

AN EPITOME OF THEOSOPHY

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WITH AN HISTORICAL NOTE

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Historical Note

AN *EPITOME OF THEOSOPHY* is the earliest as it remains the best, condensed, yet withal substantive treatment of the Great Message of the doctrines of the Wisdom-Religion, or Theosophy.

It was originally issued as "A Theosophical Tract" by the Aryan Theosophical Society of New York City in December, 1887. This "Tract" was printed in full in Mr. Judge's magazine, *The Path*, Volume 11, No. 10, January, 1888, a brief or digest of six pages, rather than a treatment; a table rather than its contents.

The foundation of *The Path*, the return of Madame Blavatsky to active effort in the West by her residence in London and the commencement of her magazine, *Lucifer*; the public announcement of the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society; the foundation of the Blavatsky Lodge at London; the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*; the organization of the American Section of the Theosophical Society—all these occurred contemporaneously in the years 1886-1888, and betokened a new orbit of action, a great revival of Theosophy pure and simple in the Western World. *An Epitome of Theosophy*, even in its original immature form, had no small share in this revival. So great was its circulation in the United States, so great the need elsewhere, that the Theosophical Publication Society in England requested Mr. Judge to revise the leaflet for issuance in Great Britain.

Mr. Judge accordingly re-wrote entirely the original *Tract* as put together at his suggestion by Mr. Alexander Fullerton and others, enlarging it to a booklet, and sent the manuscript to the Theosophical Publication Society at London. Its managers wrote back that the treatment was entirely too "deep" for the average mind; that what was needed was something "light." Mr. Judge replied to this criticism in characteristic fashion. His answer will be found in Volume II of the *Letters That Have Helped Me*, in No. IV of that book. He says (in part)

"It is with great regret that I learn from recent London advices that the Managers of the Society there think that the Tract, 'Epitome of Theosophy,' which appeared in *The Path*, is 'too advanced to be reprinted now, and that what is needed is a 'stepping-stone from fiction to philosophy.'

"Permit me to say that I cannot agree with this opinion, nor with the policy which is outlined by it. The opinion is erroneous, and the policy is weak as well as being out of accord with that of the Masters.

"If I had made up that Epitome wholly myself I might have some hesitation in speaking this way, but I did not. The general idea of such a series of tracts was given to me some two years ago, and this one was prepared by several students who know what the people need. It is at once comprehensive and fundamental. It covers most of the ground, and if any sincere reader grasps it he will have food for his reflection of the sort needed.

"If, however, we are to proceed by a mollified passage from folly (which is fiction) to philosophy, then we at once diverge from the path marked out for us by the Masters; and for this statement I can refer to letters from Them in my hands. I need only draw your attention to the fact that when those Masters began to cause their servants to give out matter in India. They did not begin with fiction, but with stern facts. We are not seeking to cater to a lot of fiction readers and curiosity hunters, but to the pressing needs of earnest minds. Fiction readers never influenced a nation's progress. And these earnest minds do not desire, and ought not to be treated to a gruel which the sentence just quoted would seem to indicate as their fate.

"I therefore respectfully urge upon you that the weak and erroneous policy to which I have referred shall not be followed, but that strong lines of action be taken, and that we leave fiction to the writers who profit by it or who think that thus people's minds can be turned to the Truth. If a contrary line be adopted then we will not only disappoint the Master (if that be possible) but we will in a very large sense be guilty of making false representations to a growing body of subscribers here as elsewhere."

These wise counsels of Mr. Judge, fortified by the advice of Madame Blavatsky, prevailed with the Managers of the T.P.S., and the Epitome was accordingly issued in the summer of 1888. Subsequently the work has been reissued and circulated by various Theosophical bodies.

As we feel that the present cycle of effort in the Theosophical Movement closely parallels the beginnings of the great renaissance of 1886-1888, and that a whole new generation of incarnated Souls are wrestling with the same problems, and suffer from the same needs, we think it timely and fitting to make available to them this wonderful Epitome of the only doctrines which have power to heal, by teaching, the nations. Hence the present Edition.

An Epitome of Theosophy

THEOSOPHY, the Wisdom-Religion, has existed from immemorial time. It offers us a theory of nature and of life which is founded upon knowledge acquired by the Sages of the past, more especially those of the East; and its higher students claim that this knowledge is not imagined or inferred, but that it is a knowledge of facts seen and known by those who are willing to comply with the conditions requisite for seeing and knowing.

