

BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT THEOSOPHY

Articles by H. P. Blavatsky

WHAT IS THEOSOPHY?

WHAT ARE THE THEOSOPHISTS?

IS THEOSOPHY A RELIGION?

“LET EVERY MAN PROVE HIS OWN WORK”

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FOREWORD

MADAME BLAVATSKY arrived in India in January, 1879. In less than a year she founded the first Theosophical magazine—the *Theosophist*, of which the first issue appeared in October. It soon became apparent that this journal was to be a vehicle of explanations of the meaning and purpose of the Theosophical Movement, and to place on record basic examples of the religio-philosophical inquiry that has occupied searchers for truth throughout history.

The obvious business of such an organ would be to undertake definitions. Accordingly, the first issue, dated October, 1879, contained articles addressed to the questions: “What Is Theosophy?”, and “What Are the Theosophists?” The importance of such clarifying discussions becomes evident when it is realized that Col. Olcott, who with William Q Judge was associated with H.P.B. from the beginning, was by no means aware of the scope of the project she envisioned, and all that was involved. Olcott thought of the Society as primarily a body devoted to “occult research,” while H.P.B. planned a great movement of moral reform which would labor unceasingly for the brotherhood of man. In a letter to Olcott, dated Dec. 6, 1887, she reviewed for Olcott the high intent of the Movement, saying:

The Society was formed, then gradually made to merge into and evolve hints of the teachings from the Secret Doctrine of the *oldest school of Occult Philosophy in the whole world*—a school to reform which, finally, the Lord Gautama was made to appear. These teachings could not be given abruptly. They *had* to be instilled gradually.

Save for a few scattered articles which appeared earlier in Spiritualist journals in the United States, *Isis Unveiled*, the two-volume work published in 1877, was H.P.B.’s initial expression of Theosophical ideas. Drawing upon the resources of both science and religion to show the reality of laws of intellectual and spiritual evolution, in addition

to what science was disclosing in regard to physical and organic evolution, H.P.B. intended *Isis Unveiled* as an introduction to the fuller treatments of the processes of individual and social regeneration which she planned for subsequent publication. As the reader will see, the articles which appeared in her magazines—first the *Theosophist*, then *Lucifer*—were essential elements in this program, to be completed, finally, with publication of *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), *The Key to Theosophy* (1889), and *The Voice of the Silence* (1889).

“What Is Theosophy?” immediately declares the comprehensive meaning of “Theosophy” as a word to characterize the age-old longing of men to find and know the Truth. The scope of Theosophy, so conceived, eliminates any possibility of sectarianism in authentic expressions of the Theosophical Movement, setting a difficult ideal for fallible human beings to live up to. Yet on this objective H.P.B. never compromised, making it clear that the ideal of human perfectibility could never be achieved so long as men remain satisfied with less than *universal* truth. There is a sense in which the study of Theosophy becomes a means of learning how the individual, while still imperfect and subject to error, may nonetheless preserve a true idea of this goal and be content with nothing less.

“What Are the Theosophists?” embodies instruction on this theme, showing the folly of supposing that any human association can be more than a body of *seekers*. In its highest meaning—in its fruition—Theosophy is defined as “spiritual knowledge itself—the very essence of philosophical and theistic inquiry.” An organization of people calling themselves Theosophists can have no dogmas, no creeds, and is ideally an association of “explorers” rather than “believers.” In this search, the guides are all the Great Teachers of his-tory, and H.P.B. made it her role to give an extraordinarily extended introduction to the vast resources of literature and tradition in which the spiritual inquiries of mankind are embodied.

H.P.B. came to England to stay in May, 1887. Again she started a Theosophical magazine, *Lucifer*, which soon became her own organ of militant expression. With some twelve years of experience behind her in work for Theosophy, she now took up matters of prejudice and

misconceptions of Theosophy and pressed upon her readers the far-reaching challenge in theosophy to both religious orthodoxy and conventional scientific opinion.

It was not enough, moreover, to present in modern terms the content of ancient philosophical religion. The distortions and corruptions of religious teachings had to be explained. In “Is Theosophy a Religion?”, published in *mLucifer* for November, 1888, H.P.B. made an often quoted statement: “Theosophy, we say, is not a Religion . . . but Religion itself.” She explains the decline of great religious movements—and the transformation of their original inspiration into narrow claims of “exclusive revelation,” ending, finally, in superstition—not by a condemnation of evil men, but by an account of the laws of spiritual communication and the almost insuperable difficulties imposed by the ordinary human condition on faithful transmission of spiritual truth. This article points to the duty of Theosophists in working toward a general understanding of these problems.

“Let Every Man Prove his own Work” makes clear the relationship between the Theosophical Movement and labors of charity and social reform. There is no rejection of these efforts; indeed, attempts to lessen the burdens of poverty and want should be the natural fruit of Theosophical understanding; yet the doing of material “good” involves psychological and moral mysteries that have to be understood if the works of philanthropists and reformers are to bear enduring fruit. In this article, which appeared in *Lucifer* for November, 1887, H.P.B. accepts the judgment of honest critics, at the same time drawing attention to the failure of powerful and wealthy religious orthodoxies to practice their professed ethics. The burden of this article is that *knowledge* is an essential of truly practical philanthropy.

Theosophist, October, 1879

WHAT IS THEOSOPHY?

THIS question has been so often asked, and misconception so widely prevails, that the editors of a journal devoted to an exposition of the world's Theosophy would be remiss were its first number issued without coming to a full understanding with their readers. But our heading involves two further queries: What is the Theosophical Society; and what are the Theosophists? To each an answer will be given.

According to lexicographers, the term *theosophia* is composed of two Greek words—*theos*, “god,” and *sophos*, “wise.” So far, correct. But the explanations that follow are far from giving a clear idea of Theosophy. Webster defines it most originally as “a supposed intercourse with God and superior spirits, and consequent attainment of superhuman knowledge, by *physical processes*, as by the theurgic operations of some ancient Platonists, or by the *chemical processes* of the German fire-philosophers.”

This, to say the least, is a poor and flippant explanation. To attribute such ideas to men like Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Porphyry, Proclus—shows either intentional misrepresentation, or Mr. Webster's ignorance of the philosophy and motives of the greatest geniuses of the later Alexandrian School. To impute to those whom their contemporaries as well as posterity styled “*theo-didakttoi*,” god-taught—a purpose to develop their psychological, spiritual perceptions by “*physical processes*,” is to describe them as materialists. As to the concluding fling at the fire-philosophers, it rebounds from them to fall home among our most eminent modern men of science; those, in whose mouths the Rev. James Martineau places the following boast: “matter is all we want; give us atoms alone, and we will explain the

universe.”

Vaughan offers a far better, more philosophical definition. “A Theosophist,” he says—“is one who gives you a theory of God or the works of God, which has not revelation, but an inspiration of his own for its basis.” In this view every great thinker and philosopher, especially every founder of a new religion, school of philosophy, or sect, is necessarily a Theosophist. Hence, Theosophy and Theosophists have existed ever since the first glimmering of nascent thought made man seek instinctively for the means of expressing his own independent opinions.

There were Theosophists before the Christian era, notwithstanding that the Christian writers ascribe the development of the Eclectic theosophical system to the early part of the third century of their Era. Diogenes Laertius traces Theosophy to an epoch antedating the dynasty of the Ptolemies; and names as its founder an Egyptian Hierophant called Pot-Amun, the name being Coptic and signifying a priest consecrated to Amun, the god of Wisdom. But history shows it revived by Ammonius Saccas, the founder of the Neo-Platonic School. He and his disciples called themselves “*Philalethians*”—lovers of the truth; while others termed them the “*Analogists*,” on account of their method of interpreting all sacred legends, symbolical myths and mysteries, by a rule of analogy or correspondence, so that events which had occurred in the external world were regarded as expressing operations and experiences of the human soul. It was the aim and purpose of Ammonius to reconcile all sects, peoples and nations under one common faith—a belief in one Supreme Eternal, Unknown, and Unnamed Power, governing the Universe by immutable and eternal laws. His object was to prove a primitive system of Theosophy, which at the beginning was essentially alike in all countries; to induce all men to lay aside their strifes and quarrels, and unite in purpose and thought as the children of one common mother; to purify the ancient religions, by degrees corrupted and obscured, from all dross of human element, by uniting and expounding them upon pure philosophical principles. Hence, the Buddhistic, Vedantic and Magian, or Zoroastrian, systems were taught

in the Eclectic Theosophical School along with all the philosophies of Greece. Hence also, the pre-eminently Buddhist and Indian feature among the ancient Theosophists and Alexandria, of due reverence for parents and aged persons; a fraternal affection for the whole human race; and a compassionate feeling for even the dumb animals. While seeking to establish a system of moral discipline which enforced upon people the duty to live according to the laws of their respective countries; to exalt their minds by the research and contemplation of the one Absolute Truth; his chief object in order, as he believed, to achieve all others, was to extract from the various religious teachings, as from a many-chorded instrument, one full and harmonious melody, which would find response in every truth-loving heart.

Theosophy is, then, the archaic *Wisdom-Religion*, the esoteric doctrine once known in every ancient country having claims to civilization. This "Wisdom" all the old writings show us as an emanation of the divine Principle; and the clear comprehension of it is typified in such names as the Indian Buddha, the Babylonian Nebo, the Thoth of Memphis, the Hermes of Greece; in the appellations, also, of some goddesses—Metis, Neitha, Athena, the Gnostic *Sophia*, and finally—the Vedas, from the word "to know." Under this designation, all the ancient philosophers of the East and West, the Hierophants of old Egypt, the Rishis of Aryavart, the Theodidaktos of Greece, included all knowledge of things occult and essentially divine. The *Mercavah* of the Hebrew Rabbis, the secular and popular series, were thus designated as only the vehicle, the outward shell which contained the higher esoteric knowledge. The Magi of Zoroaster received instruction and were initiated in the caves and secret lodges of Bactria; the Egyptian and Grecian hierophants had their *aporrheta*, or secret discourses, during which the *Mysta* became 'an *Epopta*—a Seer.

The central idea of the Eclectic Theosophy was that of a simple Supreme Essence, Unknown and *Unknowable*—for—"How could one know the knower?" as enquires *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Their system was characterized by three distinct features—the theory of the above-named Essence; the doctrine of the human soul—an emanation from the latter, hence of the same nature; and its theurgy. It

is this last science which has led the Neo-Platonists to be so misrepresented in our era of materialistic science. Theurgy being essentially the art of applying the divine powers of man to the subordination of the blind forces of nature, its votaries were first termed magicians—a corruption of the word "Magh," signifying a wise, or learned man, and—derided. Skeptics of a century ago would have been as wide of the mark if they had laughed at the idea of a phonograph or telegraph. There derided and the "infidels" of one generation generally become the wise men and saints of the next.

