

Dr. Annie Besant as Social Reformer and Literature a Study

Ragavendra Chari H P

Asst. Professor of English, Gfgc Tumkur

Abstract

Annie Besant : 1 October 1847 – 20 September 1933 was an English socialist, theosophist, freemason, women's rights and Home Rule activist, educationist, and campaigner for Indian nationalism. She was an ardent supporter of both Irish and Indian self-rule.^[1] She became the first female president of the Indian National Congress in 1917.

She became a prominent speaker for the National Secular Society NSS, as well as a writer, and a close friend of Charles Bradlaugh. In 1877 they were prosecuted for publishing a book by birth control campaigner Charles Knowlton. Thereafter, she became involved with union actions, including the Bloody Sunday demonstration and the London matchgirls strike of 1888. She was a leading speaker for both the Fabian Society and the Marxist Social Democratic Federation SDF. She was also elected to the London School Board for Tower Hamlets, topping the poll, even though few women were qualified to vote at that time. In 1890 Besant met Helena Blavatsky, and over the next few years her interest in theosophy grew, whilst her interest in secular matters waned. She became a member of the Theosophical Society and a prominent lecturer on the subject. As part of her theosophy-related work, she travelled to India. In 1898 she helped establish the Central Hindu School, and in 1922 she helped establish the Hyderabad Sind National Collegiate Board in Bombay today's Mumbai, India. The Theosophical Society Auditorium in Hyderabad, Sindh Sindh is called Besant Hall in her honour. In 1902, she established the first overseas Lodge of the International Order of Co-Freemasonry, Le Droit Humain. Over the next few years, she established lodges in many parts of the British Empire. In 1907 she became president of the Theosophical Society, whose international headquarters were, by then, located in Adyar, Madras. Besant also became involved in politics in India, joining the Indian National Congress.^[2] When World War I broke out in 1914, she helped launch the Home Rule League to campaign for democracy in India, and dominion status within the British Empire. This led to her election as president of the Indian National Congress, in late 1917. In the late 1920s, Besant travelled to the United States with her protégé and adopted son Jiddu Krishnamurti, who she claimed was the new Messiah and incarnation of Buddha. Krishnamurti rejected these claims in 1929. After the war, she continued to campaign for Indian independence and for the causes of theosophy, she died in 1933.

KEYWORDS : In 1890 Besant met Helena Blavatsky, British Empire, Theosophy, Life of Annie Besant, As social Reformer, literature, The Role of India's Independence, Central Hindu School, national awakening, a PAN India movement, Swarajya Sabha in 1920, Unity and the Spirit.

Life of Annie Besant : **Annie Wood** was born on 1 October 1847 in London, the daughter of William Burton Perse Wood 1816–1852 and his wife Emily Roche Morris died 1874. Her father was English,

attended Trinity College Dublin, and attained a medical degree; her mother was an Irish Catholic. Her paternal grandfather Robert Wright Wood was a brother of Sir Matthew Wood, 1st Baronet. Wood's father died when she was five years old, leaving a son, Henry Trueman Wood, and Annie, his one daughter. Her mother supported Henry's education at Harrow School, by running a boarding house there. Annie was fostered by Ellen Marryat, sister of the author Frederick Marryat, who ran a school at Charmouth, until age 16. She returned to her mother at Harrow self-confident, aware of a sense of duty to society, and under the influence of the Tractarians. As a young woman, she was also able to travel in Europe. In summer 1867, Wood and her mother stayed at Pendleton near Manchester with the radical solicitor William Prowting Roberts, who questioned Wood's political assumptions. In December of that year, at age 20, Annie married the cleric Frank Besant 1840–1917, younger brother of Walter Besant, an evangelical, serious Anglican.

