the light, theologies the clouds; and they are clouds still, though they glitter with all the hues of the spectrum. Fetish worship, animal worship, hero worship, ancestor worship, nature

worship, book worship; polytheism, monotheism, theism, deism, atheism, materialism (which includes positivism), agnosticism; the blind adoration of the idol, the blind adoration of the crucible - these are the Alpha and the Omega of human religious thought, the measure of relative spiritual blindness.

All these concepts pass through a single prism - the human mind. And that is why they are so imperfect, so incongruous, so human. A man can never see the whole light by looking from inside his body outwardly, any more than one can see the clear daylight through a dust-soiled window-glass, or the stars through a smeared reflecting lens. Why? Because the physical senses are adapted only to the things of a physical world, and religion is a transcendentalism. Religious truth is not a thing for physical observation, but one for psychical intuition. One who has not developed this psychical power can never *know* religion as a fact; he can only accept it as a creed, or paint it to himself as an emotional sentimentality. Bigotry is the brand to put upon one; gush that for the other. Back of both, and equally threatening them, is Scepticism.

Like man his religion has its ages; *first*, proclamation, propagandism, martyrdom; *second* conquest, faith; *third*, neglect, self-criticism; *fourth*, decadence, tenacious formalism; *fifth*, hypocrisy; *sixth*, compromise; *seventh*, decay and extinction. And, like the human race, no religion passes *as a whole* through these stages *seriatim*. At this very day, we see the Australian sunk in the depths of animalism, the American Red Indian just emerging from the Stone Age, the European in the full flush of high material civilization. And so a glance at religious history shows us the cropping up of highly heretical schools and sects in each great religion, of which each represents some special departure from primitive orthodoxy, some separate advance along the road towards the final goal that we have sketched out. And I also note, as the physician observes the symptoms of his patient, that history constantly shows in the bitter mutual hatreds of these cliques and sects for each other, the clearest proofs that our postulate is correct when we say - as just now - that Religion can never be really known by the physical brain of the physical man. All these hatreds, bitternesses and cruel reprisals of sect for sect, and world's faith for world's faith, show that men mistake the non-essentials for essentials, illusions for realities.

We can test this statement most easily. Look away from this war of theologians to the class of men who have developed their psychical powers and what do you see? In place of strife, peace, agreement mutual tolerance, a brotherly concord as to the fundamentals of religion. Whatever their exoteric creed they are greater than and far above it, and their innate holiness and gentleness of nature give life and strength to the Church they represent; they are the flowers of the human tree, the brothers of all mankind; for they know what is the light that shines behind the clouds; under the foundations of all the Churches they see the same rock. I ask those of you who wish to be convinced of this fact to read the *Dabistan*, by Mohsan Fami, who records in it his observations of the *sâdhus* of twelve different religions two centuries ago. "Granting all the premises" - the modern sceptic will say - "can you prove to me that science has not swept away all your religious hypotheses along with the myths, legends, superstitions and other lumber? Well, I answer, "Yes". It is exactly on that datum line that the Theosophical Society is building itself up. Some people think us opponents of Science, but on the contrary we are its warmest advocates - until it begins to dogmatize from incomplete, known data upon new facts. When it reaches that point we challenge it and fight it with all our strength, such as it may be, just as we fight the dogmatism of theology. For to our mind, it does not matter whether you blindly worship a fetish, a man, a book, or a crucible - it is blind idolatry all the same; and Science can be, and has been, as cruel and remorseless in her way as the Church ever was in hers.

The first step is to have an agreement as to what the word "Science" means. I take it to be the collection and arrangement of observed facts about Nature. If that is correct, then I protest against half measures: I want those observations to be complete, to cover all of Nature, not the half of it. What sort of ontology would it be which, while pretending to investigate the laws of our being, took note only of our anatomy, physiology and whatever relates to the physical frame of man, leaving out all that concerns his mental function? Absurd! you would say; but I ask you whether it is any more absurd to study man in his body without the mind, than to study him in body and mind while ignoring the trans-corporeal manifestations of his middle nature. You want me to define what I mean by this "middle nature" and by its trans-corporeal manifestations: I will do so, I start, then, with the proposition that there is more of a man than can be burnt with fire, eaten by tigers, drowned by water, chopped to pieces with knives, or rotted in the ground. The materialist will deny this, but it does not matter; the proposition can be proved as easily as that he is a man.

They have in Europe a science which they call psychology: it is a misnomer - it is another kind of ology - but we wont quarrel about words. Well, when you come to analyze the Western idea that underlies this term of psychology, you will discover that it relates only to the normal and abnormal intellectual manifestations of the brain. One class of scientists - especially among the alienists, or students of insanity - maintain that mind is a function of the gray vesicles of the lobes of the brain; injure the brain by any one of a dozen accidents, and sensation is cut off, thought ceases, mind is destroyed, the thinking, hence responsible, entity is extinguished. All that is left is carrion, and out of this carrion, before the accident, sprang by magneto-electrical energy all that distinguishes man from the lowest animal, as the lotus springs from slimy mud.

