

# Theosophy and Social Reconstruction



By

G-6 L. HADEN GUEST,  
M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

—  
FOREWORD BY ANNIE BESANT.  
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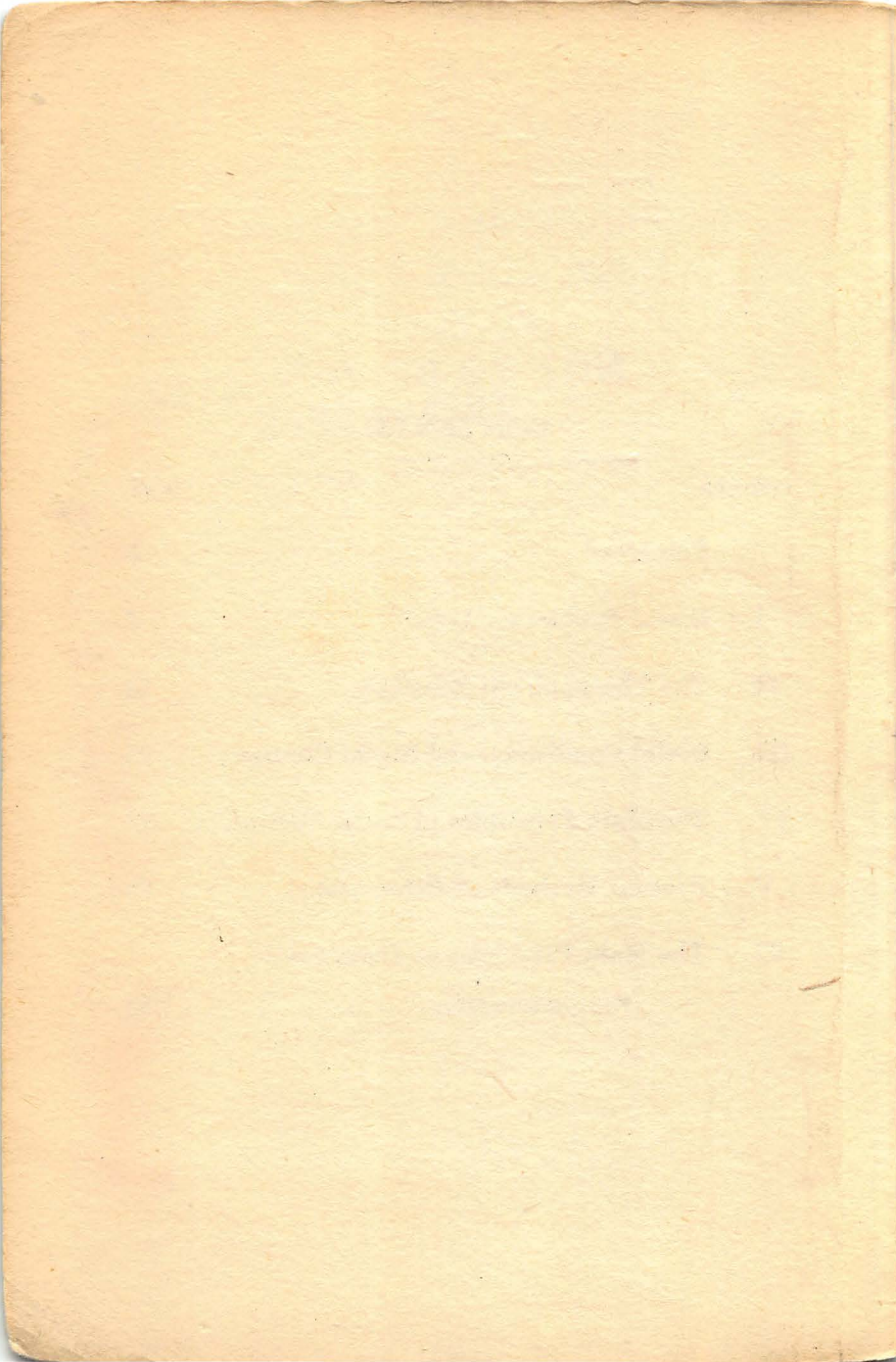
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By L. HADEN GUEST,

M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

*Presented to the  
Spokane Society by  
E. Lippman Tammatt*



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER

PAGE

Foreword	.. .. .	5
I. Social Problems Stated	.. .. .	7
II. The Theosophical Solution..	.. .. .	14
III. Social Conditions and Social Changes	.. .. .	25
IV. The Main Principles of Social Reform	.. .. .	33
V. Present Methods of Government	.. .. .	43
VI. The Main Principles of Democratic Reconstruction	.. .. .	50

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## FOREWORD.

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THIS little volume is an attempt to throw the light of Theosophy on Social Problems, the subject on which the best minds of the country are fixed. We are, indeed, in the position of the unfortunate man placed before the Sphinx and questioned by her; if we cannot reply we shall be devoured.