As regards the Divine essence and the nature of the soul and spirit, modern Theosophy believes now as ancient Theosophy did. The popular *Diu* of the Aryan nations was identical with the *Iao* of the Chaldeans, and even with the Jupiter of the less learned and philosophical among the Romans; and it was just as identical with the *Jahve* of the Samaritans, the *Tiu* or "Tiusco" of the Northmen, the *Duwo* of the Britains, and the *Zeus* of the Thracians. As to the Absolute Essence, the One and all—whether we accept the Greek Pythagorean, the Chaldean Kabalistic, or the Aryan philosophy in regard to it, it will lead to one and the same result. The Primeval Monad of the Pythagorean system, which retires into darkness and is itself Darkness (for human intellect) was made the basis of all things; and we can find the idea in all its integrity in the philosophical systems of Leibnitz and Spinoza. Therefore, whether a Theosophist agrees with the Kabala which, speaking of En-Soph propounds the query: "Who, then, can comprehend It since It is formless, and Non-existent?"—or, remembering that magnificent hymn from the Rig-Veda (Hymn 129th, Book 10th)—enquires:

"Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?
Whether his will created or was mute.
He knows it—or perchance *even He knows not*;"

or again, accepts the Vedantic conception of Brahma, who in the *Upanishads* is represented as "without life, without mind, pure," *unconscious*, for—Brahma is "Absolute Consciousness"; or, even finally, siding with the Svabhavikas of Nepal, maintains that nothing exists but "Svabhavat" (substance or nature) which exists by *itself*

without any creator; any one of the above conceptions can lead but to pure and absolute Theosophy—that Theosophy which prompted such men as Hegel, Fichte and Spinoza to take up the labors of the old Grecian philosophers and speculate upon the One Substance—the Deity, the *Divine* proceeding from the Divine Wisdom—incomprehensible, unknown and *unnamed*—by any ancient or modern religious philosophy, with the exception of Christianity and Mohammedanism. Every Theosophist, then, holding to a theory of the Deity “which has not revelation, but an inspiration of his own for its basis,” may accept any of the above definitions or belong to any of these religions, and yet remain strictly within the boundaries of Theosophy. For the latter is belief in the Deity as the ALL, the source of all existence, the infinite that cannot be either comprehended or known, the universe alone revealing *It*, or, as some prefer it, Him, thus giving a sex to that, to anthropomorphize which is *blasphemy*. True, Theosophy shrinks from brutal materialization; it prefers believing that, from eternity retired within itself, the Spirit of the Deity neither wills nor creates; but that, from the infinite effulgency everywhere going forth from the Great Centre, that which produces all visible and invisible things, is but a Ray containing in itself the generative and conceptive power, which, in its turn, produces that which the Greeks called *Macrococosm*, the *Kabalists Tikkun* or Adam Kadmon—the archetypal man, and the Aryans *Purusha*, the manifested Brahm, or the Divine Male. Theosophy believes also in the *Anastasis* or continued existence, and in transmigration (evolution) or a series of changes in the soul¹ which can be defended and explained on strict philosophical principles; and only by making a distinction between *Paramatma* (transcendental, supreme soul) and *Jivatma* (animal, or conscious soul) of the Vedantins.

To fully define Theosophy, we must consider it under all its aspects. The interior world has not been hidden from all by impenetrable darkness. By that higher intuition acquired by *Theosophia*—or God-

¹ In a series of articles entitled “The World’s Great Theosophists,” we intend showing that from Pythagoras, who got his wisdom in India, down to our best known modern philosophers and theosophists—David Hume, and Shelley, the English poet—the Spiritists of France included—many believed and yet believe in metempsychosis or reincarnation of the soul; however unelaborated the system of the Spiritists may fairly be regarded.

knowledge, which carried the mind from the world of form into that of formless spirit, man has been sometimes enabled in every age and every country to perceive things in the interior or invisible world. Hence, the “Samadhi,” or *Dyan Yog Samadhi*, of the Hindu ascetics; the “Daimonion-photi,” or spiritual illumination of the Neo-Platonists; the “sidereal confabulation of soul,” of the Rosicrucians or Fire-philosophers; and, even the ecstatic trance of mystics and of the modern mesmerists and spiritualists, are identical in nature, though various as to manifestation. The search after man’s diviner “self,” so often and so erroneously interpreted as individual communion with a personal God, was the object of every mystic, and belief in its possibility seems to have been coeval with the genesis of humanity, each people giving it another name. Thus Plato and Plotinus call “Noetic work” that which the Yogin and the Shrotriya term *Vidya*. “By reflection, self-knowledge and intellectual discipline, the soul can be raised to the vision of eternal truth, goodness, and beauty—that is, to the *Vision of God*—this is the *epopteia*,” said the Greeks. “To unite one’s soul to the Universal Soul,” says Porphyry, “requires but a perfectly pure mind. Through self-contemplation, perfect chastity, and purity of body, we may approach nearer to It, and receive, in that state, true knowledge and wonderful insight.” And Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who has read neither Porphyry nor other Greek authors, but who is a thorough Vedic scholar, says in his *Veda Bhashya* (opasna prakaru ank. 9)—“To obtain Diksh (highest initiation) and *Yog*, one has to practise according to the rules . . . The soul in human body can perform the greatest wonders by knowing the Universal Spirit (or God) and acquainting itself with the properties and qualities (occult) of all the things in the universe. A human being (a *Dikshii* or initiate) can thus acquire a power of seeing and hearing at great distances.” Finally, Alfred R. Wallace, F.R.S., a spiritualist and yet a confessedly great naturalist, says, with brave candour: “It is ‘spirit’ that alone feels, and perceives, and thinks—that acquires knowledge, and reasons and aspires . . . there not unfrequently occur individuals so constituted that the spirit can perceive independently of the corporeal organs of sense, or can perhaps, wholly or partially, quit the body for a time and

return to it again...the spirit... communicates with spirit easier than with matter.” We can now see how, after thousands of years have intervened between the age of Gymnosophists² and our own highly civilized era, notwithstanding, or, perhaps, just because of such an enlightenment which pours its radiant light upon the psychological as well as upon the physical realms of nature, over twenty millions of people today believe, under a different form, in those same spiritual powers that were believed in by the Yogins and the Pythagoreans, nearly 3,000 years ago. Thus, while the Aryan mystic claimed for himself the power of solving all the problems of life and death, when he had once obtained the power of acting independently of his body, through the *Atman*—”self,” or “soul”; and the old Greeks went in search of *Atmu*—the Hidden one, or the God-Soul of man, with the symbolical mirror of the Thesmophorian mysteries;— so the spiritualists of today believe in the faculty of the spirits, or the souls of the disembodied persons, to communicate visibly and tangibly with those they loved on earth. And all these, Aryan Yogins, Greek philosophers, and modern spiritualists, affirm that possibility on the ground that the embodied soul and its never embodied spirit—the real *self*, are not separated from either the Universal Soul or other spirits by space, but merely by the differentiation of their qualities; as in the boundless expanse of the universe there can be no limitation. And that when this difference is once removed—according to the Greeks and Aryans by abstract contemplation, producing the temporary liberation of the imprisoned Soul; and according to spiritualists, through mediumship—such an union between embodied and disembodied spirits becomes possible. Thus was it that Patanjali’s Yogins and, following in their steps, Plotinus, Porphyry and other Neo-Platonists, maintained that in their hours of ecstasy, they had been united to, or rather become as one with God, several times during the course of their lives. This idea, erroneous as it may seem in its application to the Universal Spirit, was, and is, claimed by too many great philosophers to be put aside as entirely chimerical. In the case of the Theodidaktoi, the only controvertible point, the dark spot on this philosophy of extreme

mysticism, was its claim to include that which is simply ecstatic illumination, under the head of sensuous perception. In the case of the Yogins, who maintained their ability to see Iswara “face to face,” this claim was successfully overthrown by the stern logic of Kapila. As to the similar assumption made for their Greek followers, for a long array of Christian ecstasies, and, finally, for the last two claimants to “God-seeing” within these last hundred years—Jacob Bohme and Swedenborg—this pretension would and *should* have been philosophically and logically questioned, if a few of our great men of science who are spiritualists had had more interest in the philosophy than in the mere phenomenalism of spiritualism.

The Alexandrian Theosophists were divided into neophytes, initiates, and masters, or hierophants; and their rules were copied from the ancient Mysteries of Orpheus, who, according to Herodotus, brought them from India. Amrnonius obligated his disciples by oath not to divulge his *higher* doctrines, except to those who were proved thoroughly worthy and initiated, and who had learned to regard the gods, the angels, and the demons of other peoples, according to the esoteric *hyponia*, or under-meaning. “The gods exist, but they are not what the *hoipolloi*, the uneducated multitude, suppose them to be,” says Epicurus. “He is not an atheist who denies the existence of the gods whom the multitude worship, but he is such who fastens on these gods the opinions of the multitude. “In his turn, Aristotle declares that of the “Divine Essence pervading the whole world of nature, what are styled the *gods* are simply the first principles.”

Plotinus, the pupil of the “God-taught” Amrnonius, tells us that the secret *gnosis* or the knowledge of Theosophy, has three degrees — opinion, science, and *illumination*. “The means or instrument of the first is sense, or perception; of the second, dialectics; of the third, intuition. To the last, reason is subordinate^ is *absolute knowledge*, founded on the identification of the mind with the object known.”