Theosophy, meaning knowledge of or about God (not in the sense of a personal anthropomorphic God, but in that of divine "godly" wisdom), and the term "God" being universally accepted as including the whole of both the known and the unknown, it follows that "Theosophy" must imply wisdom respecting the absolute; and, since the absolute is without beginning and eternal, this wisdom must have existed always. Hence Theosophy is sometimes called the Wisdom-Religion, because from immemorial time it has had knowledge of all the laws governing the spiritual, the moral, and the material.

The theory of nature and of life which it offers is not one that was at first speculatively laid down and then proved by adjusting facts or conclusions to fit it; but is an explanation of existence, cosmic and individual, derived from knowledge reached by those who have acquired the power to see behind the curtain that hides the operations of nature from the ordinary mind. Such Beings are called Sages, using the term in its highest sense. Of late they have been called Mahatmas and Adepts. In ancient times they were known as the Rishis and Maharishis —/ the last being a word that means Great Rishis.

It is not claimed that these exalted beings, or Sages, have existed only in the East. They are known to have lived in all parts of the globe, in obedience to the cyclic laws referred to below. But as far as concerns the present development of the

human race on this planet, they now are to be found in the East, although the fact may be that some of them had, in remote times, retreated from even the American shores.

There being of necessity various grades among the students of this Wisdom-Religion, it stands to reason that those belonging to the lower degrees are able to give out only so much of the knowledge as is the appanage of the grade they have reached, and depend, to some extent, for further information upon students who are higher yet. It is these higher students for whom the claim is asserted that their knowledge is not mere inference, but that it concerns realities seen and known by them. While some of them are connected with the Theosophical Society, they are yet above it. The power to see and absolutely know such laws is surrounded by natural inherent regulations which must be complied with as conditions precedent; and it is, therefore, not possible to respond to the demand of the worldly man for an immediate statement of this wisdom, insomuch as he could not comprehend it until those conditions are fulfilled. As this knowledge deals with laws and states of matter, and of consciousness undreamed of by the "practical" Western world, it can only be grasped, piece-by-piece, as the student pushes forward the demolition of his preconceived notions, that are due either to inadequate or to erroneous theories. It is claimed by these higher students that, in the Occident especially, a false method of reasoning has for many centuries prevailed, resulting in a universal habit of mind which causes men to look upon many effects as causes, and to regard that which is real as the unreal, putting meanwhile the unreal in the place of the real. As a minor example, the phenomena of mesmerism and clairvoyance have, until lately, been denied by Western science, yet there have always been numerous persons who know for themselves, by incontrovertible introspective evidence, the truth of these phenomena, and, in some instances, understand their cause and rationale.

The following are some of the fundamental propositions of Theosophy:

The spirit in man is the only real and permanent part of his being; the rest of his nature being variously compounded. And since decay is incident to all composite things, everything in man but his spirit is impermanent.

Further, the universe being one thing and not diverse, and everything within it being connected with the whole and with every other thing therein, of which upon the upper plane (below referred to, there is a perfect knowledge, no act or thought occurs without each portion of the great whole perceiving and noting it. Hence all are inseparably bound together by the tie of Brotherhood.

This first fundamental proposition of Theosophy postulates that the universe is not an aggregation of diverse unities but that it is one whole.

This whole is what is denominated "Deity" by Western Philosophers, and "Para-Brahm" by the Hindu Vedantins. It may be called the Unmanifested, containing within itself the potency of every form of manifestation, together with the laws governing those manifestations. Further, it is taught that there is no creation of worlds in the theological sense; but that their appearance is due strictly to evolution. When the time comes for the Unmanifested to manifest as an objective Universe, which it does periodically, it emanates a Power or "The First Cause"— so called because it itself is the rootless root of that Cause, and called in the East the

"Causeless Cause." The first Cause we may call Brahma, or Ormazd, or Osiris, or by any name we please. The projection into time of the influence or so-called "breath of Brahma" causes all the worlds and the beings upon them to gradually appear. They remain in manifestation just as long as that influence continues to proceed forth in evolution. After long aeons the outbreathing, evolutionary influence slackens, and the universe begins to go into obscurity, or pralaya, until, the "breath" being fully indrawn, no objects remain, because nothing is but Brahma. Care must be taken by the student to make a distinction between Brahma (the impersonal Parabrahma) and Brahma the manifested Logos. A discussion of the means used by this power in acting would be out of place in this Epitome, but of those means Theosophy also treats.

