THE PORTABLE WORLD BIBLE

EDITED BY

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General Introduction

Man's basic problem is his need to find a way to live in constructive peace in the face of forces which tend to thrust him into destructive conflict. There is nothing new in this. Centuries ago some of the wisest of men faced the problem and set forth a method for its solution: a way of life based upon a social idealism which must begin with the most intimate relations between individuals and extend to the most enlightened co-operation between nations, in order to make war, the fear of war, and the worst of man's miseries only bitter memories of the past.

The kind of idealism required for this tremendous accomplishment, the idealism which so often colours statements made by religious theorists of the West, has often been called "Christian." To be sure, it is, yet this is only a small part of the truth, for these ideals of world brotherhood and international human morality were uttered in many places long before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

During the greatest of all religious eras (roughly from 800 to 500 B.C.), India, China, Persia, and Israel were all injecting into human thought what was then a new force. Without question, this force has been one of the most powerful influences in human life, for, persisting without material change to the present day, it has determined every statement of idealistic social purpose to which we now pay homage.

Religion, as we conceive the meaning of the term

today, may be said to consist of three conceptions and the actions which spring from them: man's conception of the source of his being, of his self, and of other human beings and his own proper relation to them. In primitive, polytheistic religions there was little if any connexion between the first conception and the last two. Religion, born of fear and questioning, consisted chiefly in the propitiation of gods and spirits through sacrifices and ceremonies performed in the hope that supernatural protection and favour would be bestowed upon the worshipper. Gods were thought of as beings possessed of great though limited might, who often exerted their power in malignant ways unless properly wooed by offerings or circumvented by witchcraft. Their relationship to men was more like that of autocratic rulers exacting tribute than that of loving heavenly fathers whose concern was for the welfare of their earthly children.

But with the appearance in India of the *Upanishads* (800 to 600 B.C.), Gautama, the Buddha (560 to 480 B.C.), and Mahavira (599 to 527 B.C.), of Confucius (551 to 479 B.C.) and Lao Tze (604 to 517? B.C.) in China, Zarathushtra (660 to 583 B.C.) in Persia, and the Pre-Exilic prophets (750 to 586 B.C.) in Israel, sacrifices, ceremonies, propitiations, ceased to be enough to make up the religious life of man. The whole god-concept was changing. In Mahavira's Jainism the existence of all gods was denied and man's religious duty consisted entirely of thought and behaviour unconnected with any form of worship. In the Hindu *Upanishads* and in Taoism the ruling principle of the universe was conceived as a single intangible, indescribable force (*Brahma, Brahman*, or *Atman* in the *Upanishads*, *Tao* in Taoism). In each case it was a benevolent force, working for the welfare of mankind. In the original

Indian Buddhism "the gods" were recognized, but as creatures who needed salvation as badly as did man himself, while, by implication, the Upanishadic conception of Brahman was denied. Here, as in Jainism, meditation and social behaviour were substituted for worship. Questions about divinity and immortality were "questions which tended not to edification." Confucius "preferred not speaking" about God, but spoke of "the ordinances of heaven" and human conduct instead. And in Zoroastrianism and the Judaism of this period God was worshipped as a single personal, universal benevolent force, a loving Father-God whose care was for the well-being of his children, the human race.

Accompanying these changed god-concepts were changes in the religious rules which determined human conduct. In India the highest desideratum of the religious was the cessation of rebirths. In Upanishadic Hinduism this was achieved through a mystical union with Brahma; in Buddhism and Jainism through the attainment of Nirvana. In Confucianism, Taoism, and the Judaism of this period, the reward sought was the good life on earth, distinguished by peace, prosperity, and happiness; in Zoroastrianism the goal was Paradise after death. But regardless of differences in the states sought as the result of the religious life, all agreed that they could be achieved only through individual purity of heart and mind, good work, and righteous loving-kindness to one's fellow-men in recognition of the essential unity of men, each with all others, and each and all with the divine principle. It was in these days, rather than in those which made Bethlehem of Judea famous, that the principle of "peace on earth, goodwill to men" first began to sweep across the world like a cleansing wind.