Theosophy is the exact science of psychology, so to say; it stands in relation to natural, uncultivated mediumship, as the knowledge of a Tyndall stands to that of a school-boy in physics. It develops in man a direct beholding; that which Schelling denominates”a realization of

2 The reality of the Yog-power was affirmed by many Greek and Roman writers, who call the Yogins Indian Gymnosophists; by Strabo, Lucan, Plutarch, Cicero (Tusculum), Pliny (vii, 2), etc.

the identity of subject and object in the individual'; so that under the influence and knowledge of *hyponia man* thinks divine thoughts, views all things as they really are, and, finally,* becomes recipient of the Soul of the World," to use one of the finest expressions of Emerson." I, the imperfect, adore my own perfect"—he says in his superb Essay on the *Oversoul*. Besides this psychological, or soul-state, Theosophy cultivated every branch of sciences and arts. It was thoroughly familiar with what is now commonly known as mesmerism, Practical theurgy or "ceremonial magic" so often resorted to in their exorcisms by the Roman Catholic clergy—was discarded by the theosophists. It is but Jamblichus alone who, transcending the other Eclectics, added to Theosophy the doctrine of Theurgy. When ignorant of the true meaning of the esoteric divinesymbolsof nature, man is apt to miscalculate the powers of his soul, and, instead of communing spiritually and mentally with the higher, celestial beings, the good spirits (the gods of the theurgists of the Platonic school), he will unconsciously call forth the evil, dark powers which lurk around humanity—the undying, grim creations of human crimes and vices—and thus fall from *theurgia* (white magic) into *goetia* (or black magic, sorcery). Yet, neither white, nor black magic are what popular superstition understands by the terms. The possibility of "raising spirits" according to the key of Solomon, is the height of superstition and ignorance. Purity of deed and thought can alone raise us to an intercourse "with the gods" and attain for us the goal we desire. Alchemy, believed by so many to have been a spiritual philosophy as well as physical science, belonged to the teachings of the theosophical school.

It is a noticeable fact that neither Zoroaster, Buddha, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Confucius, Socrates, nor Ammonius Saccas, committed anything to writing. The reason for it is obvious. Theosophy is a double-edged weapon and unfit for the ignorant or the selfish. Like every ancient philosophy it has its votaries among the moderns; but, until late in our own days, its disciples were few in numbers, and of the most various sects and opinions. "Entirely speculative, and founding no school, they have still exercised a silent influence upon philosophy;

and no doubt, when the time arrives, many ideas thus

silently propounded may yet give new directions to human thought"—remarks Mr. Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie IX° ... himself a mystic and a Theosophist, in his large and valuable work, *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* (articles *Theosophical Society of New York* and *Theosophy*, p. 731).⁸ Since the days of the fire-philosophers, they had never formed themselves into societies, for, tracked like wild beasts by the Christian clergy, to be known as a Theosophist often amounted, hardly a century ago, to a death-warrant. The statistics show that, during a period of 150 years, no less than 90,000 men and women were burned in Europe for alleged witchcraft. In Great Britain only, from A.D. 1640 to 1660, but twenty years, 3,000 persons were put to death for compact with the "Devil." It was but late in the present century—in 1875—that some progressed mystics and spiritualists, unsatisfied with the theories and explanations of Spiritualism, started by its votaries, and finding that they were far from covering the whole ground of the wide range of phenomena, formed at New York, America, an association which is now widely known as the Theosophical Society. And now, having explained what is Theosophy, we will, in a separate article, explain what is the nature of our Society, which is also called the "Universal Brotherhood of Humanity."

⁸ The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia of History, Rites, Symbolism, and Biography. Edited by Kenneth R. H. Meckenzie IX° (Cryptonymous), Hon. Member of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, No. 2, Scotland New York, J. W. Bouton 706 Broadway, 1877.

Theosophist, October, 1879

WHAT ARE THE THEOSOPHISTS?

ARE they what they claim to be—students of natural law, of ancient and modern philosophy, and even of exact science? Are they Deists, Atheists, Socialists, Materialists, or Idealists; or are they but a schism of modern Spiritualism,—mere visionaries? Are they entitled to any consideration, as capable of discussing philosophy and promoting real science; or should they be treated with the compassionate toleration which one gives to “harmless enthusiasts”? The Theosophical Society has been variously charged with a belief in “miracles,” and “miracle-working”; with a secret political object—like the Carbonari; with being spies of an autocratic Czar; with preaching socialistic and nihilistic doctrines; and, *mirabile dictu*, with having a covert understanding with the French Jesuits, to disrupt modern Spiritualism for a pecuniary consideration! With equal violence they have been denounced as dreamers, by the American Positivists; as fetish-worshippers, by some of the New York press; as revivalists of “mouldy superstitions,” by the Spiritualists; as infidel emissaries of Satan, by the Christian Church; as the very types of “*gobe-mouche*,” by Professor W. B. Carpenter, F.R.S.; and, finally, and most absurdly, some Hindu opponents, with a view to lessening their influence, have flatly charged them with the employment of *demons* to perform certain phenomena. Out of all this pother of opinions, one fact stands conspicuous—the Society, its members, and their views, are deemed of enough importance to be discussed and denounced: *Men slander only those whom they hate—or fear.*

But, if the Society has had its enemies and traducers, it has also had its friends and advocates. For every word of censure, there has

been a word of praise. Beginning with a party of about a dozen earnest men and women, a month later its members had so increased as to necessitate the hiring of a public hall for its meetings; within two years, it had working branches in European countries. Still later, it found itself in alliance with the Indian Arya Samaj, headed by the learned Pandit Dayanand Saraswati Swami, and the Ceylonese Buddhists, under the erudite H. Sumangala, High Priest of Adam’s Peak and President of the Widyodaya College, Colombo.

He who would seriously attempt to fathom the psychological sciences, must come to the sacred land of ancient Aryavarta. None is older than she in esoteric wisdom and civilization, however fallen may be her poor shadow—modern India. Holding this country, as we do, for the fruitful hot-bed whence proceeded all subsequent philosophical systems, to this source of all psychology and philosophy a portion of our Society has come to learn its ancient wisdom and ask for the impartation of its wondrous secrets. Philology has made too much progress to require at this late day a demonstration of this fact of the primogenitive nationality of Aryavart. The unproved and prejudiced hypothesis of modern Chronology is not worthy of a moment’s thought, and it will vanish in time like so many other unproved hypotheses. The line of philosophical heredity, from Kapila through Epicurus to James Mill; from Patanjali through Plotinus to Jacob Bohme, can be traced like the course of a river through a landscape. One of the objects of the Society’s organization was to examine the too transcendent views of the Spiritualists in regard to the powers of disembodied spirits; and, having told them what, in our opinion at least, a portion of their phenomena are *not*, it will become incumbent upon us now to show what they are. So apparent is it that it is in the East, and especially in India, that the key to the alleged “supernatural” phenomena of the Spiritualists must be sought, that it has recently been conceded in the Allahabad *Pioneer* (Aug. 11th, 1879), an Anglo-Indian daily journal which has not the reputation of saying what it does not mean. Blaming the men of science who “intent upon physical discovery, for some generations have been too prone to neglect super-physical investigation,” it mentions “the new wave of

doubt (spiritualism) which has “latterly disturbed this conviction.” To a large number of persons including many of high culture and intelligence, it adds, “the supernatural has again asserted itself as a fit subject of inquiry and research. And there are plausible hypotheses in favour of the idea that among the ‘sages’ of the East . . . there may be found in a higher degree than among the more modernised inhabitants of the West traces of those personal peculiarities, whatever they may be, which are required as a condition precedent to the occurrence of supernatural phenomena.” And then, unaware that the cause he pleads is one of the chief aims and objects of our Society, the editorial writer remarks that it is “the only direction in which, it seemstous, the effortsof the Theosophists in India might possibly be useful. The leading members of the Theosophical Society in India are known to be very advanced students of occult phenomena, already, and we cannot but hope that their professions of interest in Oriental philosophy... may cover a deserved intention of carrying out explorations of the kind we indicate.”

While, as observed, one of our objects, it yet is but one of many; the most important of which is to revive the work of Ammonius Saccas, and make various nations remember that they are the children “of one mother.” As to the transcendental side of the ancient Theosophy, it is also high time that the Theosophical Society should explain. With how much, then, of this nature-searching, God-seeking science of the ancient Aryan and Greek mystics, and of the powers of modern spiritual mediumship, does the Society agree? Our answer is: with it all. But if asked what it believes in, the reply will be: “*As a body*—Nothing.” The Society, as a body, has no creed, as creeds are but the shells around spiritual knowledge; and Theosophy in its fruition is spiritual knowledge itself—the very essence of philosophical and theistic enquiry. Visible representative of Universal Theosophy, it can be no more sectarian than a Geographical Society, which represents universal geographical exploration without caring whether the explorers be of one creed or another. The religion of the Society is an algebraical equation, in which so long as the sign=of equality is not omitted, each member is allowed to substitute quantities of his own, which better

accord with climatic and other exigencies of his native land, with the idiosyncrasies of his people, or even with his own. Having no accepted creed, our Society is very ready to give and take, to learn and teach, by practical experimentation, as opposed to mere passive and credulous acceptance of enforced dogma. It is willing to accept every result claimed by any of the foregoing schools or systems, that can be logically and experimentally demonstrated. Conversely, it can take nothing on mere faith, no matter by whom the demand may be made.

But, when we come to consider ourselves individually, it is quite another thing. The Society’s members represent the most varied nationalities and races, and were born and educated in the most dissimilar creeds and social conditions. Some of them believe in one thing, others in another. Some incline towards the ancient m^g/cor secret wisdom that was taught in the sanctuaries, which was the very opposite of supernaturalism or diabolism; others in modern spiritualism, or intercourse with the spirits of the dead; still others in mesmerism or animal magnetism, or only an occult dynamic force in nature. A certain number have scarcely yet acquired any definite belief, but are in a state of attentive expectancy; and there are even those who call themselves materialists, in a certain sense. Of atheists and bigoted sectarians of any religion, there are none in the Society; for the very fact of a man’s joining it proves that he is in search of the final truth as to the ultimate essence of things. If there be such a thing as a speculative atheist, which philosophers may deny, he would have to reject both cause and effect, whether in this world of matter, or in that of spirit. There may be members who, like the poet Shelley, have let their imagination soar from cause to prior cause *ad infinitum*, as each in its turn became logically transformed into a result necessitating a prior cause, until they have thinned the Eternal into a mere mist. But even they are not atheist in the speculative sense, whether they identify the material forces of the universe with the functions with which the theists endow their God, or otherwise; for once that they cannot free themselves from the conception of the abstract ideal of power, cause, necessity, and effect, they can be considered as atheists only in respect to a personal God, and not to the Universal Soul of the Pantheist. On

the other hand the bigoted sectarian, fenced in, as he is, with a creed upon every paling of which is written the warning “No Thoroughfare,” can neither come out of his enclosure to join the Theosophical Society, nor, if he could, has it room for one whose very religion forbids examination. The very root idea of the Society is free and fearless investigation.