The opposed party affirm that the brain is the organ of the mind, the machine of its manifestation, and that the thinking something in man thinks still and still exists even though the brain be shattered, even though the man die. The one reflects the tone of materialistic science, the other the tone of the Christian Churches and of the two crores of so-called modern Spiritualists. The Materialists regard man as a Unity, a thinking machine, the other regard him as a Duality, a compound of body and soul. There is no ground for a "middle nature" in either of these schools. True, here and there, you will find some casual allusion to a third and higher principle - the "spirit," as, for instance, in the Christian *New Testament* (I *Thessalonians*, v 23) where I Paul says: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" - an expression which, however sound as theology, is dreadfully loose and heterodox as science. But the whole drift of Christian teaching and of mediumistic teaching favours the duality theory; the body dead, the second principle enters on a new career of its own until it attains to a postulated *summum bonum* or *summum malum* state. Now experienced observers of the mediumistic phenomena have seen many animated figures or more or less substantial apparitions of deceased persons, and these they regard as the returning souls revisiting the land of the living. They have no idea of this middle nature. But the Hindû philosophers make a far deeper analysis of man. Instead of a single part, or a duality, they affirm that there are no fewer than seven distinct groups which go to make up a human being. These are:

- (1) The Material body - *Stûlasarîra*
- (2) The *Lingasarîra*
- (3) The Life Principle - *Jîva*
- (4) The *Kâmarûpa*, resulting as *Mâyâvirûpa*

- (5) The Physical Intelligence (or Animal Soul) - *Manas*
- (6) The Spiritual Intelligence - *Buddhi*
- (7) The *Âtmâ*

And so minute is their analysis, that each of these groups is subdivided into seven sub-groups. Generally speaking, the first, fourth and seventh principles mark the boundaries of the tripartite or trinitarian man. And the fourth, which comes just midway between the gross body (*Stûlasarîra*) and the *Âtmâ*, or divine and eternal principle, is this middle nature of which we have been in search. Now the next question to be asked of us is whether this fourth principle, or *Mâyâvirûpa* or human "Double," is intelligent or non-intelligent, matter or spirit; and the next, whether its existence can be scientifically accounted for and proved. We will take them in order.

In itself the Double is but a vapour, a mist, or a solid form according to its relative state of condensation. Given outside the body one set of atmospheric, electric, magnetic, telluric and other conditions, this form may be invisible yet capable of making sounds or giving other tests of its presence; given another set of conditions, it may be visible, but as a misty vapour; given a third set, it may be condensed into perfect visibility and even tangibility. Volumes upon volumes might be filled with bare paragraph abstracts of recorded instances of these apparitional visits. Sometimes the form manifests intelligence, it speaks; sometimes it can only show itself - I am now speaking of the apparitions of dead persons. I have personally seen more than five hundred such apparitions at a place in America where hundreds more saw them, and I put my experiences in the form of a book, which was praised by some of the eminent scientists of Europe as a careful record of scientifically accurate observations. I only mention this to satisfy you that here is no case of hallucination or unsupported statements. Well, then, we have here the middle nature of man acting outside of and after the death of the physical body; though for my part - being a believer in Asiatic Psychology - I do not believe that these post-mortem apparitions are the very man himself - the thinking, responsible Ego. They are, I conceive, but the vapoury image of the deceased - matter energized by a residuum of the vital force which is still entangled in the lingering molecules. But to prove our proposition we must show that this middle principle, this *Mâyâvirûpa* or Double, can be separated from the living body at will, projected to a distance, and animated by the full consciousness of that man.

We have two means of proving this - (1) in the concurrent testimony of eye-witnesses as recorded in the literature of different races; and (2) in the evidence of living witnesses. In the Hindû religious and philosophical works there are many such testimonies. Not to mention others, we may cite the case of *Sankarâchârya*, who entranced his body, left it in the custody of his disciples, entered the body of a Râjah just deceased, and lived in it for a number of weeks; and that of Agastya, who appeared in the heat of the battle between Râma and Râvana, while his body was entranced in the Nilghiris. This story is given in the *Râmâyana*. In Patañjali's *Yoga Sûtras* this phenomenon is affirmed to be within the power of every Siddha who perfects himself in Yoga. As to living witnesses, I am one myself; for I have seen the Doubles of several men acting intelligently at great distances from their bodies, and in this pamphlet that I now show you, [*Hints on Esoteric Theosophy* (Calcutta, 1882)] will be found the certificates of no less than nine reputable persons - five Hindûs and four Europeans - that they have seen such appearances on various occasions within the past two years. And then we have the scores of similar attestations from credible persons living in different parts of the world which are to be read in many European books treating upon these subjects. I do not pretend to say that a skeptical public can be expected to take this mass of evidence, conclusive as it may be, without reserve; the alleged phenomenon so surpasses

ordinary human experience that, to believe its reality, each one must see for himself. I however do affirm that we have here a case of probable verity made out; for, under the strictest canons of scientific orthodoxy, we cannot suspect a conspiracy to lie among so many individual witnesses, who never saw or heard of each other, who, in fact, did not even live in the same generation, but yet whose testimonies corroborate each other.