This breathing-forth is known as a Manvantara, or the Manifestation of the world between two Manus (from Manu, and Antara "between") and the completion of the inbreathing brings with it Pralaya, or destruction. It is from these truths that the erroneous doctrines of "creation" and the "last judgment" have sprung. Such Manvantaras and Pralayas have eternally occurred, and will continue to take place periodically and forever.

For the purpose of a Manvantara two so-called eternal principles are postulated, that is, Purusha and Prakriti (or spirit and matter), because both are ever present and conjoined in each manifestation. Those terms are used here because no equivalent for them exists in English. Purusha is called "spirit," and Prakriti "matter," but this Purusha is not the unmanifested, nor is Prakriti matter as known to science; the Aryan Sages therefore declare that there is a higher spirit still, called Purushottama. The reason for this is that at the night of Brahmâ, or the so-called indrawing of his breath, both Purusha and Prakriti are absorbed in the Unmanifested; a conception which is the same as the idea underlying the Biblical expression -- "remaining in the bosom of the Father."

This brings us to the doctrine of Universal Evolution as expounded by the Sages of the Wisdom-Religion. The Spirit, or Purusha, they say, proceeds from Brahma through the various forms of matter evolved at the same time, beginning in the world of the spiritual from the highest and in the material world from the lowest form. The lowest form is one unknown as yet to modern science. Thus, therefore, the mineral, vegetable and animal forms each imprison a spark of the Divine, a portion of the indivisible Purusha.

These sparks struggle to "return to the Father," or in other words, to secure self-consciousness and at last come into the highest form, on Earth, that of man, where alone self-consciousness is possible to them. The period, calculated in human time, during which this evolution goes on embraces millions of ages. Each spark of divinity has, therefore, millions of ages in which to accomplish its mission—that of obtaining complete self-consciousness while in the form of man. But by this is not meant that the mere act of coming into human form of itself confers self-consciousness upon this divine spark. That great work may be accomplished during the Manvantara in which a Divine spark reaches the human form, or it may not; all depends upon the individual's own will and efforts. Each particular spirit thus goes through the Manvantara, or enters into manifestation for its own enrichment and for that of the Whole. Mahatmas and Rishis are thus gradually evolved during a

Manvantara, and become, after its expiration, planetary spirits, who guide the evolutions of other future planets. The planetary spirits of our globe are those who in previous Manvantaras -- or days of Brahma -- made the efforts, and became in the course of that long period Mahatmas.

Each Manvantara is for the same end and purpose, so that the Mahatmas who have now attained those heights, or those who may become such in the succeeding years of the present Manvantara, will probably be the planetary spirits of the next Manvantara for this or other planets. This system is thus seen to be based upon the identity of Spiritual Being, and, under the name of "Universal Brotherhood," constitutes the basic idea of the Theosophical Society, whose object is the realization of that Brotherhood among men. The Sages say that this Purusha is the basis of all manifested objects. Without it nothing could exist or cohere. It interpenetrates everything everywhere. It is the reality of which, or upon which, those things called real by us are mere images. As Purusha reaches to and embraces all beings, they are all connected together; and in or on the plane where that Purusha is, there is a perfect consciousness of every act, thought, object, and circumstance, whether supposed to occur there, or on this plane, or any other. For below the spirit and above the intellect is a plane of consciousness in which experiences are noted, commonly called man's "spiritual nature;" this is frequently said to be as susceptible of culture as his body or his intellect.