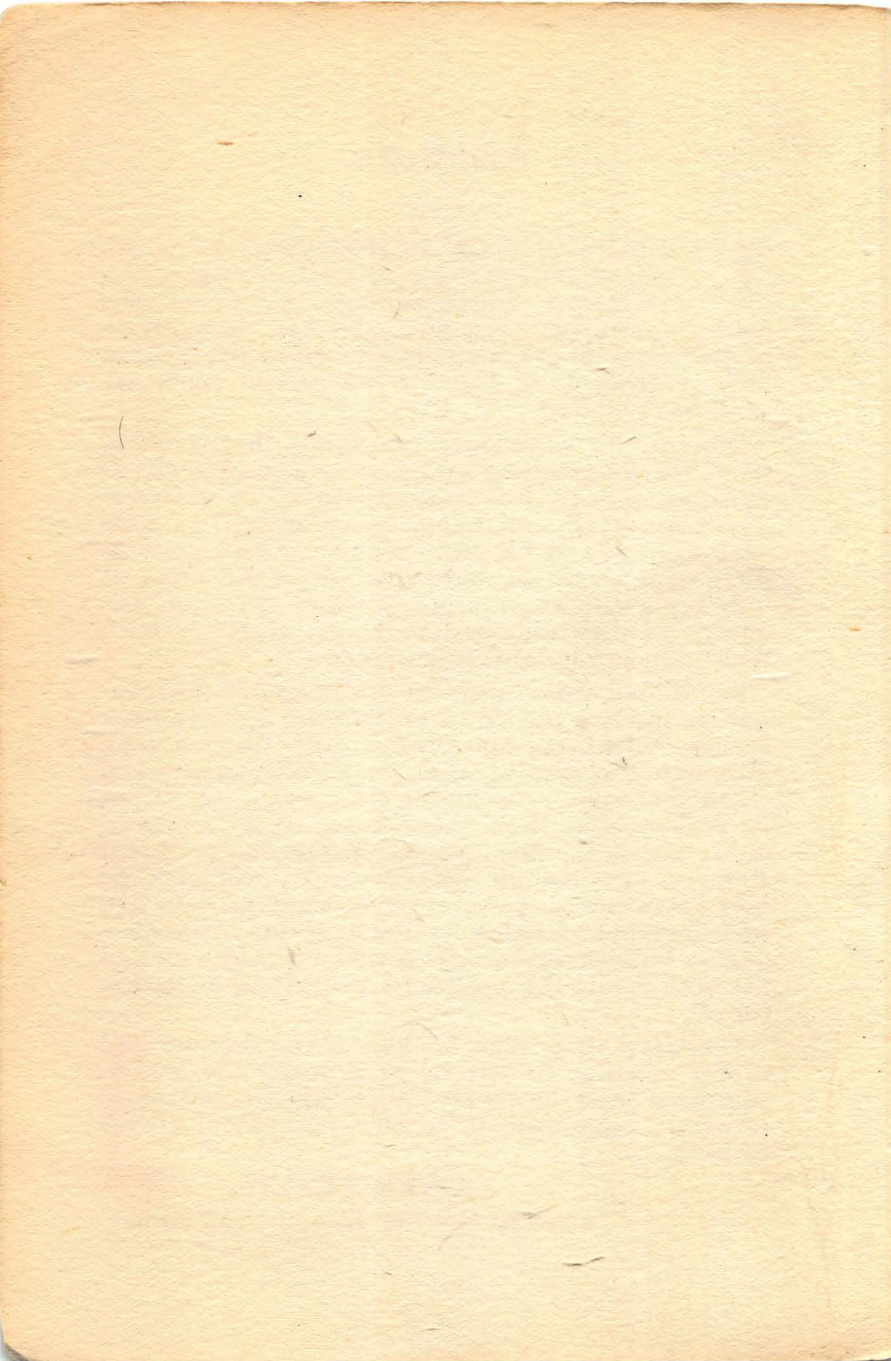
The public conscience is rapidly invigorating itself for a sustained and strenuous endeavour so to organise Society as to secure to all its members a minimum of well-being, below which no man shall fall, save by his own default. There are conflicts over methods, but none over the ideal of building a noble and happy Society. Towards this end all good citizens are striving, no matter with what name they label themselves.

Dr. Haden Guest uses the teachings of Reincarnation and Karma—in this relation a happy phrase occurs: “Progress depends upon the Will of God, although the rate of that progress depends upon the will of man”—to explain the present conditions of Society, and then proceeds to apply them in order to find the line of least resistance for Social Reform. In dealing with separate problems, he lays down the condition: “Attacking no class and no individual, working for the interests of no class and no individual, our aim must be for the race and the nation, and the conditions of spiritual evolution for all.”

I believe that this booklet is an honest and useful attempt to help forward Social Reform on righteous and brotherly lines, and I therefore earnestly commend it to the thoughtful lovers of men.

ANNIE BESANT,

*President of the Theosophical Society.*





## CHAPTER I.

### SOCIAL PROBLEMS STATED.

On looking over the field of social affairs at the present time one cannot fail to be struck with two groups of facts, on the one hand, the wide extent of misery, degradation, poverty and social disorganization; on the other, the effort on a continually increasing scale made to cope with these evils.

The desire for some kind of social reconstruction and for improvement in the ordering of social life is, indeed, well-nigh universal, and every political party in England bears it witness. The Conservatives appeal to the country to support Tariff Reform, on the ground that this will improve industrial conditions and help to solve the unemployment problem. The Liberals plan large schemes of financial and social betterment aimed at the same object, while the Labour Party express their aspirations in socialistic projects of wide application and of great significance.

