

Paper 94 — The Melchizedek Teachings in the Orient

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Most endnotes and Urantia Book cross-references have been deleted to enhance readability.

Sources for Paper 94, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) Lewis **Browne**, *This Believing World: A Simple Account of the Great Religions of Mankind* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926)
- (2) H. **Jacobi**, “Brāhmanism,” *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. II*, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910)
- (3) Robert Ernest **Hume**, Ph.D., *The World’s Living Religions: An Historical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1924)
- (4) William Kelley **Wright**, Ph.D., *A Student’s Philosophy of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922, new ed. 1935)
- (5) Lionel **Giles**, *The Sayings of Lao Tzū* (London: John Murray, 1905)
- (6) James Bissett **Pratt**, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism, and A Buddhist Pilgrimage* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the UB writer pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Blue** indicates original (or “revealed”) information, or UB-specific terminology and concepts. (What to highlight in this regard is debatable; the highlights are tentative.)

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PAPER 94 — THE M E L C H I Z E D E K TEACHINGS IN THE ORIENT

94:0.1 The early teachers of the Salem religion penetrated to the remotest tribes of Africa and Eurasia, ever preaching Machiventa's gospel of man's faith and trust in the one universal God as the only price of obtaining divine favor. Melchizedek's covenant with Abraham was the pattern for all the early propaganda that went out from Salem and other centers. Urantia has never had more enthusiastic and aggressive missionaries of any religion than these noble men and women who carried the teachings of Melchizedek over the entire Eastern Hemisphere. These missionaries were recruited from many peoples and races, and they largely spread their teachings through the medium of native converts. They established training centers in different parts of the world where they taught the natives the Salem religion and then commissioned these pupils to function as teachers among their own people.

1. THE SALEM TEACHINGS IN VEDIC INDIA

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN
INDIA, I: BRAHMANISM (Browne 119)

1. The primitive Aryan gods—the Vedas. (Browne 119)

About four or five thousand years ago [the Aryan invaders] broke through the passes of the Hindu Kush Mountains, and then settled down in the fertile valley of the Indus (B 119).

Their religion was a low fear of many spirits, among them being “three and thirty gods” who were worshipped with oblations of beer—*soma* it was called—on a spread of straw....

Certain of these gods the Aryan invaders must have brought with them from the unknown cradle-land whence they had come; others quite clearly must have been developed in the new home (B 119-20).

The father of each family was the priest, and the mother was the priestess. There were no temples, and indeed no permanent holy places of any kind. . . (B 120).

94:1.1 In the days of Melchizedek, India was a cosmopolitan country which had recently come under the political and religious dominance of

the Aryan-Andite invaders from the north and west.

At this time only the northern and western portions of the peninsula had been extensively permeated by the Aryans.

These Vedic newcomers had brought along with them their many tribal deities.

Their religious forms of worship followed closely the ceremonial practices of their earlier Andite forebears in that

the father still functioned as a priest and the mother as a priestess,

and the family hearth was still utilized as an altar.

94:1.2 The Vedic cult was then in process of growth and metamorphosis under the direction of the Brahman caste of teacher-priests,

Then professional sacrificers arose—priests whose services at the altar were imagined to be somehow more efficacious than the services of ordinary men. And by these priests the ritual was elaborated and complicated still further (B 121).

From early times there seems to have been a steady drift in Aryan India toward a synthesis, an amalgamation of the gods (B 120).

who were gradually assuming control over the expanding ritual of worship.

The amalgamation of the onetime thirty-three Aryan deities was well under way when the Salem missionaries penetrated the north of India.

94:1.3 The polytheism of these Aryans represented a degeneration of their earlier monotheism occasioned by their separation into tribal units, each tribe having its venerated god. This devolution of the original monotheism and trinitarianism of Andite Mesopotamia was in process of resynthesis in the early centuries of the second millennium before Christ.

[See endnote.]

The many gods were organized into a pantheon under the triune leadership¹ of

The most important of these spirits was one called Indra, usually pictured as a boasting, gluttonous, drunken brawler controlling the wind and the rain. Besides him there were several other deities who had most seriously to be reckoned with: Dyaush Pitar (related to Zeus Pater and Jupiter), who was the sky-god; Asura, the “Wise Spirit of Heaven”;

Dyaus pitar, the lord of heaven; Indra, the tempestuous lord of the atmosphere;

Agni, the god of fire (the Sanskrit name is related to our English word “ignite”); Mithra, a sun-god (the remote ancestor, of course, of the Roman mystery-god Mithras); Soma, the principle of intoxication become a god; and various others (B 119-20).

[See 79:3.4 and 104:1.2.]

BRĀHMANISM. (Jacobi 799)

II. RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS
(Jacobi 800)

It is conceivable that henotheism might, in the end, have led to monotheism, or at least to a purer form of religion than the old Vedic polytheism (J 800).

[See 79:3.4.]

Not only, during [the last stage of the Rigveda period], had a Father-god, Prajāpati, become the object of speculation and adoration, but even before that time it had become a habit of the poet-priest to ascribe the attributes, functions, and powers of several gods to that particular one whom he was for the time invoking (J 800).

[[Sacrifice] existed from eternity, and proceeded from the Supreme Being (Prajāpati or Brahmā) ... (J 800).]

[Compare 94:2 and 94:3, below.]

and Agni, the three-headed fire god, lord of the earth

and the vestigial symbol of an earlier Trinity concept.

94:1.4 Definite henotheistic developments were paving the way for an evolved monotheism.

Agni, the most ancient deity, was often exalted as the father-head of the entire pantheon.

The deity-father principle, sometimes called Prajapati,

sometimes termed Brahma,

was submerged in the theologic battle which the Brahman priests later fought with the Salem teachers.

The Brahman was conceived as the energy-divinity principle activating the entire Vedic pantheon.

94:1.5 The Salem missionaries preached the one God of Melchizedek, the Most High of heaven. This portrayal was not altogether disharmonious with the emerging concept of the Father-Brahma as the source of all gods, but the Salem doctrine was nonritualistic and hence ran directly counter to the dogmas, traditions, and teachings of the Brahman priesthood. Never would the Brahman priests accept the Salem teaching of salvation through faith, favor with God apart from ritualistic observances and sacrificial ceremonials.

94:1.6 The rejection of the Melchizedek gospel of trust in God and salvation through faith marked a vital turning point for India. The Salem missionaries had contributed much to the loss of faith in all the ancient Vedic gods, but the leaders, the priests of Vedism, refused to accept the Melchizedek teaching of one God and one simple faith.

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, I: BRAHMANISM (Browne 119)

1. The primitive Aryan gods—the Vedas. (Browne 119)

[The priests] created a vast literature of psalms and magic spells to recite at the altars in order to get a firmer hold on the gods—a literature still preserved in what are called the Vedas.... Of them all the oldest and most important is called the **Rig Veda**, a collection of over a thousand hymns which date back perhaps as far as 2000 B.C. (B 121).

94:1.7 The Brahmans culled the sacred writings of their day in an effort to combat the Salem teachers, and this compilation, as later revised, has come on down to modern times as

the **Rig-Veda**,

[Different schools in Hinduism have their special Vedas. The four earliest are: "The Veda of Verses, or Psalms," Rig Veda; "The Veda of Sacred Formulas," Yajur Veda; "The Veda of Chants," Sama Veda; and "The Veda of Charms," Atharva Veda (Hume 20).]

[*Contrast:* But in the Brāhmana period the priests cared less to exalt the personal gods than to emphasize the momentous dignity of the impersonal sacrifice. The **conception of the Deity** as embodied in the Vedic gods was first **debased** by the ritualistic preoccupation of the priests; and the degradation of the gods was consummated by the **superstition** of the vulgar (J 800).]

one of the most ancient of sacred books.

The second, third, and fourth Vedas followed as the Brahmans sought to crystallize, formalize, and fix their rituals of worship and sacrifice upon the peoples of those days.

Taken at their best, these writings are the equal of any other body of similar character in beauty of concept and truth of discernment. But as this superior religion became contaminated with the thousands upon thousands of **superstitions**, cults, and rituals of southern India, it progressively metamorphosed into the most variegated system of theology ever developed by mortal man.

An examination of the Vedas will disclose some of the highest

and some of the most **debased concepts of Deity** ever to be conceived.

2. BRAHMANISM

2. The Aryans move to the Ganges—caste—the brahmins. (Browne 121)

94:2.1 As the Salem missionaries penetrated southward into the Dravidian Deccan, they encountered

Many years passed in [the fertile valley of the Indus] before overcrowding forced the white men to penetrate further into the land; but then a heavy migration began southward toward the valley of the Ganges.... The white invaders grew terrified lest in time the identity of their stock might be lost in the welter of the far larger black population.... They raised up a towering religious and social barrier of caste to protect themselves from the blacks (B 121-22).

an increasing caste system, the scheme of the Aryans to prevent loss of racial identity in the face of a rising tide of the secondary Sangik peoples.

Since the Brahman priest caste was the very essence of this system, this social order greatly retarded the progress of the Salem teachers.

Of course, the expedient failed to accomplish its purpose, as we can see from the fact that all Hindus today, high-caste as well as low, are black.

This caste system failed to save the Aryan race,

But though it failed utterly in that direction, it proved all too successful in another.... It was natural, of course, for the priests—the brahmins they were called—to emerge at the very top of this monstrous social system. As long as they alone were deemed able to placate and cajole the gods, so long were they alone able to command the highest respect of men (B 122-23).

but it did succeed in perpetuating the Brahmins,

who, in turn, have maintained their religious hegemony in India to the present time.

94:2.2 And now, with the weakening of Vedism through the rejection of higher truth, the cult of the Aryans became subject to increasing inroads from the Deccan.

In a desperate effort to stem the tide of racial extinction and religious obliteration,

In time the priests, not content with their supremacy over men, began to covet supremacy over the very gods. And they actually managed to achieve it, too! They began by exalting the importance of the ritual ... And from that they went to exalting themselves saying: "The whole universe is subject to the gods, the gods to the spells, and the spells to the brahmins; therefore the brahmins are our gods!" (B 123)

the Brahman caste sought to exalt themselves above all else.

They taught that the sacrifice to deity in itself was all-efficacious,

[Sacrifice is regarded as possessing a mystical potency, superior even to the gods, who, it is sometimes stated, attained to their Divine rank by means of sacrifice (Jacobi 800).]

that it was all-compelling in its potency.

["There are two kinds of gods; for the gods are gods, and priests that are learned in the Veda (the sacred writings) and teach it are human gods" (Wright 72).]

They proclaimed that,

of the two essential divine principles of the universe, one was Brahman the deity, and the other was the Brahman priesthood.

Among no other Urantia peoples did the priests presume to exalt themselves above even their gods, to relegate to themselves the honors due their gods.

It was a development which had mounted so outrageously high that it had toppled over into **absurdity** (B 123).

The masses, finding the protection afforded by the brahmin gods to be prohibitively costly, began to bargain instead for the much cheaper protection of unorthodox demons. Out of the depths of their ancient savage heritage, or from the slime of the black native animism around them, they dragged up scores of fell spirits to dread or cling to. . . .

And in time the priests, too, began to question the sincerity of their over-ritualized religion.... Quite obviously whole sections of the Brahmanas were intended to be stout ropes of ingenious rationalism by which the priests might save themselves from drowning in doubt.

But despite the stoutness of those ropes, and the craft with which they were plaited, they nevertheless failed to be of much avail. The priests went down. Down, down they went in the dark and muddy waters of doubt and dismay ... until at last their feet touched bottom in the ooze of **blackest pessimism**. . . (B 123-25).