Annie Besant –The Role of India’s Independence : In 1902, Annie Besant wrote that “India was not ruled for its benefit, but rather for the benefit of its conquerors.” She promoted national awakening while combating social ills such as caste discrimination and child marriage. She devoted a lot of time and effort to improving education in India. Annie Besant entered politics when she joined the Indian National Congress. When she first joined, the Congress was merely a debating body whose members deliberated on which resolutions to pass. These resolutions were mild in nature, requesting more representation for middle-class Indians in the British government. It had yet to grow into a mass movement demanding complete independence. When World War I broke out in 1914, Britain enlisted the help of its colonies against its adversaries. But, according to Annie Besant, this was where India’s opportunities lay. Annie Besant founded the All India Home Rule League in September, 1916. The Tilak home rule league was formed in April 1916. This was India’s first faction to demand complete independence. The league worked all year to establish a network of local branches and organize agitations. The colonial authorities, for their part, placed her under house arrest as a result of her activities. Other political parties threatened more riots if she was not released. As a result, the government was forced to make minor concessions. One of them was that once the war was over, the possibility of self-rule would be considered. In September 1917, Annie Besant was released. In December of that year, she was elected president of the Indian National Congress for a one-year term. The new Congress leadership would be handed over to Mahatma Gandhi at this time. He was a key supporter of her release from house arrest. Annie Besant would fight for India’s independence until the end of her life. She would go on speaking tours in India and abroad to spread the word about the independence movement.

Research Activity : In 1907, Besant founded a rival organization in London named the International Club for Psychical Research ICPR, which attracted occultists, spiritualists and theosophists. In 1911 it was thought to have six hundred members. The *International Psychic Gazette*, a monthly periodical, was started in 1912 as its official journal, but ceased publication after a few months. In her talks and writings, Besant encouraged the development of psychic faculties, as long as this was undertaken with appropriate spiritual preparation. Examples of her own claimed experiences are described by Kurt Leland in *Invisible Worlds: Annie Besant on Psychic and Spiritual Development* 2014. In *Occult Chemistry* 1908, Besant describes clairvoyant visions shared with Charles Leadbeater of the anatomical structure of elements, which she said they achieved by entering an altered state of consciousness that enabled them to slow down of the movement of particles, thereby allowing them to see the nature of atoms in their natural state. SPR researchers acknowledged that Besant may have had genuine psychic

experiences, but objected that her tendency to take them at ‘their most superficial face value’ with ‘utter disregard of any rules of evidence or canons of criticism’ limited their value in scientific terms.

Social Reforms and Theosophy

- Annie Besant came to India in 1893 with H. S. Olcott.
- In 1898, she founded the Central Hindu School and College in Varanasi.
- In 1907, she became the President of the Theosophical Society.
- In 1916 she established the All India Home Rule League with Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
- In 1917, she was elected as President of the Indian National Congress (INC).
- In 1918, the Indian Scout Movement was founded by her.
- In 1933, she died in Adyar, Madras, at 85.
- In 1902, she wrote an essay regarding the policies of the British.
- Besant’s philosophical beliefs influenced her social reform work in India. She emphasised the unity of all religions and advocated for universal brotherhood.
- Her spiritual ideals motivated her to campaign against the caste system and untouchability, which she saw as significant impediments to India’s progress.
- She also supported women’s rights, including advocating for the abolition of child marriage, polygamy, and the purdah system.
- Annie Besant believed that a society could not progress without the equal participation of women.
- She fought against social issues, including caste prejudice and child marriage.
- She spent a lot of time and effort in India to improve the education system of India.
- When Annie Besant joined the Indian National Congress, she became involved in politics and India's freedom struggle.
- When she initially joined, the Congress was majorly a debating group whose members deliberated on which motions to pass.
- These motions were moderate, proposing that middle-class Indians be more represented in the British government.
- Annie Besant worked for the promotion of a national awakening. Her work was published in 1902 and in which she said, “India is not controlled for the benefit of the people, but rather for the profit of her conquerors.”
- The freedom struggle hadn’t yet developed into a broad movement calling for complete independence.
- During World War I, she launched a movement for India’s freedom.
- In 1916, she established the All India Home Rule League with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and this was India’s first movement to call for complete independence.
- As a result of her activity, British authorities placed her under house arrest.
- But the government was obliged to make concessions to stop the Home Rule League.
- One of them was that after the war, Britishers prospect the possibility of self-government in India.
- In September 1917, she was set free from house arrest. She was elected for one year as President of the Indian National Congress (INC) in December 1917.
- Throughout the year, the league attempted to build a network of local branches to make it a PAN India movement and conduct agitations for freedom.