Denied and flaunted century after century by con-

quests, wars, racial and sectarian persecution, commercial greed, social and political ambition, and fanatical disagreements, this ideal yet remains the prayer of the truly devout and the hope of all of the peoples of the world whose lives have been swayed by these religions and Christianity.

It may be argued that Hinduism and Zoroastrianism do not belong in any category which groups the religions of goodwill. It is quite true that greater emphases were placed in the *Upanishads* upon philosophy, "union with Brahma," and ceremonial sacrifice than upon social ethics, and that the degrading caste system and the subordination of women were perpetuated by them. Yet there are many ethical and humanitarian principles of the highest order enunciated in the *Upanishads*, and set forth by them, for the first time in India, as prerequisites to the religious life. The very concept of union with and through Brahma intimates the unity of the human race. And it is significant that the religious philosophy of Gautama, the Buddha, growing as it did directly out of the period of Upanishadic influence, included one of the highest codes of individual purity and social ethics which has ever been formulated. In Zoroastrianism, though ethical precepts are more difficult to find than in Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and later Judaism, those which occur are of the highest order, and a whole philosophy of social behaviour is innate in the Zoroastrian emphasis upon the righteousness of work.

The similarity of the fundamental principles of all these creeds (which, with Christianity, one might well call "the good-will religions," for this phrase designates their greatest distinguishing quality) may be seen by examining a few statements from several of them.

In the *Upanishads* we read:

As all spokes are contained in the axle and felly of a wheel, all beings are contained in the Atman.

Who knows that one whose dwelling is love, he indeed is a teacher.

As he acts, so will he be. He becomes pure by good deeds and bad by bad deeds. Whatever deed he does, that will he reap.

Be subdued, give, be merciful.

Sacrifice, study, charity, are the first branch of the law.

The good is one thing, the pleasant another. It is well with him who clings to the good; he who chooses the pleasant, misses his end.

The Atman cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by much learning. He who has not first turned away from wickedness, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Atman.

From Buddhist texts:

Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time. Hatred ceases by love. This is an old rule.

Do not kill nor cause slaughter.

One's own self conquered is better than all other people.

Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth.

A man does not become a Brahmana by his plaited hair, by his family, or by birth; in whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a Brahmana.

To one in whom love dwells, all in the world are brothers.

From the Zoroastrian Scriptures:

He who relieves the poor makes Ahura king.

Whether one is lord of little or much, let him show love to the righteous.

From Confucianist Scriptures:

What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.

Return justice for injury, and kindness for kindness.

The tendency of man's nature is good.

Wisdom, benevolence, and fortitude, these are the universal virtues.

To give one's self earnestly to the duties due to men may be called wisdom. . . . The man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge of others what is nigh in ourselves;—this may be called the art of virtue.

Love all men. Know all men.

From the Scriptures of Taoism:

Keep on good terms with men.

He who loves the world as he does his own body can be entrusted with the world.

So far as arms are concerned, they are implements of ill omen. He who takes delight in the slaughter of men cannot have his will done in the world.

The sage makes the self of the people his self.

To the good I act with goodness. To the bad I also act with goodness. To the faithful I act with faith. To the faithless I also act with faith.

I have three treasures. The first is called love; the second is called moderation; the third is called not venturing to go ahead of the world.

Return love for great hatred.

The virtuous resort to agreement.

The universe and I came into being together, and I, and everything therein, are one.

Everything has Tao within it and continues to produce it without end. The endless love of the sage for his fellow-man is based on the same principle.

From the words of Pre-Exilic Hebrew prophets:

Take away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not bear the melody of thy voice. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Forasmuch as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat, ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them, ye have planted vineyards but ye shall not drink wine from them.

I hate, I despise, your feast days.

Let no man strive, or reprove another.

I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

Do justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with thy God.

Behold, saith Jehovah, I will make a new covenant. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it.

Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

Oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood.

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in wisdom, neither let the mighty glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight.

Christianity, growing directly out of later Judaism, perhaps gave a greater emphasis to the basic concep-

tion of brotherly love as a motivating force in intercourse between all peoples. Yet the fundamental conception of benevolent good-will, of peaceful agreement, of *laissez faire* and loving kindness from all to all, was well established several centuries before the birth of Jesus. And it is of the deepest significance that, in the final alignment of forces in twentieth-century global warfare, the powerful nations in which the ideals of the "good-will religions" had taken firmest hold were fighting together against two mighty nations in one of which the ideal had never been firmly established and in the other of which years of organized destruction of the ideal had preceded entry into war. Regardless of differences in theology which exist among members of the United Nations, they found themselves in almost automatic common agreement to stamp out those forces which completely abrogated the principles of international morality in their determination to make many human beings subject to the will of a few. The people of each of the United Nations understood, without explanations, the statements of social idealism which issued from the others, for as joint heirs of the "good-will religions" they stood on common, ancient, holy ground.

With even that much union achieved by means of the awful flux of war, will it be lost when the grim immediacy has passed? Shall we ever return to the blind inadequacy of attempted isolation from our fellows in a world in which the spatial distances of even a quarter of a century ago have, through the radio and the airplane, become so ineffective that the myth of the separate interests of nations and races has lost every verisimilitude?

Are we capable of making some sort of permanent world union successful? Can we find the key to understanding between the peoples of the world which will

make it unnecessary for us to engage in world-wide warfare every quarter of a century? Where shall we start on our search for understanding the peoples of the East, for instance, who, to most of us, have seemed as far removed from our lives and interests as the characters in a fairy tale?

Carlyle had an answer to that question. In *Heroes and Hero Worship* he wrote:

It is well said, in every sense, that a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him. A man's or a nation of men's. By religion I do not mean the church creed which he professes, the articles of faith which he will sign and, in words or otherwise, assert; not this wholly, in many cases not this at all. We see men of all kinds of professed creeds attain to almost all degrees of worth or worthlessness under each or any of them. This is not what I call religion, this profession and assertion, which is often a profession and assertion from the outworks of the man, from the mere argumentative region of him, if even so deep as that. But the thing a man does practically believe (and this is often enough without asserting it even to himself, much less to others), the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest. That is his religion, or, it may be, his mere scepticism and no-religion: the manner in which he feels himself to be spiritually related to the unseen world or no-world, and I say, if you tell me what that is, you tell me to a very great extent what the man is, what the kind of things he will do is. Of a man or of a nation we inquire, therefore, first of all, what religion they had.

Unfortunately, there is frequently a wide gulf existing between the statements of the scriptures and the

religious and secular practices of those whose canons they are. All scriptures have had their interpreters and commentators, those who would add to them and those who would detract from them, and those who would fit them to their own uses. Organized Hinduism, Oriental Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism to-day bear little relation to the ideals of the *Upanishads*, of Gautama, Lao Tze, or Confucius. Nor do the lives or even the protestations of the average Jew and Christian adequately reflect the words of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus.

The scriptures do not tell us what religion men have to-day. Yet their ancient idealism and their pure impassioned search for God and a way of life capable of establishing human happiness were never more pertinent. Though we and the Buddhists, the Hindus, the Parsis, the Confucianists, the Taoists, and all the others who have sadly divided human ranks by doctrinaire labels, may have largely missed the way, the scriptural signposts pointing to the path of return are still unblemished. They are still waiting to be read, still showing the ancient unity of social idealism among all true followers of "the good-will religions."

Behind the making of the *Viking Portable Library World Bible* there has been a triple stimulus—the beauty and goodness of the scriptures here represented, their universal applicability to the problems of modern living, and the belief that knowledge of these scriptures and the basic unity of their social principles can become a contribution to a much-needed understanding among the peoples of the world.