But if we have a case of probable truth, the man of science will ask us what we next demand of him. Do we allege a natural and scientific, or a supernatural, hence unscientific, explanation for the projection of the Double of the living, and the apparition of that of the deceased man? I answer, most assuredly, the former. I am devoted enough to Science to deny, with all the emphasis I can give to words, the fact that a miraculous phenomenon ever took place, in this age or any age. Whatever has ever occurred must have done so within the operation of natural law. To suppose anything else would be equivalent to saying that there is no permanency in the laws of the universe, but that they can be set aside and played with at the caprice of an irresponsible and meddling Power. We should be in a universe going by jerks, started and stopped like a clock that a child is playing with. This supernaturalism is the curse of all creeds, it hangs like an incubus around the neck of the religions and hatches the satire of the sceptic; it is the dry-rot that eats out the heart of any faith that builds upon it. This it is which, carried in the body of a church, foredooms it to ultimate destruction as surely as the hidden cancer carried in the human system will one day kill it. And of all epochs this nineteenth century is the worst in which to come before the public as the champions of supernatural religions. They are going down in every land, melting before the laboratory fires like waxen images. No, when I stand forth as the defender of Hindûism, Buddhism or Zoroastrianism, I wish it understood that I do not claim any respect or tolerance for them outside the limits of natural law, I believe - nay I *know* - that their foundation is a scientific one, and on those conditions they must stand or fall so far as I am concerned. I do not say they are in equally close reconciliation with science, but I do say that whatever foundation they have, whether broad or narrow, long or short, is and must be a scientific one. And so, too, when I ask you to cease from making yourselves ridiculous by denying the existence of this middle nature in man, it is because I am persuaded, as the result of much reading and a good deal of personal experience, that the Double, or Mâyâvirûpa, is a scientific fact.

Well then, to return - is it matter or something else? I say matter *plus* something else. And here stop a moment to think what matter is. Loose thinkers - among whom we must class raw lads fresh from college, though they be ever so much titled - are too apt to associate the idea of matter with the properties of density, visibility, and tangibility. But this is very inexcusable. The air we breathe is invisible, yet matter - its equivalents of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and carbonic acid are each atomic, ponderable, demonstrable by analysis. Electricity cannot, except under prepaid conditions, be seen, yet it is matter. The Universal Ether of science no one ever saw, yet it is matter in a state of extreme tenuity. Take the familiar example of forms of water, and see how they rapidly run up the scale of tenuity until they elude the clutch of science: stone-hard ice, melted ice, condensed steam, super-heated and invisible steam, electricity, and - it is gone out of the world of effects into the world of causes!

Well then, with this warning before you, my cerebrally superheated young friend of the Madras University, pray do not contradict me when I say that the Hindû philosophy of man fits in with the lines of modern science much more snugly than that of either the supernaturalistic Christian or the materialistic man of science. As we have seen the successive forms of water running up into the invisible world, so here, Esoteric Hindû Philosophy gives us a graduated series of molecular arrangements in the human

economy, at one end of which is the concrete mass of the *Stûlasarîra*, at the other the last sublimation called *Âtmâ*, or spirit. "But how can all these exist together in one combination; is a man like a nest of boxes or baskets fitted into each other, or do you mean to say the scientific absurdity that two things can simultaneously occupy the same space?" This is a side question provoked by the main one, but we must dispose of it first.

I will say, then, that as the thing has been explained to me, each of these several sets of atoms which compose the seven parts of man occupy the interstitial space between the next coarser set of atoms. They are focalized as to their several energies in what the Hindûs call the Shadadharams, or centres of vital force, crowned by Sahasrâram, in which *Âtmâ* is located. This supreme point is in the crown of the head; the others are located at the base of the spine, the abdomen, the umbilicus, the heart, the root of the throat, and the centre of the frontal sinus. The atoms of the *Buddhi* would, then, pervade the interstices of the *Manas*; those of the *Manas*, those of the *Kâmarûpa*; those of the latter those of the *Jîva*; those of the *Stûlasarîra*. And as each coarser contains the particles of all the finer principles, therefore the *Stûlasarîra* is the gross casket within which the several parts of the composite man are contained. Pervading and energizing all is the *Âtmâ*, or that incomprehensible final energy which cannot be comprehended by the physical senses, and which is described to himself by the Brahman in the *Mândûkya-Upanishat* by saying: "Thou art not this, nor that, nor the third, nor anything which the mind can grasp with the help of the physical perceptions." Your popular Telugu poet beautifully and allegorically depicts this idea in his poem *Sîtârâma Añjaniam* (cosmic matter) where *Sîtâ* - who is herself the personification of Prakrti - is asked by the daughters and wives of the Rshis to point out her husband, but, through modesty, refrains. The ladies then pointing successively to a number of different men ask each time: "Is this thy husband?" She answers in the negative, but when they point to *Râma* she is silent, for she cannot even speak of her heart's lord before strangers. So the poet would have us understand, while we may freely say what *Âtmâ* is *not*, when we are required to say what *it is* we must be silent, for words are powerless to express the sublime idea.