3. The Upanishads—the Over-Soul—transmigration—Nirvana—the growth of asceticism. (Browne 125)

But they went so **absurdly** far with these presumptuous claims that the whole precarious system collapsed

before the debasing cults which poured in from the surrounding and less advanced civilizations.

The vast Vedic priesthood itself floundered and sank beneath the **black** flood of inertia and **pessimism**

which their own selfish and unwise presumption had brought upon all India.

94:2.3 The undue concentration on self led certainly to a fear of the nonevolutionary perpetuation of self in an endless round of successive incarnations

Most other folk halted with the hope that death would immediately open the door to salvation....But the Hindus could not cherish so easy a hope. Death seemed to them but the beginning of more of this same old torment which is earthly life.... If their preceding life had been extraordinarily good, on their return they became perhaps as much as princes or even brahmins; but if they had done evil, then they returned to live as dogs or pigs or even slimy weeds at the edge of swamps (B 126-27).

The fell idea of transmigration, of a weary round of endless life, had taken hold of the Hindus (B 126).

[In a simple form this conception is often found among very primitive folk, and the philosophers may have learned it from the Dravidian aborigines, and adapted it in order to explain the problem why the fortunes of men in this life are so often ill proportioned to their deserts (Wright 74).]

[[Before the Vedic period closed,] thought of a future life had begun, and men desired to enter Heaven, which was conceived materialistically as a sort of Valhalla or Elysium, whose chief delights would be plenty of soma juice, beautiful women, song and fighting, as well as the privileges of returning to earth to enjoy the soma and victuals prepared for them at the sacrifices offered by their earthly descendants (Wright 71).]

as man, beast, or weeds.

And of all the contaminating beliefs which could have become fastened upon what may have been an emerging monotheism, none was so stultifying as this

belief in transmigration—the doctrine of the reincarnation of souls—

which came from the Dravidian Deccan.

This belief in the weary and monotonous round of repeated transmigrations robbed struggling mortals of their long-cherished hope of finding that deliverance and spiritual advancement in death

which had been a part of the earlier Vedic faith.

94:2.4 This philosophically debilitating teaching was soon followed by the invention of the doctrine of

There seemed to be but one effectual way of **escape** from that terrible cycle of unending life, and that was by absorption into the "It." If only a man could annihilate his individual **self**, could utterly destroy his little "it," then at last could he be free of life and attain the release called Nirvana.... Without desire the individual "it" would be lost, and only the **Brahma**,

the **Over-Soul**, the One Universal "It" would be left (B 127).

One wonders if this nihilistic philosophy of the Upanishads greatly influenced the life of the masses in India twenty-six hundred years ago.... But that it profoundly affected the learned is quite beyond doubt. The desire to end **desire** simply **ravished** the higher classes in that day (B 127-29).

the eternal **escape** from **self** by submergence in the universal rest and peace of absolute union with **Brahman**,

the **oversoul** of all creation.

Mortal **desire** and human ambition were effectually **ravished** and virtually destroyed.

For more than two thousand years the better minds of India have sought to escape from all desire, and thus was opened wide the door for the entrance of those later cults and teachings which have virtually shackled the souls of many Hindu peoples in the chains of spiritual hopelessness.

Of all civilizations, the Vedic-Aryan paid the most terrible price for its rejection of the Salem gospel.

94:2.5 Caste alone could not perpetuate the Aryan religio-cultural system, and as the inferior religions of the Deccan permeated the north,

A new spirit, a sepulchral spirit of **hopelessness**, took possession of the erstwhile white men (B 125).

there developed an age of despair and **hopelessness**.

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, II: JAINISM (Browne 129)

1. Mahavira—his gospel. (Browne 129)

But above all [Mahavira] forbade his monks to kill.... Solicitude against destroying life—and life was thought to be not merely in man but also in animals, plants, even grains of dust—drove the followers of Mahavira to the most grotesque of excesses (B 131).

It was during these dark days that the cult of taking no life arose,

To this day they maintain hospitals for animals, caring even for sick snakes and rats and even lice! . . (B 131).

and it has ever since persisted.

[(1) The Samkya philosophy ... is **frankly atheistic**. It is also pessimistic. Desire is the great evil—how become free from desire, disappointment and sorrow in this life and endless rebirths in the future? (2) The answer was offered by the Yoga school, who attempted to work out a way of salvation through asceticism (**Wright** 79).]

Many of the new cults were **frankly atheistic**, claiming that such salvation as was attainable could come only by man's own unaided efforts.

But throughout a great deal of all this unfortunate philosophy, distorted remnants of the Melchizedek and even the Adamic teachings can be traced.

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, I: BRAHMANISM (Browne 119)

3. The Upanishads—the Over-Soul—transmigration—Nirvana—the growth of asceticism. (Browne 125)

It is difficult to say just when the Upanishads were written, but according to the best authorities it was probably during the two centuries stretching from about 800 B.C. to about 600 B.C.

94:2.6 These were the times of the compilation of the later scriptures of the Hindu faith, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads.

Having rejected the teachings of personal religion through the personal faith experience with the one God, and having become contaminated with the flood of debasing and debilitating cults and creeds from the Deccan, with their anthropomorphisms and reincarnations, the Brahmanic priesthood experienced a violent reaction against these vitiating beliefs; there was a definite effort to seek and to find *true reality*. The Brahmans set out to deanthropomorphize the Indian concept of deity, but in so doing they stumbled into the grievous error of depersonalizing the concept of God, and they emerged, not with a lofty and spiritual ideal of the Paradise Father, but with a distant and metaphysical idea of an all-encompassing Absolute.

94:2.7 In their efforts at self-preservation the Brahmans had rejected the one God of Melchizedek, and now they found themselves with

Their burden was an entirely new understanding of man's chance of ever attaining rest in the universe. In the first place, they threw all the old gods and the old rites overboard, frankly confessing that they were quite without essential reality. Only one thing, they insisted, was real: the Brahma,

the hypothesis of Brahman,

the “Self,” the One Absolute, Infinite, Impersonal, Indescribable “It” (B 125).

that indefinite and illusive philosophic self, that impersonal and impotent *it*

which has left the spiritual life of India helpless and prostrate from that unfortunate day to the twentieth century.

94:2.8 It was during the times of the writing of the Upanishads that Buddhism arose in India. But despite its successes of a thousand years, it could not compete with later Hinduism; despite a higher morality, its early portrayal of God was even less well-defined than was that of Hinduism, which provided for lesser and personal deities.

[Accordingly, decadent Buddhism soon faded away before the pressure of another religion, Islam, which arrived in India with a God of power, a God-enthused founder, and a vigorous anti-idolatrous monotheism (Hume 75).]

Buddhism finally gave way in northern India before the onslaught of a militant Islam with its clear-cut concept of Allah as the supreme God of the universe.

3. BRAHMANIC PHILOSOPHY

94:3.1 While the highest phase of Brahmanism was hardly a religion, it was truly one of the most noble reaches of the mortal mind into the domains of philosophy and metaphysics. Having started out to discover final reality, the Indian mind did not stop until it had speculated about almost every phase of theology excepting the essential dual concept of religion: the existence of the Universal Father of all universe creatures and the fact of the ascending experience in the universe of these very creatures as they seek to attain the eternal Father, who has commanded them to be perfect, even as he is perfect.

94:3.2 In the concept of Brahman the minds of those days truly grasped at the idea of some all-pervading Absolute, for this postulate was at one and the same time identified as creative energy and cosmic reaction.

BRĀHMANISM. (Jacobi 799)

II. RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS
(Jacobi 800)

Brahman cannot be defined;

it is expressly and repeatedly stated that all known attributes of things must be denied of Brahman, which therefore can be described only by negations (*neti neti*, 'no no') (J 801).

Brahman is the infinite, the unchangeable, the eternal, the absolute; it is pure Being, on which all that exists depends, and from which it derives its reality (J 801).

[[According to a famous passage in the Rig Veda] the Purusa was in the beginning, and from him the world originated. The deity rising from the Purusa is called *Nārāyana* (i.e. 'descended from Nara,' the primeval male) ... Thus *Nārāyana* is identified with *Brahmā* ... (J 811).]

[Total Deity is functional on the following seven levels:

1. *Static*—self-contained and self-existent Deity.
2. *Potential*—self-willed and self-purposive Deity.

Brahman was conceived to be beyond all definition,

capable of being comprehended only by the successive negation of all finite qualities.

It was definitely a belief in an absolute, even an infinite, being,

but this concept was largely devoid of personality attributes and was therefore not experiencible by individual religionists.

94:3.3 *Brahman-Narayana* was conceived as the Absolute, the infinite IT IS, the primordial creative potency of the potential cosmos,

the Universal Self existing static and potential throughout all eternity.

3. *Associative*—self-personalized and divinely fraternal Deity.

4. *Creative*—self-distributive and divinely revealed Deity.

5. *Evolutional*—self-expansive and creature-identified Deity.

6. *Supreme*—self-experiential and creature-Creator-unifying Deity....

7. *Ultimate*—self-projected and time-space-transcending Deity (0:1.3-10).]

Had the philosophers of those days been able to make the next advance in deity conception,

had they been able to conceive of the Brahman as *associative* and *creative*,

as a personality approachable by *created* and *evolving* beings,

then might such a teaching have become the most advanced portraiture of Deity on Urantia since it would have encompassed the first five levels of total deity function

and might possibly have envisioned the remaining two.

94:3.4 In certain phases the concept of the One Universal Oversoul as the totality of the summation of all creature existence led the Indian philosophers very close to the truth of the Supreme Being, but this truth availed them naught because they failed to evolve any reasonable or rational personal approach to the attainment of their theoretic monotheistic goal of Brahman-Narayana.

94:3.5 The karma principle of causality continuity is, again, very close to the truth of the repercussional synthesis of all time-space actions in the Deity presence of the Supreme; but this postulate never provided for the co-ordinate personal attainment of Deity by the individual religionist, only for the ultimate engulfment of all personality by the Universal Oversoul.

[See 111:0.4.]

[See *endnote*, in which Jacobi mentions Ramana-
nuja's view that souls, though essentially one with
Brahman, still retain some kind of individuality of
their own when joined to him.]

94:3.6 The philosophy of Brahmanism also came very near to the realization of the indwelling of the Thought Adjusters, only to become perverted through the misconception of truth.

The teaching that the soul is the indwelling of the Brahman would have paved the way for an advanced religion had not this concept been completely vitiated by the belief that there is no human individuality apart from this indwelling of the Universal One.²

94:3.7 In the doctrine of the merging of the self-soul with the Oversoul, the theologians of India failed to provide for the survival of something human, something new and unique, something born of the union of the will of man and the will of God. The teaching of the soul's return to the Brahman is closely parallel to the truth of the Adjuster's return to the bosom of the Universal Father, but there is something distinct from the Adjuster which also survives, the morontial counterpart of mortal personality. And this vital concept was fatally absent from Brahmanic philosophy.

94:3.8 Brahmanic philosophy has approximated many of the facts of the universe and has approached numerous cosmic truths, but it has all too often fallen victim to the error of failing to differentiate between the several levels of reality, such as absolute, transcendental, and finite. It has failed to take into account that what may be finite-illusory on the absolute level may be absolutely real on the finite level.

And it has also taken no cognizance of the essential personality of the Universal Father, who is personally contactable on all levels from the evolutionary creature's limited experience with God on up to the limitless experience of the **Eternal Son** with the Paradise Father.