That change is needed is conceded on all hands; discussion centres only upon the nature of that change. Along certain lines of social development, we are, indeed, past the stage of discussion, and considerably advanced to that of accomplishment. Here differences of opinion must chiefly concern themselves with the rate of change. Among such lines of social development are those concerned with education, with the public health, with the regulation of the conditions of factory, workshop and mine, as they affect the workers, with social legislation (Old Age Pensions and the Children's Act for example), with municipal ownership

## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

and management of socially needed services, such as lighting, water supply and local transit. And having already accomplished so much, more and more seems within our power.

The problem of poverty, so long regarded as insoluble, is now boldly attacked as an avoidable evil, and Sydney Webb has formulated the great conception of the National Minimum, applying to all that concerns the normal life of man (education, health, housing, wages, etc.), and it is to become the business of the State to secure that none of its citizens shall fall below this level. The State is to define a minimum line of efficiency and well-being, and so to organize itself that none may be allowed to sink below this. A movement for the abolition of destitution embodying this great constructive proposal in its relation to the Poor Law is one of the most important of contemporary social happenings. And this is only one among many.

There press upon us from all sides so many schemes, so many plans, that the ear may well be deafened and the mind confused by the variety of the cries; comprehensive insurance schemes, votes for women, feeding of school children, land reform, penal reform, hospital reform; these and many other matters all clamor for settlement. And, amid conflicting claims, it is by no means easy to discriminate relative values and to assign to one or other priority of importance. For all problems cannot be dealt with at once. Which, then, is to be first and which second?

The attempt to discriminate takes us out of the hurly-burly of multitudinous happenings into the world of principles. And, behind the surge of social and political suggestions, criticisms and experiments, two main principles emerge, those of Individualism and of Socialism. These two principles are the two poles between which the warp and woof of the social structure is woven.

No party professes unadulterated Individualism and none unadulterated Socialism. But each party,



## SOCIAL PROBLEMS STATED.

in formulating its policy in accordance with its past history and its future hopes, is obliged to take up a position somewhere on the line between these two extremes.

And to justify some piece of alteration of our social machine, one or other of these principles is constantly invoked. The Conservative, protesting against a Liberal budget, pleads the Individualist case; the Labour M.P., protesting against existing wages or housing conditions, pleads from the Socialist standpoint. But there is no security about these standpoints; the Conservative speaks from the Socialist standpoint, as on educational matters, if it makes the moment's case stronger, the Labour man pleads from the individualist, as on many Trade Union matters, if that suits his immediate object.

To a certain extent this is inevitable, depending upon whether the social or the individual aspect of a problem is being discussed and illumination of both aspects from all points of view is desirable. But the point of view is constantly shifted to suit the exigencies of the moment. Underlying principles are taken, not as fixed view-points, but as opportunist expedients, to be used as occasion directs. And this means that politics and statesmanship at the present day are to be understood, not by reference to ideas and principles, but by reference to the prejudices and necessities of the various classes whose views find expression through individuals; a general drift in the socialist or individualist direction being obvious, but no deliberate aim. Here and there a great man, unshaken by the immediate needs of the instant, will retain his grasp on principles in the midst of the fight. But such men are rare, even among social and political leaders. Rarer still among the rank and file.

And if we attempt to delve deeper, to go beyond the comparative superficiality of the opposition of socialist and individualist, and correlate our ideas of social reconstruction with



any scientific view of the world, with any philosophical system, or with any religious revelation, the attempt becomes one of the very greatest difficulty. Yet if we are to put our present-day efforts into proper perspective, and to see them in their correct proportion as the heirs of the past and the progenitors of the future, we must find some way of bringing our plans and our schemes into relation with an outline of world development.

The attempt to do this has been frequently made, every Utopian has done it, in a sense, every great reformer must try to do it. One of the latest efforts, that of trying to understand the present in the light of Neo-Darwinian thought, has resulted in some curious bye-products of social legislation. To attempt to see social life as a phase of the 'struggle for existence,' has resulted in suggestions, designed, more or less crudely, to relieve us of the burden of 'the unfit' by segregation, sterilization, or the lethal chamber, and these suggestions are put into partial operation in Europe and America, and are seriously and attentively discussed. And they are important in the world of social affairs, because, being based on ideas of wide application, they appear in contemporary politics with some kind of power and authority behind them. All the more so, since, in the general indifference to religion, 'science' is accorded a superstitious reverence, and the *ipsi dixit* of a 'scientific' man is frequently accepted and acted on in a most truly unscientific spirit.

Yet the facts can be interpreted quite differently. Prince Kropotkin, studying natural history, has in his book, *Mutual Aid*, brought forward an explanation quite different from that of the Neo-Darwinian, and, by laying stress on 'mutual aid' among animals, puts the struggle for existence into quite a secondary position. The Socialism of Karl Marx, again, attempts to explain all things by a special conception of history, and every social and political thinker, so far as he attempts to reach



## SOCIAL PROBLEMS STATED.

fundamentals, must attempt to find some kind of a philosophical foundation for his proposals. But no system of ideas, no general outline of a plan in the world, commands anything more than a very partial and very limited assent. The so-called 'scientific' explanations are flatly contradicted by the social experience of communities extending over centuries, as embodied in our social customs and in our legislation. And the 'community-experience' of centuries is not likely to be put aside at the bidding of any theory, however profound it may appear, and however well-based.