All of the selections printed here are taken from *The Bible of the World*, and have been chosen only if they seemed to the editor to contribute to an understanding of the basic faiths which they represent. Mere stories,

history, and the descriptions of ceremonial rites, which do not in themselves contribute to knowledge of religious faith, have been omitted. The book is not intended as a substitute for the *Bible of the World* which serves a more comprehensive purpose for the serious student or reader who wishes to go farther in his examination of individual religions than is possible in this much smaller volume. Rather, the attempt here is to present the gist of each of the world's eight most influential religious faiths, as revealed by their basic scriptures, in one compact volume for the reader who has little leisure.

The order in which the scriptural selections are presented is not chronological, nor is any evaluation of relative importance intimated by their arrangement. The world's great religions fall into three groups, those which originated with the descendants of the Indo-European races (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism), those which originated with the Semitic races (Judeo-Christianity and Mohammedanism), and those which originated with the Turanian races (Confucianism and Taoism). These groupings, and the order noted above, have been followed in the *World Bible*.

At a famous meeting of the Free Religious Association of America held in Boston during the last half of the nineteenth century, a somewhat overzealous minister quoted certain passages from the Christian Gospels, adding that these could not be matched in the sacred books of any other religion. At this point Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was in the audience, rose and said quietly, "The gentleman's remark proves only how narrowly he has read."

One aim of the *Viking Portable Library World Bible* is to make it possible for those whose time for

reading and research is limited to disprove "the gentleman's remark" for themselves, and in so doing, to add their quota to a better understanding between the peoples of the world.

THE HINDU

The Worshippers of Brahma

Herdsmen, shepherds, tillers of the soil, warriors, and wanderers—a race of white men dwelt once upon the plains of Central Asia. Whence they came and when, how long they lived there, what the details of their daily lives were, when and why they separated to wander far from their ancient home and in different directions from it, no one knows, for they left behind them no record—at least none which has yet been plainly read. Bits of correlated evidence indicate that they were both agricultural and nomadic, making long stops to raise crops for their herds and flocks, then pushing on to new locations.

At some time, or times, in their migrations, some went far to the west, some to the east. They were apparently a people of astounding vigour and ingenuity, these Indo-Europeans who called themselves *Arya*, a people who conquered the inhabitants of whatever country they entered, forcing upon them their forms of religion and government, and their customs. One of the western offshoots founded the Persian kingdom. Another established Athens and Lacedaemon, beginnings of the Greek nation. A third went to an inland point on a long peninsula shaped like a boot where, on seven hills, they built the city which became Rome. Another group went to the land which is now Spain, and still another crossed the sea to what is now Cornwall, England.

Over the passes of the Hindu Kush mountains went one of the most powerful of the wandering groups, down

into the Valley of the Indus, and settled there, where the earth was watered by the melting of everlasting snows on the heights above. They brought with them the elements of an as yet unrecorded religion. Little is known about it, but its vestiges may be found in the faiths later developed among their descendants. They worshipped a "sky father" who, in the language of those who went into India, was *Dyaush pitar*, who became *Zeus pater* in Greek, *Diespiter* or Jupiter in Latin, and, in conception if not etymologically, *Ahura Mazda* in Zoroastrianism. ("Our Heavenly Father" in later Judaism and in Christianity?) They paid homage also to his daughter *Ushas*, the Dawn, who became *Eos* or *Heos* in Greek and *Aurora* in Latin, to his consort Mother Earth, *Privithi* (Greek *Gaia Meter*) and the sun god *Surya* (Greek Helios). *Yama* became, with *Yami*, the Adam and Eve of Hinduism (and later the ruler of the regions of the dead). *Yima*, "the good shepherd," became the first man of the Persian religion. In their religious rites these people who went into India drank the fermented juice of the mountain plant *Soma*, and worshipped *Soma* as a god. The Persians sanctified the same plant, calling it *Haoma*, and developed a tradition that Zarathushtra talked with an angel of that name.