We have now prepared the ground to answer both of the questions put to us by our imaginary critic. The *Kâmarûpa*, when intelligently projected beyond the physical body by the developed energy of an Initiate of Occult Science, contains in it all his *Manas* and *Buddhi* (including the *Chittham* and *Ahankâram*, - sense of individuality) - his Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence. The Initiate quits his earthly casket - in which are left the *Jîva* and *Lingasarîra* - and for the moment lives, thinks and acts in this Double of himself. Its atomic condition being less dense than that of the corporeal body, it has enhanced powers of locomotion and perception. Barriers that would stop the body - for example, the walls of a room - cannot stop it, for its particles may pass through the interstices of the gross matter composing the wall. It is in the subjective world and may traverse its space like thought, which is itself a form of energy. Or, if he likes, the Initiate may simply project a non-intelligent image of himself and make it appear at the spot at which he may have focalized his thought. It depends upon him whether the image shall be but an illusionary form, or his own self; it may be mere matter, or matter *plus* himself. As to our accounting for the middle nature of man scientifically, I have already shown that we may do this by the collection of testimonies, and by personal observation. We may add that further proof is obtainable by the best and surest of all methods - that of going oneself through the necessary course of self-training and projecting one's own Double. For this is no exclusive science reserved for a favoured few; it is a true science based upon natural law, and within the reach of everyone who has the requisite qualifications. The humblest labourer may lift the veil of mystery as well as the proudest sovereign or the haughtiest priest.

But it is constantly asked: why are not these secrets thrown open to the world as freely as the details of chemistry or any other branch of knowledge? It is a natural question - for a superficial reasoner to put; but it is not a sound one. The difference between psychic and physical sciences is that the former can only be learned by the self-evolution of psychical powers. No college professor can evolve them for you, nor any friend, fellow-student or relative; you must evolve them for yourself. Can another man learn music, or Samskrit, or the art of painting or sculpture for you? Can another eat, sleep, feel warm or cold, digest or breathe for you? Then why should you expect him to learn psychology for you? Anyhow he cannot do it, however much you may expect it, and that is the final answer to all such questioners. Nor is it absolutely *certain* that, even though you should try ever so much, you could evolve these powers in yourself. Has every man the capacity for languages, or music, or poetry, or science, or philosophy? You know that each of these require certain clear aptitudes, and if you have them not you can never become a musician, poet, scientist or philosopher. The branches of physical science are difficult to master, even when you have the natural capacity; but psychical science is more difficult than either of them - I might almost say than all combined. That is why the Mahâtmâ has been described as "the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers" (Sinnott's *The Occult World* p 101), and in all generations the true Sâdhu has been revered as almost a superhuman being. The term applies to him only in the sense of his being above the weaknesses, the prejudice and the ignorance of his fellow men.

With the most absurd blindness to the experience of the race, we Founders of the Theosophical Society are constantly being asked to turn its members into Adepts. We must show the short cut to the Himavat, the private passages to the Asramums in the Nilghiris! They are not willing to work and suffer for the getting of knowledge, as all who have got it heretofore, they must be put into a first-class carriage and taken straight behind the Veil of Isis! They fancy our Society an improved sort of Miracle Club, or School of Magic wherein for ten rupees a man can become a Mahâtmâ between the morning bath and the evening meal! Such people entirely overlook the avowed two chief objects of the Society - the formation of a nucleus of an Universal Brotherhood for the research after truth and the promotion of kind feelings between man and man; and the promotion of the study of ancient religions, philosophies and sciences. They do not appreciate this purely unselfish part of the Society's work, nor seem to think it a noble and most meritorious thing to labour for the enlightenment and happiness of mankind. They have an insatiable curiosity to behold wonders, seeing which they would not, in many instances, be stimulated to search after the hidden springs of wisdom, but only sit with open mouth and pendulous tongue, to wonder how the trick was done and what would be the next one?