This upper plane is the real register of all sensations and experiences, although there are other registering planes. It is sometimes called the "subconscious mind." Theosophy, however, holds that it is a misuse of terms to say that the spiritual nature can be cultivated. The real object to be kept in view is to so open up or make porous the lower nature that the spiritual nature may shine through it and become the guide and ruler. It is only "cultivated" in the sense of having a vehicle prepared for its use, into which it may descend. In other words, it is held that the real man, who is the higher self -- being the spark of the Divine before alluded to -- overshadows the visible being, which has the possibility of becoming united to that spark. Thus it is said that the higher Spirit is not in the man, but above him. It is always peaceful, unconcerned, blissful, and full of absolute knowledge. It continually partakes of the Divine state, being continually that state itself, "conjoined with the Gods, it feeds upon Ambrosia." The object of the student is to let the light of that spirit shine through the lower coverings.

This "spiritual culture" is only attainable as the grosser interests, passions, and demands of the flesh are subordinated to the interests, aspirations and needs of the higher nature; and this is a matter of both system and established law.

This spirit can only become the ruler when the firm intellectual acknowledgment or admission is first made that IT alone is. And, as stated above, it being not only the person concerned but also the whole, all selfishness must be eliminated from the lower nature before its divine state can be reached. So long as the smallest personal or selfish desire -- even for spiritual attainment for our own sake -- remains, so long is the desired end put off. Hence the above term "demands of the flesh" really covers also demands that are not of the flesh, and its proper rendering would be "desires of the personal nature, including those of the individual soul."

When systematically trained in accordance with the aforesaid system and law, men attain to clear insight into the immaterial, spiritual world, and their interior faculties apprehend truth as immediately and readily as physical faculties grasp the things of sense, or mental faculties those of reason. Or, in the words used by some of them, "They are able to look directly upon ideas;" and hence their testimony to such truth is as trustworthy as is that of scientists or philosophers to truth in their respective fields.

In the course of this spiritual training such men acquire perception of, and control over, various forces in Nature unknown to other men, and thus are able to perform works usually called "miraculous," though really but the result of larger knowledge of natural law. What these powers are may be found in Patanjali's "Yoga Philosophy."

Their testimony as to super-sensuous truth, verified by their possession of such powers, challenges candid examination from every religious mind.

Turning now to the system expounded by these sages, we find, in the first place, an account of cosmogony, the past and future of this earth and other planets, the evolution of life through elemental, mineral, vegetable, animal and human forms, as they are called.

These "passive life elementals" are unknown to modern science, though sometimes approached by it as a subtle material agent in the production of life, whereas they are a form of life itself.

Each Kalpa, or grand period, is divided into four ages or yugas, each lasting many thousands of years, and each one being marked by a predominant characteristic. These are the Satya-yug (or age of truth), the Treta-yug, the Dvâpara-yug, and our present Kali-yug (or age of darkness), which began five thousand years back. The word "darkness" here refers to spiritual and not material darkness. In this age, however, all causes bring about their effects much more rapidly than in any other age -- a fact due to the intensified momentum of "evil," as the course of its cycle is about rounding towards that of a new cycle of truth. Thus a sincere lover of the race can accomplish more in three incarnations during Kali-Yuga, than he could in a much greater number in any other age. The darkness of this age is not absolute, but is greater than that of other ages; its main tendency being towards materiality, while having some mitigation in occasional ethical or scientific advance conducive to the well-being of the race, by the removal of immediate causes of crime or disease.

Our earth is one of a chain of seven planets, it alone being on the visible plane, while the six others are on different planes, and therefore invisible. (The other planets of our solar system belong each to a chain of seven.) And the life-wave passes from the higher to the lower in the chain until it reaches our earth, and then ascends and passes to the three others on the opposite arc, and thus seven times. The evolution of forms is coincident with this progress, the tide of life bearing with it the mineral and vegetable forms, until each globe in turn is ready to receive the human life wave. Of these globes our earth is the fourth.

Humanity passes from globe to globe in a series of Rounds, first circling about each globe, and reincarnating upon it a fixed number of times. Concerning the human evolution on the concealed planets or globes little is permitted to be said. We have

to concern ourselves with our Earth alone. The latter, when the wave of humanity has reached it for the last time (in this, our Fourth Round), began to evolve man, subdividing him into races. Each of these races when it has, through evolution, reached the period known as "the moment of choice" and decided its future destiny as an individual race, begins to disappear. The races are separated, moreover, from each other by catastrophes of nature, such as the subsidence of continents and great natural convulsions. Coincidentally with the development of races the development of specialized senses takes place; thus our fifth race has so far developed five senses.

