

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Editor: DR. PAUL CARUS.

Associates: { E. C. HEGELER
MARY CARUS.

VOL. XIX. (NO. 12.) DECEMBER, 1905. NO. 595

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MACBETH.

BY WILHELM VON KAULBACH.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

AND THE UPANISHADS.

BY CHARLES JOHNSTON.

WERE a student of the Upanishads, steeped in the golden air of Eastern wisdom, to turn to the Gospels of Palestine, what impression would he receive from them? That of a wonderful difference, and yet of a wonderful likeness. Finding himself in a new world, he would nevertheless encounter on all sides things very familiar. Take these two sentences, for example: "This soul of mine, in the inner being, is smaller than a grain of rice, or a grain of barley, or a grain of mustard-seed. . . . just as, beloved, birds of the air come together to a tree to rest, so indeed all this comes to rest in the soul."¹ Who can fail to think of the well-known words: "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed . . . which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."²

Here is a parallel even closer. Take first the words of the old scripture of India: "Just as a treasure of gold, hid in a field, is passed by over and over again by those who know not its place and find it not, even so, verily, all these beings enter day by day into the world of the Eternal, and know it not. This, verily, is the soul in the inner being."³

It is hardly necessary to add, for comparison, the words of the more familiar parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."⁴

¹ Chhandogya Upanishad, iii, 14, 3. Prashna Upanishad, iv, 6.

² Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

³ Chhandogya Upanishad, viii, 6, 3.

⁴ Matt. xiii. 44.

Equally close is the likeness in the following: "Just as a sovereign orders those whom he has set in authority, saying: 'Be ye rulers over these villages and these villages;' thus, verily, the soul disposes the life-powers in this direction and in that."⁵ This is exactly the frame of the parable of the talents or pounds, where "a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom," and, returning, said to his servant "because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."⁶ All these examples are taken from the "parables of the kingdom." We might get equally close resemblances at other points, as, for example, the "blind leaders of the blind,"⁷ which recalls the Upanishad sentence, "the deluded wander about staggering, like blind men led by a blind man."⁸ Or compare the image of "the salt of the earth" with this singularly vivid and charming passage from the Eastern Wisdom:

"Let the Master teach me more! said he.

"Let it be so, dear! said he.—Put this salt in water, and come to me in the morning.

"And he did so, and the Master said to him:

"The salt you put in the water last night—bring it to me!

"And looking for its appearance, he could not see it, as it was melted in the water.

"Taste the top of it! said he.—How is it?

"It is salt! said he.

"Taste the middle of it! said he.—How is it?

"It is salt! said he.

"Taste the bottom of it! said he.—How is it?

"It is salt! said he.

"Take it away, then, and return to me.

"And he did so; but that salt exists for ever. And the Master said to him:

"Just so, dear, you do not see the Real in the world. Yet it is there all the same. And this Spirit is the Self of all that is, it is the Real, it is the Soul. That Thou Art!"

The passages cited are all taken from the older Upanishads, and are, therefore, several centuries older than Buddhism. It is hardly credible that any of these passages is less than three thousand years old, thus antedating the Gospels by a thousand years.

II.

Our comparisons were made chiefly with the "parables of the kingdom," to which fifteen of the thirty-five parables in the Gospels explicitly belong. Many more of them doubtless belong to the same class, as we can see in the case of the "parable of the pounds,"

⁵ Prashna Upanishad, iii, 4.

⁷ Matt. xv. 14.

⁶ Luke, xix. 12.

⁸ Katha Upanishad, ii, 5.

which is simply introduced as a story by Luke, but which Matthew expressly numbers among the "parables of the kingdom."

It is well, therefore, to consider these parables, as a whole, in order that we may understand the meaning of the words "the kingdom of heaven" which run through them all like a golden thread. These words were not originated by Jesus. The phrase "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," or, more literally, "the realm of the heavens has drawn near," was the rallying cry of John the Baptist, and on his lips had doubtless a Messianic meaning. Jesus adopted the phrase, and we find him first using it himself, and then bidding his disciples to use it, as a text for their teaching. It would be difficult to gain, from the parables of the kingdom alone, any clear idea of the thought of Jesus. We should be at a loss to conceive anything which is like "a pearl, a net, a king entrusting money to his servants, a grain of mustard seed, leaven, wheat" and so forth; and only in the much-disputed "Tao" of the Chinese sage Lao-tse could we find an equal enigma. Nor can it be said that the meaning of the parables, as given by the Teacher, makes the matter altogether plain. Indeed, when we read for instance the explanation of the "parable of the tares," we are conscious that one parable is being explained by another, and so with the "parable of the sower."