When we come to religion, we find that there is not even any attempt worthy of the name to correlate the Christian religion with politics and government. Statesmanship, religion, business, science and philosophy are kept in separate compartments.

There is the further difficulty that, before any of the ideas current in the world of to-day can gain expression in fact, they have to pass through the swirl and storm of the democratic electoral machinery. Conservative, Liberal and Socialist ideas are not considered on their merits as ideas, but on their attractiveness as party cries. This takes the reality out of politics and reduces it to the level of a game. Ideas, plans, schemes or proposals are counters in the game for the winning of popular approval. And, in the struggle for existence among political ideas, it is by no means the best considered, the most far-seeing and the wisest ideas that make the readiest appeal to the democracy. Even when, by some favourable combination of circumstances, a piece of good legislation is added to the statute book, its effectiveness will depend upon the effectiveness of our national and local administrative machinery, limited as this is by considerations of *personnel* and by the imperfect adaptation of administrative organisation to function which is so characteristic of English local government.



## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

Amid such confusion, surrounded by such difficulties, the possibility of building any social structure of permanent importance may well appear illusory. And the effort at such building is not very apparent; the politician is moved by the needs of the moment to do the work of the moment (which has to be done) and only appeals to general guiding principles to help him not to go too far wrong. But in the world of principles and general ideas, the same kind of confusion prevails, as in the everyday world of practical proposals. There is no firm ground to stand upon. No plan or system of ideas is ordinarily current, which enables great general ideas to be brought into immediate touch with the everyday world, without producing distortion and confusion; nor by which any particular isolated fact, or group of facts, may be related with others and seen in its proper position in the perspective of the whole. This is most clearly seen with regard to religion. The attempt to bring the consideration of problems of factory organisation or rates of wages, for instance, into intelligible relation with the Christian faith, produces a grotesque confusion. Politicians and social reformers habitually treat the religious explanation of the world as having no immediate practical application. God is felt to be a long way out of the world.

And then, perhaps, one asks, what is the use of it all? Is there indeed any God in the world, any order, any law, or is all blind chance? There have been great civilisations in the past, and they have passed away. Like waves on the sea, they have arisen and disappeared. What guarantee have we that our civilisation too will not rise up and then pass away again, like another wave on the life-sea of this planet? And we can see no guarantee and no certainty either of progress or of permanence, save that which may lie in the will of man to achieve. And what reliance can be placed upon this weak and irresolute thing?

And it may be, that, in such mood, one may



## SOCIAL PROBLEMS STATED.

turn away from the world, believing that there is no balm for its wounds, no permanent hope, no solution for its evil, no relation between the individual and the general life, and that it offers only empty satisfactions. For ordinary religion does not help us. It offers vague metaphysics and beautiful fairy stories, but no food for the mind. Ask ordinary Christianity or Judaism why one man is put by God to be born in a slum and grow up a criminal outcast, while another is born surrounded by the comforts and elegancies of life and grows up a great statesman? And there is no answer sufficing for the heart and the reason. Ask what happens to a man's soul after death—if indeed man be not a mere congeries of physical atoms—and the answer can only make any scientific-minded man smile, by its entire vagueness. Ask these religions to explain the great stretch of history in the past, or to throw some light upon the future, and they falter, and are of no practical assistance. Take any great sorrow of love or of death to them, and they can give only platitudes and generalities; but for the mind, nothing else at all. What is there then in the world? In the sphere of politics and social affairs, turmoil, doubt and confusion; in the world of ideas, aridity and loss of hope; in the world of religion, dogma, platitude and superstition. Is it worth while attempting any social reconstruction at all, and if it is, at what point in the confusion are we to begin, or must we be governed by the needs of the moment?

## CHAPTER II.

### THE THEOSOPHICAL SOLUTION.

Into this world of strife, confusion and pain, Theosophy comes like a flood of sunlight, bringing illumination, peace, order and assurance of progress. Theosophy brings to the modern world the statement of a plan in the world's evolution, and the definite object of that plan. Regarding man as a spiritual being, it bids us look on the scheme of organic evolution as providing the field for the evolution of Spirit. And one of its most fruitful ideas—without which the complexities of the modern world cannot be resolved at all—is that this evolution takes place by the continued reincarnation of Spirit, in bodies of matter.

The most painful and insistent of our human problems are made clear by this doctrine of reincarnation. Take any modern social problem that deals with poverty—the problem, for instance, presented by the mentally defective. Thousands of these mentally defective people are alive in England to-day; they come for the most part from the lowest slums, from the most poverty-stricken areas. On any but the purely materialist hypothesis—which is controverted by so many facts now-a-days as hardly to be worth more than a mention—how are we to reconcile the birth of these people, the lives and experiences of these people, with any understandable idea of law in the world? And if God is love, how reconcile it with any understandable idea of justice or of love in the world?—For all men born in one year are not mentally defective. Some born into the professional classes, or into other well-cared-for



## THE THEOSOPHICAL SOLUTION.

groups of the community are provided with a good heredity and with favourable circumstances. Why should one spiritual being be born mentally defective, and another as a future statesman? Maybe two such children were born on the same day, in the same city, and only a short distance apart. For the slums of great cities often run in and out of the more prosperous neighbourhoods. Heredity explains the body. But what explains the choice of this body for the soul? Frank materialism may accept heredity as the sole explanation and deny the soul or spirit; but frank materialism is, in itself, no longer acceptable to the mind which investigates contemporary evidence of the super-physical.