In India this race of white men became joined with aboriginal tribes already there, eliminating those among them who were troublesome. They began to establish and record a religion that has fathered more conceptions and gone through more mutations than any other under the sun. So that, if one asks concerning an inhabitant of India, "What religion had he?" it is necessary, before answering, to ask in return, "In what part of India did he live, and when, and under the influence of what leader or leaders?"

L. D. Barnett says:

> Hinduism is not one homogeneous growth of religious thought. . . . It is, on the contrary, an aggregation of minor growths, some of cognate origin, some of foreign provenance, all grouped under the shadow of one mighty tree. . . . Its churches are as well the stately cathedral where scholars and princes worship, as the humblest shrine where villagers offer flowers to some god born of their own hearts, or the wayside spot haunted by some godling who may have dwelt there long before Hindus came into India, or may have arrived there last week.

Within this mighty force of varied expression that sways the religious impulses of nearly 250,000,000 human souls there is, and has been of old, room for the widest range of theological variance, from the most complicated worship of a multiplicity of gods to the most exalted recognition of, and homage to, the one God, the mighty unexplained force which created and rules the universe. These conceptions have changed from time to time, from scripture to scripture, from group to group, and from individual to individual within a group. As the almost unbelievably large volume of Indian sacred literature has grown, and the followers of Indian religious concepts have split into innumerable sects, it has become impossible to state succinctly and comprehensively the details of Hinduist theology. Yet there are central threads which run through all phases of it—relics of the early, unrecorded Indo-European religion, and other concepts which have grown out of later conditions of life and changing trends of thought.

In the Valley of the Indus the newcomers composed, and at some later date recorded, the most ancient of all the world's scriptures, the *Vedas*, of which the *Rig-*

Veda is the oldest. No one knows when it was written. Estimates date it as far back as 4000 B.C., but conservative scholarship says merely that the 10,000 stanzas which compose it (more than the bulk of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* together) were written "earlier than 1000 B.C." The title of the work means "Stanzas of praise," though some of the later hymns are blessings and curses.

The *Yajur-Veda* repeats many of the hymns of the *Rig-Veda*, with additional stanzas, and contains short prayers and long, solemn litanies. The *Sama-Veda*, devoted chiefly to worship of *Indra*, is the *Veda* of music, and also contains a number of verses borrowed from the *Rig*. The *Atharva-Veda* contains 730 hymns, a number of which are charms of witchcraft, blessings, and curses. Its chief value lies in its revelations of popular practices, superstitions, and folklore.

By far the most important and interesting of these four ancient books is the *Rig-Veda* with its questioning, its wonder, and its frequent deep humility. Many of the hymns, written before the frequent repetition of theological concepts by priests had bred authoritarian certainty, are filled with an awed, wondering search for answers that might have come from a child. "What covered in, and where? And what gave shelter? Was water there?" asks the singer of the "Creation" hymn. "What was above it then, and what below it? Who verily knows whence it was born, and whence comes, this creation? He, the first origin, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not." Even God, the almighty creator, perhaps even his knowledge was not absolutel

In this earliest of all the Hindu religious books there is only one brief mention of caste, which later became so important a part of all Hindu religious belief. The society of earliest Vedic times was of simple organiza-

tion, patriarchal, with rajas ruling as chieftains and often by hereditary succession. The father ruled the household and offered the religious sacrifices. The wife was mistress of the house, assisted at the sacrifice (hence Yasodhara's complaint at Gautama's abandonment of her—see the introduction to the Buddhist scriptures), and shared in the control of the children, of slaves, and of unmarried brothers and sisters of the husband.

The *Rig-Veda* says that there are 33 gods, though these do not include some of the minor deities, and even some of the 33 seem to have been of little importance. Several of these, notably *Indra* (the god who protected his people in battle), *Agni* (the god of fire), *Mitra* (the sun god, deity of the Mithraists), and *Varuna*, were brought with them from their earlier Asiatic home, along with *Dyaush ptar*, *Ushas*, and the others mentioned earlier. Traces of all of these are found also in the Persia of Zarathushtra's time.