As a body, the Theosophical Society holds that all original thinkers and investigators of the hidden side of nature whether materialists—those who find in matter “the promise and potency of all terrestrial life,” or spiritualists—that is, those who discover in spirit the source of all energy and of matter as well, were and are, properly, Theosophists. For to be one, one need not necessarily recognize the existence of any special God or a deity. One need but worship the spirit of living nature, and try to identify oneself with it. To revere that *Presence*, the invisible Cause, which is yet ever manifesting itself in its incessant results; the intangible, omnipotent, and omnipresent Proteus: indivisible in its Essence, and eluding form, yet appearing under all and every form; who is here and there, and everywhere and nowhere; is ALL, and NOTHING; ubiquitous yet one; the Essence filling, binding, bounding, containing everything, contained in all. It will, we think, be seen now, that whether classed as Theists, Pantheists or Atheists, such men are near kinsmen to the rest. Be what he may, once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought—Godward—he is a Theosophist; an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth with “an inspiration of his own” to solve the universal problems.

With every man that is earnestly searching in his own way after a knowledge of the Divine Principle, of man’s relations to it, and nature’s manifestations of it, Theosophy is allied. It is likewise the ally of honest science, as distinguished from much that passes for *exact*, physical science, so long as the latter does not poach on the domains of psychology and metaphysics.

And it is also the ally of every honest religion—to wit, a religion willing to be judged by the same tests as it applies to the others. Those books, which contain the most self-evident truth, are to it inspired

(not revealed). But all books it regards, on account of the human element contained in them, as inferior to the Book of Nature; to read which and comprehend it correctly, the innate powers of the soul must be highly developed. Ideal laws can be perceived by the intuitive faculty alone; they are beyond the domain of argument and dialectics, and no one can understand or rightly appreciate them through the explanations of another mind, even though this mind be claiming a direct revelation. And, as this Society, which allows the widest sweep in the realms of the pure ideal, is no less firm in the sphere of facts, its deference to modern science and its just representatives is sincere. Despite all their lack of a higher spiritual intuition, the world’s debt to the representatives of modern physical science is immense; hence, the Society endorses heartily the noble and indignant protest of that gifted and eloquent preacher, the Rev. O.B. Frothingham, against those who try to undervalue the services of our great naturalists. “Talk of Science as being irreligious, atheistic,” he exclaimed in a recent lecture, delivered at New York, “Science is creating a new idea of God. It is due to Science that we have any conception at all of a *living* God. If we do not become atheists one of these days under the maddening effect of Protestantism, it will be due to Science, because it is disabusing us of hideous illusions that tease and embarrass us, and putting us in the way of knowing how to reason about the things we see. . . .”

And it is also due to the unremitting labors of such Orientalists as Sir W. Jones, Max Muller, Burnouf, Colebrooke, Haug, St. Hilaire, and so many others, that the Society, as a body, feels equal respect and veneration for Vedic, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, and other old religions of the world; and, a like brotherly feeling toward its Hindu, Sinhalese, Parsi, Jain, Hebrew, and Christian members as individual students of “self,” of nature, and of the divine in nature.

Born in the United States of America, the Society was constituted on the model of its Mother Land. The latter, omitting the name of God from its constitution lest it should afford a pretext one day to make a state religion, gives absolute equality to all religions in its laws. All support and each is in turn protected by the State. The Society,

modelled upon this constitution, may fairly be termed a “Republic of Conscience.”

We have now, we think, made clear why our members, as individuals, are free to stay outside or inside any creed they please, provided they do not pretend that none but themselves shall enjoy the privilege of conscience, and try to force their opinions upon the others. In this respect the Rules of the Society are very strict: It tries to act upon the wisdom of the old Buddhistic axiom, “Honour thine own faith, and do not slander that of others”; echoed back in our present century, in the *’Declaration of Principles’ of the Brahma Samaj, which so nobly states that: * ‘no sect shall be vilified, ridiculed, or hated.’ In Section VI of the Revised Rules of the Theosophical Society, recently adopted in General Council, at Bombay, is this mandate:

It is not lawful for any officer of the Parent Society to express, by word or act, any hostility to, or preference for, any one section (sectarian division, or group within the Society) more than another. All must be regarded and treated as equally the objects of the Society’s solicitude and exertions. All have an equal right to have the essential features of their religious belief laid before the tribunal of an impartial world.

In their individual capacity, members may, when attacked, occasionally break this Rule, but, nevertheless, as officers they are restrained, and the Rule is strictly enforced during the meetings. For, above all human sects stands Theosophy in its abstract sense; Theosophy which is too wide for any of them to contain but which easily contains them.

In conclusion, we may state that, broader and far more universal in its views than any existing mere scientific Society, it has *plus* science its belief in every possibility, and determined will to penetrate into those unknown spiritual regions which exact science pretends that its votaries have no business to explore. And, it has one quality more than any religion in that it makes no difference between Gentile, Jew, or Christian. It is in this spirit that the Society has been established upon the footing of a Universal Brotherhood.

Unconcerned about politics; hostile to the insane dreams of Socialism and of Communism, which it abhors—as both are but

disguised conspiracies of brutal force and sordidness against honest labour; the Society cares but little about the outward human management of the material world. The whole of its aspirations are directed towards the occult truths of the visible and invisible worlds. Whether the physical man be under the rule of an empire or a republic, concerns only the man of matter. His body may be enslaved; as to his soul, he has the right to give to his rulers the proud answer of Socrates to his judges. They have no sway over the *inner* man.

Such, then, is the Theosophical Society, and such its principles, its multifarious aims, and its objects. Need we wonder at the past misconceptions of the general public, and the easy hold the enemy has been able to find to lower it in the public estimation. The true student has ever been a recluse, a man of silence and meditation. With the busy world his habits and tastes are so little in common that, while he is studying, his enemies and slanderers have undisturbed opportunities. But time cures all and lies are but ephemera. Truth alone is eternal.

About a few of the Fellows of the Society who have made great scientific discoveries, and some others to whom the psychologist and the biologist are indebted for the new light thrown upon the darker problems of the inner man, we will speak later on. Our object now was but to prove to the reader that Theosophy is neither “a new fangled doctrine,” a political cabal, nor one of those societies of enthusiasts which are born today but to die tomorrow. That not all of its members can think alike, is proved by the Society having organized into two great Divisions—the Eastern and the Western—and the latter being divided into numerous sections, according to races and religious views. One man’s thought, infinitely various as are its manifestations, is not all-embracing. Denied ubiquity, it must necessarily speculate but in one direction; and once transcending the boundaries of exact human knowledge, it has to err and wander, for the ramifications of the one Central and absolute Truth are infinite. Hence, we occasionally find even the greater philosophers losing themselves in the labyrinths of speculations, thereby provoking the criticism of posterity. But as all work for one and the same object,

namely, the disenfranchisement of human thought, the elimination of superstitions, and the discovery of truth, all are equally welcome. The attainment of these objects, all agree, can best be secured by convincing the reason and warming the enthusiasm of the generation of fresh young minds, that are just ripening into maturity, and making ready to take the place of their prejudiced and conservative fathers. And, as each—the great ones as well as small—have trodden the royal road to knowledge, we listen to all, and take both small and great into our fellowship. For no honest searcher comes back empty-handed, and even he who has enjoyed the least share of popular favor can lay at least his mite upon the one altar of Truth.

Lucifer, November, 1888

IS THEOSOPHY A RELIGION?

“Religion is the best armour that man can have,
but it is the worst cloak.” —BUNYAN

IT is no exaggeration to say that there never was—during the present century, at any rate—a movement, social or religious, so terribly, nay, so absurdly misunderstood, or more blundered about than THEOSOPHY—whether regarded theoretically as a code of ethics, or practically, in its objective expression, *i.e.*, the Society known by that name.

Year after year, and day after day had our officers and members to interrupt people speaking of the theosophical movement by putting in more or less emphatic protests against theosophy being referred to as a “religion,” and the Theosophical Society as a kind of church or religious body. Still worse, it is as often spoken of as a “new sect”! Is it a stubborn prejudice, an error, or both? The latter, most likely. The most narrow-minded and even notoriously unfair people are still in need of a plausible pretext, of a peg on which to hang their little uncharitable remarks and innocently-uttered slanders. And what peg is more solid for that purpose, more convenient than an “ism” or a “sect.” The great majority would be very sorry to be disabused and finally forced to accept the fact that theosophy is neither. The name suits them, and they pretend to be unaware of its falseness. But there are others, also, many more or less friendly people, who labour sincerely under the same delusion. To these, we say: Surely the world has been hitherto sufficiently cursed with the intellectual extinguishers known as dogmatic creeds, without having inflicted upon it a new form of faith! Too many already wear their faith, truly, as Shakespeare puts it, “but as the fashion of his hat,” ever changing “with the next block.” Moreover, the very *raison d’etre* of the Theosophical Society

was, from its beginning, to utter a loud protest and lead an open warfare against dogma or any belief based upon blind faith.

It may sound odd and paradoxical, but it is true to say that, hitherto, the most apt workers in practical theosophy, its most devoted members were those recruited from the ranks of agnostics and even of materialists. No genuine, no sincere searcher after truth can ever be found among the *blind* believers in the “Divine Word,” let the latter be claimed to come from Allah, Brahma or Jehovah, or their respective Kuran, Purana and Bible. For :

Faith is not *reason's* labour, but repose.

He who believes his own religion on faith, will regard that of every other man as a lie, and hate it on that same faith. Moreover, unless it fetters reason and entirely blinds our perceptions of anything outside our own particular faith, the latter is no faith at all, but a temporary belief, the delusion we labour under, at some particular time of life. Moreover, “faith without principles is but a flattering phrase for willful positiveness or fanatical bodily sensations,” in Coleridge’s clever definition.

What, then, is Theosophy, and how may it be defined in its latest presentation in this closing portion of the sixteenth century?

Theosophy, we say, is not *a* Religion.

Yet there are, as everyone knows, certain beliefs, philosophical, religious and scientific, which have become so closely associated in recent years with the word “Theosophy” that they have come to be taken by the general public for theosophy itself. Moreover, we shall be told these beliefs have been put forward, explained and defended by those very Founders who have declared that Theosophy is *not* a Religion. What is then the explanation of this *apparent* contradiction? How can a certain body of beliefs and teachings, an elaborate doctrine, in fact, be labelled “Theosophy” and be tacitly accepted as “Theosophical” by nine-tenths of the members of the T.S., if Theosophy is not a Religion?—we are asked.

To explain this is the purpose of the present protest.