A most illuminating sentence is preserved by Luke, though not in relation to the parables. It is in this passage: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," or better "with outward show" . . . "for behold, the kingdom of God is within you."⁹ This is closely approached by the words of Paul: "the kingdom of righteousness and peace."¹⁰

It is noteworthy that the fourth Gospel contains no parables, and while we may in part account for this by saying that the last evangelist, writing in the evening of a long life, sought not to repeat what had already been recorded, but rather to complete the existing records; yet this is only a part of the truth. It would seem rather that John gives no parables, because the teaching of Jesus which he records was not, for the most part, teaching to the multitudes, but was preeminently teaching given to disciples, to "whom it was given to know the mysteries." If this be so, then we may well seek in the fourth Gospel for a more unveiled presentation of the great mystery, a teaching immediate and vivid, not clothed in similitudes and imagery.

We shall find the most direct statement, perhaps, in a verse

⁹ Luke, xvii, 21.

¹⁰ Romans, xiv. 17.

like this, a part of the last great discourse before the tragedy: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."¹¹ We shall not go very far wrong, if we take this to be a restatement of the wonderful phrase recorded by Luke: "the kingdom of God is within you," for we may believe that the king will dwell within his kingdom.

We come to this, therefore, as the heart of the matter: a clear statement that, as a result of certain things done and experienced, we may look for a certain indwelling of the divine principle of life, even of Divinity itself; and that this indwelling which will make itself known in consciousness, is the beginning of immortality, of a real and realized eternal life. The beginning of the way is very vividly described: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."¹² It is probable that the reading "except a man be born from above" represents the original thought more closely, and we find this expanded thus: "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." It may be suggested that we have here another phrase taken from John the Baptist, and clothed with a more living meaning, for the Baptist spoke of baptism with the Spirit and fire.¹³ And it is further of high interest to find the fourth Gospel using the phrase "the kingdom of God," though recording none of the "parables of the kingdom."

III.

We saw the first sign of spiritual rebirth thus stated by Jesus: "if a man love me, he will keep my words." A few verses earlier, a somewhat more expanded phrase is used: "he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."¹⁴ It seems fitting to enquire here what commandments are referred to. If we take all the specific commands given in the four Gospels, we shall find them grouping themselves naturally into two classes. The first class includes rules touching the relation of man to the divine power; rules such as this: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."¹⁵ Even stronger is the following: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."¹⁶

Here, at the beginning of the way, we may draw a very close

¹¹ John, xiv. 23.

¹² John, iii. 3.

¹³ Matt., iii. 11.

¹⁴ John, xiv. 21.

¹⁵ Matt. vi. 24.

¹⁶ John, xii. 25.

parallel from the Upanishads. The words spoken are put into the mouth of Death, the great Initiator: "The better is one thing, the dearer is another thing; these two bind a man in opposite ways. Of these two, it is well for him who takes the better; he fails of his object, who chooses the dearer. The better and the dearer approach a man; going round them, the sage discerns between them. The sage chooses the better rather than the dearer; the fool chooses the dearer, through lust of possession. Thou indeed, pondering on dear and dearly loved desires, hast passed them by. Not this way of wealth hast thou chosen, in which many men sink. The great Beyond gleams not for the child, led away by the delusion of possessions. 'This is the world, there is no other,' he thinks, and so falls again and again under my dominion."¹⁷

The phrase attributed to the deluded: "This is the world, there is no other," recalls a good many like the following: "My kingdom is not of this world,"¹⁸ or: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."¹⁹ And it is impossible not to see a close relation between the idea of mammon and the "dear and dearly loved desires" of the Upanishads, the "way of wealth in which many sink," the way of the "lust of possession." The antithesis is even more strongly brought out in an earlier part of the Upanishad, where Death the Initiator, seeking to test the postulant's sincerity, tempts him thus: "Choose sons and grandsons of a hundred years, and much cattle, and elephants and gold and horses. Choose the great abode of the earth, and for thyself live as many autumns as thou wilt. If thou thinkest this an equal wish, choose wealth and length of days. Be thou mighty in the world: I make thee an enjoyer of thy desires. Whatsoever desires are difficult in the mortal world, ask all desires according to thy will. These beauties, with their chariots and lutes—not such as these are to be won by men—be waited on by them, my gifts. Ask me not concerning Death."²⁰