Such minds can get no profit by joining the Theosophical Society, and I advise them to stay outside. We want no such selfish triflers. Ours is a serious, hard-working, self-denying Society, and we want only men worthy to be called men and worthy of our respect. We want men whose first question will not be "what good can I get by joining?" "but" what good can I *do* by joining?" Our work requires the services of men who can be satisfied to labour for the next generation and the succeeding ones; men who, seeing the lamentable religious state of the world - seeing noble faiths debased, temples, churches, and holy shrines thronged by hypocrites and mockers - burn with a desire to rekindle the fires of spirituality and morality upon the polluted altars, and bring the knowledge of the Rshis within the reach of a sin-burdened world. We want Hindûs who can love India with so pure an affection that they will count it a joy and an honour beyond the price to work and to suffer, even, for her sake. Men we want, who will be able to put aside for the moment their puerile hatreds of race, and creed, and caste, as they put away a soiled cloth or a worn-out garment; and with a loving heart and clean conscience be ready to join with every other man - be he black or white, red or yellow, bondsman or freeman - whose heart beats with love for India and her wide-scattered children of many races, throughout the world. We welcome most those who are

ready to trample under foot their selfishness when it comes in conflict with the general good. We welcome the intelligent student of science who has such broad conceptions of his subject that he considers it quite as important to solve the mystery of Force as to know the atomic combinations of Matter, and feeling so, is not afraid or ashamed to take for his teacher anyone who is competent, whatever be the colour of his skin.

Now to take our scientific argument one step further. Granted that the existence of the Double has been proven, and also its projectibility, how is it projected? By an expenditure of energy, of course. That energy is the vital force set in motion by the will. The power of concentrating the will for this purpose is one that may be natural or acquired. There are some persons who have it naturally so strong in them that they often send their Doubles to distant places and make them visible, though they may never have given a day's study to the science of psychology; I have known both men and women of this sort. But it is an uncommon power, and can never be exercised at all times except by the true proficient in psychological science. The operations of the brain in mechanically evolving the current of will-force have been more or less carefully expounded by Bain and Maudsley, while Professors Tait and Balfour Stewart have, in their *Unseen Universe*, traced for us the dynamic effect of thought evolution into the Ether, or, as Hindûs have called it these thousands of years, the Âkâsa. They go so far as to say that it is not an unthinkable proposition that the evolution of thought in a single human brain may dynamically affect a distant planet. In other words, when a thought is evolved a vibration of etheric particles is set up, and this motion must continue on indefinitely. Now the Yogi evolves such a current and turns it upon himself as a concentrated force; continuing the process until the power is sufficient to force his Double out of its corporeal encasement, and to project it to whatsoever locality he desires. We have thus shown the fact of the Mâyâvirûpa, its capability to exist outside the body, and the energy which causes its projection. I cannot go into details to elaborate the argument, for I can only detain you an hour in this tropical heat. But I have at least, I trust, shown you that I rely only upon scientific principles, and claim no indulgence from the advocates of supernaturalism.

And now is this Double - which is none other than what is commonly called the "Soul," immortal? No, it is not. So much of it as is matter in aggregation must ultimately obey the law of dispersion which in time breaks up and forces out of the objective universe whatever is material. It is equally the law of planetary as of lesser forms. As all that is material in a star was primarily condensed from the loose atoms in space, so all that is material in the human body, however coarse or however fine it may be, was primarily condensed from the chaotic atoms in the Âkâsa. And to that dispersed condition they must return whenever the centripetal force that attracted them into the human nucleus ceases to resist the centrifugal force or attractions of the atoms in space. This brings us right upon the problem of a continuity of existence beyond the physical death. Here is the dividing line between the world's religions. The dualists affirm that this soul goes to heavenly or infernal places to be for ever blest or punished according to the deeds done in the body. Though they do not use the very word, yet it is the doctrine of merit they teach. For even those extremely unscientific theologians who affirm that a punishing and rewarding Deity has from all time preordained some to be saved and some to be damned, tell us that the merit of faith in a certain system of morals and discipline and a share in the vicarious merit of another, are prerequisites to future bliss. We may assume, therefore, that merit, or KARMA, is a corner-stone of Religion. This is both a logical and scientific proposition, for the thoughts, words and deeds of a man are so many causes which must work out corresponding effects; the good ones can only produce good effects, the bad ones only bad - unless they are antagonized and neutralized by stronger ones that are good.