It is perhaps necessary, first of all, to say, that the assertion that

“Theosophy is not *a* Religion,” by no means excludes the fact that “Theosophy *is* Religion” itself. A Religion in the true and only correct sense, is a bond uniting men together—not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs. Now Religion, *per se*, in its widest meaning is that which binds not only *all* MEN, but also *all* BEINGS and all *things* in the entire Universe into one grand whole. This is our theosophical definition of religion; but the same definition changes again with every creed and country, and no two Christians even regard it alike. We find this in more than one eminent author. Thus Carlyle defined the Protestant Religion in his day, with a remarkable prophetic eye to this ever-growing feeling in our present day, as:

For the most part a wise, prudential feeling, grounded on mere calculation; a matter, as all others now are, of expediency and utility; whereby some smaller *quantum* of earthly enjoyment may be exchanged for a far larger *quantum* of celestial enjoyment. Thus religion, too, is profit, a working for wages; not reverence, but vulgar hope and fear.

In her turn Mrs. Stowe, whether consciously or otherwise, seemed to have had Roman Catholicism rather than Protestantism in her mind, when saying of her heroine that:

Religion she looked upon in the light of a ticket (with the correct number of indulgences bought and paid for), which, being once purchased and snugly laid away in a pocket-book, is to be produced at the celestial gate, and thus secure admission to heaven. . . .

But to Theosophists (the genuine Theosophists are here meant) who accept no mediation by proxy, no salvation through innocent bloodshed, nor would they think of “working for wages” in the *One Universal* religion, the only definition they could subscribe to and accept in full is one given by Miller. How truly and theosophically he describes it, by showing that

. . . true Religion

Is always mild, propitious and humble;
Plays not *the tyrant*, plants *no faith in blood*,
Nor bears destruction on her chariot wheels;
But stoops to polish, succour and redress,
And builds her grandeur on the public good.

The above is a correct definition of what true theosophy *is*, or ought to be. (Among the creeds Buddhism alone is such a true heart-

binding and men-binding philosophy, because it is not a dogmatic religion.) In this respect, as it is the duty and task of every genuine theosophist to accept and carry out these principles, Theosophy *is* RELIGION, and the Society its one Universal Church; the temple of Solomon's wisdom,* in building which "there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building" (I Kings, vi.); for this "temple" is made by no human hand, nor built in any locality on earth—but, verily, is raised only in the inner sanctuary of man's heart wherein reigns alone the awakened soul.

Thus Theosophy is not *a* Religion, we say, but RELIGION itself, the one bond of unity, which is so universal and all-embracing that no man, as no speck—from gods and mortals down to animals, the blade of grass and atom—can be outside of its light. Therefore, any organization or body of that name must necessarily be a UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD.

Were it otherwise, Theosophy would be but a word added to hundreds other such words as high sounding as they are pretentious and empty. Viewed as a philosophy, Theosophy in its practical work is the alembic of the Mediaeval alchemist. It transmutes the apparently base metal of every ritualistic and dogmatic creed (Christianity included) into the gold of fact and truth, and thus truly produces a universal panacea for the ills of mankind. This is why, when applying for admission into the Theosophical Society, no one is asked what religion he belongs to, nor what his deistic views may be. These views are his own personal property and have nought to do with the Society. Because Theosophy can be practiced by Christian or Heathen, Jew or Gentile, by Agnostic or Materialist, or even an Atheist, provided that none of these is a bigoted fanatic, who refuses to recognize as his brother any man or woman outside his own special creed or belief. Count Leo N. Tolstoy does not believe in the Bible, the Church, or the

* Whose 700 wives and 300 concubines, by the bye, are merely the personations of man's attributes, feelings, passions and his various occult powers: the Kabalistic numbers 7 and 3 showing it plainly. Solomon himself, moreover, being, simply, the emblem of Sol—the "Solar Initiate" or the Christ-Sun, is a variant of the Indian "Vikarttana" (the Sun) shorn of his beams by Viswakarma, his Hierophant-Initiator, who thus shears the Chrestos-candidate for initiation of his golden radiance and crowns him with a dark' blackened aureole—the "crown of thorns." (See the "Secret Doctrine" for full explanation.) Solomon was never a living man. As described in Kings, his life and works are an allegory on the trials and glory of Initiation.

divinity of Christ; and yet no Christian surpasses him in the practical bearing out of the principles alleged to have been preached on the Mount. And these principles are those of Theosophy; not because they were uttered by the Christian Christ, but because they are universal ethics, and were preached by Buddha and Confucius, Krishna, and all the great Sages, thousands of years before the Sermon on the Mount was written. Hence, once that we live up to such theosophy, it becomes a universal *panacea* indeed, for it heals the wounds inflicted by the gross asperities of the Church "isms" on the sensitive soul of every naturally religious man. How many of these, forcibly thrust out by the reactive impulse of disappointment from the narrow area of blind belief into the ranks of arid disbelief, have been brought back to hopeful aspiration by simply joining our Brotherhood—yea, imperfect as it is.

If, as an offset to this, we are reminded that several prominent members have left the Society disappointed in theosophy as they had been in other associations, this cannot dismay us in the least. For with a very, *very few* exceptions, in the early stage of the T.S.'s activities when some left because they did not find mysticism practiced in the General Body as *they* understood it, or because "the leaders lacked Spirituality," were "untheosophical, hence, untrue to the rules," you see, the majority left because most of them were either half-hearted or too self-opinionated—a church and infallible dogma in themselves. Some broke away, again under very shallow pretexts indeed, such, for instance, as "because Christianity (to say Churchianity, or *sham* Christianity, would be more just) was too roughly handled in our magazines"—just as if other fanatical religions were ever treated any better or upheld! Thus, all those who left have done well to leave, and have never been regretted.

Furthermore, there is this also to be added: the number of those who left can hardly be compared with the number of those who found everything they had hoped for in Theosophy. Its doctrines, if seriously studied, call forth, by stimulating one's reasoning powers and awakening the *inner* in the animal man, every hitherto dormant power for good in us, and also the perception of the true and the real, as opposed to

the false and the unreal. Tearing off with no uncertain hand the thick veil of dead-letter with which every old religious scriptures were cloaked, scientific Theosophy, learned in the cunning symbolism of the ages, reveals to the scoffer at old wisdom the origin of the world's faiths and sciences. It opens new vistas beyond the old horizons of crystallized, motionless and despotic faiths; and turning blind belief into a reasoned knowledge founded on mathematical laws—the only *exact* science—it demonstrates to him under pro founder and more philosophical aspects the existence of that which, repelled by the grossness of its dead-letter form, he had long since abandoned as a nursery tale. It gives a clear and well-defined object, an ideal to live for, to every sincere man or woman belonging to whatever station in Society and of whatever culture and degree of intellect. Practical Theosophy is not *one* Science, but embraces every science in life, moral and physical. It may, in short, be justly regarded as the universal “coach,” a tutor of world-wide knowledge and experience, and of an erudition which not only assists and guides his pupils toward a successful examination for every scientific or moral service in earthly life, but fits them for *the lives* to come, if those pupils will only study the universe and its mysteries *within themselves*, instead of studying them through the spectacles of orthodox science and religions.

And let no reader misunderstand these statements. It is Theosophy *per se*, not any individual member of the Society or even Theosophist, on whose behalf such a universal omniscience is claimed. The two—Theosophy and the Theosophical Society—as a vessel and the *ollapodrida* it contains, must not be confounded. One is, as an ideal, *divine* Wisdom, perfection itself; the other a poor, imperfect thing, trying to run *under*, if not *within*, its shadow on Earth. No man is perfect; why, then, should any member of the T.S. be expected to be a paragon of every human virtue? And why should the whole organization be criticized and blamed for the faults, whether real or imaginary, of some of its “Fellows,” or even its Leaders? Never was the Society, as a concrete body, free from blame or sin—*errare humanum est*—nor were any of its members. Hence, it is rather those members—most of whom will not be led by theosophy, that ought to

be blamed. Theosophy is the soul of its Society; the latter the gross and imperfect body of the former. Hence, those modern Solomons who *will* sit in the Judgment Seat and talk of that they know nothing about, are invited before they slander theosophy or any theosophists to first get acquainted with both, instead of ignorantly calling one a “farrago of insane beliefs” and the other a “sect of impostors and lunatics.”

Regardless of this, Theosophy is spoken of by friends and foes as a religion when not a *sect*. Let us see how the special beliefs which have become associated with the word have come to stand in that position, and how it is that they have so good a right to it that none of the leaders of the Society have ever thought of disavowing their doctrines.

We have said that we believed in the absolute unity of nature. Unity implies the possibility for a unit on one plane, to come into contact with another unit on or from another plane. We believe in it.

The just published “Secret Doctrine” will show what were the ideas of all antiquity with regard to the *primeval instructors* of primitive man and his three earlier races. The genesis of that WISDOM-RELIGION, in which all theosophists believe, dates from that period. So-called “Occultism,” or rather Esoteric Science, has to be traced in its origin to those Beings who, led by Karma, have incarnated in our humanity, and thus struck the key-note of that secret Science which countless generations of subsequent adepts have expanded since then in every age, while they checked its doctrines by personal observation and experience. The bulk of this knowledge—which no man is able to possess in its fullness—constitutes that which we now call Theosophy or “divine knowledge.” Beings from other and higher worlds may have it entire; we can have it only approximately.

Thus, unity of everything in the universe implies and justifies our belief in the existence of a knowledge at once scientific philosophical and religious, showing the necessity and actuality of the connection of man and all things in the universe with each other; which knowledge, therefore, becomes essentially RELIGION, and must be called in its integrity and universality by the distinctive name of WISDOM-RELIGION.

It is from this WISDOM-RELIGION that all the various individual “Religions” (erroneously so called) have sprung, forming in their turn offshoots and branches, and also all the minor creeds, based upon and always originated through some personal experience in psychology. Every such religion, or religious offshoot, be it considered orthodox or heretical, wise or foolish, started originally as a clear and unadulterated stream from the Mother-Source. The fact that each became in time polluted with purely human speculations and even inventions, due to interested motives, does not prevent any from having been pure in its early beginnings. There are those creeds—we shall not call them religions—which have now been overlaid with the human element out of all recognition; others just showing signs of early decay; not one that escaped the hand of time. But each and all are of divine, because natural and true origin; aye—Mazdeism, Brahmanism, Buddhism as much as Christianity. It is the dogmas and human element in the latter which led directly to modern Spiritualism.