The Home Rule Movement

- Annie was arrested in June 1917 under the pretext of law and order and held under house arrest.
- She flew a red and green flag in the garden where she was held to demonstrate her defiance.
- The Congress and Muslim League have pledged to protest if Annie Besant was not released from arrest.
- Annie's imprisonment had provided energy for protests, allowing those who wished for India's freedom to unite different political parties, and people for a goal of independence.
- The name of the All India Home Rule League was changed to Swarajya Sabha in 1920.
- In the Gandhian era, she lost her glory. She respects Gandhi as a man who lived a life driven by honesty and compassion but she called for democratic change through constitutional means.
- She opposed Gandhi's non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement as she considered it a threat to the rule of law.
- The Indian Home Rule Movement was based on the Irish Home Rule Movement in British India.
- Annie Besant founded the Home Rule League in 1916.
- The Home Rule League was India's party for the first time to fight for change.
- Unlike Congress, the League was active throughout the year.
- It established a robust network of local branches, allowing it to organize protests, public meetings, and agitations.
- Gandhi's movements became successful and she lost her political status but continued to work for India despite becoming unpopular and losing her favour in the Indian National Congress.

Annie Besant as the President of INC

In 1917, she became the first woman to be the President of the Indian National Congress. She led an important meeting in Calcutta. When she arrived in India in 1893, she got deeply involved in the struggle for Indian independence. She liked India so much that she decided to stay here. She did a lot of good work for society and ran various campaigns to help people.

Early Association With Indian National Congress

- She joined the Indian National Congress (INC) in the early 20th century and quickly emerged as a leading moderate voice.
- Played a crucial role in reviving political activity in India after the lull following the Swadeshi Movement.
- Her Home Rule agitation influenced the INC to adopt a stronger demand for self-government.
- Worked closely with Bal Gangadhar Tilak in organizing the Home Rule Movement.
- Served as the first woman President of the Indian National Congress at the 1917 Calcutta Session.
- Her presidency symbolised greater women's participation in national politics.
- Acted as a bridge between Moderates and Extremists, helping reunify the Congress after the 1907 Surat split.
- Strongly criticized the Montague–Chelmsford Reforms 1919 as inadequate.
- Her ideas inspired young nationalist leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, and Subramania Iyer.
- A strong supporter of constitutional reforms and gradual transition to self-rule.

- Although overshadowed by Gandhi's rise and the mass movement era, she remained committed to the cause of Dominion Status.
- Her educational initiatives, including the Central Hindu College, supported the broader nationalist agenda.
- Annie Besant's work laid the foundation for the later mass-based national movement under Gandhi.

Contribution to Education :

- When Annie Besant's father died, her family was left penniless, and her education was funded by another person. As she knew the importance of education, she worked extensively for the spread of education.
- She was one of the founders of Banaras Hindu University.
- She also founded the Central Hindu School in Varanasi for the promotion of school education.
- She promoted ancient Indian religions, philosophies, and beliefs as subjects for study.
- By 1918, when she was at the peak of her career, established many organizations.
- Madanapalle College in Andhra Pradesh
- Girls' College in Varanasi
- Her role in the establishment of the Madras Parliament was plausible.
- Adyar Arts League in Tamilnadu at headquarters of Theosophical Society
- Women's Indian Association at Adyar— later on, it grew as All-India Women's Conference in Poona in 1927 and the Women's Indian Association at Adyar
- Order of the Brothers of Service
- Study the NCERT Notes Partition of Bengal [here](#)