And no hypothesis generally current in the western world, other than reincarnation, will explain these facts in any way reconcilable with the idea of law.

And yet, there must be law governing the coming to birth of the Spirits who inhabit bodies on this earth.

Everywhere in the universe where man's mind has penetrated, everywhere where facts have been collected, arranged and scrutinized, there, law has been found. In chemistry, in astronomy, in physics, in biology, everywhere law. Are we to believe that there is no law in the spiritual world, that in that which affects man's essence, all is left to chance? For the theory that man comes but once to this earth and inhabits the so greatly differing bodies of the mentally defective and the statesman, then goes away and returns no more, is not conformable with any understandable idea of law. Shall there be Hell for the criminal who never had a chance, and Heaven for the well-off man who never had a temptation? Still less is such a view conformable with any understandable idea of love or justice.

And why should we not understand the Law which must be behind? Surely the laws of our own



Spirit are not more beyond us than the laws of the movements and constitution of suns, millions and billions of miles away.

And one of the greatest gifts of Theosophy to the modern world, is the re-statement, in clear and simple language, of the theory of reincarnation, which explains these facts, and of the laws under which it takes place. According to this theory, the reincarnation of the human Spirit in the human body is only one chapter in the story of spiritual evolution. The whole universe exists but for the evolution of Spirit; and at a certain point in that evolution, the Spirit reaches the lowest human condition, and becomes recognisable as a human entity. The Spirit, as an infant human soul, is then ready to undergo its human experiences, and, as a child going to school enters first the lowest and most elementary class, so the infant soul enters the simplest and most elementary human body.

After living a life in this body and gaining knowledge of actions and their results, of desires and repulsions, of pleasures and pains, and of every kind of life experience, the body dies, and the soul, set free in the finer worlds, assimilates the result of these experiences, is modified by the assimilation, and comes back after an interval spent in this process and in rest, to gain another life-experience.

Time after time the soul of man comes into a mortal body, experiences therein birth, infancy, youth, old age and death; time after time, the soul assimilates the experiences, and grows by their nourishment; until, having entered at the lowest form, he passes at the end into the highest, and has completed his human evolution, having learned all that this earthly school has to teach.

On this theory the differences between the degraded slum-dweller, the most primitive savage, the average civilised man, the saint and the genius, are explained as being due to differences in length of human evolution. The saint and the genius entered the school of earth a very long time ago ;



## THE THEOSOPHICAL SOLUTION.

they are nearing the end of their experiences. The savage and the slum-dweller; on the other hand, are at the beginning, the average man is half-way. The object of lives on this earth is that the soul shall learn the lessons these lives have to teach, and to grow to that stage at which we shall have no more to learn from earth. Then we shall be ready for the still mightier evolution which stretches beyond.

Applying this theory to our modern life, we find that, where before all was disorder, pain and confusion, now there is order.

We are a world full of beings at different stages of growth, needing different environments, different conditions. And, from all the disturbance and turmoil of the world, we see emerging the certainty of a law guiding the Spirit of man on the path of his evolution. The mere contemplation of the theory of reincarnation has already reduced the chaos of social problems to something like manageable proportions. We begin to see that, if we can only discover the laws under which reincarnation takes place, we shall have a firm foundation for our social building. And Theosophy states these laws simply and clearly, and yet supplies such a mass of detail, that the student must be deeply versed indeed who needs to go beyond the published literature for answers to his questions. To understand these laws aright it is necessary to clearly keep in mind the broad outline of the cosmic process, as conceived by Theosophical teaching. According to this, the Logos of a system creates the worlds of that system as a field for the evolution of the spiritual individuals who are therein to unfold their powers. These spiritual individuals are sparks of the Divine Life, and come forth from Him by the exercise of His Will, which is also their will, as they are part of Him. To the Theosophist, the world does not consist only of a scientifically-defined physical, and a vaguely-hinted-at spiritual, world,



but of a series of seven planes of matter, each finer than the other, beginning at the densest on the physical level, rising through the emotional to the mental, and then, through higher worlds, to the highest of all, which are beyond the reach of man; and each of these planes is the habitat of the Spirit in its appropriate vehicle of manifestation.

It is in the physical, emotional (or astral) and mental worlds, that the specifically human evolution takes place; and it is the complete mastery of these worlds and the bodies made of their materials which man uses in his evolution, which is the object of this evolution. The man who has thus completed his lessons on earth is perfect as far as humanity is concerned, and is called a Master of Wisdom, because, having absolute power over His developed mind, nothing is hidden from Him in this system. That such Masters have existed in the past, the history of every great religion bears witness. To give the knowledge that such men are living now is part of the message which Theosophy brings into the world.