4. THE HINDU RELIGION

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, IV: HINDUISM (**Browne** 150)

1. The dominant religion in India today—caste—the trinity—the divisiveness in Hinduism. (Browne 150)

94:4.1 With the passing of the centuries in India,

[contd] But despite the rising of **Jainism and Buddhism** in India, the old priestly religion rooted in the **Vedas** was never completely ousted. Even though for a while it lost the favor of the rulers, never for a moment did it lose its attractiveness to the ruled (B 150).

the populace returned in measure to the ancient rituals of the **Vedas**

as they had been modified by the teachings of the Melchizedek missionaries and crystallized by the later Brahman priesthood.

This, the oldest and most cosmopolitan of the world's religions, has undergone further changes in response to **Buddhism and Jainism** and to the later appearing influences of Mohammedanism and Christianity.

But by the time the teachings of Jesus arrived, they had already become so Occidentalized as to be a "white man's religion," hence strange and foreign to the Hindu mind.

94:4.2 Hindu theology, at present, depicts four descending levels of deity and divinity:

94:4.3 1. *The Brahman*, the Absolute, the Infinite One, the IT IS.

BRĀHMANISM. (Jacobi 799)

III. MYTHOLOGY (Jacobi 802)

3. **The three Supreme Gods** (Jacobi 810)

Notwithstanding these sectarian tendencies, the three Supreme Gods are regarded, in principle, as of equal dignity and forming as such a kind of triad, which in the doctrine of the *Trimūrti* has been acknowledged since about the 5th cent. A.D. (J 811).

The same holds good with the Brahmā of later mythology: Brahmā proceeded from Brahman, the First Cause; and, on the other hand, he is, in a vague way, identified with it, whence he is called *svayambhū* ('self-born') or *aja* ('unborn') (J 811).

Still the idea of creation and of fate is personified in Brahmā, and in this character he is universally acknowledged by all classical writers down to modern times (J 811).

94:4.4 2. *The Trimurti*, the supreme trinity of Hinduism.

In this association *Brahma*, the first member, is conceived as being self-created out of the Brahman—infinity.

Were it not for close identification with the pantheistic Infinite One, Brahma could constitute the foundation for a concept of the Universal Father.

Brahma is also identified with fate.

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, IV: HINDUISM (Browne 150)

1. The dominant religion in India today—caste—the trinity—the divisiveness in Hinduism. (Browne 150)

It is true that about 300 A.D. an attempt was made to create [a common doctrine] by combining the three main Hindu gods into a universally acceptable trinity; but the attempt failed dismally. Brahma, the chief god in that trinity, never became popular save with the priests and philosophers.... And Vishnu and Shiva, the two other gods in the trinity, always remained distinct and separate, continuing to attract distinct and separate followings. . . (B 152).

3. Shiva—his popularity—the Tantra—sex in religion. (Browne 156)

[[Çiva] is the author of life as well as its destroyer, and personifies the reproductive forces of nature, for which reason the bull and the phallus (*lingam*) are his common symbols (George Foot Moore, *History of Religions, Vol. I* [1920], 340).]

In the trinity by which the theologians tried to unite the Hindu sects, Brahma stood for the principle of Creation, Vishnu for that of Preservation, and Shiva for that of Destruction (B 156).

2. Vishnu—the avatars—the Bhagavad-Gita—Krishna—theology in Vishnuism. (Browne 152)

[contd] One of the two most popular gods in India today is Vishnu.

Originally a minor Vedic sun-god, he has since risen to superlative importance largely because he has been credited with the power of incarnating himself occasionally in human form (B 152-53).

94:4.5 The worship of the second and third members, Siva and Vishnu,

arose in the first millennium after Christ.

Siva is lord of life and death, god of fertility,

and master of destruction.

Vishnu is extremely popular

due to the belief that he periodically incarnates in human form.

Through those periodic incarnations—those “avatars” as they are called—Vishnu **became real**, tangible, almost human to all sorts of Hindu people (B 153).

[[The sectaries who worship either Vishnu or Çiva as in reality the one God, usually identify] their Lord outright with the Supreme Being and subordinat[e] the two other members of the triad (George Foot **Moore**, *History of Religions, Vol. 1* [1920], 344).]

In this way, Vishnu **becomes real** and living in the imaginations of the Indians.

Siva and Vishnu are each regarded by some as supreme over all.

94:4.6 3. *Vedic and post-Vedic deities.*

BRĀHMANISM. (**Jacobi** 799)

III. MYTHOLOGY (Jacobi 802)

[Introduction] (Jacobi 802)

The Vedic gods who continue to be generally acknowledged in the Brāhmanical period are **Agni, Indra, Savitr, Soma, Vāyu, Varuna, Yama, and the Aśvins**; and in addition to them, Prajāpati, Visnu, and Rudra (J 803).

Many of the ancient gods of the Aryans, such as **Agni, Indra, Soma,**

have persisted as secondary to the three members of the Trimurti.

2. Post-Vedic gods. (Jacobi 807)

(A) *Those of high rank.*—To the post-Vedic period must be assigned Kumāra, the war-god.... Another son of Śiva, or rather of Pārvāti, is Ganeśa.... The principal river-goddess of India is the Gangā. [Etc.] (J 807-08)

Numerous additional gods have arisen since the early days of Vedic India,

and these have also been incorporated into the Hindu pantheon.

(B) We must now speak of the different groups of *divine beings who rank below the gods*. (J 809)

(C) We shall now speak of *heroic men*. (J 810)

[See J 809-10.]

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, IV: HINDUISM (Browne 150)

1. The dominant religion in India today—caste—the trinity—the divisiveness in Hinduism. (Browne 150)

No matter how many evils may be debited against Hinduism, at least this one virtue must be listed to its credit: it is *tolerant*. . (B 152).

94:4.7 4. The *demigods*:

supermen, semigods, *heroes*, demons, ghosts, evil spirits, sprites, monsters, goblins, and saints of the later-day cults.

94:4.8 While Hinduism has long failed to vivify the Indian people,

at the same time it has usually been a *tolerant* religion.

Its great strength lies in the fact that it has proved to be the most adaptive, amorphous religion to appear on Urantia. It is capable of almost unlimited change and possesses an unusual range of flexible adjustment from the high and semimontheistic speculations of the intellectual Brahman to the arrant fetishism and primitive cult practices of the debased and depressed classes of ignorant believers.

94:4.9 Hinduism has survived because it is essentially an integral part of the basic social fabric of India. It has no great hierarchy which can be disturbed or destroyed; it is interwoven into the life pattern of the people.

VII: BRAHMANISM (Wright 69)

V—*Modern Hinduism* (Wright 80)

Hinduism thus only too readily recognizes that there is a measure of truth in all religions, from those of wild hill folk whose obscene and bloodthirsty deities can be regarded as manifestations of Shiva to those of Buddhists and Christians, the founders of whose religions are readily acceptable as incarnations of Vishnu,—incarnations inferior, of course, to Krishna, the seducer of countless milkmaids! (Wr 83)

It has an adaptability to changing conditions that excels all other cults, and it displays a tolerant attitude of adoption toward many other religions,

Gautama Buddha and even Christ himself being claimed as incarnations of Vishnu.

94:4.10 Today, in India, the great need is for the portrayal of the Jesusonian gospel—the Fatherhood of God and the sonship and consequent brotherhood of all men, which is personally realized in loving ministry and social service. In India the philosophical framework is existent, the cult structure is present; all that is needed is the vitalizing spark of the dynamic love portrayed in the original gospel of the Son of Man, divested of the Occidental dogmas and doctrines which have tended to make Michael's life bestowal a white man's religion.

5. THE STRUGGLE FOR TRUTH IN CHINA

94:5.1 As the Salem missionaries passed through Asia, spreading the doctrine of the Most High God and salvation through faith, they absorbed much of the philosophy and religious thought of the various countries traversed. But the teachers commissioned by Melchizedek and his successors did not default in their trust; they did penetrate to all peoples of the Eurasian continent, and it was in the middle of the second millennium before Christ that they arrived in China. At See Fuch, for more than one hundred years, the Salemites maintained their headquarters, there training Chinese teachers who taught throughout all the domains of the yellow race.

94:5.2 It was in direct consequence of this teaching that the earliest form of Taoism arose in China, a vastly different religion than the one which bears that name today.

BOOK IV: WHAT HAPPENED IN CHINA, I: CONFUCIANISM (Browne 169)

1. The primitive religion of China—ancestor-worship—the state cult—the popular religion—burial customs—family festivals—why did China advance so early? (Browne 169)

Early or proto-Taoism was a compound of the following factors:

94:5.3 1. The lingering teachings of Singlangton, which persisted in the concept of Shang-ti, the God of Heaven. In the times of Singlangton the Chinese people became

[See 79:8.4 and 79:8.7.]

[contd] What may have been the earliest religion of China, no one seems to know for certain. Some scholars maintain it was almost or quite a monotheism, for from earliest times the Chinese seem to have worshipped a Supreme Ruler usually identified with Heaven.

virtually monotheistic;

they concentrated their worship on the One Truth, later known as the Spirit of Heaven, the universe ruler.

And the yellow race never fully lost this early concept of Deity, although in subsequent centuries

This theory of an early monotheism can hardly be accepted, however, for side by side with the worship of the Supreme Ruler, the Spirit of Heaven, there went on also the worship of numerous spirits of the earth (B 169).

many subordinate gods and spirits insidiously crept into their religion.

94:5.4 2. The Salem religion of a Most High Creator Deity who would bestow his favor upon mankind in response to man's faith. But it is all too true that, by the time the Melchizedek missionaries had penetrated to the lands of the yellow race, their original message had become considerably changed from the simple doctrines of Salem in the days of Machiventa.

94:5.5 3. The Brahman-Absolute concept of the Indian philosophers, coupled with the desire to escape all evil. Perhaps the greatest extraneous influence in the eastward spread of the Salem religion was exerted by the Indian teachers of the Vedic faith, who injected their conception of the Brahman—the Absolute—into the salvationistic thought of the Salemites.

94:5.6 This composite belief spread through the lands of the yellow and brown races as an underlying influence in religio-philosophic thought. In Japan this proto-Taoism was known as Shinto, and in this country, far distant from Salem of Palestine, the peoples learned of the incarnation of Machiventa Melchizedek, who dwelt upon earth

[Since the olden people did not know my name, I manifested myself by being born into the world as a visible existence and endured such abasement even that man should not forget my name (131:7.2).]

that the name of God might not be forgotten by mankind.

94:5.7 In China all of these beliefs were later confused and compounded with

Perhaps originally those two elements, nature- and ancestor-worship were rivals for the allegiance of the people; but later they were fused together by the belief that Heaven, the chief of the nature spirits, was the first forefather of the emperor, and therefore the chief also of the ancestor spirits (B 169-70).

the ever-growing cult of ancestor worship.

But never since the time of Singlangton have the Chinese fallen into helpless slavery to priestcraft.

Prayers were offered *to* the dead, and only in order to bring them near and secure their aid. Of course, it must not be imagined that the Chinese peasants three thousand years ago knew no demons to fear or taboos to dread. But it is safe to say that, of all ancient peoples, the Chinese were the least intimidated by such things. Perhaps that is why of all ancient peoples the Chinese were the **first** to dare push forward along that adventurous path which we call **civilization** (B 173-74).

2. The story of Confucius. (Browne 174)

[contd] But if one dares to claim that the fearless, priestless religion of China was responsible for her early advance in civilization, one must admit it was responsible also for her early arrest. Today China is one of the most backward lands on earth, and it seems evident that her backward-looking **ancestor-worship** is in large part to blame for that condition (B 174).