I need not go into the metaphysical analysis of what is bad and what good. We may pass it over with the simple postulate that whatever has either a debasing tendency upon the individual or promotes injustice, misery, suffering, ignorance and animalism in society is essentially bad, that what tends to the contrary is good. I should call that a bad religion which taught that it is meritorious to do evil that good may come; for good can never come out of evil, the evil tree produces not good fruit. A religion that can only be propagated at the point of the sword; or upon the martyr's pile; or under instruments of torture; or by devastating countries and enslaving their populations; or by cunning stratagems seducing ignorant children or adults away from their families and castes and ancestral creeds - is a vile and devilish religion, the enemy of truth, the destroyer of social happiness. If a religion is not based upon a lie, the fact can be proved and it can stand unshaken as the rocky mountain against all the assaults of sceptics. A true religion is not one that runs to holes and corners, like a naked leper to hide his sores, when a bold critic casts his searching eye upon it and asks for its credentials. If I stand here to defend what is good in Hinduism, it is because of my full conviction that, that good exists, and that however fantastic and even childish some may think its tangled overgrowth of customs, legends and superstitions, there is the rock of truth, of scientific truth, below them all. On that rock it is destined to stand through countless coming generations as it has already stood through the countless generations which have professed that hoary Faith since the Rshis shot from their Himâlayan heights the blazing light of spiritual truth over a dark and ignorant world.

It is most reasonable that you should ask me what those of you are to do who are not gifted with the power to get outside the illusion-breeding screen of the body and acquire an intimate actual perception of "Divine" truth through the developed psychical senses. As we have ourselves shown that all men cannot be Adepts, what comfort do we hold out to the rest? This involves a momentary glance at the theory of rebirths. If this little span of human life we are now enjoying be the entire sum of human existence; if you and I never lived before and will never live again, then there would be no ray of hope to offer to any mind that was not capable of the intellectual suicide of blind faith. The doctrine of a vicarious atonement for sin is not merely unthinkable, it is positively repulsive to one who can take a larger and more scientific view of man's origin and destiny than that of the dualists. One whose religious perceptions rest upon the intuition that cause and effect are equal; that there is a perfect and correspondential reign of Law throughout the universe; that under any reasonable conception of eternity there must always have been at work the same forces as are now active - must scout the assertion that this brief instant of sentient life is our only one.

Science has traced us back through an inconceivably long sequence of existences - in the human, the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral kingdoms - to the cradle of future sentient life, the Ether of space. Would a man of science, then, make bold to affirm that you and I, who represent a relatively high stage of evolution, came to be what we are without previous development in other births, whether on this earth or other planets? And if he would not, he must, in conformity with his own canons of the conservation and correlation of energy, deduce from the whole analogy of nature that there is another life for us beyond this life. The force which evolved us cannot be expended, it must run on in its vibratory line until its limit is reached. And that limit the Hindû and the Buddhist, the Jain and the Zoroastrian Adepts, all define as that abstract world which lies beyond the phenomenal one of illusions and pain. Whatever they may call it - whether Mukti, or Nirvâna, or Light - it is all the same idea; it is the outcome of the eternal Principle of energy after passing around a cycle of correlations with matter. That final limit the Middle Nature as a whole never reaches, for it is material as to its form, size, colour and atomic relations; if we call it the "Soul," therefore, we may say that the "Soul" is not immortal; for that which is material tends always to resume its primitive atomic condition. And the Hindû philosopher, arguing from these premises, teaches

that what does escape out of the phenomenal world is Âtmâ, the SPIRIT. And thus, while from the Hindû standpoint it is correct to say the "Soul" is not immortal, it must also be added that the "Spirit" is; for, unlike the Soul or Middle Nature, Âtmâ contains no mortal and perishable ingredients, but is of its essence unchangeable and eternal.

The confusion of the words "Soul" and "Spirit," so common now, is perplexing and mischievous to this last degree.

It is no argument to bring against the Asiatic theory of Palingenesis, that we have no remembrance of former existences. We have forgotten nineteen-twentieths of the incidents of our present life. Memory plays as the most prankish tricks. Every one of us can recollect some one trifling incident out of a whole day's, month's year's incidents of our earliest years, and one that was in no way important, nor apparently more calculated than the others to impress itself indelibly upon the memory. How is this? And if this utter forgetfulness of the majority of our life-incidents is no proof that we did not exist consciously at those times, then our oblivion of the entire experiences in previous births is no argument against the fact of such previous births. Nor, let me hasten to add, are the alleged remembrances of previous births, affirmed by the modern school of Reincarnationists, valid proofs of such births; they may be - I do not say they are mere tricks of the imagination, cerebral pictures suggested by chance external influences. The only question with us is whether in science and logic it is necessary for us to postulate for ourselves a series of births, somewhere, at various times. And this I think must be answered in the affirmative.