In considering the meaning and the method of the spiritual life, it is well to begin by defining the meaning of the term "spiritual." Theosophy divides the human constitution in a definite way, both as regards consciousness and the vehicles through which it manifests. The word "spirit" is restricted to that divinity in us that manifests on the highest planes of the universe and is distinguished by its consciousness of unity. Unity is the keynote of spirit, for below the spiritual realm all is division. When we pass from the spiritual into the intellectual, we at once find ourselves in the midst of separation.

Unity and the Spirit

Dealing with our own intellectual nature, to which the word "soul" ought to be restricted, we at once notice that it is the principle of separateness. In the growth of our intellectual nature, we become more and more conscious of the separateness of the "I." It is sometimes called the "I ness" in us. It gives rise to all our ideas of separate existence, separate property, separate gains and losses.

Intellect is just as much a part of us as spirit, only a different part, and it is the very antithesis of the spiritual nature. For where the intellect sees "I" and "mine," the spirit sees unity, non-separateness; where the intellect strives to develop itself and assert itself as separate, the spirit sees itself in all things and regards all forms as equally its own.

The spirit is that part of human nature in which the sense of unity resides, the part in which primarily we are one with God, and secondarily one with all that lives throughout the universe. A very old Upanishad begins with the statement that all this world is God-inveiled, and going on then to speak of one who knows that vast, pervading, all embracing unity, it bursts into a cry of exultation: "What then becomes of

sorrow, what then becomes of delusion, for him who has known the unity?" That sense of a oneness at the heart of things is the testimony of the spiritual consciousness, and only as that is realized is it possible that the spiritual life will manifest. The technical names do not matter at all. They are drawn from the Sanskrit, which for millennia has given definite names to every stage of human and other consciousness.

In Christianity the sense of oneness has been personified in the Christ. The first stage—where there is still the Christ and the Father—is where the wills are blended, "not my will but thine be done." The second stage is where the sense of unity is felt: "I and my Father are one." In that manifestation of the spiritual life we have the ideal which underlies the deepest inspiration of the Christian sacred writings, and it is only as "the Christ is born in man," to use the Christian symbol, that the truly spiritual life begins.

The second great stage of the spiritual life is also marked out in the Christian scriptures, as in all other great world scriptures, when it is said that when the end comes, all that has been gathered up in the Christ, the Son, is gathered up yet further into the Father, and "God shall be all in all." Even that partial separation of Son and Father vanishes, and the unity is supreme. Whether we read the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, or the New Testament, we find ourselves in exactly the same atmosphere as regards the meaning and nature of the spiritual life: it is that which knows the oneness, that in which unity is complete.

Now this is possible for us in spite of the separation of the intellect which bars us from each other, because in the heart of our nature we are divine. That is the great reality on which all the beauty and power of human life depend. It is no small thing whether a people believes they are divine or have been deluded into the idea that they are by nature sinful, miserable, and degraded. Nothing is so fatal to progress, nothing so discouraging to the growth of the inner nature, as the continual repetition of that which is not true: that we are fundamentally and essentially wicked, not divine. It is a poison at the very heart of life; it stamps us with a brand which is hard indeed to throw off. If we want to give even the lowest and most degraded a sense of inner dignity, which will enable them to climb out of the mud in which they are plunged to the dignity of a divine human nature, we must tell them of their essential divinity, that in their hearts they are righteous and not foul. For it is just in proportion that we do so, that within them there will be faint stirrings of the spirit, so overlaid that they are not conscious of it in their ordinary life. If there is one duty of preachers of religion more vital than another, it is that all who hear them shall feel the stirring of the Divine within themselves.