The characteristics of *Indra* are of particular interest in thinking of the god-concepts of the world's religions. Most peoples have attributed to a god an especial interest in their welfare in battle. In the early days of Judaism the God of Israel was not a peaceful deity but "a mighty man of war." It was Jehovah who sent the plagues to torture the Egyptians in retaliation for their persecution of the Jews, who caused the waters of the Red Sea to part so that the Children of Israel could cross over on dry land, and then to come together again to overwhelm the Egyptians. It was Jehovah who brought calamities to the enemies of Israel who had stolen the Ark of the Covenant, Jehovah who always fought beside his people and made one of them equal to many from among those who followed other gods. Even Jesus, whose followers think of him as symbolizing

the ideal of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men," is reported to have said, "I bring you not peace but a sword."

And there is a strange and persistent reminder of this ancient concept in modern times. Since the beginning of World War II story after story of miraculous escapes from death have filtered into the news. Flyers forced down at sea, drifting for days on a raft, made shore or were rescued after daily prayers and the singing of hymns were begun. A boy in a submerged submarine, which could not surface because its mechanism had jammed, prayed then fainted, and in his fall jarred loose the fouled mechanism and the ship rose to the surface. Bullets were deflected from the vital parts of religious soldiers by the sacred talismen they wore. The English Channel, during the five terrible days when the British Army was being evacuated from Dunkirk, was miraculously calm in answer to the prayers of the British people.

It is not to question the faith out of which these stories have come that they are mentioned here, but merely to point out that here again is the conception of a God of war protecting his people in battle, as did Jehovah in the early days of the Old Testament, as *Indra* did in the pre-historic days of the great Indo-European migrations.

Apparently the earlier inhabitants of India, whom the newcomers found there, believed that the powers of nature were manifestations of gods. Frequently the same god had more than one name. Of these, several were added to the pantheon of the invaders, making a confusing catalogue of many names.

But the deities thus designated had not all existed from the beginning of time. They too were created, along with the sky, the earth, the creatures of earth, and

man. ("The gods are later than this world's production," says the *Rig* "Creation" hymn.) In the earlier hymns of the *Rig*, creation is believed to have taken place through some phenomenon of natural generation without any personal god acting in the process. In later hymns there is introduced the idea of a personal creator, *Prajapati*, a physical being whose body was divided, his head becoming the sky, his feet the earth, his navel the air, his eye the sun, and his breath the wind.

In the *Rig-Veda* the conception of life after death is vague. *Yama* is the ruler of the region to which persons go after death, whether they have led good or bad lives, but the character of that region or the manner of existence there seems clouded in mystery. The nearest approach to any idea of salvation consists in a state of happy and prosperous being on this earth before death. In the later *Atharva-Veda* there is described a dark pit below earth into which the evil are hurled after death, and there is a vague intimation that the good go to a happier place. It is only in the still later *Upanishads* and the *Mahabharata* that there emerges a clear belief in a hell for the wicked and a heaven for the righteous, inhabited during the intervals between rebirths.

By the time of the *Brahmanas* (probably about 800 B.C. and later) many of the peoples who had originally settled in the Valley of the Indus had pushed on to the Valley of the Ganges, where there was rain only at the time of the monsoons. In addition to hardships imposed by frequent droughts, there was the depressing effect of a more difficult climate. The daily tasks necessary to maintaining life became more onerous, and apparently the dark-skinned aborigines, set off from the white invaders by the sad and ancient barrier of colour, were compelled to perform many of these

tasks under duress. It is at this time that the system of castes (so integral a part of orthodox Hindu religious belief) became important. The human race, the *Brahmanas* say, was divided at the time of its creation into the *Brahman*, or priestly class, who now became the real rulers of the people; the *Rajanya* or *Kshatriya*, the warriors; the *Vaisya*, composed of farmers, artisans, and tradesmen; and the *Sudra*, or serfs. (For a later explanation of the creation of the castes by Brahma, see "The Creation of Castes" from the *Markandeya Purana*, p. 76.)