So then conceding the plurality of births, and coming back to our argument, we see that even though anyone of us may not have the capacity for acquiring adeptship in this birth, it is still a possibility to acquire it in a succeeding one. If we make the beginning we create a cause which will, in due time and in proportion to its original energy, sooner or later give us adeptship, and with it the knowledge of the hidden laws of being, and of the way to break the shackles of matter and obtain Mukti - Emancipation. And the first step in this beginning is to cleanse ourselves from vicious desires and habits, to do away with unreasoning prejudices, dogmatism and intolerance, to try to discover what is essentially fundamental and what is non-essential in the religion one professes, and to live up to the highest ideal of goodness, intelligence, and spiritual-mindedness that one can extract from that religion and from the intuitions of one's own nature. I regard that man as a mad iconoclast who would strike down any religion - especially one of the world's ancient religions - without examining it and giving it credit for its intrinsic truth. I call him a vain enthusiast who would patch up a new Faith out of the ancient Faiths, merely to have his name in the mouths of men. I call him a foolish zealot who would expect to make all men see truth as he sees it, since no two men can even see alike a simple tree or shrub, let alone grasp metaphysical propositions with the same clearness. As for those who go about the world to propagate their peculiar religious belief, without the ability to show its superiority to other beliefs which they would supplant, or to answer without equivocation the fair questions of critics - they are either well-meaning visionaries or presumptuous fools. But mad, or vain, or stupid, as either of these may be, if they are sincere they are personally entitled to the respect that sincerity always commands. Unless the whole world is ready to accept one infallible chief and blindly adopt one creed, the wisest, the only rule must ever be to tolerate in our fellow man that infirmity of judgment which we are ourselves always liable to, and never wholly free from. And that is the declared policy and platform of the Theosophical Society - as you may see by reading this pamphlet containing its Rules and By-Laws. It is the broad platform of mutual tolerance and universal brotherhood.

There must be elementary stages leading up towards adeptship, you will say; there are, and modern science has laid out some of them. I told you that psychology is the most difficult of sciences to get to the bottom of, but still Western research has cleared many obstacles from the path. Mesmerism is by far the most necessary branch of study to take up first. It gives you (1) proof of the separability of mind from conscious physical existence; a mesmerized subject may show an active intellectual consciousness and discrimination while his body is not only asleep but buried in so profound a trance as to more resemble a livid corpse than a living man; (2) it gives you proof of the actual transmissibility of thought from one mind to another; the mesmeric operator can, without uttering a word or giving a perceptible signal, transmit to his subject the thought in his own mind; (3) it easily proves the reality of a power to hear sounds and see things occurring at great distances, to communicate with the thought of distant persons, to look through walls, down into the bowels of the earth, into the depths of the ocean and through all other obstructions to corporeal vision; (4) of a power to look into the human body, detect the seat and causes of disease, and prescribe suitable remedies, as also a power to impart health and restore physical and mental vigour by the laying on of the mesmerist's hands, or by his imparting his robust vital force to a glass of water for the patient to drink, or to a cloth for him to wear; (5) of a power to see the past and even prognosticate the future. These and many more things Mesmeric Science enables a person, not an Adept of the higher Asiatic Psychology, to prove completely to himself and others. I say this on the authority of a Committee of the Academy of France. And then, besides Mesmerism, there are the highly important branches of Psychometry, Odyle, Mediumism, and others that to barely mention would be beyond the scope of my present lecture. Each and all help the inquirer towards the acquisition of "Divine" wisdom, towards an intelligent and scientific conception of the laws of that "Eternal Something," as Herbert Spencer calls it, which you may call God or by any other name you like. Whatever name you may choose for it, the knowledge of it is the highest goal for human thought, and to be in a state of harmony with it the noblest, first and most necessary aspiration of intelligent man. The pursuit of this knowledge is, in one word, THEOSOPHY, and the proper method of research constitute Theosophical Science.

And thus in a single sentence I have answered a thousand questions as to what Theosophy is, and what the object of Theosophical research. Most of you, like the great mass of Hindûs, have until this moment been imagining to yourselves that we were come to preach some new religion, to propagate some new conceit, to set up some "New Dispensation". You see now how far you have been from the mark, and what popular injustice has been done to us. Instead of preaching a new religion we are preaching the superior claims of the oldest religions in the world to the confidence of the present generation. It is not our poor ignorant selves that we offer to you as guides and gurus, but the venerable Rshis of the archaic ages. It is not an American or a Russian, but a hoary Hindû Philosophy that we claim your allegiance for. We come not to pull down or destroy, but to rebuild the strong fabric of Asiatic religion. We ask you to help us to set it up again, not on the shifting and treacherous sands of blind faith, but upon the rocky base of truth, and to cement its separate stones together with the strong cement of Modern Science. Hindûism proper *has nothing whatever to fear from the researches of Science*. Whatever of falsehood may have come down to you from previous generations, we may well dispense with, and when the time comes for us to see through our present *mâyâ* (illusions) we will cheerfully do so. "The world was not made in a day," and we are not such ignorant enthusiasts as to dream that in a day, or a year, or a generation, long-established errors can be detected and done away with. Let us but always desire to know the truth, and hold ourselves ready to speak for it, act for it, die for it, if necessary, when we may discover it.