The law by which this human evolution takes place is called conveniently by the Samskrit word Karma, which may be translated—the law of Action and Reaction. Man, in his evolution, has free will; he may do what he will, either in the world of action (the physical), or in the world of emotion and desire (the astral) or in the world of mind; with one proviso, that he bears all the results of his actions, painful or pleasurable, that he escapes nothing, that he pays the uttermost farthing of his debts.

Some actions, the soul discovers, cause pain, others bring happiness. At first, his recognition of causal connection is absent, or very limited, but, as life succeeds life, as certain actions always bring pain, and certain others happiness, the soul learns. And as he learns he grows, his powers unfold. From the savage he grows into the average; from the average, he climbs higher still, until he who



## THE THEOSOPHICAL SOLUTION.

was at the beginning an infant soul, stands forth glorious as a Master of Wisdom, a perfect man. The attainment of this goal is the object of human evolution as laid down by the Logos, and because it is His Will that man shall finally attain, this achievement is ultimately inevitable for all. Man may delay or go far astray, for he has free will, but, sooner or later, the general current of evolution will carry him with it to his destiny; to struggle against this current is in the long run impossible.

This means that progress depends upon the Will of God, although the rate of that progress depends upon the will of man.

Out of the consideration of these main outlines other important points emerge. Man is a spark of the Divine Life. Every man is such a spark, and the differences between men depend upon the length of their evolution, and not on differences of their essential nature. Just as in a family some are born earlier and are elder, some later and are younger, but all are brothers because children of the same father, so in the world some souls are born earlier, and are elder, and some later and are younger, but all are brothers because sons of the same Divine Father, out of whose Life all lives have sprung. Thus is the brotherhood of man founded securely on the Fatherhood of God. But the statement is not left here. For when the teaching concerning the super-physical planes of matter is studied we find the reality of this Brotherhood taken from the realm of statement to that of scientific fact. Brotherhood on the higher planes is as much a fact of nature as is the law of gravity in the physical world.

But the most important conclusion of all which emerges from this study is that of the inner certainty of God. Man is a spark of the Divine Flame, by his nature he is one with Him, and, by this identity of nature, he can know Him within, as he knows himself; not only intellectually recognising divinity by contemplating the world without,



## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

but inwardly knowing it by his identity with it.

Theosophy, in this way, brings God back into the world, gives the outline of a plan on which human evolution is proceeding, states the main laws governing this evolution, and provides a science of the Spirit and of the superphysical worlds, by means of which these laws and this evolution may be understood. The policies and the systems, the sciences and the arts of humanity, are no longer seen as divorced from spiritual things, and from religion, but as steps on a ladder leading up to their study. For Theosophy bridges the gap between the knowledge of God, which is the supreme science and the sciences of the physical world in which we live, by providing a science of the superphysical, and of religion, and of the Spirit. Without these, no such bridging is possible; without these God cannot be brought into intelligible relation with the things of daily life.

When we turn again to look over the field of social affairs from the standpoint of the Theosophist, very different is the aspect from that which before we saw. Strife, confusion, pain and evil are there as before, but they are understandable, they are to be explained by the law of karma, they are necessities of reincarnation. Out of these things, men are evolving needed qualities; what they suffer passes away, what they gain in experience they have for ever. And our knowledge of the plan behind all the apparent confusion, enables us to lay, deep and secure, the foundations of any social building we may undertake.

What, from the Theosophical standpoint, should be the main considerations which should govern our building? First and foremost, the knowledge that the world exists for the purpose of evolving the spirit, and that our social systems should be constructed to further this end. Second, that all men are brothers in the divinity of their nature, and that their duties therefore depend on their age. To the elder, the duty of protection,



## THE THEOSOPHICAL SOLUTION.

help, instruction, guidance ; to the younger, desire for learning, loyalty, obedience, trustworthiness. In these two statements, we have the outline of a plan, the details of which can be made ever clearer and plainer by deeper study. But we are forced in this study to contemplate a sweep of evolution behind us, greater than we had imagined, and a sweep of evolution before us, greater than we had dared to dream. The evolution of humanity is but one chapter in the great story of the universe, and we do not see it in true perspective unless we see it as such a chapter. So looking on human life, the importance of small distinctions melts away, the antagonisms between Liberal and Tory, Liberal and Socialist, Socialist and Individualist, between the nations and between the races, become of secondary consideration. That which matters is what helps the human Spirit to evolve ; that which hinders it is evil, that which helps it is good. Therefore no special political, social or economic system can claim the allegiance of the Theosophist unless it serves this end.

What then for the Theosophist should be the main lines of social reconstruction ?