Unfolding the Spiritual Nature : Looking thus at everyone as divine at heart, we begin to ask: if that is the meaning of spirit and spiritual life, what is the method for unfolding it? The first step, as mentioned, is to get people to believe in it, to put aside all that has been said about the human heart being "desperately wicked," about original sin. There is no original sin except ignorance, and we are all born into that. We have to grow slowly out of it by experience, which gives us wisdom. That is the starting point, as the conscious sense of unity is the crown. The method of spiritual life is whatever enables the life to show itself forth in reality, as it ever is in essence. Our inner Divinity—that is the inspiring thought we want to spread through all the churches, which too long have been clouded by a doctrine exactly the reverse. When we once believe ourselves divine, we will seek to justify our inner nature. Now the method of the spiritual life in the fullest sense cannot, I frankly admit, be applied to the least developed among us. For them the very first lesson is that ancient one, "Cease to do evil." One of my favorite Upanishads speaks of the steps by which one may search for and find the Self, the God within.

The first step, it is said, is to "cease to do evil." That is the first step towards the spiritual life, the foundation which must be laid. The second step is active: to do the right. They are no less true because they are commonplace. They are necessary everywhere and must be repeated until evil is forsaken and good embraced. The spiritual life cannot begin until one completes these steps.

Regarding the later steps, it is written that no one who is slothful, who is unintelligent, who is lacking in devotion can find the Self. And again it is said that "The Self is not found by knowledge nor by devotion, but by knowledge wedded to devotion." These are the two wings that lift us up into the spiritual world. We may find a mass of details in the various scriptures of the world to fill in these broad outlines which guide us to the narrow ancient Path. But what is specially needed just now is a way in which people living in the world bound by domestic ties, and occupations of every sort may gain the spiritual life, by which they may secure progress in real spirituality. In the different religions of the world there has been a certain inclination to draw a line of division between the life of the world and the life of the spirit. That line, which is real, is however often misunderstood and misrepresented. It is thought to consist in circumstance, whereas it consists in attitude—a profound difference, and one vitally important to us. Owing to this misunderstanding, men and women in all ages have left the world in order to find the Divine. They have gone out into desert and jungle and cave, into mountain and solitary plain, imagining that by giving up what they called "the world," the life of the spirit might be secured. And yet if God is all pervading and everywhere, Divinity must be in the marketplace as much as in the desert, in the bank as much as in the jungle, in the court of law as much as in the solitary mountain, in human haunts as well as in lonely places. It is true that the weaker souls can more easily sense the all pervading life away from the jangle of humanity, but that is a sign of weakness and not spirituality. It is not the strong, the heroic, the warrior, who asks for solitude in seeking the spiritual life. Yet the solitary life has its place, and often a man or woman will go aside into some lonely place and dwell there in solitude for a lifetime. But that is never the last and crowning life; it is not the life in which the Christ walks the earth. Such a life sometimes prepares one to break off ties which one is otherwise not strong enough to break. People run away because they cannot battle; they evade what they cannot face. That is often a wise policy; and for anyone easily tempted, it is good advice to avoid temptation.

But the true heroes of the spiritual life avoid no place and no person. They are not afraid of polluting their garments, for they have woven them of stuff that cannot be soiled. Those who live the solitary life will return again to lead the life of the world. The lesson of detachment they learned in the solitary places will serve them well when they return to ordinary life. Liberation, the freeing of the spirit, that conscious life of union with God which is the mark of the human become divine, that last conquest is won in the world, not in the jungle or desert.

Renouncing the Fruit of Action : The spiritual life is gradually won, and the lessons of the spirit learned in this world—but on one condition. This condition embraces two stages: first, we do all that ought to be done because it is our duty. As the spiritual life dawns, we recognize that all our actions are to be performed, not for some particular result, but because it is our duty to perform them. This is easily said, but how hard to accomplish! We need not change anything in our life to become spiritual, but we must change our attitude to life. We must cease to ask anything from it and give everything we do to it, because it is our duty. Now that conception of life is the first great step towards the recognition of unity. If there is only one great Life, if each of us is only an expression of that Life, then all our activity is simply the working of that Life within us, and the results are reaped by the common Life and not by the

separated self. This is what is meant in the Gita by giving up working for fruit—for the fruit is the ordinary result of action.

