

THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

AN EXPLANATORY TREATISE

BY

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THERE were forwarded to the writer copies of the *Glasgow Herald* of 11th April last containing an extract from "A Tour round the world, by Moneure D. Conway." As interest has been aroused in the cause advocated by the Theosophical Society, it may not be out of place to put before the writer's acquaintances some facts and explanations, thereby assisting them to understand the objects of a movement, which is in its aims and objects scientific and humanitarian. What, then, is Theosophy, what does it profess to be? It professes to be nothing more nor less than the reconciliation of Science and Religion. It shows that Religion, to be worthy of the name, must be based upon Experimental Science, that Science is unified or bound together by Religion:—in short, that men must have a Reason for their Faith, that Faith begins where Knowledge ends.

That Science and Religion are divorced at present scarcely any thinking person will deny. Among our Scientists and Literary men orthodox Christianity (putting "Heathendom" meantime aside) is looked upon as an exploded farce. ("Religion—a Retrospect and Prospect" by Mr. Herbert Spencer). Science in the European Schools of Metaphysics and Physical Laboratories is professedly 'Materialistic,' (using the word of course in its exoteric sense) while it is "Agnostic" towards Spiritual Science, or Matter in its higher noumenal aspects.

But let us pause to see what passes for "Religion" among normal professors of the Exoteric Christian Faith. A God, sitting somewhere in majestic isolation, out of his divine fancy created (1) angels and (2) men, fully knowing

(having divine foreknowledge) that each in turn would, by simple disobedience, produce a state of moral chaos. This Deity is ultimately moved by a compassion, which is, (to say the least of it) untimely, and by a feat, which is incomprehensible, sends a part of himself to undo, to some extent, the mischief which he had himself created. True it is that very few are *saved*—the majority being irrecoverably *damned*—; but the “ways of God” are said to be “mysterious,” and what would be the grossest of Injustice with mankind may pass for the sublimity of moral excellence with God.

This would seem to be the embodiment of Christian Orthodoxy, and to this the educated mind will *not* be reconciled. Hence if we are to show that Theosophy effects the reconciliation of Science and Religion we must bring to light the esoteric basis of religion and see what Religion really *is* and what it is we have to reconcile.

Now Theosophy lays it down as an axiom that there is no Religion higher than Truth. Freedom of Thought, resulting in the harmony called “Truth,” is with Theosophists a first principle, and they accept as axiomatic Mr. Wordsworth’s doctrine—“To the solid ground of Nature trusts the mind that builds for aye.” There is *essentially nothing supernatural* in Theosophy as we shall endeavour to explain. In the Poet’s words, just quoted, we have the key-note to the *true Religion* of which we are in search and which can, without difficulty, be reconciled to Science.

Theosophists believe that the fundamental basis of all Religions is the same, that they are all representations or phases of one and the same Truth. They believe that whether one be born in England, India, or Japan, he requires to undergo a similar experience in working out his own salvation, that, be he Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, or Mahometan, it is by a similar process that the individual

man progresses. It is by sacrificing himself after his Master's example in daily duty, *i. e.*, it is by a dutiful expenditure of psychic energy or force, that the reaction comes upon himself; in fact, in Christian phraseology, he "dies to *live*."

A study of Occult Science enables us to see that Thought (using the word in its broadest sense) is not, as Bain would have it, the product or characteristic of a physical brain. It is an energized material, sublimated in character, controlled by will and accompanied by cerebral action. Thus each thought as it enters man's psychic current may evolve correlations upon correlations, and upon the moral *quality* of the thought or magnetic essence depends its value in the scale of Progress. Thus we find that the Law of Divine Justice in Nature is ever operating. As is the intensity *and value* of our *Karma* (Thought, Speech and Action) so is the reward, which, in the scale of progress, Deific Nature bestows. In the Philosophy of Occultism we are brought face to face with nature, not only in the fields of "material" research but on the higher plane of Thought and Ethics. The *Macrocosm* of which man is the *Microcosm* may be viewed substantively or adjectively. On the "ascending arc" there is a rising from grossness to sublimation—from granite to god; while as regards moral responsibility there is "goodness" or "badness", relatively, according to the extent of compliance with, or disobedience of, the *Law*. The highest substantive sublimation is, adjectively, "the best." God is Substance, and, being all harmonious, is "Good." Thus we see that "matter" in its grosser sense is the *Maya*, or illusion, of the Buddhists, but that there is a point at which, in the process of Evolution, or rather Involution, we come to the eternal Yea—the Omnipresent Substance—the Ever Living God.

