

NOTES AND QUERIES ON PRE-EXISTENCE.

Miss Florence Harrison has called attention to a correspondence on pre-existence which appears in Notes and Queries in 1856. In the number 49 for 6th December, the following interesting communication is printed over the signature "W. L. N. Bath."

Your correspondent, Mr. Riley, inquires for the name of a work or works on what he calls the "fanciful," but which I trust he will forgive me for designating the ancient and very probable opinion of the pre-existence of souls.

That the Deity, at the beginning of the world (when we are taught that He "rested from all His works which He had made,") created the souls of all men, which, however, are not united to the body till the individuals for which they are destined are born into the world, was (to omit any reference to Plato and his followers), a very general belief among the Jewish Kabbalists, a common opinion in our Saviour's time, and holden and taught by many fathers of the Christian Church, as Justin Martyr, Origen, and others. It was, however, opposed by Tertullian. (See Bp. Kaye's Ecc. Hist. illustrated from the writings of Tertullian, p. 204, etc.)

Mede, in chap. iii. of his *Mystery of Godliness* (Works fol. 1768, p. 15), combats the vulgar opinion of a "daily creation of souls" at the time the bodies are produced which they are to inform. He calls "the reasonable doctrine" of pre-existence "a key for some of the main mysteries of Providence, which no other can so handsomely unlock." Sir Harry Vane is said by Burnet (*Own Times* fol. 1724, i. 164), to have maintained this doctrine. Joseph Glanvill, rector of Bath, (the friend of Meric Casaubon and of Baxter and a metaphysician of singular vigor and acuteness), published in 1662, but without his name, a treatise to prove the reasonableness of the doctrine. It was afterwards republished, with annotations, by Dr. Henry More. The title of the book is: "Lux Orientalis; or an Inquiry into the Opinion of the Eastern Sages concerning the Preexistence of Souls, being a key to unlock the grand Mysteries of Providence in relation to Man's Sin and Misery." London, 1662, 12 mo.

Among the Baxter MSS., in the Red Cross Street Library, is a long letter,

full of curious learning, from Glanvill to Baxter, in defence of the doctrine of the soul's preexistence.

In 1762, the Rev. Capel Berrow, rector of Rossington, published a work entitled *A Pre-existent Lapse of Human Souls demonstrated*; and in the *European Magazine* for September, 1801, may be found a letter from Bp. Warburton to the author, in which he says, "The idea of a pre-existence has been espoused by many learned and ingenious men in every age, as bidding fair to resolve many difficulties." Allusions to this doctrine will be found pervading the beautiful verses of Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, in his *Silex Scintillans* (London, 1650), and traces of it occur in Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality in Childhood." Southey, in his published Letters, (by Warton, vol. ii, p. 160), says:

"I have a strong and lively faith in a state of continued consciousness from this state of existence, and that we shall recover the consciousness of some lower stages through which we may previously have passed seems to me not improbable." And again: "The system of progressive existence, seems, of all others, the most benevolent; and all that we do understand is so wise and so good, and all we do or do not, so perfectly and overwhelmingly wonderful that the most benevolent system is the most probable." Letters vol. i, p. 294.

THE SECRET DOCTRINE.

The three fundamental propositions of The Secret Doctrine have been summarized thus.

1. "An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable Principle, on which all speculation is impossible. It is beyond the range and reach of thought. . . . unthinkable and unspeakable."

2. "The absolute universality of the law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow." The Universe in toto is periodically "the playground of numberless universes, manifesting and disappearing," called "the manifesting stars," and the "sparks of eternity."

3. "The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every soul—a spark of the former—through the cycle of Incarnation (or 'Necessity') in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term."