This advice is only for those who will to lead the spiritual life, for it is not advisable for people to give up working for the fruit of action until a more potent motive has arisen within them, one that spurs them into activity without a prize for the personal self. We must have activity, it is the way of evolution. Without activity we do not evolve; without effort and struggle we float in the backwaters of life and make no progress along the river. Activity is the law of progress; as we exercise ourselves, new life flows into us. For that reason it is written that one who is slothful may never find the Self. Those who are slothful and inactive have not even begun to turn to the spiritual life. The motive for action for ordinary people is quite properly the enjoyment of the fruit. This is God's way of leading the world along the path of evolution. Prizes are put before us. We strive after the prizes, and as we strive develop our powers. But when we seize the prize, it crumbles to pieces in our hands—always. If we look at human life, we see this continually repeated. You desire money; gain it, millions. In the midst of the millions a deadly discontent invades you; you become weary of the wealth that you are not able to use. You strive for fame and win it, and then you call it "a voice going by, to be lost on an endless sea." You strive for power, and when you hold it, power palls and you are weary and disappointed. The same sequence is ever repeated. But when the spirit begins to stir and to seek its own manifestation, then the prizes lose their attractive power. We see duty instead of fruit as motive. And then we work for duty's sake, as part of the One Great Life, and we work with all the energy of those who work for fruit, perhaps even with more. Those who can work at some great scheme for human good and then, after years of labor, see it crumble before them, and remain content, they have gone far along the road of the spiritual life. Does this seem impossible? Not when we understand the Life, and have felt its unity; for in that consciousness no effort for human good is wasted, no good work fails. The form in which the work is embodied may crumble, but the life remains.

Such a motive may animate even those outside the spiritual life. Consider how sometimes in some great battle campaign "success" and "failure" are words that change their meaning when a vast host struggles for a single end. A small band of soldiers may be sent to achieve a hopeless, impossible task. A commanding officer may receive an order he knows is impossible to obey, perhaps taking a hillside bristling with cannon. He knows that before he can gain the top of that hill his regiment will be decimated, and if he presses on, annihilated. It does not make any difference to the loyal soldier who trusts his general and leads his men. He does not hesitate; he regards the command only as a proof of the confidence of his commander, that he is considered strong enough to fight and inevitably fail. But have they failed when the last man dies and only the corpses remain? It looks so to those who have seen only that little part of the struggle. But while they held the attention of the enemy, other movements that ensured victory went unnoticed. When a grateful nation raises the monument of thanks to those who have conquered, the names of those who have failed in order to make the victory of their comrades possible will hold a place of honor.

And so with those who are spiritual. They know the plan cannot fail. They know the combat must in the end be crowned with victory. It does not matter to those who have known the Oneness that this little part is stamped as failure. It has made possible the victory of the great plan for human redemption, which is the real end for which they worked. They were not working to make a success here, to found some great institution there; they were working for the redemption of humanity. Though the form of their part of the work has been shattered, the life advances and succeeds. That is what is meant by working for duty. It

makes all life comparatively easy. It makes life calm, strong, impartial, and undaunted; for those who work for duty do not cling to anything they do. Once it is done they have no more concern with it. They let go of success or failure as the world counts them, for they know the Life within goes onward to its goal. This is the secret of peace in work. Those who work for success are always troubled, always anxious, always counting their forces, reckoning their chances and possibilities. But those who do not care for success but only for duty work with the strength of Divinity, and their aim is always sure.