Now since "All" (the Absolute, ego, will-power and thought included) is in one aspect "Matter," we have no difficulty in bringing Ethics and Religion into the region of the material Universe, and, this being so, it is not difficult to see that not only are Science and Religion reconcilable but necessarily *identical*. The process known as "working out our own salvation" is a natural process of bringing ourselves into harmony with the One Law of the Universe. It is the enlarging of ourselves through mathematical and axiomatic knowledge, gained by our own labour and by personal self-sacrifice.

We have now to show that all religions are but different phases of one and the same Truth. Theosophical Literature abounds with proof that the various "Religions" are but different exponents of the one Religion of Nature and that the symbologies of the various sacred compilations have their natural realities. Thus, for example, the ancients were conversant with the process of salvation embodied in the Christian Faith. They believed in the sacrificial principle of Christ, as is represented in the allegory in which Psyche (the Soul) falls, having drunken the beverage offered by Venus (Passion), is imprisoned in Hades (Matter) and is restored by Eros (the Saviour or Divine Love.) In short, Orientalists, Egyptologists and Scientists generally, have proved that the Christian cult is not confined to the four non-historical "gospels," nor dependent on a definite personality supposed to be therein portrayed. Theosophical students recognise Christ, not as a particular sectarian leader or reformer, but as a *principle* inherent in humanity itself. It is the privilege of mankind thus to be followers of the Divine Law in the sacrificial principle of Christ, and the at-one-ment is an experience, which regenerate humanity, individually, must undergo, with a view to realizing Life

in God, which is the antithesis to Spiritual Death. In the Occult Philosophy the principle is known as the *Individual Seventh* being that which identifies itself with the Absolute or *Universal Seventh*.

Thus we come into the sphere of Exact substantive science, in other words the sphere of Transcendental Physics. We bring humanity, on all the planes material, moral and spiritual, into relationship with corresponding planes external to itself; and the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Sankhya*, the *Puranas*, the *Zend Avesta*, the *Books of Hermes*, the *Kabala* and the *Gospels* are, one and all, indicative of the course which human nature must pursue in harmonising with the *Cosmos*, of which it is the centre.

Several important works have lately been added to existing Theosophical Literature—*Isis Unveiled or The Secret Doctrine*, by H. P. Blavatsky, Editor of *The Theosophist*, *Lectures on Archaic Religions*, by H. S. Olcott, *Esoteric Buddhism* and *The Occult World*, by A. P. Sinnett, *The Perfect Way or the Finding of Christ*, by Dr. Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, *The Unpublished Writings of Elivias Levi*. These are harmonious in their teaching. They raise the Phenomenal to the Noumenal, the Historical to the Allegorical, the Material to the Spiritual, the Real to the Ideal, the last of which in turn becomes the Real. They prove beyond a doubt the essential unity of Science and Religion and deal fully with the subtle metaphysical questions regarding matter in its higher sublimations.

Having thus dealt with the unity of Science and Religion we pass on to consider the Theosophical Society. But before discoursing on the Society, its aim and objects, it would be well to try to know something of its founders. *The Mahatmas of the Himalat*.

Now who is a Mahatma? Having shown that the only true religion is the Natural Religion, it follows

that the only men who are truly religious are those who are in sympathy with Nature on all its various planes; and as all known religions are but different phases of the Natural Religion men must, ultimately, by working out their "salvation" (*i.e.*, rising from gross to sublimated matter, from *Maya* to Reality), come into relationships of intellectual and spiritual harmony. Knowledge is power; there are multifarious degrees of knowledge, and men at a certain stage of material and moral evolution are in possession of *strata* of knowledge far above that which is to be found on the ordinary material plane. Accordingly the withholding of higher *strata* of knowledge from those who might misapply and misuse the same is not only advisable but (for the welfare of humanity) absolutely necessary. As the vanguards of humanity have, *in successive births*, risen by their own effort in the scale of sublimation, they have arrived at a point where knowledge is so greatly enlarged and power so greatly increased that it is an absolute necessity to keep back, from those not yet prepared for its reception, the fruits of their enlarged experience. Thus we see that human nature has been, is now, and will be the same; and when we look along the line of History we find *Rishis*, *Munis*, *Magi* "Wise men" and *Mahatmas* in every faith in every land. These are the men, who, by the Religio-scientific process we have spoken of, have raised themselves "from Earth to Heaven." Their "miracles" and wonders are the theme of all religious and sacred writings; and although by the populace they have been reckoned to be "gods" yet they themselves have never made such claims or such professions. Their retirement from the busy world and the careful guarding of their secret knowledge have been for valid reasons (1) because they could not live among humanity and preserve their spiritual power—the gross impure magnetic emanations being stalling and degenerating—and (2) because the putting of the subli-