The Sages further tell us that the affairs of this world and its people are subject to cyclic laws, and during any one cycle the rate or quality of progress appertaining to a different cycle is not possible. These cyclic laws operate in each age. As the ages grow darker the same laws prevail, only the cycles are shorter; that is, they are the same length in the absolute sense, but go over the given limit in a shorter period of time. These laws impose restrictions on the progress of the race. In a cycle, where all is ascending and descending, the Adepts must wait until the time comes before they can aid the race to ascend. They cannot, and must not, interfere with Karmic law. Thus they begin to work actively again in the spiritual sense, when the cycle is known by them to be approaching its turning point.

At the same time these cycles have no hard lines or points of departure or inception, inasmuch as one may be ending or drawing to a close for some time after another has already begun. They thus overlap and shade into one another, as day does into night; and it is only when the one has completely ended and the other has really begun by bringing out its blossoms, that we can say we are in a new cycle. It may be illustrated by comparing two adjacent cycles to two interlaced circles, where the circumference of one touches the center of the other, so that the moment where one ended and the other began would be at the point where the circumferences intersected each other. Or by imagining a man as representing, in the act of walking, the progress of the cycles; his rate of advancement can only be obtained by taking the distance covered by his paces, the points at the middle of each pace, between the feet, being the beginning of cycles and their ending.

The cyclic progress is assisted, or the deterioration further permitted, in this way; at a time when the cycle is ascending, developed and progressed Beings, known in Sanscrit by the term "Jñânis," descend to this earth from other spheres where the cycle is going down, in order that they may also help the spiritual progress of this globe. In like manner they leave this sphere when our cycle approaches darkness. These Jñânis must not, however, be confounded with the Mahatmas and Adepts mentioned above. The right aim of true Theosophists should, therefore, be so to live that their influence may be conducive for the dispelling of darkness to the end that such Jñânis may turn again towards this sphere.

Theosophy also teaches the existence of a universal diffused and highly ethereal medium, which has been called the "Astral Light" and "Akâsa." It is the repository of all past, present, and future events, and in it are recorded the effects of spiritual causes, and of all acts and thoughts from the direction of either spirit or matter. It may be called the Book of the Recording Angel.

Akâsa, however, is a misnomer when it is confused with Ether or the astral light of the Kabalists. Akâsa is the noumenon of the phenomenal Ether or astral light proper, for Akâsa is infinite, impartite, intangible, its only production being Sound.*

And this astral light is material and not spirit. It is, in fact, the lower principle of that cosmic body of which akâsa is the highest. It has the power of retaining all images. This includes a statement that each thought as well as word and act makes an image there. These images may be said to have two lives. **First.** Their own as an image. **Second.** The impress left by them in the matrix of the astral light. In the upper realm of this light there is no such thing as space or time in the human sense. All future events are the thoughts and acts of men; these are producers in advance of the picture of the event which is to occur. Ordinary men continually, recklessly, and wickedly, are making these events sure to come to pass, but the Sages, Mahatmas, and the Adepts of the good law, make only such pictures as are in accordance with Divine law, because they control the production of their thought. In the astral light are all the differentiated sounds as well. The elementals are energetic centers in it. The shades of departed human beings and animals are also there. Hence, any seer or entranced person can see in it all that anyone has done or said, as well as that which has happened to anyone with whom he is connected. Hence, also, the identity of deceased persons -- who are supposed to report specially out of this plane -- is not to be concluded from the giving of forgotten or unknown words, facts, or ideas. Out of this plane of matter can be taken the pictures of all who have ever lived, and then reflected on a suitable magneto-electrical surface, so as to seem like the apparition of the deceased, producing all the sensations of weight, hardness, and extension.

Through the means of the Astral Light and the help of Elementals, the various material elements may be drawn down and precipitated from the atmosphere upon either a plane surface or in the form of a solid object; this precipitation may be made permanent, or it may be of such a light cohesive power as soon to fade away. But the help of the elementals can only be obtained by a strong will added to a complete knowledge of the laws which govern the being of the elementals. It is useless to give further details on this point; first, because the untrained student cannot understand; and second, the complete explanation is not permitted, were it even possible in this space.

The world of the elementals is an important factor in our world and in the course of the student. Each thought as it is evolved by a man coalesces instantly with an elemental, and is then beyond the man's power.