People ask us what in our religion, and how it is possible for us to be on equal terms of friendliness with people of such antagonistic Faiths. I answer that what may be our personal preferences among the

world's religions has nothing to do with the general question of Theosophy. We are advocating Theosophy as the only method by which one may discover that Eternal Something, not asking people of another creed than ours to take our creed and throw aside their own. We two Founders profess a religion of tolerance, charity, kindness, altruism, or love of one's fellows; a religion that does not try to discover all that is bad in our neighbour's creed, but all that is good, and to make him live up to the best code of morals and piety he can find in it. We profess, in a word, the religion that is embodied in the Golden Rule of Confucius, of Gautama, and of the Founders of nearly all the great religions; and that is preserved for the admiration and reverence of posterity in the Edicts of the good king Asoka on the monoliths and rocks of Hindustan. Following this simple creed, we find no difficulty whatever in living upon terms of perfect peace with the adherent of any creed who will meet us in a reciprocal spirit. If we have been at war with the pretended Christians, it is because they have belied the teachings of Him whom they pretend to call Master, and by every vile and unworthy subterfuge have tried to oppose the growth of our influence. It is they who war upon us, for defending Hindûism and the other Asiatic religions, not we who war upon them. If they would practice their own precepts we would never use voice or pen against them, for then they would respect the religious feelings of the Hindû, the Pârsî, the Jain, the Jew, the Buddhist and the Musalmân, and deserve our respect in return. But they began with calumny instead of argument, and calumny, I fear, will be the favorite weapon to the bitter end. In comparison with the unmanly conduct of my brawling countryman who lectured here the other day, denouncing the Vedas as filthy abomination and the Theosophists as disreputable adventurers, how sweet and noble was the behaviour of that Muhammadan lawyer who defended Raymond Lully when a Musalmân tribunal was disposed to punish him for trying to propagate his religion in their city. "If you think it a meritorious act, O Muslims, for a Musalmân to try to preach Islâm among the heretics, why should we be uncharitable to this Christian whose motive is identical?" I cannot remember the exact words, but that is the sense. The tender voice of Charity spoke by that lawyer's lips, and his words were the echo of the Spirit of truth.

Come then, ye old men and young men of Madras, if ye call yourselves lovers of India, and would make yourselves worthy of the blessings of the Rshis, join hands and hearts with us to carry on this great work. We ask you for no honours, no worldly benefits or rewards for ourselves. We do not seek you for followers; choose your proper leaders from among your wisest and purest men, and we will follow them. We do not offer ourselves as your teachers, for all we can teach is what we have learnt from this Asia; the Gospel we circulate is derived from the recluses of the Indian mountains, not from the professors of the West. It is for India we plead, for the restoration of her ancient religion, the vindication of her ancient glory, the maintenance of her greatness in science, the arts and philosophy. If any selfish consideration of sect or caste or local prejudice bars the way, put it aside, at least until you have done something for the land of your birth, the renown of your noble race. In this great crowd I see painted upon your foreheads the vertical sect-marks of the Dwaitas and the Visishtâdvaitis, and the horizontal stripes of the Sivas. These are the surface indications of religious differences that have often burst out in bitter words and bitter deeds. But with another sense than the eye of the body I see another set of sect-marks indicative of far greater peril to Indian nationality and Indian spirituality than those. These marks are branded deep upon the brains and hearts of some - though, happily, not all - of your most promising young men, the choicest children of the sorrowing Mother India, and they are eating away the sense of pride that they belong to this race and have inherited this noble religion. These are the B.A., B.L. and M.A. brands that the University over yonder has marked you with. After three years of intercourse with the Hindû nation and of identification with its thought, I almost feel a shudder when some noble-browed youth is presented to me as a titled graduate. Not that I undervalue the importance of college culture, nor the honourable distinction one earns by acquiring University degrees; but I say that, *if such distinctions can only be had at the cost of one's national honour and one's spiritual intuitions*, they are a curse to the graduate and a calamity to his country. I would rather see a dirty *Bairâgee* who has his ancestors' intuitive belief in man's

spiritual capabilities, than the most brilliant graduate ever turned out of the University, who has lost that belief. Let me companion with the naked hermit of the jungle rather than with a graduate who, though loaded with degrees, has by a course of false history and false science, been made to lose all faith in anything greater in the Universe than a Haeckel or a Comte, or in any powers in himself higher than those of procreation, thought or digestion. Call me a Conservative, if you will; I am Conservative to this extent that, until our modern professors can show me a Philosophy that is unassailable; a science that is self-demonstrative, that is, axiomatic; a psychology that takes in all psychic phenomena; a new religion that is all truth and without a flaw - - I shall proclaim that which I feel, I know, to be the fact, viz., that the Rshis knew the secrets of Nature and of Man, that there is but one common platform of all religions, and that upon it ever stood and now stand in fraternal concord and amity the Hierophants and esoteric Initiates of the world's great Faiths. That platform is THEOSOPHY. May the blessing of its ancient Masters be upon our poor stricken India!