As the caste system, emphasized in the *Brahmanas*, grew in importance, the position of the lowest class was demeaned to the point where neither gods nor men would speak to the *Sudra*. As time added new complexities to Hinduism and its reflections in Hindu society, castes themselves were divided. Robert Hume, in *The World's Living Religions*, says that in modern times "there are over 2,000 mutually exclusive subcastes in the Hindu system."

In the *Brahmanas* there is developed the creation story of the golden egg, which floated about for a year in a universe which was entirely water (even as in the first chapter of Genesis). At the end of this time the egg broke into two parts and "a man, this *Prajapati*" was produced from it. In the later *Upanishads* one half of the golden egg is said to have become the sky, the other half the earth. In the *Satapatha Brahmana*, *Prajapati*, having emerged from the golden egg, from his breath creates the *Devas* as gods who, entering the sky, produce light, and the *Asuras* from his "downward breathing" (or flatulence) who, entering the earth as evil spirits, become demons and produce darkness.

Here is evidence on which to base an interesting speculation (it can be no more than that) as to whether

religious differences may have been at least one of the causes which divided the Indo-Europeans who went to Persia from those who went to India, for in the Persian religion the *Daevas* are the demons, while from the godlike *Ahuras* there emerges the mighty Ahura Mazda, the universal God of Zoroastrianism. One cannot but think here also of the regions of upper light (goodness) and nether darkness (evil) of Zoroastrianism, and of the heaven and hell so clearly conceived in Christianity some 800 years after the writing of the *Brahmanas*.

The joyousness which so often pervaded the *Vedas* now disappears in a pessimistic conviction that life is a burden and rebirth a misfortune. This became a most important basis for the creed of Gautama Buddha, approximately 300 years later.

Something else of great significance was happening to Indian religious belief at the time of the *Brahmanas*. Even then the religious observances were becoming cluttered with complicated ceremonials conducted by the priests. The gods were being constantly propitiated by material sacrifices. But the fertile minds of Indian thinkers were beginning to question the materialistic complexity of these practices and the multiplicity of the gods to whom homage was given. An intangible spirituality was invading Hindu thought.

With the *Upanishads* (800-600 B.C.) Hinduism entered a new phase centering upon the conception of Brahma as the supreme God. The names of the other gods are simply names of the various powers of the absolute, impersonal, indescribable being which created and rules the universe. (See "How Many Gods?" p. 50.) In the earlier writings the word *Brahma* or *Brahman* had meant "sacred knowledge" or "sacred utterance." Now, closely connected, in some uses synonymous,

with Brahma is the concept of *Atman*, the universal soul or Self which is within us all, which is, indeed, our being. (See "The Universal Self," p. 39 and "The Education of Svetaketu," p. 54.) Through recognition of and devotion to this Self, and through following certain rules of social ethics, one may achieve union with Brahma, thus partaking of divinity and thus perhaps avoiding the repeated misery of rebirths.

The end of the *Upanishads* period was the beginning of the most exciting and productive era in the religious history of the world. At about this time Zarathushtra was proclaiming the exalted rule of the one god Ahura Mazda in Persia, and in connexion with this pure and vigorous monotheism was urging upon his followers one of the most virile ethical codes based upon works which the world has ever known. In China at about this time Confucius was bringing order and new meaning to the ancient Chinese formalism through emphasis upon social and political principles which still cry for adoption in the relations of man to man and nation to nation, and Lao Tze was decrying all kinds of ceremony and urging a mystical return, through Tao, to the state of goodness which is every man's heritage from the nature which creates him. In Israel the Pre-Exilic prophets, Amos, Hosea, the first Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, were preparing the way for a strict monotheism by preaching a righteous, forgiving, loving Jehovah, supreme among the nations, with whom one may find union through purity of heart and righteous social conduct. (Micah summarized man's religious duty thus: "To do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God.") And in India itself, less than 100 years later, the great Gautama Buddha, thoroughly familiar with and strongly influenced by the *Upanishads*, though he

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