Of course, there will be an outcry from both sides, if we say that modern Spiritualism *per se*, cleansed of the unhealthy speculations which were based on the dicta of two little girls and their very unreliable “Spirits”—is, nevertheless, far more true and philosophical than any church dogma. *Carnalised* Spiritualism is now reaping its Karma. Its primitive *innovators** the said “two little girls” from Rochester, the Mecca of modern Spiritualism, have grown up and turned into old women since the first raps produced by them have opened wide ajar the gates between this and the other world. It is on their “innocent” testimony that the elaborate scheme of a sidereal Summer-land, with its active astral population of “Spirits,” ever on the wing between their “Silent Land” and our very loud-mouthed, gossiping earth—has been started and worked out. And now the two female Mahommeds of Modern Spiritualism have turned self-apostates and play false to the “philosophy” they have created, and have gone over to the enemy. They expose and denounce *practical* Spiritualism as the humbug of the ages. Spiritualists—(save a handful of fair exceptions)—have rejoiced and sided with *our* enemies and slanderers, when these, *who had never been Theosophists*, played us false and showed the cloven

foot denouncing the Founders of the Theosophical Society as frauds and impostors. Shall the Theosophists laugh in their turn now that the original “revealers” of Spiritualism have become its “revilers”? Never! for the phenomena of Spiritualism are facts, and the treachery of the “Fox girls” only makes us feel new pity for all mediums, and confirms, before the whole world, our constant declaration that no medium can be relied upon. No true theosophist will ever laugh, or far less rejoice, at the discomfiture even of an opponent. The reason for it is simple:—

Because we know that beings from other, higher worlds do confabulate with some elect mortals now as ever; though now far more rarely than in the days of old, as mankind becomes with every civilized generation worse in every respect.

Theosophy—owing, in truth, to the *levee in arms* of all the Spiritualists of Europe and America at the first words uttered against the idea that every communicating *intelligence* is necessarily the Spirit of some ex-mortal from this earth—has not said its last word about Spiritualism and “Spirits.” It may one day. Meanwhile, a humble servant of theosophy, the Editor, declares once more her belief in Beings, grander, wiser, nobler than any *personal* God, who are beyond any “Spirits of the dead,” Saints, or winged Angels, who, nevertheless, *do* condescend in all and every age to occasionally overshadow rare sensitives—often entirely unconnected with Church, Spiritualism or even Theosophy. And believing in high and holy Spiritual Beings, she must also believe in the existence of their opposites—lower “spirits,” good, bad and indifferent. Therefore does she believe in spiritualism and its phenomena, some of which are so repugnant to her.

This, as a casual remark and a digression, just to show that Theosophy includes Spiritualism—as it should be, not as it is—among its sciences, based on knowledge and the experience of countless ages. There is not a religion worthy of the name which has been started otherwise than in consequence of such *visits* from Beings on the higher planes.

Thus were born all prehistoric, as well as all the historic religions, Mazdeism and Brahmanism, Buddhism and Christianity, Judaism, Gnosticism and Mahomedanism; in short every more or less successful

“ism.” All are true at the bottom, and all are false on their surface. The Revealer, the artist who impressed a portion of the Truth on the brain of the Seer, was in every instance a true artist, who gave out genuine truths; but the instrument proved also, in every instance, to be *only a man*. Invite Rubenstein and ask him to play a sonata of Beethoven on a piano left to *self-tuning*, one-half of the keys of which are in chronic paralysis, while the wires hang loose; then see whet her, the genius of the artist notwithstanding, you will be able to recognize the sonata. The moral of *the fabula* is that a man—let him be the greatest of mediums or natural Seers—is but a man; and man left to his own devices and speculations *must* be out of tune with absolute truth, while even picking up some of its crumbs. For Man is but *a fallen Angel*, a god within, but having an animal brain in his head, more subject to cold and wine fumes while in company with other men on Earth, than to the faultless reception of divine revelations.

Hence the multi-coloured dogmas of the churches. Hence also the thousand and one “philosophies” so-called (some contradictory, theosophical theories included); and the variegated “Sciences” and schemes, Spiritual, Mental, Christian and Secular; Sectarianism and bigotry, and especially the personal vanity and self-opinionatedness of almost every “Innovator” since the mediaeval ages. These have all darkened and hidden the very existence of TRUTH—the common root of all. Will our critics imagine that we exclude theosophical teachings from this nomenclature? Not at all. And though the esoteric doctrines which our Society has been and is expounding are not *mental or spiritual* impressions from some “unknown, *from above*” but the fruit of teachings given to us by living men, still, except that which was dictated and written out by those Masters of Wisdom themselves, these doctrines may be in many cases as incomplete and faulty as any of our foes would desire it. The “Secret Doctrine”—a work which gives out all that can be given out during this century, is an attempt to lay bare *in part* the common foundation and inheritance of all—great and small religious and philosophical schemes. It was found indispensable to tear away all this mass of concreted misconceptions and prejudice which now hides the parent trunk of *(a)* all the great

world-religions; *(b)* of the smaller sects; and *(c)* of Theosophy as it stands now—however veiled the great Truth, by ourselves and our limited knowledge. The crust of error is thick, laid on by whatever hand; and because we *personally* have tried to remove some of it, the effort became the standing reproach against all theosophical writers and even the Society. Few among our friends and readers have failed to characterize our attempt to expose error in the *Theosophist* and *Lucifer* as “very uncharitable attacks on Christianity,” “untheosophical assaults,” etc., etc. Yet these are necessary, nay, indispensable, if we wish to plough up at least *approximate* truths. We have to lay things bare, and are ready to suffer for it—as usual. It is vain to promise to *give* truth, and then leave it mingled with error out of mere faint-heartedness. That the result of such policy could only muddy the stream of facts is shown plainly. After twelve years of incessant labour and struggle with enemies from the four quarters of the globe, notwithstanding our four theosophical monthly journals—the *Theosophist*, *Path*, *Lucifer*, and the French *Lotus*—our wish-washy, tame protests in them, our timid declarations, our “masterly policy of inactivity,” and playing at hide-and-seek in the shadow of dreary metaphysics, have only led to Theosophy being seriously regarded as a religious SECT. For the hundredth time we are told—“What good is Theosophy doing?” and “See what good the Churches are doing!”

Nevertheless, it is an averred fact that mankind is not a whit better in morality, and in some respects ten times worse now, than it ever was in the days of Paganism. Moreover, for the last half century, from that period when Freethought and Science got the best of the Churches—Christianity is yearly losing far more adherents among the cultured classes than it gains proselytes in the lower *strata*, the scum of Heathendom. On the other hand, Theosophy has brought back from Materialism and blank despair to belief (based on logic and evidence) in man’s *divine* Self, and the immortality of the latter, more than one of those whom the Church has lost through dogma, exaction of faith and tyranny. And, if it is proven that Theosophy saves one man only in a thousand of those the Church has lost, is not the former a far higher factor for good than all the missionaries put together?

Theosophy, as repeatedly declared in print and *viva voce* by its members and officers, proceeds on diametrically opposite lines to those which are trodden by the Church; and Theosophy rejects the methods of Science, since her inductive methods can only lead to crass materialism. Yet, *de facto*, Theosophy claims to be both “RELIGION” and “SCIENCE,” for theosophy is the essence of both. It is for the sake and love of the two divine abstractions—z.e., theosophical religion and science, that its Society has become the volunteer *scavenger* of both orthodox religion and modern science; as also the relentless Nemesis of those who have degraded the two noble truths to their own ends and purposes, and then divorced each violently from the other, though the two are and *must be one*. To prove this is also one of our objects in the present paper.

The modern Materialist insists on an impassable chasm between the two, pointing out that the “Conflict between Religion and Science” has ended in the triumph of the latter and the defeat of the first. The modern Theosophist refuses to see, on the contrary, any such chasm at all. If it is claimed by both Church and Science that each of them pursues the truth and *nothing but the truth*, then either one of them is mistaken, and accepts falsehood for truth, or both. Any other impediment to their reconciliation must be set down as purely *fictitious*. Truth is one, even if sought for or pursued at two different ends. Therefore, Theosophy claims to reconcile the two foes. It premises by saying that the *true* spiritual and primitive Christian religion is, as much as the other great and still older philosophies that preceded it—*the light of Truth*—“*the life and the light of men*.”

But so is the *true* light of Science. Therefore, darkened as the former is now by dogmas examined through glasses smoked with the superstitions artificially produced by the Churches, this light can hardly penetrate and meet its sister ray in a science, equally as cobwebbed by paradoxes and the materialistic sophistries of the age. The teachings of the two are incompatible, and cannot agree so long as both Religious philosophy and the Science of physical and external (in philosophy, *false*) nature, insist upon the infallibility of their respective “will-o’-the-wisps.” The two lights, having their beams of equal length in the

matter of false deductions, can but extinguish each other and produce still worse darkness. Yet, they can be reconciled on the condition that both shall clean their houses, one from the human dross of the ages, the other from the hideous excrescence of modern materialism and atheism. And as both decline, the most meritorious and best thing to do is precisely what Theosophy alone can and *will do*: *i.e.*, point out to the innocents caught by the glue of the two waylayers—verily two dragons of old, one devouring the intellects, the other the souls of men—that their supposed chasm is but an optical delusion; that, far from being one, it is but an immense garbage mound respectively erected by the two foes, as a fortification against mutual attacks.

Thus, if theosophy does no more than point out and seriously draw the attention of the world to the fact that the *supposed* disagreement between religion and science is conditioned, on the one hand by the intelligent materialists rightly kicking against absurd human dogmas, and on the other by blind fanatics and interested churchmen who, instead of defending the souls of mankind, fight simply tooth and nail for their personal bread and butter and authority—why, even then, theosophy will prove itself the saviour of mankind.