THE PHYSICAL BODY : Under the term physical body must be included the two lower principles of man - called in our old terminology the Sthūla Sharīra and Linga Sharīra - since they both function on the physical plane, are composed of physical matter, are formed for the period of one physical life, are cast off by the man at death, and disintegrate together in the physical world when he passes on into the astral. Another reason for classing these two principles as our physical body or physical vehicle is that so long as we cannot pass out of the physical world - or plane, we are accustomed to call it - we are using one or other or both of these physical vestures; they both belong to the physical plane by their materials, and cannot pass outside it; consciousness working in them is bound within their physical limitations, and is subject to the ordinary laws of space and time. Although partially separable, they are rarely separated during earthly life and such separation is inadvisable and is always a sign of disease or of ill-balanced constitution. They are distinguishable by the materials of which they are composed into the gross body and the etheric double, the latter being the exact duplicate of the visible body, particle for particle, and the medium through which play all the electrical and vital currents on which the activity of the body depends. This etheric double has hitherto been called the Linga Sharīra, but it seems advisable, for several reasons, to put an end to the use of the name in this relation. "Linga Sharīra" has from time immemorial been used in Hindu books in another sense, and much confusion arises among students of Eastern literature, whether Easterns or Westerns, in consequence of its arbitrary wresting from its recognized meaning; for this reason, if for no other, it would be well to surrender its improper use. Further, it is better to have English names for the subdivisions of the human constitution, and thus remove from our elementary literature the stumbling block to beginners of a Sanskrit terminology. Also, the name etheric double exactly expresses the nature and constitution of the subtler portion of the physical body, and is thus significant and therefore easy to remember, as every name should be; it is "etheric" because made of ether, "double" because an exact duplicate of the gross body - its shadow, as it were. There is, however, one difficulty in our way that we cannot overlook; we may take a good deal of pains with the body and may resolutely refuse to befoul it, but we are living among people who are careless and who for the most part know nothing of these facts in nature. In a town like London, or indeed in any Western town, we cannot walk through streets without being offended at every turn, and the more we refine the body the more delicately acute do the physical senses become, and the more we must suffer in a civilization so coarse and animal as is the present. Walking through the poorer and the business streets, where there are beer houses at every corner, we can scarcely ever escape the smell of drink, the effluvium from one drinking-place overlapping that from the next - even reputedly respectable streets being thus poisoned; so, too, we have to pass slaughter-houses and butchers' shops. Of course one knows that when civilization is a little more advanced better arrangements will be made, and something will be gained when all these unclean things are gathered in special quarters where those can seek them who want them. But meanwhile particles from these places fall on our bodies, and we breathe them in with the air. But as the normally healthy body gives no soil in which disease-microbes can germinate, so the clean body offers no soil in which these impure particles can grow. Besides, as we have seen, there

are armies of living creatures that are always at work keeping our blood pure, and these regiments of true lifeguards will charge down upon any poisonous particle that comes into the city of a pure body and will destroy it and cut it to pieces. For us it is to choose whether we will have in our blood these defenders of life, or whether we will people it with the pirates that plunder and slay the good.

CONCLUSION : The second great stage of the spiritual life is also marked out in the Christian scriptures, as in all other great world scriptures, when it is said that when the end comes, all that has been gathered up in the Christ, the Son, is gathered up yet further into the Father, and "God shall be all in all." Even that partial separation of Son and Father vanishes, and the unity is supreme. Whether we read the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, or the New Testament, we find ourselves in exactly the same atmosphere as regards the meaning and nature of the spiritual life: it is that which knows the oneness, that in which unity is complete. Looking thus at everyone as divine at heart, we begin to ask: if that is the meaning of spirit and spiritual life, what is the method for unfolding it. The first step, as mentioned, is to get people to believe in it, to put aside all that has been said about the human heart being "desperately wicked," about original sin. There is no original sin except ignorance, and we are all born into that. We have to grow slowly out of it by experience, which gives us wisdom. That is the starting point, as the conscious sense of unity is the crown. The method of spiritual life is whatever enables the life to show itself forth in reality, as it ever is in essence.

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