mated material or spiritual powers into the hands of the uneducated masses would be more potent for evil than has been the discovery of dynamite and gunpowder. They know and realise more fully than we the tendencies of unregenerate nature, and accordingly, for ages, the Occult Brotherhood has carefully guarded its treasures, dealing them out only to *Chelas* or disciples, who, after years of training and self-development, are permitted to enter the Fraternity. Thus now we learn that what has often passed for "fiction" contains a large amount of fact. The history of "Glyndon" in *Zanoni*, by Lord Lytton is the history of an undutiful *Chela*. The Brotherhood as it *now* exists (for it has never been extinct) is described, as far as by an outsider it can be described, by Sinnett in his "Occult World" (Trübner & Co., London) which will give the reader a comprehensive idea of "The Brothers" and of their connection with the Theosophical Society. The reader there will find that the secret and august Fraternity, looking to the utter dearth of spirituality in modern religion and to the grossly materialistic tendency of Science, has resolved to disclose to the world as much of their knowledge as their rites of initiation will permit, that Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott are the *Chelas* chosen for pioneering the movement and that the Theosophical Society is the direct outcome of the wishes of the secret Brotherhood. The aims and objects of the Society are as follows :—

- First*.—To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed or color.
- Second*.—To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literature religious and sciences and vindicate its importance.
- Third*.—To investigate the hidden mysteries of nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

The Society was founded at New York in 1875 and in that city was prepared and published that marvellous compendium of authorities, "Isis Unveiled," much of which, it is an open secret, is the work of the *Mahatmas*. Three years after its inauguration the operations of the Parent Society were transferred to India, in which Continent and in Ceylon there are over 90 Branch Societies. There are Branch Societies also in Odessa, Corfu, Holland, Paris, London, New York and other cities in America, West Indies and Australia. For admission into the Society it is necessary that the candidate should be introduced by two Fellows of good standing, who certify to his good faith and character. He must also give an obligation as to certain signs and pass-words, by which recognition can be obtained in foreign countries. The Theosophical Society is thus an intellectual and spiritual brotherhood composed of men of different races, ranks and creeds. This is what many sectarian "Religions" have been hopeful of accomplishing; but up to this point all Missionary movements (except in secular and educational matters) have proved but lamentable failures.

Having thus shown in a general way the scope of Theosophical Science and the Society which places it before the World, we may pass on to show its connection with what are known as secret sciences, *viz.*, Mesmerism and modern Spiritualism.

The Science of Mesmerism has been much more cultivated and understood in the East than in the West. There are many western scientists, who do not recognize it as a science and believe that it is more or less a sham and humbug. But a study of a performance by a Mesmerist would show that it is a stern reality and that the victims, who are *pro tempore* under the will power of the operator, "squirm around" in a foolish and painful manner. Now, by means of Occultism we see that,

either in so-called Material Science or in Transcendental Physics, we can never get out of the region of Nature, or, in other words, the Region of Matter or Spirit in its seven phases of sublimation. There is no such thing as *Nothingness*, and thoughts are phases of sublimated matter which is as real and perceptible to a sensitive person as steam is to the ordinary observer. Thus we see that, even in ordinary conversation between man and man, there is a process of throwing back and forward, in the form of "thought," an actual physical reality—an electric "fluid," which is either in Harmony (equalling in Ethics the sense of Righteousness and Truth) or at variance (equalling the sense of Error and Falsehood); and thus it is that, by an unrighteous exercise of will, the greatest possible discomfort and affliction may be brought upon our fellowmen. Again we see that the world of Ethics is in the world of Matter. Truth is a harmony of material sublimations: Error and Doubt are discords of the same. Thus also we can see why it is that the Brotherhood of Adepts demand a long probation before the veil of Isis is withdrawn; for during the period of Occult Study, prior to Initiation, the moral character of the student is supervised and tested, before he is permitted to operate with forces in space of the "fourth dimension" or as it is technically called—the astral plane.