And now we have shown, it is hoped, what real Theosophy is, and what are its adherents. One is divine Science and a code of Ethics so sublime that no theosophist is capable of doing it justice; the others weak but sincere men. Why, then, should Theosophy ever be judged by the personal shortcomings of any leader or member of our 150 branches? One may work for it to the best of his ability, yet never raise himself to the height of his call and aspiration. This is his or her misfortune, never the fault of Theosophy, or even of the body at large. Its Founders claim no other merit than that of having set the first theosophical wheel rolling. If judged at all they must be judged by the work they have done, not by what friends may think or enemies say of them. There is no room for *personalities* in a work like ours; and all must be ready, as the Founders are, if needs be, for the car of Jaggannath to crush them *individually for the good of all*. It is only in the days of the dim Future, when death will have laid his cold hand on the luckless Founders and stopped thereby their activity, that their

respective merits and demerits, their good and bad acts and deeds, and their theosophical work will have to be weighed on the Balance of Posterity. Then only, after the two scales with their contrasted loads have been brought to an equipoise, and the character of the net result left over has become evident to all in its full and intrinsic value, then only shall the nature of the verdict passed be determined with anything like justice. At present, except in India, those results are too scattered over the face of the earth, too much limited to a handful of individuals to be easily judged. Now, these results can hardly be perceived, much less heard of amid the din and clamour made by our teeming enemies, and their ready imitators—the indifferent. Yet however small, if once proved good, even now every man who has at heart the moral progress of humanity, owes his thankfulness to Theosophy for those results. And as Theosophy was revived and brought before the world, *via* its unworthy servants, the “Founders,” if their work was useful, it alone must be their vindicator, regardless of the present state of their balance in the petty cash accounts of Karma, wherein social “respectabilities” are entered up.

Lucifer, November, 1887

“LET EVERY MAN PROVE HIS OWN WORK”

SUCH is the title of a letter received by the Editors of *Lucifer*. It is of so serious a nature that it seems well to make it the subject of this month’s editorial. Considering the truths uttered in its few lines, its importance and the bearing it has upon the much obscured subject of Theosophy, and its visible agent or vehicle—the Society of that name—the letter is certainly worthy of the most considerate answer.

Fiat justitia, ruat caelum I

Justice will be done to both sides in the dispute; namely, Theosophists and the members of the Theosophical Society¹ on the one hand, and the followers of the *Divine Word (or Christos)*, and the so-called Christians, on the other.

We reproduce the letter:

To the Editors of LUCIFER

What a grand chance is now open in this country, to the exponents of a noble and advanced religion (if such this Theosophy be²) for proving its strength, righteousness and verity to the Western world, by throwing a penetrating and illuminating ray of its declared light upon the terribly harrowing and perplexing practical problems of our age.

Surely one of the purest and least self*incrusted duties of man, is to

¹ Not all the members of the Theosophical Society are Theosophists; nor are the members of the so-called Christian Churches all Christians, by any means. True Theosophists, as true Christians, are very few; and there are practical Theosophists in the fold of Christianity, as there are practical Christians in the Theosophical Society, outside all ritualistic Christianity. “Not every one that saith unto me ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father:” (Matthew, vii, 21.) “Believe not in Me, but in the truths I utter.” (Buddha’s Aphorisms.)

² “This” Theosophy is not a religion, but rather the RELIGION—if one. So far, we prefer to call it a philosophy; one, moreover, which contains every religion, as it is the essence and the foundation of all. Rule III. of the Theos. Body says: “The Society represents no particular religious creed, is entirely unsectarian, and includes professors of all faiths.”

alleviate the sufferings of his fellow man?

From what I read, and from what I daily come into immediate contact with, I can hardly think it would be possible to over-rate in contemplation, the intense privation and agonizing suffering that is—aye, say it—at *this moment* being endured by a vast proportion of our brothers and sisters, arising in a large measure from their not absolutely having the means for procuring the *bare necessities of existence*.

Surely a high and Heaven-born religion—a religion professing to receive its advanced knowledge and Light from “those more learned in the Science of Life,” should be able to tell us something of how to deal with such life, in its primitive condition of helpless submission to the surrounding circumstances of—civilization!

If one of our main duties is that of exercising disinterested love towards the Brotherhood, surely “those more learned” ones, whether in the flesh, or out of it, can and will, if appealed to by the votaries, aid them in discovering ways and means for such an end, and in organising some great fraternal scheme for dealing *rightly* with questions which are so appalling in their complexity, and which must and do press with such irresistible force upon all those who are earnest in their endeavours to carry out the will of Christ in a Christian land?
L.F.F.F.

October 25, 1887.

This honest-spoken and sincere letter contains two statements; an implied accusation against “Theosophy” (*i.e.*, the Society of that name), and a virtual admission that Christianity—or, again, rather its ritualistic and dogmatic religions—deserve the same and even a sterner rebuke. For if “Theosophy,” represented by its professors, merits on external appearance the reproach that so far it has failed to transfer divine wisdom from the region of the metaphysical into that of practical work, “Christianity,” that is, merely professing Christians, churchmen and laymen, lie under a like accusation, evidently. “Theosophy” has, certainly, failed to discover *infallible* ways and means of bringing all its votaries to exercise “disinterested love” in their Brotherhood; it has not yet been able to relieve suffering in mankind at large; but neither has Christianity. And not even the writer of the above letter nor any one else, can show sufficient excuse for the Christians in this respect. Thus the admission that “those who are

earnest in their endeavours to carry out the will of Christ in a Christian land” *need the help of* “those more learned,” whether (pagan adepts) “in the flesh, or (spirits?) out of it” is very suggestive, for it contains the defence and the *raison d’être* of the Theosophical Society. Tacit though it is, once that it comes from the pen of a sincere Christian, one who longs to learn some practical means to relieve the sufferings of the starving multitudes—this admission becomes the greatest and most complete justification for the existence of the Theosophical Brotherhood; a full confession of the absolute necessity for such a body independent of, and untrammelled by, any enchaining dogmas, and it points out at the same time the signal failure of Christianity to accomplish the desired results.

Truly said Coleridge that “good works may exist *without* saving (?) principles, therefore cannot contain in themselves the principles of salvation; but saving principles never did, never can exist without good works.” Theosophists admit the definition, and disagree with the Christians only as to the nature of these “saving principles.” The Church (or churches) maintain that the only saving principle is belief in Jesus, or the carnalized Christ of the soul-killing dogma; theosophy, undogmatic and unsectarian, answers, it is not so. The only *saving* principle dwells in man himself, and has never dwelt outside of his immortal divine self, *i.e.*, it is the true Christos, as it is the true Buddha, the divine inward light which proceeds from the eternal unmanifesting unknown ALL. And this light *can only be made known by its works*—faith in it having to remain ever blind in all, save in the man himself who feels that light within his soul.

Therefore, the tacit admission of the author of the above letter covers another point of great importance. The writer seems to have felt that which many, among those who strive to help the suffering, have felt and expressed. The creeds of the churches fail to supply the *intellectual* light, and the true wisdom which are needed to make the practical philanthropy carried out, by the true and earnest followers of Christ, a *reality*. The “practical” people either go on “doing good” unintelligently, and thus often do harm instead; or, appalled by the awful problem before them, and failing to find in their “churches” any

clue, or a hope of solution, they retire from the battlefield and let themselves be drifted blindly by the current in which they happen to be born.

Of late it has become the fashion for friends, as well as for foes, to reproach the Theosophical Society with doing no practical work, but losing itself in the clouds of metaphysics. Metaphysicians, we are told, by those who like to repeat stale arguments, have been learning their lesson for the last few thousand years; and it is now high time that they should begin to do some practical work. Agreed; but considering that the Christian churches count nearly nineteen centuries of existence, and that the Theosophical Society and Brotherhood is a body hardly twelve years old; considering again that the Christian churches roll in fabulous wealth, and number their adherents by hundreds of millions, whereas the Theosophical Brotherhood is but a few thousand strong, and that it has no funds, or funds, at its disposal, but that 98 per cent of its members are as poor and as uninfluential as the aristocracy of the Christian church is rich and powerful; taking all this into consideration, there would be much to say if the theosophists would only choose to press the matter upon the public notice. Meanwhile, as the bitterest critics of the “leaders” of the Theosophical Society are by no means only outsiders, but as there are members of that society who always find a pretext to be dissatisfied, we ask: Can works of charity that will be known among men be accomplished without money? Certainly not. And yet, notwithstanding all this, none of its (European) members, except a few devoted officers in charge of societies, will do *practical* work; but some of them, those especially who have never lifted a finger to relieve suffering, and help their outside, poorer brothers, are those who talk the most loudly, and are the bitterest in their denunciations of the *unspirituality* and the unfitness of the “leaders of theosophy.” By this they remove themselves into the outer ring of critics, like those spectators at the play who laugh at an actor passably representing Hamlet, while they themselves could not walk on the stage with a letter on a salver. While in India, comparatively poor theosophists have opened gratuitous dispensaries for the sick, hospitals, schools, and everything they could think of,

asking no returns from the poor, as the missionaries do, no abandonment of one’s forefathers’ religion, as a heavy price for favours received, have the English theosophists, as a rule, done a single thing for those suffering multitudes, whose pitiful cry rings throughout the whole Heavens as a protest against the actual state of things in Christendom?

We take this opportunity of saying, in reply to others as much as to our correspondent, that, up till now, the energies of the Society have been chiefly occupied in organising, extending, and solidifying the Society itself, which has taxed its time, energies and resources to such an extent as to leave it far less powerful for practical charity than we would have wished. But, even so, compared with the influence and the funds at the disposal of the Society, its work in practical charity, if less widely known, will certainly bear favourable comparison with that of professing Christians, with their enormous resources in money, workers, and opportunities of all kinds. It must not be forgotten that practical charity is not one of the *declared* objects of the Society. It goes without saying, and needs no “declaration,” that every member of the Society must be practically philanthropic if he be a theosophist at all; and our declared work is, in reality, more important and more efficacious than work in the everyday plane which bears more evident and immediate fruit, for the direct effect of an appreciation of theosophy is to make those charitable who were not so before. Theosophy creates the charity which afterwards, and of its own accord, makes itself manifest in works.

Theosophy is correctly—though in this particular case, it is rather ironically—termed “a high, Heaven-born religion.” It is argued that since it professes to receive its advanced knowledge and light from “those more learned in the Science of Life,” the latter ought and *must*, if applied to by their votaries (the theosophists), aid them in discovering ways and means, in organising some great fraternal scheme, etc.

The scheme was planned, and the rules and laws to guide such a practical brotherhood, have been given by those “more learned in the Science of (practical daily, *altruistic*) life”; aye verily “more learned” in it than any other men since the days of Gautama Buddha and the

Gnostic Essenes. The “scheme” dates back to the year when the Theosophical Society was founded. Let anyone read its wise and noble laws embodied to this day in the Statutes of the Fraternity, and judge for himself whether, if carried out rigorously and applied to practical life, the “scheme” would not have proved the most beneficent to mankind in general, and especially to our poorer brethren of the starving multitudes.” Theosophy teaches the spirit of “non-separateness,” the evanescence and illusion of human creeds and dogma, hence, inculcates *universal love and charity for all mankind without distinction of race, colour, caste or creed*”; is it not therefore the fittest to alleviate the sufferings of mankind? No true theosophist would refuse admission into a hospital, or any charitable establishment, to any man, woman or child, under the pretext that he is *not* a theosophist, as a Roman Catholic would when dealing with a Protestant, and a Protestant would when dealing with a Catholic. No true theosophist of the original rules would fail to put into practice the parable of the “Good Samaritan,” or proffer help only to entice the unwary who, he hopes, will become a pervert from his god and the gods of his forefathers. None would slander his brother, none let a needy man go unhelped, none offer fine talk instead of practical love and charity.