The postulant answers: "To-morrow these fleeting things wear out the vigor of a mortal's powers. Even the whole of life is short; thine, Death, are chariots and dance and song. Not by wealth can a man be satisfied. Shall we choose wealth, if we have seen thee? Shall we desire life while thou art master? But the wish I choose is truly that. Coming near to the unfading immortals, a fading mortal here below, and understanding, considering the sweets of beauty and pleasure, who would rejoice in length of days?"²¹

¹⁷ Katha Upanishad, ii, 1.

¹⁸ John, xviii. 36.

¹⁹ John, xvi. 33.

²⁰ Katha Upanishad, i, 23, 24, 25.

²¹ Katha Upanishad, i, 26, 27, 28.

If we remember that, in India, elephants are the sign of princely rank, we shall be able to find a fairly vivid expression of "mammon" in the sentence: "sons and grandsons of a hundred years, and much cattle, and elephants and gold and horses. . . .these beauties with their chariots and lutes—not such as these are to be won by mortal men." An expression even more perfectly modern in sound, though probably not less than three thousand years old, is found in another Upanishad: "he who amongst men is rich and happy, a lord, well endowed with all wealth, this is the highest bliss of mankind."²² A man who is "rich and happy and a lord" might very well stand to-day for the type of worldly success, just as in the days of the Vedas. And it would seem that it is precisely this ideal of worldly success which is meant in the phrase: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The tremendous tragedy of the Teacher's death shows once for all what meaning he himself attributed to his teaching; for, from the standpoint of worldly success, what could be a more ghastly failure than the felon's death, in the company of thieves?

IV.

The words "he that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" strongly remind one of the Upanishad sentence: "when all desires that were hid in the heart are let go, the mortal becomes immortal and reaches the Eternal."²³ In the phrase: "he that loveth his life," the Greek word *psychē* is used, a word which seems to cover one great idea in the New Testament, but whose identity is veiled under several different English words. The same is true of the derived adjective *psychikos*. For instance, *psychikē* is translated "sensual" in the verse "this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."²⁴ It is translated "natural" in a very famous passage of Paul's, a passage which comes closer to certain Eastern teachings than anything else in the New Testament. It is worth while substituting the anglicized word "psychical" for "natural," to bring out the original color of this passage: "There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. . . .So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a psychical body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a psychical body and there is a spiritual body. And so it was written, The first man

²² Brhad Aranyaka Upanishad, iv, 3.

²³ Brhad Aranyaka Upanishad, iv, 4. ²⁴ James, iii. 15.

Adam was made a living *psychē*; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. . . . The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. . . . for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."²⁵

Paul here teaches some such doctrine as this: There are two realms of our life, beside the mere physical body. There is a psychical body, and there is a spiritual body. The psychical body is the realm of the passions and desires, of all selfish and self-seeking impulses, of which Paul himself has given such full and vigorous lists again and again. Those who live in the psychical body, with no sense of anything higher, he calls "the dead," as in the phrase "to be carnally minded is death";²⁶ or in the words, "you who were dead in trespasses and sins."²⁷ And the most complete worldly success would still leave its possessor numbered among the "dead" in this sense.

Paul then conceives a quickening of the life from above, or "a birth from above" as Jesus expresses it. In the more analytical teaching of Paul, this new birth comes through the intervention of the "spiritual body," the vesture of the Spirit, to which he gives the remarkable title of "the new man, the Lord from heaven." As he views the matter, it would seem that there must first be something like a softening or disintegrating of the psychical body or egotistical nature; there must be a weakening of the force of passion and desire, a "crucifixion" to use the word so often employed by Paul himself, of the body of lust and hate; and then, after this crucifixion, there comes the resurrection, when the man's life is no longer centered in the psychical body but in the spiritual body, in that divine Soul which Paul calls the new man, the Lord from heaven. Paul, everywhere throughout his writings, speaks of the spiritual body as inherently immortal, as already enjoying eternal life; and in his view, salvation is attained through the weakening and disintegrating of the psychical nature, and resurrection into the spiritual and already immortal nature. The immortal nature he speaks of as the Lord from heaven, and the Christ, and recognizes it as identical with the divine life manifested in Jesus. One might say, perhaps, that Paul regarded Jesus as one in whom the psychical and egotistical nature had been completely conquered, and whose whole life was centered in the spiritual body, whose consciousness was altogether that of the new man, the Lord from heaven, and who was, therefore, one with Divinity, one with the Eternal. We might further say that Paul teaches a like transmu-

²⁵ 1 Cor., xv. 40-53.