The yellow race was the **first** to emerge from barbaric bondage into orderly **civilization** because it was the first to achieve some measure of freedom from the abject fear of the gods, not even fearing the ghosts of the dead as other races feared them.

China met her defeat because she failed to progress beyond her early emancipation from priests; she fell into an almost equally calamitous error,

the **worship of ancestors.**

94:5.8 But the Salemites did not labor in vain. It was upon the foundations of their gospel that the great philosophers of sixth-century China built their teachings. The moral atmosphere and the spiritual sentiments of the times of Lao-tse and Confucius grew up out of the teachings of the Salem missionaries of an earlier age.

6. LAO-TSE AND CONFUCIUS

94:6.1 About six hundred years before the arrival of Michael, it seemed to Melchizedek, long since departed from the flesh, that the purity of his teaching on earth was being unduly jeopardized by general absorption into the older Urantia beliefs. It appeared for a time that his mission as a forerunner of Michael might be in danger of failing. And in the sixth century before Christ, through an unusual co-ordination of spiritual agencies, not all of which are understood even by the planetary supervisors, Urantia witnessed a most unusual presentation of manifold religious truth. Through the agency of several human teachers the Salem gospel was restated and revitalized, and as it was then presented, much has persisted to the times of this writing.

94:6.2 This unique century of spiritual progress was characterized by great religious, moral, and philosophic teachers all over the civilized world. In China, the two outstanding teachers were Lao-tse and Confucius.

I: TAO IN ITS TRANSCENDENTAL ASPECT, AND IN ITS PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION (Giles 22)

94:6.3 Lao-tse built directly upon the concepts of the Salem traditions when he declared Tao to be

The World has a First Cause, which may be regarded as the Mother of the World (G 23).

the One First Cause of all creation.

BOOK IV: WHAT HAPPENED IN CHINA, II: TAOISM (Browne 183)

1. The life of Lao-Tze—the Tao-Teh-king—the gospel—was Lao-Tze a religious teacher? (Browne 183)

But in the broader sense of the word, Lao-Tze was superlatively a man of faith. For all the eerie morbidness of his nihilistic doctrine, Lao-Tze was profoundly a spiritual being. He saw with blinding clarity what Confucius never even remotely suspected—that all life is but an ark of bulrushes drowning in a swamp of vanity.

Desperately was he conscious of the need for security, of the need for something infinite in time and space to which finite little man might cling. And that was why he was so attached to the idea of Tao, and taught that the one road to salvation for every man was utter union with that Tao (B 188).

[Only once in the “Tao-Teh-king” is the Supreme god, Shang-Ti, mentioned, and then only to make known that he is inferior to the ineffable Tao (B 188).]

I: TAO IN ITS TRANSCENDENTAL ASPECT, AND IN ITS PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION (Giles 22)

Tao produced Unity; Unity produced Duality;

Duality produced Trinity; and Trinity produced all existing objects.

Lao was a man of great spiritual vision.

He taught that man’s eternal destiny was

“everlasting union with Tao,

Supreme God and Universal King.”

His comprehension of ultimate causation was most discerning, for he wrote:

“Unity arises out of the Absolute Tao, and from Unity there appears cosmic Duality,

and from such Duality, Trinity springs forth into existence, and Trinity is the primal source of all reality.”

These myriad objects leave darkness behind them and embrace the light, being **harmonised** by contact with the Vital Force (G 22).

VIII: MISCELLANEOUS SAYINGS AND PRECEPTS (Giles 47)

[An extraordinary spectacle, this: a decrepit old yellow-skinned sage sitting there in a wild frontier camp in China five hundred years before Jesus ever walked on earth, and calmly telling the world to **return good for evil!** . . . (B 187).]

To the good I would be good;

to the not-good I would also be good, in order to make them good (G 50-51).

[**Life** is a going forth. **Death** is a **returning home** (*Treasure-House of the Living Religions* 73, from Goddard, *Lao Tzu's Tao* 36).] [Compare 131:8.6.]

IV: LOWLINESS AND HUMILITY (Giles 33)

He who, conscious of being strong, is content to be weak,—he shall be a channel for the waters of the world, and Virtue will never desert him. He returns to the **state of a little child** (G 34).

“All reality is ever in balance between the potentials and the actuals of the cosmos,

and these are eternally **harmonized** by the spirit of divinity.”

94:6.4 Lao-tse also made one of the earliest presentations of the doctrine of **returning good for evil:**

“Goodness begets goodness,

but to the one who is truly good, evil also begets goodness.”

94:6.5 He taught the return of the creature to the Creator

and pictured **life** as the emergence of a personality from the cosmic potentials, while **death** was like the **returning home** of this creature personality.

His concept of true faith was unusual, and he too likened it to

the **“attitude of a little child.”**

I: TAO IN ITS TRANSCENDENTAL ASPECT, AND IN ITS PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION (Giles 22)

It is the Way of Heaven **not to strive**, and yet it knows how to overcome; not to speak, and yet it knows how to obtain a **response**; it calls not, and things come of themselves; it is slow to move, but excellent in its designs (G 23).

[Compare 131:3.8.]

VII: PARADOXES (Giles 43)

The Sage does not care to hoard. The more he uses for the benefit of others, the more he possesses himself. The more he gives to his fellow-men, the more he has of his own (G 46).

VIII: MISCELLANEOUS SAYINGS AND PRECEPTS (Giles 47)

This is the Way of Heaven, which **benefits**, and injures not.

This is the Way of the Sage, in whose **actions** there is no element of strife (G 53).

94:6.6 His understanding of the eternal purpose of God was clear, for he said:

“The Absolute Deity **does not strive** but is always victorious;

he does not coerce mankind but always stands ready to **respond** to their true desires; the will of God is eternal in patience and eternal in the inevitability of its expression.”

And of the true religionist he said, in expressing the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive:

“The good man seeks not to retain truth for himself

but rather attempts to bestow these riches upon his fellows, for that is the realization of truth.

The will of the Absolute God always **benefits**, never destroys;

the purpose of the true believer is always to **act** but never to coerce.”

BOOK IV: WHAT HAPPENED IN CHINA, II: TAOISM (Browne 183)

2. The degeneration of Taoism—alchemy—gods and priests—the deification of Lao-Tze. (Browne 188)

[contd] Of course a teaching so aloof and unpractical could not remain undefiled and stand any chance of entering the hearts of ordinary men.... [S]oon many philosophers were to be found in the hills or far in the forests of China, striving there to live according to the teachings of that book. In caves and the hollowed trunks of trees they sat and labored to practice kenosis—the seeing, doing, and thinking of nothing (B 188-89).

94:6.7 Lao's teaching of nonresistance and the distinction which he made between *action* and *coercion* became later perverted into the beliefs of

“seeing, doing, and thinking nothing.”

But Lao never taught such error, albeit his presentation of nonresistance has been a factor in the further development of the pacific predilections of the Chinese peoples.

94:6.8 But the popular Taoism of twentieth-century Urantia has very little in common with the lofty sentiments and the cosmic concepts of the old philosopher who taught the truth as he perceived it, which was: That faith in the Absolute God is the source of that divine energy which will remake the world, and by which man ascends to spiritual union with Tao, the Eternal Deity and Creator Absolute of the universes.

BOOK IV: WHAT HAPPENED IN CHINA, I: CONFUCIANISM (Browne 169)

2. The story of Confucius. (Browne 174)

Confucius, whose Chinese name was **Kung-fu-tze** lived in that amazing century, the **sixth B.C.**, which produced Mahavira and Buddha in India, Zoroaster (perhaps) in Persia, and Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Second Isaiah in Israel (B 175).

For many years Confucius spent all his time collecting and editing the old writings of his people, and he was not called upon to apply himself to practical affairs until he was fifty years of age (B 176).

3. The work of Confucius—his gospel—his place in history. (Browne 178)

He wandered about for thirteen years without finding a single ruler willing to give him employment. Evidently he was looked on with suspicion by princes and people, and at least once he was attacked by a mob and almost assassinated (B 177).

It is questionable whether any other man in all history has had a more lasting **influence** on a people than that old sage of Shantung who in his life could not even get a job! . . . (B 179).

94:6.9 Confucius (Kung Fu-tze) was a younger contemporary of Lao in **sixth-century** China.

Confucius based his doctrines upon the better moral traditions of the long history of the yellow race, and he was also **somewhat influenced by the lingering traditions of the Salem missionaries.**

His chief work consisted in the compilation of the wise sayings of ancient philosophers.

He was a rejected teacher during his lifetime,

but his writings and teachings have ever since exerted a great **influence** in China and Japan.

He believed in the moral power of deeds quite as much as his savage ancestor might have believed in the efficacy of magic spells.... Not unjustly, therefore, Confucius may be described as a shaman who relied on moral prescriptions rather than magic rites as the means wherewith to control the universe (B 180).

Propriety, regularity, exact and punctilious observance of the “three hundred points of ceremony and three thousand points of behavior”—these were the ultimate ends and aims of life.... Everything had to be ordered, for “Order is Heaven’s only law” (B 181).

Filial piety, respect for the ancestors, was in his eyes the highest of all virtues (B 181).

[See endnotes.]

4. The deification of Confucius. (Browne 182)

Confucius set a new pace for the shamans in that he put morality in the place of magic.

But he built too well;

he made a new fetish out of order

and established a respect for ancestral conduct

that is still venerated by the Chinese at the time of this writing.

94:6.10 The Confucian preaching of morality was predicated on the theory that the earthly way is the distorted shadow of the heavenly way; that the true pattern of temporal civilization is the mirror reflection of the eternal order of heaven.³ The potential God concept in Confucianism was almost completely subordinated to the emphasis placed upon the Way of Heaven, the pattern of the cosmos.⁴

94:6.11 The teachings of Lao have been lost to all but a few in the Orient, but the writings of Confucius have ever since constituted the basis of the moral fabric of the culture of almost a third of Urantians.

These Confucian precepts, while perpetuating the best of the past, were somewhat inimical to the very Chinese spirit of investigation that had produced those achievements which were so venerated.

The influence of these doctrines was unsuccessfully combated both by

In the third century [B.C.] a successful usurper of the throne tried his best to uproot the whole growth, for its uncompromising condemnation of all nonconformity and change made his rebellious life indescribably hard. This emperor put forth systematic effort to destroy all Confucian books, and to slay all those who knew them by heart. But he failed, and when a member of an oldtime dynasty regained the imperial throne, Confucianism began to flourish as never before.

the imperial efforts

[Ch'in Shih Huang Ti ... introduced a uniform system of laws, weights and measures, thus aiding both unity and commerce.... Later orthodox scholars held his name in reproach for one of the signal acts of his reign, the "Burning of the Books." What motives lay behind this deed we do not certainly know: he may have believed that the scholars who were forever harping on the past and the literature which made sacred the institutions of the old régime were an enemy to the new order he was trying to establish ("China," pp. 532-33, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1936).]

of Ch'in Shih Huang Ti

[Mo Ti ... was deeply religious, believed that T'ien (Heaven) loved men, and that all men should love each other. It was his doctrine of universal love as the basis of ethics which brought against him the vigour of Mencius' dialectic ("China," p. 533, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1936).]

and by the teachings of Mo Ti, who proclaimed a brotherhood founded not on ethical duty but on the love of God.

He sought to rekindle the ancient quest for new truth, but his teachings failed before the vigorous opposition of the disciples of Confucius.

Confucius himself was exalted until he became a veritable god (B 182).