Is it then the fault of Theosophy, any more than it is the fault of the Christ-teachings, if the majority of the members of the Theosophical Society, often changing their philosophical and religious views upon entering our Body, have yet remained practically the same as they were when professing *lip* Christianity? Our laws and rules are the same as given to us from the beginning; it is the general members of the Society who have allowed them to become virtually *obsolete*. Those few who are ever ready to sacrifice their time and labour to work for the poor, and who do, unrecognised and unthanked for it, good work wherever they can, are often too poor themselves to put their larger schemes of charity into objective practical form, however willing they may be.

“The fault I find with the Theosophical Society,” said one of the most eminent surgeons in London to one of the editors, quite recently, “is that I cannot discover that any of its members really lead the

Christ-life.” This seemed a very serious accusation from a man who is not only in the front rank of his profession, and valued for his kindly nature, by his patients, and by society, and well known as a quiet doer of many good deeds. The only possible answer to be made was that the Christ-life is undeniably the ideal of every one worthy in any sense of the name of a Theosophist, and that if it is not lived it is because there are none strong enough to carry it out. Only a few days later the same complaint was put in a more graphic form by a celebrated lady-artist.

“You Theosophists don’t do enough good for me,” she said pithily. And in her case also there is the right to speak, given by the fact that she leads two lives—one, a butterfly existence in society, and the other a serious one, which makes little noise, but has much purpose. Those who regard life as a great vocation, like the two critics of the Theosophical movement whom we have just quoted, have a right to demand of such a movement more than mere words. They themselves endeavour very quietly to lead the “Christ-life,” and they cannot understand a number of people uniting in the effort towards this life without practical results being apparent. Another critic of the same character who has the best possible right to criticise, being a thoroughly practical philanthropist and charitable to the last degree, has said of the Theosophists that their much talking and writing seems to resolve itself into mere intellectual luxury, productive of no direct good to the world.

The point of difference between the Theosophists (when we use this term we mean, not members of the Society, but people who are really using the organization as a method of learning more of the true wisdom-religion which exists as a vital and eternal fact behind all such efforts) and the practical philanthropists, religious or secular, is a very serious one, and the answer, that probably none of them are strong enough yet to lead the “Christ-life,” is only a portion of the truth. The situation can be put very plainly, in so many words. The religious philanthropist holds a position of his own, which cannot in any way concern or affect the Theosophist. He does not do good merely for the sake of doing good, but also as a means towards his

own salvation. This is the outcome of the selfish and personal side of man's nature, which has so coloured and affected a grand religion that its devotees are little better than the idol-worshippers who ask their deity of clay to bring them luck in business, and the payment of debts. The religious philanthropist who hopes to gain salvation by good works has simply, to quote a well-worn yet ever fresh witticism, exchanged worldliness for other-worldliness.

The secular philanthropist is really at heart a socialist, and nothing else; he hopes to make men happy and good by bettering their physical position. No serious student of human nature can believe in this theory for a moment. There is no doubt that it is a very agreeable one, because if it is accepted there is immediate, straightforward work to undertake. "The poor ye have always with you." The causation which produced human nature itself produced poverty, misery, pain, degradation, at the same time that it produced wealth, and comfort, and joy and glory. Life-long philanthropists, who have started on their work with a joyous youthful conviction that it is possible to "do good," have, though never relaxing the habit of charity, confessed to the present writer that, as a matter of fact, misery cannot be relieved. It is a vital element in human nature, and is as necessary to some lives as pleasure is to others.

It is a strange thing to observe how practical philanthropists will eventually, after long and bitter experience, arrive at a conclusion which, to an occultist, is from the first a working hypothesis. This is, that misery is not only endurable, but agreeable to many who endure it. A noble woman, whose life has been given to the rescue of the lowest class of wretched girls, those who seem to be driven to vice by want, said, only a few days since, that with many of these outcasts it is not possible to raise them to any apparently happier lot. And this she distinctly stated (and she can speak with authority, having spent her life literally among them, and studied them thoroughly), is not so much from any love of vice, but from love of that very state which the wealthy classes call misery. They prefer the savage life of a bare-foot, half-clad creature, with no roof at night and no food by day, to any comforts which can be offered them. By comforts, we do not mean the workhouse or the reformatory, but the comforts of a quiet

home; and we can give chapter and verse, so to speak, to show that this is the case, not merely with the children of outcasts, who might be supposed to have a savage heredity, but with the children of gentle, cultivated, and Christian people.

Our great towns hide in their slums thousands of beings whose history would form an inexplicable enigma, a perfectly baffling moral picture, could they be written out clearly, so as to be intelligible. But they are only known to the devoted workers among the outcast classes, to whom they become a sad and terrible puzzle, not to be solved, and therefore, better not discussed. Those who have no clue to the science of life are compelled to dismiss such difficulties in this manner, otherwise they would fall, crushed beneath the thought of them. The social question as it is called, the great deep waters of misery, the deadly apathy of those who have power and possessions—these things are hardly to be faced by a generous soul who has not reached to the great idea of evolution, and who has not guessed at the marvelous mystery of human development.

The Theosophist is placed in a different position from any of these persons, because he has heard of the vast scope of life with which all mystic and occult writers and teachers deal, and he has been brought very near to the great mystery. Indeed, none, though they may have enrolled themselves as Fellows of the Society, can be called in any serious sense Theosophists, until they have begun to consciously taste in their own persons, this same mystery; which is, indeed, a law inexorable, by which man lifts himself by degrees from the state of a beast to the glory of a God. The rapidity with which this is done is different with every living soul; and the wretches who hug the primitive taskmaster, *misery*, choose to go slowly through a tread-mill course which may give them innumerable lives of physical sensation—whether pleasant or painful, well-beloved because tangible to the very lowest senses. The Theosophist who desires to enter upon occultism takes some of Nature's privileges into his own hands, by that very wish, and soon discovers that experiences come to him with double-quick rapidity. His business is then to recognise that he is under a—to him—new and swifter law of development, and to snatch at the lessons

that come to him.

But, in recognising this, he also makes another discovery. He sees that it takes a very wise man to do good works without danger of doing incalculable harm. A highly developed adept in life may grasp the nettle, and by his great intuitive powers, know whom to relieve from pain and whom to leave in the mire that is their best teacher. The poor and wretched themselves will tell anyone who is able to win their confidence what disastrous mistakes are made by those who come from a different class and endeavour to help them. Kindness and gentle treatment will sometimes bring out the worst qualities of a man or woman who has led a fairly presentable life when kept down by pain and despair. May the Master of Mercy forgive us for saying such words of any human creatures, all of whom are a part of ourselves, according to the law of human brotherhood which no disowning of it can destroy. But the words are true. None of us know the darkness which lurks in the depths of our own natures until some strange and unfamiliar experience rouses the whole being into action. So with these others who seem more miserable than ourselves.

As soon as he begins to understand what a friend and teacher pain can be, the Theosophist stands appalled before the mysterious problem of human life, and though he may long to do good works, equally dreads to do them wrongly until he has himself acquired greater power and knowledge. The ignorant doing of good works may be vitally injurious, as all but those who are blind in their love of benevolence are compelled to acknowledge. In this sense the answer made as to lack of Christ-like lives among Theosophists, that there are probably none strong enough to live such, is perfectly correct and covers the whole question. For it is not the spirit of self-sacrifice, or of devotion, or of desire to help that is lacking, but the strength to acquire knowledge and power and intuition, so that the deeds done shall really be worthy of the "Buddha-Christ" spirit. Therefore it is that Theosophists cannot pose as a body of philanthropists, though secretly they may adventure on the path of good works. They profess to be a body of learners merely, pledged to help each other and all the rest of humanity, so far as in them lies, to a better understanding of the mystery of life, and to a better knowledge of the peace which lies

beyond it.

But as it is an inexorable law, that the ground must be tilled if the harvest is to be reaped, so Theosophists are obliged to work in the world unceasingly, and very often in doing this to make serious mistakes, as do all workers who are not embodied Redeemers. Their efforts may not come under the title of good works, and they may be condemned as a school of idle talkers, yet they are an outcome and fruition of this particular moment of time, when the ideas which they hold are greeted by the crowd with interest; and therefore their work is good, as the lotus-flower is good when it opens in the midday sun.

None know more keenly and definitely than they that good works are necessary; only these cannot be rightly accomplished without knowledge. Schemes for Universal Brotherhood, and the redemption of mankind, might be given out plentifully by the great adepts of life, and would be mere dead-letter utterances while individuals remain ignorant, and unable to grasp the great meaning of their teachers. To Theosophists we say, let us carry out the rules given us for our society before we ask for any further schemes or laws. To the public and our critics we say, try to understand the value of good works before you demand them of others, or enter upon them rashly yourselves. Yet it is an absolute fact that without good works the spirit of brotherhood would die in the world; and this can never be. Therefore is the double activity of learning and doing most necessary; we have to do good, and we have to do it *rightly*, with knowledge.

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It is well known that the first rule of the society is to carry out the object of forming the nucleus of a universal brotherhood. The practical working of this rule was explained by those who laid it down, to the following effect:—

HE WHO DOES NOT PRACTISE ALTRUISM ; HE WHO IS NOT PREPARED TO SHARE HIS LAST MORSEL WITH A WEAKER OR POORER THAN HIMSELF ; HE WHO NEGLECTS TO HELP HIS BROTHER MAN, OF WHATEVER RACE, NATION, OR CREED, WHENEVER AND WHEREVER HE MEETS SUFFERING, AND

WHO TURNS A DEAF EAR TO THE CRY OF HUMAN MISERY;
HE WHO HEARS AN INNOCENT PERSON SLANDERED,
WHETHER A BROTHER THEOSOPHIST OR NOT, AND DOES
NOT UNDERTAKE HIS DEFENCE AS HE WOULD
UNDERTAKE HIS OWN—IS NO THEOSOPHIST.