It can easily be seen that this process is going on every instant. Therefore, each thought exists as an entity. Its length of life depends on two things: (a) The original force of the person's will and thought; (b) The power of the elemental which coalesced with it, the latter being determined by the class to which the elemental belongs. This is the case with good and bad thoughts alike, and as the will beneath the generality of wicked thoughts is usually powerful, we can see that the result is

* Akâsa in the mysticism of the Esoteric Philosophy is, properly speaking, the female "Holy Ghost;" "Sound" or speech being the Logos – the manifested Verbum of the unmanifested Mother. See Sâmkhyasâra," Preface, page 33, et seq.

very important, because the elemental has no conscience and obtains its constitution and direction from the thought it may from time to time carry.

Each human being has his own elementals that partake of his nature and his thoughts. If you fix your thoughts upon a person in anger, or in critical, uncharitable judgment, you attract to yourself a number of those elementals that belong to, generate, and are generated by this particular fault or failing, and they precipitate themselves upon you. Hence, through the injustice of your merely human condemnation, which cannot know the source and causes of the action of another, you at once become a sharer of his fault or failing by your own act, and the spirit expelled returns "with seven devils worse than himself."

This is the origin of the popular saying that "curses, like chickens, come home to roost, and has its root in the laws governing magnetic affinity.

In the Kali-Yoga we are hypnotized by the effect of the immense body of images in the Astral Light, compounded of all the deeds, thoughts, and so forth of our ancestors, whose lives tended in a material direction. These images influence the inner man-who is conscious of them-by suggestion. In a brighter age the influence of such images would be towards Truth. The effect of the Astral Light, as thus molded and painted by us, will remain so long as we continue to place those images there, and it thus becomes our judge and our executioner. Every universal law thus contains within itself the means for its own accomplishment and the punishment for its violation, and requires no further authority to postulate it or to carry out its decrees.

The Astral Light by its inherent action both evolves and destroys forms. It is the universal register. Its chief office is that of a vehicle for the operation of the laws of Karma, or the progress of the principle of life, and it is thus in a deep spiritual sense a medium or "mediator" between man and his Deity-his higher spirit.

Theosophy also tells of the origin, history, development and destiny of mankind.

Upon the subject of Man it teaches:

First. That each spirit is a manifestation of the One Spirit, and thus a part of all. It passes through a series of experiences in incarnation, and is destined to ultimate reunion with the Divine.

Second. That this incarnation is not single but repeated, each individuality becoming re-embodied during numerous existences in successive races and planets of our chain, and accumulating the experiences of each incarnation towards its perfection.

Third. That between adjacent incarnations, after grosser elements are first purged away, comes a period of comparative rest and refreshment, called Devachan -- the soul being therein prepared for its next advent into material life.

The constitution of man is subdivided in a septenary manner, the main divisions being those of body, soul and spirit. These divisions and their relative development govern his subjective condition after death. The real division cannot be understood, and must for a time remain esoteric, because it requires certain senses not usually developed for its understanding. If the present seven-fold division, as given by

Theosophical writers is adhered to strictly and without any conditional statement, it will give rise to controversy or error. For instance, Spirit is not a seventh principle. It is the synthesis, or the whole, and is equally present in the other six. The present various divisions can only be used as a general working hypothesis, to be developed and corrected as students advance and themselves develop.

The state of spiritual but comparative rest known as Devachan is not an eternal one, and so is not the same as the eternal heaven of Christianity. Nor does "hell" correspond to the state known to Theosophical writers as Avitchi.

All such painful states are transitory and purificatory states. When those are passed the individual goes into Devachan.

"Hell" and Avitchi are thus not the same. Avitchi is the same as the "second death," as it is in fact annihilation that only comes to the "black Magician" or spiritually wicked, as will be seen further on.

The nature of each incarnation depends upon the balance as struck of the merit and demerit of the previous life or lives-upon the way in which the man has lived and thought; and this law is inflexible and wholly just.

"Karma" -- a term signifying two things, the law of ethical causation (Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap); and the balance or excess of merit or demerit in any individual, determines also the main experiences of joy and sorrow in each incarnation, so that what we call "luck" is in reality "desert" -- desert acquired in past existence.