[Above all, he who laughed at the gods [*i.e.*, Lao-Tze] and scoffed at their worship has himself been made a god [ever since 156 B.C.] (B 191).]

BOOK IV: WHAT HAPPENED IN CHINA, III: BUDDHISM (Browne 191)

2. The Land of the “Three Truths”—popular worship. (Browne 195)

Taoism and Buddhism are the faiths to which the masses alone render allegiance; but both are little more than a dark cloaca, **swarming** with **spirits**, **devils**, ghosts, vampires, werewolves, and green-eyed **dragons** (B 195).

And to such a sorry faith has a great old Chinese race descended. **Fear** is to blame for it, of course. It was fear that picked out China’s eyes, and made her blind (B 196).

94:6.12 Like many other spiritual and moral teachers,

both Confucius and Lao-tse were eventually deified by their followers

in those spiritually dark ages of China which intervened between the decline and perversion of the Taoist faith and the coming of the Buddhist missionaries from India.

During these spiritually decadent centuries the religion of the yellow race degenerated into a pitiful theology

wherein **swarmed devils**, **dragons**, and evil **spirits**,

all betokening the returning **fears** of the unenlightened mortal mind.

And China, once at the head of human society because of an advanced religion, then fell behind because of temporary failure to progress in the true path of the development of that God-consciousness which is indispensable to the true progress, not only of the individual mortal, but also of the intricate and complex civilizations which characterize the advance of culture and society on an evolutionary planet of time and space.

7. GAUTAMA SIDDHARTHA

VIII: BUDDHISM (Wright 85)

I—*Introduction* (Wright 85)

The historic founder of Buddhism was Prince Siddhartha, of the Gautama family, usually referred to as Gautama Siddhartha. He was the son of a rajah of the Sakya clan, who occupied the region at the foot of the Himalyas which is now Nepal, as well as districts of India immediately adjacent. He lived approximately from B.C. 560 to 480 (Wr 85).

II—*The Buddha* (Wright 85)

There is little doubt that the main facts of his life and character may be extracted from the sacred scripture (*the Pitakas*). It is only necessary to discount as legendary the lavish embellishments—such as the miracles, the impossible richness and extravagance of the royal court in which he was reared, and the numbers and rank of the converts gained to the faith during his life time ... (Wr 86).

94:7.1 Contemporary with Lao-tse and Confucius in China, another great teacher of truth arose in India.

Gautama Siddhartha was born in the sixth century before Christ in the north Indian province of Nepal.

His followers later made it appear that he was the son of a fabulously wealthy ruler,

Siddhartha was the son of a petty chief, and when young was married to his first cousin, the daughter of a neighboring rajah (Wr 86).

but, in truth, he was the heir apparent to the throne of a petty chieftain

who ruled by sufferance over a small and secluded mountain valley in the southern Himalayas.

94:7.2 Gautama formulated those theories which grew into the philosophy of Buddhism

He studied under the best teachers available (probably of the Samkya sect), but got no satisfaction. He then zealously practised Yoga, for six years but found himself merely physically weakened by excessive fasting and in no way spiritually enlightened. When about thirty-five he passed through another great crisis under a Bodhi tree where he experienced a remarkable conversion (Wr 86).

after six years of the futile practice of Yoga.

[A second and perhaps just as radical implication [of Gautama's gospel] was its opposition to all caste divisions (Browne 140).]

Siddhartha made a determined but unavailing fight against the growing caste system.

At first he hesitated [to go out into the world and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation], doubting if it would be possible to induce others to believe him, but he decided to make the attempt. He met with immediate success, so convincing was his sincerity, so clear his teachings, and so inspiring his personality (Wr 86).

There was a lofty sincerity

and a unique unselfishness about this young prophet prince that greatly appealed to the men of those days.

BOOK THREE: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, III: BUDDHISM (Browne 134)

2. His gospel—its implications—the Law of Karma. (Browne 139)

Mahavira had insisted that each man could attain salvation for himself by going off alone and afflicting his own body. But the younger prophet declared that all individualism was sinful, and that one's own salvation could be found only in the effort to bring salvation to every one else.

“Go ye now,” he commanded his followers, “out of compassion for the world and the welfare of gods and men . . . and preach the doctrine which is glorious” (B 141).

Gautama's gospel countenanced none of those common instruments—gods, sacrifices, priests, or prayers—wherewith the religious technique is always practiced. . . . But in the broader connotation of the term, the gospel was itself a religion (B 140).

Unlike all other Hindu thinkers of his day, he did not believe in the individual soul (B 141).

Therefore, argued Gautama, all this pother about the transmigration of souls was sheer folly. Only the deed, not the doers, lived on from generation to generation (B 142).

He detracted from the practice of seeking individual salvation through physical affliction and personal pain.

And he exhorted his followers to carry his gospel to all the world.

94:7.3 Amid the confusion and extreme cult practices of India, the saner and more moderate teachings of Gautama came as a refreshing relief.

He denounced gods, priests, and their sacrifices,

but he too failed to perceive the *personality* of the One Universal.

Not believing in the existence of individual human souls,

Gautama, of course, made a valiant fight against the time-honored belief in transmigration of the soul.

[Gautama's gospel] tried earnestly to rid man of fear,

to make him feel *at home* in the universe—and for that reason it deserves its chapter in the story of this believing world. . . (B 140).

1: The story of Gautama. (Browne 134)

Southward Gautama took his way into a range of hills where dwelt certain hermits in caves.... They were not ordinary ascetics frantically starving their bodies, but rather devoted philosophers trying to enrich their minds....

But the wandering prince did not tarry with them long. His mind was keen, and it took little time for him to discover how empty was the ratiocination of those talky hermits. They tried to drag their petty souls to Brahma by strings of words—but Brahma Itself, he discovered, was also a mere thing of words. [Etc.] (B 136-37)

He made a noble effort to deliver men from fear,

to make them feel at ease and at home in the great universe,

but he failed to show them the pathway to that real and supernal home of ascending mortals—Paradise—and to the expanding service of eternal existence.

94:7.4 Gautama was a real prophet, and had he heeded the instruction of

the hermit Godad,

he might have aroused all India by the inspiration of the revival of the Salem gospel of salvation by faith. Godad was descended through a family that had never lost the traditions of the Melchizedek missionaries.

3. How Gautama spread his gospel. (Browne 142)

India was then swarming with restless souls in search of a faith that might comfort them; many of these came and found it in the words of Gautama. They gathered in the Deer Forest near Benares, and built themselves little huts around the dwelling-place of the Buddha.

And when they were as many as sixty in number, their master commanded them to go forth during the dry months of the year and carry his comforting message to the people.

He told them to carry abroad the good tidings that salvation was free,

and that all men, high and low, learned and ignorant,

could surely attain it if only they practiced justice and righteousness (B 143).

Early in his ministry he went back to his own home, and there converted his long-deserted wife and son to the new faith. (His son even became one of his preaching monks, and his wife joined an order of Buddhist nuns which was soon organized.) (B 143-44)

94:7.5 At Benares Gautama founded his school,

and it was during its second year that a pupil, Bautan, imparted to his teacher the traditions of the Salem missionaries about the Melchizedek covenant with Abraham;

and while Siddhartha did not have a very clear concept of the Universal Father, he took an advanced stand on salvation through faith—simple belief.

He so declared himself before his followers

and began sending his students out in groups of sixty

to proclaim to the people of India “the glad tidings of free salvation;

that all men, high and low,

can attain bliss by faith in righteousness and justice.”

94:7.6 Gautama’s wife believed her husband’s gospel and was the founder of an order of nuns.

His son became his successor and greatly extended the cult; he grasped the new idea of salvation through faith but in his later years wavered regarding the Salem gospel of divine favor through faith alone,

To the end he continued to instruct his disciples that gathered during every rainy season in the Deer Forest near Benares. Indeed, the very last words he uttered were addressed to them.

“Work out your own salvation!” he told them with his last breath. And then he died. . . (B 144).

and in his old age his dying words were,

“Work out your own salvation.”

94:7.7 When proclaimed at its best, Gautama’s gospel of universal salvation, free from sacrifice, torture, ritual, and priests,

[contd] More than twenty-four hundred years have passed since Siddharta Gautama passed away, and it is not easy for us to appreciate how revolutionary his doctrine must have been when first he uttered it. Never before had it been said in India that salvation was obtainable in any wise save through scrupulous sacrificing, or profound philosophizing, or extravagant asceticism (B 144).

was a revolutionary and amazing doctrine for its time.

And it came surprisingly near to being a revival of the Salem gospel.

And though that gospel was afterward **distorted and corrupted** and changed out of all likeness to what it had been when it came fresh from the lips of the Buddha, nevertheless it did endure and spread until its light was known over all the East (B 144).

It brought succor to millions of despairing souls,

and notwithstanding its grotesque **perversion** during later centuries,

it still persists as the hope of millions of human beings.

94:7.8 Siddhartha taught far more truth than has survived in the modern cults bearing his name. Modern Buddhism is no more the teachings of Gautama Siddhartha than is Christianity the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

8. THE BUDDHIST FAITH

VIII: BUDDHISM (Wright 85)

I—Introduction (Wright 85)

To become a **Buddhist**, in the countries in which the religion retains most of its original purity,

requires a **public profession of one's faith**, by reciting the "Refuge" formula, viz.—

"I take my refuge in the Buddha. I take my refuge in the Doctrine (*Dhamma*). I take my refuge in the Brotherhood (*Sangha*)" (Wr 85).

94:8.1 **To become a Buddhist,**

one merely made **public profession of the faith by reciting the Refuge:**

"I take my refuge in the Buddha; I take my refuge in the Doctrine; I take my refuge in the Brotherhood."

II—*The Buddha* (Wright 85)

[contd] Western scholars are now generally agreed that the Buddha conception does not owe its origin to a sun myth, but to the historical man, Prince Siddartha (Wr 85-86).

I—*Introduction* (Wright 85)

The followers of Siddartha refer to him by various epithets, as the Buddha (the Enlightened or Awakened One), the Tathagata (one who like his predecessors has come into the world to bring the true doctrine to light), Bhagava (the Blessed Lord), and Sasta (the Teacher, or Master) (Wr 85).

II—*The Buddha* (Wright 85)

He claims for himself (according to the higher critics be it understood) no supernatural origin or authority (Wr 88).

[He came from the Clan of the Sakyas, and hence came to be known in later years as Sakyamuni, or the Sage of the Sakyas—the name most commonly given him in the Far East (Pratt 5).]

94:8.2 Buddhism took origin in a historic person, not in a myth.

Gautama's followers called him Sasta, meaning master or teacher.

While he made no superhuman claims for either himself or his teachings,

his disciples early began to call him *the enlightened one*, the Buddha;

later on, Sakyamuni Buddha.

III—*The Doctrine* (Wright 88)

The essential outlines of his doctrine of salvation are recorded in the *Dhamma-Kakka-ppavattana-sutta* (“The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness”), which purports to be the sermon which he delivered near Benares at the beginning of his ministry, to the five mendicants with whom he had earlier practised Yoga, and who were among his first converts.

According to this discourse, all individual finite existence is bound up in sorrow. Hence the “four noble truths.”

The first of these is the “noble truth concerning suffering.” Birth, decay, disease and death are all painful, and so are union with the unpleasant, separation from the pleasant, and all unsatisfied desires (Wr 88-89).

The second is the “noble truth concerning the origin of suffering.” This is due to craving for the gratification of the passions, for future life (as a finite individual), and for ordinary worldly success in this life (Wr 89).