Now I approach a subject, which presents considerable difficulty and which is known as "Modern Spiritualism." That psychical phenomena occur, few genuine scientists are now inclined to doubt. With rappings and tappings and communications from "dear departed ones" thousands of educated people are familiar; but it is destined for Theosophy to show what value and importance are to be placed upon such notifications. Occultists are aware that these are produced by "elemental" forces of Nature and by "elementaries" as they are technically called—both

of which are galvanized, as it were, into temporary super-activity by drawing from the persons present their inner sublimations. Thus the person performing the part of "medium," being usually entranced into unconsciousness, is played upon by all sorts of inferior forces; and, as this sublimation has an ethical as well as material value, there is a dead-loss of moral and spiritual power. In spiritualism if there be any facts demonstrated, they are these; that according to the purity or impurity of the mediums' moral character so is the purity or impurity of the influences which surround him and also that physical-phenomena-producing "mediums" are invariably sooner or later men of very questionable character. The reason for these facts is clear. The "mediums" have had sapped out, by what are known as "spooks," their magnetic thinking essence—in other words their ethico-material sublimations.

Now Theosophy is the direct *antithesis* of spiritualism. There are, in Occultism proper, no dreaming unconscious "mediums" no rappings from departed friends. The only messages known are those from living men and the recipients are in full activity of mind and body. These communications from *Mahatmas* betoken an intelligence much superior to that of men upon the ordinary plane; but "phenomena" so-called are but expressions of higher natural laws—laws which by the superficial scientist might be assigned to the "unknown" and the "unknowable." For a full explanation as to the relationships between *Mahatmas* and *Chelas* their modes of communication and the scientific teachings, reference may be made to "Fragments of Occult Truth," beginning in the *Theosophist* for October 1881, "The Elixir of Life" in the number for March 1882, "Replies to an English F. T. S.," September 1883, "The Himalayan Brothers—Do they exist?" December of the same year, "Occult Study" by a Lay Chela, March 1884, and to the Literature already mentioned.

Now at this stage it may not be out of place to say something regarding Mr. Moncre D. Conway. The writers "Marvellous Experiences" or rather "Some experiences in India" to which Mr. Conway refers, have been printed under the authority of the London Theosophical Society, and speak for themselves. It will be sufficient here to remark that Mahatma K. H. is a living Adept and that the writer has had the honour of seeing him personally at Lahore and of being spoken to by him and even touched. Letters have been received by the writer at Madras, Lahore, Jammu (Kashmir) and again at Madras, all being in the same handwriting, showing an intelligence and consistency of character which is unmistakable, and corroborating the experiences of the "Occult World" in a conclusive manner.

Mr. Conway makes light of the sacrifices which Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott have made on behalf of Theosophy. When Mr. Conway knows a little more than can be gained from the impressions of a six hours' visit, he can be expected to form a better judgment and to agree with those who know as to the real and many sacrifices on the part of these distinguished personages.

And now for the morals of Theosophy. It will be seen that the incentive to good is not the abject fear of an avenging Deity. Virtue is its own reward, and, in the scale of progress, is a mathematical necessity. The tendency of the Universe is towards "Perfection." Contrary to the usual "religious" teachings we find that to be natural is to be good, to assist Nature and to expend our energies on her behalf is to assist ourselves. The paradox that we must *die to live* is demonstrated in the Occult Philosophy. As we have shown that Ethics is a material science, just as is Geology—the difference being one of planes of activity, so we find that the way to be "good" is to conserve our