Karma is not all exhausted in a single life, nor is a person necessarily in this life experiencing the effect of all his previous Karma; for some may be held back by various causes. The principle cause is the failure of the Ego to acquire a body which will furnish the instrument or apparatus in and by which the meditation or thoughts of previous lives can have their effect and be ripened. Hence it is held that there is a mysterious power in the man's thoughts during a life, sure to bring about its results in either an immediately succeeding life or in one many lives distant; that is, in whatever life the Ego obtains a body capable of being the focus, apparatus, or instrument for the ripening of past Karma. There is also a swaying or diverging power in Karma in its effects upon the soul, for a certain course of life – or thought – will influence the soul in that direction for sometimes three lives, before the beneficial or bad effect of any other sort of Karma can be felt. Nor does it follow that every minute portion of Karma must be felt in the same detail as when produced, for several sorts of Karma may come to a head together at one point in the life, and, by their combined effect, produce a result which, while, as a whole, accurately representing all the elements in it, still is a different Karma from each single component part. This may be known as the nullification of the postulated effect of the classes of Karma involved.

The process of evolution up to reunion with the Divine is and includes successive elevation from rank to rank of power and usefulness. The most exalted beings still in the flesh are known as Sages, Rishis, Brothers, Masters. Their great function being the preservation at all times, and when cyclic laws permit, the extension of spiritual knowledge and influence.

When union with the Divine is effected, all the events and experiences of each incarnation are known.

As to the process of spiritual development, Theosophy teaches:

First. That the essence of the process lies in the securing of supremacy, to the highest, the spiritual, element of man's nature.

Second. That this is attained along four lines, among others, --

(a) The entire eradication of selfishness in all forms, and the cultivation of *broad, generous* sympathy in, and effort for the good of others.

(b) The absolute cultivation of the inner, spiritual man by meditation, by reaching to and communion with the Divine, and by exercise of the kind described by Patanjali, i. e., incessant striving to an ideal end.

(c) The control of fleshly appetites and desires, all lower, material interests being deliberately subordinated to the behests of the spirit.

(d) The careful performance of every duty belonging to one's station in life, without desire for reward, leaving results for Divine law.

Third. That while the above is incumbent on and practicable by all religiously disposed men, a yet higher plane of spiritual attainment is conditioned upon a specific course of training, physical, intellectual and spiritual, by which the internal faculties are first aroused and then developed.

Fourth. That an extension of this process is reached in Adeptship, Mahâtmâship or the states of Rishis, Sages and Dhyân Chohans, which are all exalted stages, attained by laborious self-discipline and hardship, protracted through possibly many incarnations, and with many degrees of initiation and preferment, beyond which are yet other stages ever approaching the Divine.

As to the rationale of spiritual development it asserts:

First. That the process takes place entirely within the individual himself, the motive, the fort, and the result proceeding from his own inner nature, along the lines of self-evolution.

Second. That, however personal and interior, this process is not unaided, being possible, in fact, only through close communion with the supreme source of all strength.

As to the degree of advancement in incarnations it holds:

First. That even a mere intellectual acquaintance with Theosophic truth has great value in fitting the individual for a step upwards in his next earth-life, as it gives an impulse in that direction.

Second. That still more is gained by a career of duty, piety and beneficence.

Third. That a still greater advance is attained by the attentive and devoted use of the means to spiritual culture heretofore stated.

Fourth. That every race and individual of it reaches in evolution a period known as "the moment of choice," when they decide for themselves their future destiny by a deliberate and conscious choice between eternal life and death, and that this right of choice is the peculiar appanage of the free soul. It cannot be exercised until the