The third “noble truth” is that “concerning the destruction of suffering.” There must be absolute destruction of every selfish and self-seeking desire in order to encompass the destruction of suffering.

The fourth “noble truth” points out “the way which leads to the destruction of suffering.”

This way is the pursuit of the noble eight-fold path of

94:8.3 The original gospel of Gautama was based on the four noble truths:

1. The noble truths of suffering.

2. The origins of suffering.

3. The destruction of suffering.

4. The way to the destruction of suffering.

94:8.4 Closely linked to the doctrine of suffering and the escape therefrom was the philosophy of

the Eightfold Path:

“right views, aspirations, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and contemplation” (Wr 89).

right views, aspirations, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and contemplation.

It was not Gautama’s intention to attempt to destroy all effort, desire, and affection in the escape from suffering; rather was his teaching designed to picture to mortal man the futility of pinning all hope and aspirations entirely on temporal goals and material objectives. It was not so much that love of one’s fellows should be shunned as that the true believer should also look beyond the associations of this material world to the realities of the eternal future.

For the Buddhist layman, who wishes to lead a satisfactory moral life, to acquire merit so as to earn a favorable state of existence in his next rebirth, and to know that after a succession of rebirths he ultimately will reach Nirvana, the chief requirements are acceptance of the triple “Refuge” profession of faith, in which he declares his loyalty to the Buddha, the Doctrine, and the monastic Brotherhood, and obedience to the first five “commandments.”

94:8.5 The moral commandments of Gautama’s preaching were five in number:

The first commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” forbids the taking of all life, even animal life. Buddhists are vegetarians (Wr 91).

94:8.6 1. You shall not kill.

The second commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” forbids all forms of dishonesty and enjoins liberality, even to the extent, in extreme cases, of being willing to give one’s life for others.

94:8.7 2. You shall not steal.

The third commandment, “Thou shalt not be unchaste,” forbids fornication and adultery upon the part of laymen, and enjoins celibacy upon monks.

94:8.8 3. You shall not be unchaste.

The fourth commandment, “Thou shalt not lie,” forbids all falsehood, and enjoins saying good of one’s neighbor, and what is conducive to harmony.

94:8.9 4. You shall not lie.

The fifth commandment, “Thou shalt not drink intoxicating liquors,” probably originally enjoined complete total abstinence for one’s self, and the duty to disapprove of their use by others (Wr 92).

94:8.10 5. You shall not drink intoxicating liquors.

To those who will keep three additional commandments “a greater reward will be obtained”—more favorable rebirths and a speedier attainment of Nirvana. The sixth commandment is “Thou shalt not eat food at unseasonable times” (i.e., after the mid-day meal). The seventh commandment is “Thou shalt not wear garlands or use perfumes.” The eighth commandment is, “Thou shalt sleep on a mat spread upon the ground.”

94:8.11 There were several additional or secondary commandments,

Conformity to these three commandments is optional for the layman, but is praiseworthy, especially upon the weekly holy days (Wr 92).

whose observance was optional with believers.

94:8.12 Siddhartha hardly believed in the immortality of the human personality; his philosophy only provided for

The relation of an individual in this life to the individual whom his *karma* and desires will next bring into existence is comparable to the relation between a child and the man into whom he grows. There is functional continuity, but not continuity of either physical or mental structures (Wr 91).

a sort of functional continuity.

He never clearly defined what he meant to include in the doctrine of Nirvana.

The fact that *Nirvana* can be attained and enjoyed in this life is thought by many interpreters to make it clear that it is not as is sometimes alleged, a state of utter annihilation (Wr 89).

Nirvana is the name given to the state of supreme enlightenment and bliss,

when all the fetters binding one to the world have been broken,

and one is an *Arahat* (saint), free from all desires while living, and destined upon death never again to become incarnated in a mortal body (W 89).

Since salvation is worked out by one's own efforts, primitive Buddhism is sometimes described as an atheistic religion.

There is no place in it for prayers to a deity, or to the Buddha himself. Meditation and spiritual exercises and faithful practise of moral precepts alone are possible (Wr 90-91).

The fact that it could theoretically be experienced during mortal existence would indicate that it was not viewed as a state of complete annihilation.

It implied a condition of supreme enlightenment and supernal bliss

wherein all fetters binding man to the material world had been broken;

there was freedom from the desires of mortal life and deliverance from all danger of ever again experiencing incarnation.

94:8.13 According to the original teachings of Gautama,

salvation is achieved by human effort, apart from divine help;

there is no place for saving faith or prayers to superhuman powers.

Gautama, in his attempt to minimize the superstitions of India, endeavored to turn men away from the blatant claims of magical salvation.

And in making this effort, he left the door wide open for his successors to misinterpret his teaching and to proclaim that

If [the “four nobles truths”] really mean that “the will to live” ... is fundamentally bound to lead to sorrow and defeat, and that complete escape can only be gained by renunciation of the world in a convent and discipline for the purpose of gaining a state of ultimate extinction, the teaching of the Buddha is pessimistic to the core. Thus interpreted, the “four noble truths” are as psychologically false as they are ethically unsound. It is not true that all striving and desire are painful. On the contrary, they are only painful when they are checked and impeded. Successful striving is pleasurable (Wr 93).

Nor does the real happiness of life come in turning one’s back on the world, retiring within the recesses of one’s own inner consciousness and remaining in a state of idle contemplation. On the contrary, real happiness or satisfaction is a concomitant of earnest efforts and successful achievements (Wr 93).

That Buddhism should make its adherents lighthearted is easy to see. It assures men of the absolute justice of the universe, and that one’s good works are certain to be rewarded (Wr 94).

all human striving for attainment is distasteful and painful.

His followers overlooked the fact that

the highest happiness is linked with the intelligent and enthusiastic pursuit of worthy goals,

and that such achievements constitute true progress in cosmic self-realization.

94:8.14 The great truth of Siddhartha’s teaching was his proclamation of

a universe of absolute justice.

He taught the best godless philosophy ever invented by mortal man; it was the ideal humanism

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It removes all kinds of **superstitious** fears; there is no need to be afraid of **demons**, **ghosts**, angry gods or black magic, one's own salvation rests entirely with oneself (Wr 94).

and most effectively removed all grounds for **superstition**, magical rituals, and fear of **ghosts** or **demons**.

VI—*Merits and Defects of Primitive and Southern Buddhism* (Wright 98)

The chief moral limitation in early Buddhism, the author thinks, is that there is not enough emphasis on **social service**. The very fact that every one must work out his own salvation unaided tends to make men more or less absorbed in the cultivation of their own characters (Wr 99).

94:8.15 The great weakness in the original gospel of Buddhism was that it did not produce a religion of unselfish **social service**.

IV—*The Brotherhood* (Wright 95)

The monks devoted their whole time to the **study**, practise and **teaching** of the faith (Wr 95).

The Buddhistic **brotherhood** was, for a long time, not a fraternity of believers

but rather a community of **student teachers**.

Monks were **forbidden to receive money** (Wr 96).

Gautama **forbade their receiving money**

There was no **hierarchy** in the Brotherhood. The discipline was chiefly self-imposed (Wr 96).

and thereby sought to prevent the growth of **hierarchal** tendencies.

III—*The Doctrine* (Wright 88)

If the “Four Noble Truths” are pure pessimism, the Buddha certainly practised **far better than he preached** (Wr 94).

Gautama himself was highly social;

indeed, his life was **much greater than his preachment**.

9. THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

BOOK IV: WHAT HAPPENED IN CHINA, III: BUDDHISM (Browne 191)

1. How it entered China—why it succeeded there—its rise and fall. (Browne 191)

But the new Buddhism's greatest attraction lay in the fact that it was so thoroughly a religion of **salvation**. To poor blind people groping about in the darkness of life, it offered light. It told them that they had merely to **believe in the Buddha**,

in him who was called the **"Enlightened One,"** and straightway all would become as day for them. Neither Confucianism nor Taoism had a tithe as much to offer (B 193).

94:9.1 Buddhism prospered because it offered **salvation** through **belief in the Buddha**,

the **enlightened one**.

It was more representative of the Melchizedek truths than any other religious system to be found throughout eastern Asia.

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, III: BUDDHISM (Browne 134)

4. Early history of Buddhism—deification of Buddha—Asoka—the new Buddhism in China—Tibet—Japan—India—Ceylon. (Browne 145)

But Buddhism did not become widespread as a religion until

By war and intrigue [a low-caste adventurer named Chandragupta] had managed to carve out for himself a vast empire in northern India, and because the anti-caste doctrine of Buddhism promised to help him retain his power, he endowed its monasteries with vast estates and enormous riches. And his grandson, the famous King Asoka who became emperor of India in 264 B.C., devoted a great share of his energy during all his reign to the spreading of the Buddhist religion (B 146-47).

[contd] Asoka is esteemed by many scholars to have been the noblest monarch in history; and if the criterion is the number of souls that still revere his memory, then certainly he was a far greater figure than any other in the whole world's catalogue of kings.

By acquiring one state after another he built up an empire that included a large part of the East; and every inch of it he won by faith and not by the sword.

Asoka sent out Buddhist missionaries to Ceylon, to Kashmir, and to the uttermost ends of the earth known to him.

Eight and twenty years he carried on his far-flung missionary work, and before he died he had managed to make Buddhism the dominant religion in his half of the world (B 147).

it was espoused in self-protection by the low-caste monarch Asoka,

who, next to Ikhnaton in Egypt,

was one of the most remarkable civil rulers between Melchizedek and Michael.

Asoka built a great Indian empire through the propaganda of his Buddhist missionaries.

During a period of twenty-five years

he trained and sent forth more than seventeen thousand missionaries to the farthest frontiers of all the known world.

In one generation he made Buddhism the dominant religion of one half the world.

VIII: BUDDHISM (Wright 85)

V—*Events in Buddhist History* (Wright 97)

During the reign of Asoka, Buddhism became diffused widely over India, and was introduced into Kashmir and Ceylon (Wr 97).

Burma was converted to Buddhism about 450 A.D., Java about 650 A.D., and Siam in the seventh century, A.D. Buddhists of these countries, together with Ceylon, adhere to the Hinayana school (Wr 98).

In the meantime, however, the Mahayana development had taken place in India, and had been transmitted, as well as the rival Hinayana faith, to China during the first four centuries of the Christian era, had reached Korea by 372 A.D., and Japan by 552 A.D. Mahayana Buddhism passed through an extraordinary development into Lamaism in Thibet during the ninth century (Wr 98).

It soon became established in Tibet, Kashmir, Ceylon,

Burma, Java, Siam,

Korea, China, and Japan.

And generally speaking, it was a religion vastly superior to those which it supplanted or upstepped.

94:9.2 The spread of Buddhism from its homeland in India to all of Asia is one of the thrilling stories of the spiritual devotion and missionary persistence of sincere religionists.

[In the early Buddhist centuries the land of T'sin [China] was cut off from the Indian and semi-Indian lands for all but the most hardy and adventurous.... Upon the west and southwest rise the Pamirs and Himalayas, the loftiest mountains in the world, ... while north of them stretches for many hundred miles the Gobi desert ... This route is still fraught with immense hardship and peril; but for the merchant and missionary of the early days the southeastern route was perhaps even more frightful. For here rage those hungriest and most treacherous of all the earth's waters, the China Seas (Prati 272).]

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, III: BUDDHISM (Browne 134)

4. Early history of Buddhism—deification of Buddha—Asoka—the new Buddhism in China—Tibet—Japan—India—Ceylon. (Browne 145)

[contd from 94:9.1] But of course it was not the simple ethical gospel of Gautama that was carried to these strange lands.