Firstly, the social system must be based on the recognition of Brotherhood, and should give to each the opportunity of growth, which his stage of development needs. The detail of such a system will be complex, and must be based on experience, and the teaching of such great men as the future may bring forth. The outline of such a system is simple. The evolution of man takes place in the physical, astral and mental worlds. In each of these worlds men should be provided by Society with the best possible conditions. In the physical world, all men should be provided with at least the necessary minimum of food, clothing, warmth and housing required to keep their physical bodies in good health. Those bodies too should be born of healthy parents, living in good circumstances. Everything which stands in the way of these con-

## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

ditions is an evil, and anyone familiar with present social conditions, will recognise that the Theosophist's demands on the physical plane necessitate a sweeping change of the present state of affairs. To provide men with good bodies at birth, with good nurture during childhood, adolescence and manhood, means drastic and comprehensive reconstruction. Rates of wages, conditions of labour, conditions of housing, and a hundred other details of ordinary life will need to be greatly altered. But remember, Theosophy gives us a firm foundation for these changes. Men must have the best possible bodies in order to further their evolution; to give them less is to sin against them in the gravest way. And, to achieve these ends, much of what is now called Socialism will be required, probably to the extent of national ownership of the chief means of production, of the chief necessities of life, buildings, cotton and cloth manufacture, furniture, food-stuffs, and so forth, national ownership of electrical energy, of the chief means of distribution and a very great degree of control of the means of exchange.

In the world of emotion, the astral world, our duties are quite as comprehensive: stated broadly they are to minimise all violent and coarse emotions and desires, and to stimulate all higher and finer emotions and desires. This means the cultivation of a noble literature, of splendid theatres—national and municipal probably—and of beauty everywhere in the ordinary life of man. It also involves, even if the purely physical did not, the granting of leisure to all. No man should work so hard that he has no life left for finer things, and no man should spend all his life at work. To begin work not earlier than twenty, and to cease work not later than fifty, may seem a utopian ideal, but it is a Theosophic necessity. For beauty must once again come into men's lives, and where drudgery is, beauty cannot live.

Changes such as these involve, of course, most



## THE THEOSOPHICAL SOLUTION.

far-reaching changes in education, in labour conditions, in wages, in old age pensions, and in every department of life. And well-being for all—working or lazy, sick or well, young or old, deserving or undeserving—can be the only motto for a nation governed according to Theosophical principles. To all must be given the best possible chance; the penalty will no longer be deprivation by others of the comfort, dignity and beauty of life, but the self-inflicted penalty of falling out of the evolution, of being a laggard amongst comrades who are going joyfully forward.

In the world of mind, our duty is to provide for each intellect the opportunities it can best use, to provide for all the chance of growth, of training, of discipline, and to provide for the highest minds everything that they may need.

Present-day education can only be said to provide the administrative basis for that which will be needed in the future. Our schools must be made pleasant, calm and beautiful, they must be multiplied enormously, they must be differentiated in a thousand ways. And the whole of life, of literature, of art, of science, of religion, must be made an aid to the growth of the mind, aye, and of the Spirit too, for the service of which the mind is but an instrument.

These requirements of a social system changed in accordance with Theosophical ideas are no dream; they are the requirements for the realisation of God's plan for the world, the spiritual evolution of man. And they must and will come. For the very turmoil and confusion of the present will lead men to seek again the true way of living; and there shall be many in the coming days who will find it; and finding it, know it for the truth; and knowing it, speak it out unto all men.

But if this is to come now, in a world where ugliness, noise, disease, confusion and misery are so potent, it must come by the realisation of duty on the part of those who are elder in evolution,

## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

*outpoured life*  
*sacrifice*

those into whose hands is entrusted the sacred task of guiding aright the destinies of nations and of peoples. Those who are older in evolution must recognise where we stand, must see their duty, and, seeing it, pour out their life and their service in sacrifice to the world. For this, too, is the law of evolution, that the worlds grow by the outpouring of the life which is more highly evolved, for the benefit of that which is less evolved. This world is but the outpoured life of the Logos of our world, and if the world of social affairs is to be helped to grow into a more beautiful thing, it can only be, by the outpouring, the sacrifice of the life of the more evolved, given gladly and willingly.

Pour help, love, sympathy, compassion into the world, for so shall the world grow, so shall the reconstructed social order that we need so badly be founded, and founded upon the understanding of God's plan for the world, which is Evolution.



### CHAPTER III.

## SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGES.

The main lines upon which reconstruction should proceed are laid down in the first chapter, but it is necessary to attempt to get somewhat nearer to concrete legislative and social proposals if we are to indicate what form those proposals should take. Well-being for all is not obtained at the present time on the physical plane, nor are the other desiderata of a harmonious evolution provided. What then stands in the way? This must be our first study and we may take what is ordinarily understood as physical and social well being as the first data of our investigation.

Men should be provided with healthy well-developed bodies, and disease, mal-nutrition and under-development are rampant. Men should be born of healthy parents living in good circumstances, and instead, millions are born of weakly, ailing and diseased parents, born in very bad circumstances. The necessities of well-being are contradicted by actually existing conditions in the large proportion of cases.