man has realized the soul within him, and until that soul has attained some measure of self-consciousness in the body. The moment of choice is not a fixed period of time; it is made up of all moments. It cannot come unless all the previous lives have led up to it. For the race as a whole it has not yet come. Any individual can hasten the advent of this period for himself under the previously stated law of the ripening of Karma. Should he then fail to choose right he is not wholly condemned, for the economy of nature provides that he shall again and again have the opportunity of choice when the moment arrives for the whole race. After this period the race, having blossomed, tends towards its dissolution. A few individuals of it will have outstripped its progress and attained Adeptship or Mahâtmarship. The main body, who have chosen aright, but who have not attained salvation, pass into the subjective condition, there to await the influx of the human life wave into the next globe, which they are the first souls to people; the deliberate choosers of evil, whose lives are passed in great spiritual wickedness (for evil done for the sheer love of evil per se), sever the connection with the Divine Spirit, or the Monad, which forever abandons the human Ego. Such Egos pass into the misery of the eighth sphere, as far as we understand, there to remain until the separation between what they had thus cultivated and the personal Ishwara or divine spark is complete. But this tenet has never been explained to us by the Masters, who have always refused to answer and to explain it conclusively. At the next Manvantara that Divine Spark will probably begin again the long evolutionary, journey, being cast into the stream of life at the source and passing upward again through all the lower forms.

So long as the connection with the Divine Monad is not severed, this annihilation of personality cannot take place. Something of that personality will always remain attached to the immortal Ego. Even after such severance the human being may live on, a man among men -- a soulless being. This disappointment, so to call it, of the Divine Spark by depriving it of its chosen vehicle constitutes the "sin against the Holy Ghost" which its very nature forbade it to pardon, because it cannot continue an association with principles which have become degraded and vitiated in the absolute sense, so that they no longer respond to cyclic or evolutionary impulses, but, weighted by their own nature, sink to the lowest depths of matter. The connection, once wholly broken, cannot in the nature of Being be resumed. But innumerable opportunities for return offer themselves throughout the dissolving process, which lasts thousands of years.

There is also a fate that comes to even Adepts of the Good Law which is somewhat similar to a loss of "heaven" after its enjoyment for incalculable periods of time. When the Adept has reached a certain very high point in his evolution he may, by a mere wish, become what the Hindus call a "Deva" -- or lesser god. If he does this, then, although he will enjoy the bliss and power of that state for a vast length of time, he will not at the next Pralaya partake of the conscious life "in the bosom of the Father," but has to pass down into matter at the next new "creation," performing certain functions that could not now be made clear, and has to come up again through the elemental world; but this fate is not like that of the Black Magician who falls into Avitchi. And again between the two he can choose the middle state and become a Nirmânakâya -- one who gives up the bliss of Nirvana and remains in conscious existence outside of his body after its death; in order to help Humanity. This is the greatest sacrifice he can do for mankind. By

advancement from one degree of interest and comparative attainment to another as above stated, the student hastens the advent of the moment of choice, after which his rate of progress is greatly intensified.

It may be added that Theosophy is the only system of religion and philosophy which gives satisfactory explanation of such problems as these:

First. The object, use, and inhabitation of other planets than this earth, which planets serve to complete and prolong the evolutionary course, and to fill the required measure of the universal experience of souls.

Second. The geological cataclysms of earth; the frequent absence of intermediate types in its fauna; the occurrence of architectural and other relics of races now lost, and as to which ordinary science has nothing but vain conjecture; the nature of extinct civilizations and the causes of their extinction; the persistence of savagery and the unequal development of existing civilizations; the differences, physical and internal, between the various races of men; the line of future development.

Third. The contrasts and unisons of the world's faiths, and the common foundation underlying them all.

Fourth. The existence of evil, of suffering, and of sorrow -- a hopeless puzzle to the mere philanthropist or theologian.

Fifth. The inequalities in social condition and privilege; the sharp contrasts between wealth and poverty, intelligence and stupidity, culture and ignorance, virtue and vileness; the appearance of men of genius in families destitute of it, as well as other facts in conflict with the law of heredity; the frequent cases of unfitness of environment around individuals, so sore as to embitter disposition, hamper aspiration, and paralyze endeavor; the violent antithesis between character and condition; the occurrence of accident, misfortune and untimely death -- all of them problems solvable only by either the conventional theory of Divine caprice or the Theosophic doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation.

Sixth. The possession by individuals of psychic powers -- clairvoyance, clairaudience, etc., as well as the phenomena of psychometry and staturvolism.

Seventh. The true nature of genuine phenomena in spiritualism, and the proper antidote to superstition and to exaggerated expectation.

Eighth. The failure of conventional religions to greatly extend their areas, reform abuses, reorganize society, expand the idea of brotherhood, abate discontent, diminish crime, and elevate humanity; and an apparent inadequacy to realize in individual lives the ideal they professedly uphold.