²⁶ Romans, viii. 6.

²⁷ Ephesians, ii. 1.

tation for all those who, from being dead in trespasses and sins, the power of the psychical body, have risen to the life of the spiritual body, and that those who have passed through this resurrection will be "like him in glory," in the fullness of time also entering into the life of the Eternal. This by no means signifies such an absorption as would mean the annihilation of individual being, such an annihilation as is often described by writers on popular Buddhism. One would rather say that real individuality begins only after the new birth, with the transfer of life and consciousness to the spiritual body.

v.

If we consider the matter thus, it will become quite clear why Jesus so imperatively laid down the law that we cannot serve "God and mammon"; and we shall begin to see what is meant by the declaration that "he that loveth his life (*psychē*) shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." In the phrase of Paul, the meaning would be something like this: He who sets his heart and all his desires on the life of the psychical body shall lose it, since this is the way of 'death'; but he who weakens the psychical body and passes through the resurrection into the spiritual body shall thus transform his life, raising it to a condition which is inherently immortal, and thus keeping it to life eternal. This transformation, this "baptism from above" is an imperative condition of spiritual, that is, of immortal life; and the setting of the heart on worldly success makes the transformation impossible; for where our treasure is, there will our heart be.

There was a second element in the commandments of Jesus, as we saw. This second element is of the most vital import; moreover, it is much more intelligible than the first, in that it deals with things of common observation, and appeals very strongly to the best side of the emotional nature. For this reason, perhaps, it tends to become more conspicuous than the first, and somewhat to obscure the first. It is what Paul would call the law of charity. It is characteristic of the two teachers, that Paul teaches charity in a piece of splendid eloquence, every sentence of which is of universal import;²⁸ while Jesus frames the same teaching in a story, and makes the application in the highest degree direct and personal. It is quite impossible to mistake his meaning: "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."²⁹

²⁸ I Cor., xiii, 1.

²⁹ Matt., xxv, 35.

There is nothing vague here, nothing metaphysical, or capable of being misunderstood even by the simplest heart of man. Rather will the simple of heart most readily comprehend. Yet it is not so much a matter of comprehension as of action. As the teacher said, not merely "he that hath my commandments and understandeth them," but "he that hath my commandments and keepeth them" is beloved of the Father, and to him is the promise made. I am fully convinced that every sentence in the passage just quoted is meant to be literally and fully carried out. This is by no means weakened by the undoubted truth that there will presently arise a deeper understanding of the words. It will presently be seen that there are more ways of being an hungred than mere bodily lack of food, and that they are far more grievous; that there is another nakedness than that of the body, and one harder to bear. There is a hunger for human love; there is the terrible hunger for spiritual life. These also must be ministered to. Yet we can conceive nothing so likely to awake the keen sarcasm of the Teacher, as the pretence that, by claiming to minister to these higher needs, one is exempt from all claims of the lower, and may selfishly live one's life, seeking worldly success, and setting all the desires of the heart on the things that make for it.

It would seem that Jesus held egotism to be the chief sin and impediment to spiritual life; and it is significant that two of the most splendid passages in his teaching are directed against religious egotism. There is, first, the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, which, amongst other things, is a matchless piece of dramatic characterization and living narrative; so powerful in sheer literary quality, that the two praying figures, the one erect and haughty, the other humble and abashed, have become part of universal thought. Then there is another parable of equal, perhaps of even greater literary perfection, the story of the Good Samaritan. It is a test of the force of Jesus, that his use of an obscure tribal name in this single story has introduced the word Samaritan into all modern languages; just as another parable has for all time changed the significance of "talent" from a Roman weight to an intellectual power. The persons against whom this parable is directed, are not a Dives and a Cæsar, as we might, perhaps, expect, but a priest and a Levite; as though, in the thought of the teacher, religious egotism is most prone of all things to check the flow of charity. The word Pharisee comes from a Hebrew root meaning "to separate," and the religious sense of separateness, which says "Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men," is thus made the target

of two of the most eloquent sermons in the whole teaching of Jesus. It is a warning that egotism finds no firmer fortress anywhere in our nature than in religious bigotry. Unfortunately the need of the warning is written large in the history of the world, with its red record of "religious wars."