psychic, moral, magnetic, material energy and utilise it to the best advantage for humanity at large. A fundamental principle with Occult Scientists is that it is of no use to try to be virtuous so long as the evil desire exists. First eradicate the desire then virtue necessarily follows. Now it is an observable fact that a very great number of Theosophists abstain from alcohol and fleshmeat and that real students of Esoteric Science almost invariably do so. This is not due to an asceticism imposed to gratify a Deity, who revels in suffering and Non-nature. The asceticism on the contrary would be altogether in the opposite direction. The natures of the aspirants are so far refined that drink and butchered animals are distasteful. There is a factor also to be taken into account, and that is, that a study of the Hindu and Buddhistic Ethical systems reveals a natural moral law, which forbids the truly spiritual man from butchering lower animals for gratification and amusement. Thus it is that Theosophists are, as a rule, opposed to "sport" and vivisection. Now all this is in keeping with our statement that Theosophy is the natural Religion, because, at a given point in the scale of evolution, man develops higher faculties, requiring higher food. Thus as his discernment of Justice becomes more keen so also must become etherealized the fuel with which the machinery is supported. Here we can understand by analogy how difficult it is for a grossly materialistic nature to grasp the subtleties of matter in its higher sublimations. Every thing is with such a man a "phenomenon;" but if such people were to lead a life of purity in thought in word and deed and were careful as to the kind of fuel with which their energy was sustained, they would rise gradually to higher *strata* and would bring themselves into relationship with higher natural laws—thereby having their field of operations and potentialities in nature widened enormously.

Prof. Tyndall in remarking that matter is in character transcendental has said—if Scientists are dumb who shall vouchsafe the answer? We offer the field of investigation in which the answer may be found.

Now in conclusion we come to the most important question. Is Theosophy Deistic or Atheistic in its tendency? It is Deistic. But might it not be said—if Thought be Matter and man goes on refining and spiritualizing himself on the various planes shall he not refine himself past the highest initiation of Adepts into Negation? *No*. He comes home to pure spirit, the only real and ultimate sublimation—that from which he came and into which he returns, that in which the knower, knowledge and the thing known form a Trinity in Unity. He comes back to what is scripturally known as the “Bosom of A-Braham.” Thus we find, as has been laid down in the *Theosophist*, the *Parabrahm* of the Hindus, the one self-existent absolute consciousness, is the one and only reality, the living and true God. A Being possessing the connotations of “God,” in a popular sense, does not exist in the Universe or beyond it—if “beyond” were conceivable. The positive side of our knowledge may be formulated in the words of the *Upanishad* “That from which all forms of existence emanate, in which they endure and into which they return is *Parabrahm*.” *Parabrahm* when viewed as the substance of the Universe is known as *Mulaprakriti*, a term which in the English language has been rendered “undifferentiated cosmic matter” or as Herbert Spencer terms it “The unconditioned Absolute behind Appearances.” The differentiation of *Mulaprakriti* produces infinite forms of Being. Now it must not be understood that *Mulaprakriti* undergoes a differentiation like the matter of which we have a physical conception. *Mulaprakriti* is absolutely subjective. Thus the word “differentiation” must be carried up to the *spiritual plane* before its significance can be

comprehended. *Parabrahm* or *Mulaprakriti* (differentiated or undifferentiated) cannot undergo change as to *Substance*. We realize it to be the *Absolute Wisdom*, the *Only Reality*, the *Eternal Deity*. What is meant is that the Primordial Substance radiates Himself (Herself and Itself) and by gradual and systematic processes the Universe appears. There is not unfrequently much difficulty in grasping this conception. We must not formulate Extra Cosmic Deities, because they have no being. *Mulaprakriti* may be realized in Space. Space may be said to be the Object and yet not the Object. But the Spirit of the Object is pure Space. *Parabrahm* or *Mulaprakriti* is the Deity—He of the “Name Ineffable,” the One Eternal Omnipresent Ever Living God.

Having thus endeavoured to put before his readers some general ideas as to the Philosophy of Occultism and The Theosophical Society, the writer brings his treatise to a close.

For simplicity we have talked of the circle of Descent and Ascent from *Parabrahm* to *Parabrahm*. We have premised Matter in motion to be correspondential to degrees of Sublimation and Grossness—Grossness on the “ascending arc” merging gradually in Sublimation. This conception being realized, there is not the same difficulty for our Western minds in grasping the other conception of the Pantheistic Occult Doctrine. We realize that *Maya* is *Mulaprakriti* in differentiation as to *six* principles. It is *Mulaprakriti* (or *Parabrahm*) in its activity of *Day*, while *Parabrahm*, as such, is non-differentiation as to *seven* principles—the Universe oblivious in the sleep of Night.