Rather it was an intricate theological dogma that translated Buddha into a God (B 147).

The farther Buddhism traveled, the more it changed.

On the northwestern frontier of India, where the Hellenic and Hindu worlds touched, the Buddhist idols came to look exactly like the idols of the West (B 147-48).

In China Buddhism took on much of the character of Taoism, and in Japan it was greatly influenced by the national religion called Shinto (B 148).

The teachers of Gautama's gospel not only braved the perils of the overland caravan routes but faced the dangers of the China Seas as they pursued their mission over the Asiatic continent, bringing to all peoples the message of their faith.

But this Buddhism was no longer the simple doctrine of Gautama;

it was the miraculized gospel which made him a god.

And the farther Buddhism spread from its highland home in India, the more unlike the teachings of Gautama it became,

and the more like the religions it supplanted, it grew to be.

94:9.3 Buddhism, later on, was much affected by Taoism in China, Shinto in Japan,

Buddhism in **Thibet** very early took on a distinct **Christian** coloring, accepting into its ritual such Christian symbols and instruments as the cross, the miter, the dalmatica, censer, chaplet, and holy-water font (B 148).

In India itself, Buddhism **simply withered** and died out.

A thousand years after the death of Gautama, it had **become very largely Brahmanized.**

The plain people fearfully cried to the idols for help, and the leaders earnestly wrangled about the proper size and cut of their ceremonial robes. When therefore a new religion, **Islam**, invaded the land, it swept all before it (B 148-49).

[See 91:9.1, p. 53, above.]

VIII: BUDDHISM (**Wright** 85)

VII—*Mahayana Buddhism* (Wright 100)

and **Christianity** in **Tibet.**

After a thousand years, in India Buddhism **simply withered** and expired.

It became **Brahmanized**

and later abjectly surrendered to **Islam,**

while throughout much of the rest of the Orient it degenerated into a ritual which Gautama Siddhartha would never have recognized.

94:9.4 In the south the fundamentalist stereotype of the teachings of Siddhartha persisted in Ceylon, Burma, and the Indo-China peninsula. This is the Hinayana division of Buddhism which clings to the early or asocial doctrine.

94:9.5 But even before the collapse in India, the Chinese and north Indian groups of Gautama's followers had begun the development of

There have been many who have not been content in this way quietly to pass out of finite existence into Nirvana. They have sought the “great road” (*Mahayana*), and have chosen out of love for their fellow beings and desire to serve them, to remain incarnate until the time and opportunity may come to them also to become Buddhas and gloriously serve all living beings (Wr 100).

From [the belief that others before Gautama had from time to time discovered the way to salvation and that another Buddha will appear and start again the wheel of salvation] it was only another step to reject as the most worthy goal of human endeavor the endeavor to seek ultimately to become an *Arahat* (saint) and enter *Nirvana* by oneself. That is only the “little road” (*Hinayana*) as the innovators contemptuously called it (Wr 100).

VI—*Merits and Defects of Primitive and Southern Buddhism* (Wright 98)

So we may say that early Buddhism endeavored to conserve by religious means the *highest moral values*, and these exclusively.

the *Mahayana* teaching of the “Great Road” to salvation

in contrast with the purists of the south who held to

the *Hinayana*, or “Lesser Road.”

And these Mahayanists cast loose from the social limitations inherent in the Buddhist doctrine, and ever since has this northern division of Buddhism continued to evolve in China and Japan.

94:9.6 Buddhism is a living, growing religion today because it succeeds in

conserving many of the *highest moral values* of its adherents.

The only rewards it offered were the **calmness** and **serenity** of mind and freedom from **sorrow** that attend virtuous living in this life, and the assurance for the life to come either of a more favorable rebirth, or of eternal blessedness in Nirvana (Wr 99).

It promotes **calmness** and self-control, augments **serenity** and happiness, and does much to prevent **sorrow** and mourning.

Those who believe this philosophy live better lives than many who do not.

10. RELIGION IN TIBET

VII—*Mahayana Buddhism* (Wright 100)

94:10.1 In Tibet may be found the strangest association of the Melchizedek teachings combined with Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Christianity.

In respect to ceremonial and ecclesiastical organization, the nearest counterpart to medieval Latin Christianity is found in Thibet. On its entrance to this land, Buddhism had to assimilate folk still in the **savage state**,

When the Buddhist missionaries entered Tibet, they encountered a **state of primitive savagery**

addicted to **magic and charms**,

a problem similar to that which confronted Christianity when it had to adapt itself to the requirements of the **northern barbarians**.

very similar to that which the early Christian missionaries found among the **northern tribes** of Europe.

94:10.2 These simple-minded Tibetans would not wholly give up their ancient **magic and charms**.

In the **religious ceremonial** of Thibet are to be found **shaven priests**,

Examination of the **religious ceremonials** of present-day Tibetan rituals reveals an overgrown brotherhood of **priests** with **shaven** heads

who practice an elaborate ritual embracing

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bells,

rosaries, images, pictures, holy water, gorgeous vestments, double choirs, processions,

creeds,

mystic rites, incense,

abbots, monks, nuns,

worship of the Virgin, saints, angels,

fasts, confessions, Purgatory,—

all in huge monasteries and magnificent cathedrals

under a priestly hierarchy governed by cardinals and the Grand Lama (the latter believed to be the human incarnation of a *Bodhisattva*).

Endless repetition in a mechanical way of sacred formulæ is thought to be efficacious.

Prayers are attached to a wheel or printed upon a flag;

as the wheel rotates or the flag is unfurled by the wind the same effects ensue as if the prayer were repeated by a worshipper (Wr 101).

bells, chants, incense, processions,

rosaries, images, charms, pictures, holy water, gorgeous vestments, and elaborate choirs.

They have rigid dogmas and crystallized creeds,

mystic rites and special fasts.

Their hierarchy embraces monks, nuns, abbots,

and the Grand Lama.

They pray to angels, saints, a Holy Mother, and the gods.

They practice confessions and believe in purgatory.

Their monasteries are extensive and their cathedrals magnificent.

They keep up an endless repetition of sacred rituals

and believe that such ceremonials bestow salvation.

Prayers are fastened to a wheel,

and with its turning they believe the petitions become efficacious.

Among no other people of modern times can be found the observance of so much from so many religions; and it is inevitable that such a cumulative liturgy would become inordinately cumbersome and intolerably burdensome.

94:10.3 The Tibetans have something of all the leading world religions except the simple teachings of the Jesusionian gospel: sonship with God, brotherhood with man, and ever-ascending citizenship in the eternal universe.

11. BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

BOOK IV: WHAT HAPPENED IN CHINA, III: BUDDHISM (Browne 191)

1. How it entered China—why it succeeded there—its rise and fall. (Browne 191)

Sometime in the second century B.C., ... Buddhism finally entered China. It did not spread at once, however. Buddhism then was not yet sufficiently bedizened with easy doctrines and lovable idols for it to have any great proselyting power. But by the second century A.D. it had become an entirely new religion, very generously salvationistic and frankly compromising; and then it spread with great rapidity (B 191).

After the coming of Buddhism the Chinese in their worship of the ancestors began to pray *for* the souls of the dead, as well as *to* them (B 193).

94:11.1 Buddhism entered China in the first millennium after Christ,

and it fitted well into the religious customs of the yellow race.

In ancestor worship they had long prayed *to* the dead; now they could also pray *for* them.

Buddhism soon amalgamated with the lingering ritualistic practices of disintegrating Taoism. This new synthetic religion with its temples of worship and definite religious ceremonial soon became the generally accepted cult of the peoples of China, Korea, and Japan.

94:11.2 While in some respects it is unfortunate that Buddhism was not carried to the world until after Gautama's followers had so perverted the traditions and teachings of the cult as to make of him a divine being, nonetheless this myth of his human life, embellished as it was with a multitude of miracles, proved very appealing to the auditors of the northern or Mahayana gospel of Buddhism.

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA, III: BUDDHISM (Browne 134)

4. Early history of Buddhism—deification of Buddha—Asoka—the new Buddhism in China—Tibet—Japan—India—Ceylon. (Browne 145)

[The Mahayana school] further declared that his divine spirit continued **regularly to return to the earth**, incarnating itself generation after generation in certain exceptionally holy men called Bodhi-sattvas, **“Living Buddhas.”**

And **thus it opened a way** for the incursion of a whole troop of extra gods. And finally it allowed idols of Buddha to be set up in splendid **temples**, and even encouraged the offering of sacrifices of flowers to those idols.

94:11.3 Some of his later followers taught that

Sakyamuni Buddha's spirit **returned periodically to earth** as a living Buddha,

thus opening the way for an indefinite perpetuation of Buddha images, **temples**, rituals,

and impostor **“living Buddhas.”**

Just the very elements in the old Brahmanic religion against which Buddha had most directly rebelled came sidling over to the protestant faith, and through the Mahayana took possession of it (B 146).

XIII: THE ETERNAL BUDDHA (Pratt 259)

[The Mahanaya] is always ready to admit, even eager to suggest, that the truths of other religions are merely different formulations of its own truth, that the cult objects of other faiths are merely symbolic expressions of its own deeper apprehension of the Real (P 270).

A world view so wide as this will be compatible not only with many scientific hypotheses, but with many religious symbols. The Tathagata makes use of the teachings of the Hinayana for those who cannot yet behold the larger vision (P 269-70).

Thus did the religion of the great Indian protestant eventually find itself shackled with

those very ceremonial practices and ritualistic incantations against which he had so fearlessly fought, and which he had so valiantly denounced.

^{94:11.4} The great advance made in Buddhist philosophy consisted in its comprehension of

the relativity of all truth.

Through the mechanism of this hypothesis Buddhists have been able to reconcile and correlate the divergencies within their own religious scriptures as well as the differences between their own and many others.

It was taught that the small truth was for little minds, the large truth for great minds.

XII: THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAHA-YANA (Pratt 234)

It is the divine essence, the Buddha nature within us all, that unites itself with our wills in the struggle against ignorance and desire. Without this more than human aid, this reinforcement which streams into our nature from the exhaustless source of spiritual life, our pigmy efforts against the forces of separation and illusion would probably be fruitless (P 256).

94:11.5 This philosophy also held that

the Buddha (divine) nature resided in all men;

that man, through his own endeavors, could attain to the realization of this inner divinity.

And this teaching is one of the clearest presentations of the truth of the indwelling Adjusters ever to be made by a Urantian religion.

[?]

94:11.6 But a great limitation in the original gospel of Siddhartha, as it was interpreted by his followers, was that it attempted the complete liberation of the human self from all the limitations of the mortal nature by the technique of isolating the self from objective reality. True cosmic self-realization results from identification with cosmic reality and with the finite cosmos of energy, mind, and spirit, bounded by space and conditioned by time.

94:11.7 But though the ceremonies and outward observances of Buddhism became grossly contaminated with those of the lands to which it traveled, this degeneration was not altogether the case in the philosophical life of the great thinkers who, from time to time, embraced this system of thought and belief. Through more than two thousand years, many of the best minds of Asia have concentrated upon the problem of ascertaining absolute truth and the truth of the Absolute.

94:11.8 The evolution of a high concept of the Absolute was achieved through many channels of thought and by devious paths of reasoning. The upward ascent of this doctrine of infinity was not so clearly defined as was the evolution of the God concept in Hebrew theology. Nevertheless, there were certain broad levels which the minds of the Buddhists reached, tarried upon, and passed through on their way to the envisioning of the Primal Source of universes:

94:11.9 1. *The Gautama legend.* At the base of the concept was the historic fact of the life and teachings of Siddhartha, the prophet prince of India. This legend grew in myth as it traveled through the centuries and across the broad lands of Asia until it surpassed the status of the idea of Gautama as the enlightened one and began to take on additional attributes.