There is one passage even more scathing, though far less often quoted. It is in the narrative of the dinner to which Jesus was invited by Simon the Pharisee. It is best recorded by Luke.³⁰ He tells us that, while host and guests sat at dinner, "a woman in the city, which was a sinner," entered the house, bringing a box of precious unguent, and stood behind the couch of Jesus weeping; washing his feet with her tears, she wiped them with her hair, and kissed his feet, anointing them with the ointment. The host, Simon the Pharisee, saw it, and wondered that any one claiming illumination could fail to discern that the woman was 'a sinner.' He said nothing, but his thought was read, and his guest addressed him: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," and told the story of the two debtors, to whom fifty and five hundred pence were forgiven. Then comes the application. Turning to the woman, he said to Simon: "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment."

VI.

Turning once more, for comparison, to the Upanishads, we shall find their teaching almost the same at each stage. We have seen already that the contrast between God and mammon is sharply drawn, by Death the Initiator, and that the postulant for spiritual life must renounce completely the ideals of worldly success, dear and dearly loved desires, riches and princely rank, sons and grandsons and gold, and the whole "way of wealth in which many men sink," before he can enter the path of immortality, the "small old path, stretching far away." Moreover, we have, even more explicitly than in Paul's great epistle, the teaching as to the psychical and spiritual bodies, a teaching which lies at the heart of all later Indian psychology. The psychical body is, in a certain sense the body of desire, the body of loves and hates in a purely selfish and personal sense. One might call it an etheric double of the physical

³⁰ Luke, vii. 36.

body; and to it are transferred the animal instincts of the physical body,—transferred and transformed. The instinct of self-defence becomes egotism, ambition, the desire of domination. The instinct of reproduction becomes passion and desire, and begins to take, in psychical life, a force and prominence which simple animal life knows nothing of. The psychical body is thus the body of desire, of darkness, of egotism. Above and behind it, according to the Eastern teaching, is the spiritual body, the body of immortality, to which the name “the Higher Self” is often given. This spiritual body is the vesture and dwelling-place of the Spirit, and has its own divine powers, its own divine senses. Between the spiritual bodies of different people there can be none of that enmity which reigns between psychical natures, for, before either can live in the spiritual body, they must have left all enmity behind.

Thus, for the Indian teaching, charity, the second of the commandments of Jesus, is the necessary consequence of obedience to the first. Charity is an inherent quality of the spiritual body, and it is impossible to inherit the one without inheriting the other.

Let us make this more explicit, by quoting a few verses from one of the Upanishads, one in which the spiritual body and its indwelling Spirit are called “the Lord,” just as Paul so calls them: “All must be pervaded by the Lord, whatever moves in the passing world; through this renounced thou shalt enjoy, nor grudge to any one his wealth. . . . He who beholds all beings in the Soul, and the Soul in all beings, thereafter blames none any more. . . . He who has understood wisdom and unwisdom both, by unwisdom crossing through death, by wisdom reaches the immortal.”³¹

VII.

According to the teaching of the Upanishads, behind and above the psychical body stands the spiritual body, the Higher Self, the immortal. To it are given many names: the Ancient, the Seer, the ancient Poet, the Lord. The aim of all life is the passage from the mortal, psychical self of illusion, of dream and desire, to the immortal Self of divine light.

Above the Higher Self stands the Supreme Self, the Eternal, in whom all Higher Selves are set, as the rays are set in the sun. He who rises first to the Higher Self will rise later to know himself as the Supreme Self of all beings, not thereby losing individuality, but rather finding his true individuality, immortal and eternal. He becomes possessor of endless worlds, who knows this.

³¹ Isha Upanishad, 1 et seq.

This path is entered only after all desires that dwell in the heart are set free; when the man dreams no more dreams, and desires no more desires. Then only does the mortal become the immortal, and enter the Eternal. Wisdom consists in the revelation first of the Higher Self, and then of the Eternal. When these have been revealed in the realm within, it might well be said that to such a one the Father had come, and made his abode with him: that he had entered the realm of the heavens, and found the king within his kingdom.