XI: THE RISE OF THE MAHAYANA
(Pratt 211)

94:11.10 2. *The many Buddhas.* It was reasoned that, if Gautama had come to the peoples of India, then, in the remote past and in the remote future, the races of mankind must have been, and undoubtedly would be, blessed with other teachers of truth. This gave rise to the teaching that

The Pali texts, moreover, recognize that Gotama was not the only Buddha. Only one Buddha, to be sure, may be active at a time, but there had been several before Gotama, and there will be at least one more in the future.... Before the close of the Pali canon the number of Buddhas is raised from seven to twenty-five. [Etc.] (P 212-13)

there were many Buddhas,

In a later section of the Sukhavati Vyuha we are told of a sermon preached by the eighty-first Buddha ... recounting the excellencies of the Buddha fields belonging to some eighty-one hundred thousand *niyutas* of *kotis* [*i.e.*, 81,000,000,000,000,000,000] of Buddhas.... Of course no Buddhist takes Buddhist figures very seriously, and the passages just referred to are to be interpreted simply as meaning that the number of Buddhas is as **infinite** as space and time (P 213).

an unlimited and **infinite** number,

XIII: THE ETERNAL BUDDHA (Pratt 259)

In one sense, now are we all nearer our salvation than the Hinayana could have believed; in another, the prize is more lofty and more difficult—and immensely more worth the having—than ever the Hinayana dreamed. To be free from desire, to be extinct in the ordinary sense—compare these sane and earthly hopes with the prospect of becoming Buddha....

And what was true for these ancient saints is true for all. All shall in the end become Buddha: for all are potentially Buddha now (P 267).

Absolute knowledge cannot be other than Absolute Reality; hence the Buddha nature cannot fall short of the inclusive and ultimately Real....

... From which it follows plainly that all the Buddhas, infinite though they are in number, once fully understood, are **one** (P 260).

even that anyone could aspire to become one—to attain the divinity of a Buddha.

94:11.11 3. *The Absolute Buddha.* By the time the number of Buddhas was approaching infinity, it became necessary for the minds of those days to reunify this unwieldy concept. Accordingly it began to be taught that

all Buddhas were but the manifestation of some higher essence, some Eternal **One** of infinite and unqualified existence, some Absolute Source of all reality.

From here on, the Deity concept of Buddhism, in its highest form, becomes divorced from the human person of Gautama Siddhartha and casts off from the anthropomorphic limitations which have held it in leash. This final conception of the Buddha Eternal can well be identified as the Absolute, sometimes even as the infinite I AM.

94:11.12 While this idea of Absolute Deity never found great popular favor with the peoples of Asia, it did enable the intellectuals of these lands to unify their philosophy and to harmonize their cosmology. The concept of the Buddha Absolute is at times quasi-personal, at times wholly impersonal—even an infinite creative force. Such concepts, though helpful to philosophy, are not vital to religious development. Even an anthropomorphic Yahweh is of greater religious value than an infinitely remote Absolute of Buddhism or Brahmanism.

94:11.13 At times the Absolute was even thought of as contained within the infinite I AM. But these speculations were chill comfort to the hungry multitudes who craved to hear words of promise, to hear the simple gospel of Salem, that faith in God would assure divine favor and eternal survival.

12. THE GOD CONCEPT OF BUDDHISM

94:12.1 The great weakness in the cosmology of Buddhism was twofold: its contamination with many of the superstitions of India and China and its sublimation of Gautama, first as the enlightened one, and then as the Eternal Buddha. Just as Christianity has suffered from the absorption of much erroneous human philosophy, so does Buddhism bear its human birthmark. But the teachings of Gautama have continued to evolve during the past two and one-half millennia.

The concept of Buddha, to an enlightened Buddhist, is no more the human personality of Gautama than the concept of Jehovah is identical with the spirit demon of Horeb to an enlightened Christian. Paucity of terminology, together with the sentimental retention of olden nomenclature, is often provocative of the failure to understand the true significance of the evolution of religious concepts.

94:12.2 Gradually the concept of God, as contrasted with the Absolute, began to appear in Buddhism. Its sources are back in the early days of this differentiation of the followers of the Lesser Road and the Greater Road. It was among the latter division of Buddhism that the dual conception of God and the Absolute finally matured. Step by step, century by century, the God concept has evolved until,

[See Pratt's list of the main sects of Japanese Buddhism and their founders, on p. 519. He includes: "Yutsu Nembutsu (Ryonin) about 1100"; "Jodo (Honen Shonin) 1175"; "Shin (Shinran) 1225".]

with the teachings of Ryonin, Honen Shonin, and Shinran in Japan,

this concept finally came to fruit in the belief in Amida Buddha.

VIII: BUDDHISM (Wright 85)

VIII—*Buddhism in China and Japan* (Wright 102)

94:12.3 Among these believers it is taught that the soul, upon experiencing death, may elect to enjoy a sojourn in Paradise prior to entering Nirvana, the ultimate of existence. It is proclaimed that this new salvation is attained by faith in the divine mercies and loving care of

Among the various Buddhist sects in China and Japan there are two—the Jodo and the Shin—which remind one in some respects of Protestantism. Amida Buddha, according to these sects, out of love and compassion for mankind, refused to enter Nirvana, and rules in a heavenly Paradise in the west.

[For the philosophical Amidist (if I may use such a word) Amida is the absolute, the Tendai Dharmakaya. Even these philosophers, however, still retain the personal view. In philosophy, I was told by a very learned Shinshu abbot, Shin and Jodo thinkers accept pantheism; in faith they insist upon the personal view of God (Prati 648).]

He has promised that whosoever calls upon his name in faith, in a prescribed manner shall on his next incarnation be born in this Paradise, where he shall be made perfect, and later reach Nirvana (Wr 102).

One peculiarity of the religious situation in China, Korea and Japan is that there is nothing to prevent a layman from adhering more or less to several religions. He may go, as he pleases, to make offerings and seek divine assistance from Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian and Shinto sources (Wr 103).

Amida, God of the Paradise in the west.

In their philosophy, the Amidists hold to an Infinite Reality which is beyond all finite mortal comprehension;

in their religion, they cling to faith in the all-merciful Amida, who so loves the world that

he will not suffer one mortal who calls on his name in true faith and with a pure heart to fail in the attainment of the supernal happiness of Paradise.

94:12.4 The great strength of Buddhism is that

its adherents are free to choose truth from all religions;

such freedom of choice has seldom characterized a Urantian faith.

In this respect the Shin sect of Japan has become one of the most progressive religious groups in the world;

[contd] Among the various Buddhist countries the impact of Western civilization and the competition of Christian missions have done most to arouse the Buddhism of Japan to activity, especially in the Shin sect.... Foreign missionary effort has been engaged in, and Buddhist missionaries have been sent to China, Korea, Siberia, Thibet, the Malay Peninsula, Hawaii, and the United States (Wr 103).

it has revived the ancient missionary spirit of Gautama's followers and has begun to send teachers to other peoples.

This willingness to appropriate truth from any and all sources is indeed a commendable tendency to appear among religious believers during the first half of the twentieth century after Christ.

94:12.5 Buddhism itself is undergoing a twentieth-century renaissance. Through contact with Christianity the social aspects of Buddhism have been greatly enhanced.

Priests have travelled to Europe and America and got Western ideas (Wr 103).

The desire to learn has been rekindled in the hearts of the monk priests of the brotherhood,

Schools of all sorts are being established, especially for girls and women, who had been neglected (Wr 103).

and the spread of education throughout this faith

will be certainly provocative of new advances in religious evolution.

94:12.6 At the time of this writing, much of Asia rests its hope in Buddhism. Will this noble faith, that has so valiantly carried on through the dark ages of the past, once again receive the truth of expanded cosmic realities even as the disciples of the great teacher in India once listened to his proclamation of new truth?

Will this ancient faith respond once more to the invigorating stimulus of the presentation of new concepts of God and the Absolute for which it has so long searched?

94:12.7 All Urantia is waiting for the proclamation of the ennobling message of Michael, unencumbered by the accumulated doctrines and dogmas of nineteen centuries of contact with the religions of evolutionary origin. The hour is striking for presenting to Buddhism, to Christianity, to Hinduism, even to the peoples of all faiths, not the gospel about Jesus, but the living, spiritual reality of the gospel of Jesus.

94:12.8 [Presented by a Melchizedek of Neadon.]

1. *Compare:* As the gods overlapped in functions, there early appeared a tendency to synthesize them. A triad became pre-eminent, formed of the deities of the Fire (Agni), the Rain (Varuna, Indra), and the Sun (Mitra, Varuna, Vishnu, etc.)... From the initial letters of a representative of each of these three classes of deities (Agni, Varuna, Mitra), it has been thought, developed the syllable AUM, of which the term “Om” prominent in Indian liturgy, is a further contraction (Wr 70-71).

Contrast: Not only as identical with the chief god of the Greeks, but also from a native Indic point of view, it might have been expected that Dyaus (Zeus), the ‘shining sky,’ would play an important rôle in the Hindu pantheon. But such is not the case. There is not a single hymn addressed independently to Dyaus, nor is there any hint of especial preëminence of Dyaus in the half-dozen hymns that are sung to Heaven and Earth together (Edward Washburn Hopkins, Ph.D., *The Religions of India* [1902], p. 58).

Compare: A native classification of the Vedic gods by one of the most esteemed authorities divides them, according to the sphere in which their activities are chiefly manifest, into gods of the sky, gods of the atmosphere (that is, of the space between sky and earth), and gods of the earth... (George Foot Moore, *History of Religions, Vol. 1* [1920], p. 248).

2. *Contrast:* Brahman is declared to be the innermost essence of all things, animate and inanimate; it abides in them unknown to them, and controls them from within; hence it is called *antaryāmin* (‘controller from within’). Brahman, as immanent in us, is declared not to be different from our *ātman*. The Upanisads insist on the non-difference of the Brahman and Ātman; but it may be doubted whether thereby absolute identity is meant, so that the *ātman* would cease to exist individually when it has been joined to Brahman. On this point there is great diversity of opinion among the interpreters of the Upanisads—the Aupanisadas or Vedāntins.

These philosophers endeavoured to decide from the Upanisads their true teachings, and to show that they formed a self-consistent system. The older view seems to have been that followed by Ramanuja, viz., that souls, though essentially one with Brahman, still retain some kind of individuality of their own when joined to him, and that the world has the same relation to Brahman as the soul has to the body. The younger view expounded by Sankara has, however, become the prevailing one among philosophers; it maintains that Brahman alone is real and everything else is an illusion (*maya*), and that the souls on reaching Brahman are completely merged in him and cease to exist individually (J 801).

3. *Compare: Cosmology.*— ... The social order evolved from the universal order and models of government, social life and morals existed in the universal order as ideas or images. These were transmitted as symbols to the saints and the sages and interpreted and adapted by them to the needs of the people (“Confucianism,” p. 236, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [1930]).

4. *Compare: His Ethics and Philosophy.*— ... Man’s nature was from God; the harmonious acting out of it was obedience to the will of God; and the violation of it was disobedience. But in affirming this, there was a striking difference between his language and that of his own ancient models. In the *King* the references to the Supreme Being are abundant. With Confucius the vague, impersonal term, Heaven, took the place of the Divine name (“Confucius,” p. 239, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [1930]).