The reasons for this are to be sought and found deeper than the examination of individuals will

take us. Why multitudes of people in all civilised countries should be nearly starving while thousands of well-meaning people stand by impotent to help; why food should rot in plenty at one part of the world and men at another waste for hunger; these things can only be understood by realizing that the laws governing the food supply, wages, housing and economic conditions of men generally, are social and not individual laws and, as such, beyond the immediate control of individuals. Human beings live not as isolated units, but as cities, counties, nations or empires. And the laws of the city, county, nation or empire transcend the control of the individual and the laws of his nature, just as the laws of the physical body of man transcend the control of any individual cell in that body and the laws of that cell nature. This has always been recognised by economists whose "laws of wages," "supply and demand" and so forth are realised as beyond immediate individual moral or mental control. And it must be remembered that in certain ways humanity overleaps all boundaries, whether of nation or of empire, that all men belong to a world system, united by trade, by interchange of products, travel, literature and science into a world civilisation. The price of cotton in America affects the operative in England, India and Japan. Gold dug up in South Africa affects all parts of the world. A great discovery in England or Germany is diffused over the world to-morrow. A great crime shrieks over Europe and America and stirs up perhaps many answering germs of evil where its cry is heard. Even at the present when so much still divides nation from nation, race from race, there is more of unity, of solidarity in the human family than is often realised. And nations are more organic unities than is often realised. The laws of our social life in Great Britain are laws of a social body and it is in the laws of this body that we must look for the obstacles that prevent the realisation of the conditions of well-being we have laid down.



## SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGES.

But there is nothing unalterable about these laws; although not subject to immediate individual control they are subject to social control initiated and guided by individuals, and can be altered or improved just in proportion as we use our social machinery and social intelligence for these purposes.

Alteration has been frequent in the past and is constantly taking place. Factory and Mines legislation, Public Health legislation and Education are all fields in which by direct parliamentary action vast changes—only to be realised by historical retrospect—have been made. And by making use of parliamentary and social powers for making any changes we need to obtain we can alter bad organisation into good organisation and let grow the conditions of well-being. For this is the heart of the matter. The lack of well-being from which we suffer so profoundly is due to bad social organisation, an organisation made by the social action of men in the past and to be so unmade or changed in the future as our needs decree.

The present social arrangements are convenient to a great many, our present laws of property, inheritance, taxation and the like have their good features, but there is nothing especially inevitable or sacrosanct about them. And if, for an extreme example, conditions of well-being are incompatible with private ownership of land, then we must do away with this private ownership and find something which better serves the needs of an evolving humanity. Attacking no class and no individual, working for the interests of no class and no individual our aim must be for the race and the nation, and the conditions of spiritual evolution of all.

Even the most hurried glance over social conditions reveals the fact that the many are poor and toil over-long, day by day and year by year, and the few are over-rich. Between these two classes is a middle grade whose conditions are, on the whole, tolerable. The many who are the most of



## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

the workers are usually so poor as to be debarred from most of the refinements and higher pleasures of life, while a great proportion of them live constantly on the verge of want. Among the workers a certain number are "unemployed," and form a reserve army, wanting, but unable to obtain, work. This means that usually the supply of workers is greater than the demand, so that men are forced into competition in money "cheapness" of labour with one another. Because of this competition for the privilege of work wages are kept at a low level, and have, unless checked by other organisations (*e.g.*, that of trade unions), a constant tendency to fall to the level at which a bare subsistence is just possible. In some occupations, chiefly in those of the "skilled trades," organisation by the workers concerned plays a large part in keeping wages up to a decent level of subsistence. But recent strikes have familiarised the public with the facts of the low wages paid too often to railway, transport, textile and mine workers.

Another aspect of the matter has been accentuated also, the fact that there is no public opinion making impossible the payment of a deficient wage. The employers, the nation and the workers themselves seem to regard the payment of a wage, not as a matter of moral obligation at all, but only of a business bargain. An employer may pay his workers, men or women, boys or girls, so little that healthy life is an impossibility and yet feel and be regarded as an honest and upright man—even a benefactor because he provides work at all. In explanation of this low rate of wages he will talk of the business competition of rivals and of the low efficiency of his workers, but not of his responsibility to them as the paymaster who gives to each the money on which all their material circumstances depend. The idea of this responsibility hardly occurs to him, nor to the nation nor to the workers. A few model employers like Messrs. Cadbury and Lever are regarded as special cases



## SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGES.

and not at all too favourably by the working classes themselves.

The man's labour which is bought by a wage is regarded as something apart from the man himself, as a commodity which can be bargained and haggled about just as the price of cabbages or houses may be. And this quite artificial way of looking at the matter is persisted in, despite the fact that under-payment produces sickness of all kinds, premature breakdown, vice, crime and destitution, and that through the Hospitals and Infirmaries, Poor Law, Reformatories, Police, Prison System and private charity—not to speak of the undermining of public health in various ways—these deficiencies are all paid for by the public. The remedial expenditure just alluded to is very great and is largely avoidable, but as you cannot get something for nothing, you cannot have poor wages and bad conditions without paying for them. Men and women, girls and boys are paid wages which do not allow them to be healthy and well developed and in one way or another the public makes up the difference. This is true in the broad sense of every case in which insufficient wages are paid, but in certain "parasitic trades," as they have been called, this is more glaring still.

It has been pointed out that where there is a competition for work, wages have a tendency to fall to "subsistence" level. This level would often appear, be it said in passing, to be more correctly called "slow starvation" level. But if any other possible source of income independent of the work exists this will make it possible for still lower wages to be accepted. And there are several such sources of income. One is Poor Relief. Women in receipt of out-door relief accept work at sweated trades, such as tailoring and box-making, at wages which would be impossible without the money from "the parish." The Poor Rate in these cases is paying a part of the wages in a very direct way. Another case is where a woman is employed part-time as a



cleaner and makes the part-time wage up to a more possible amount by help from the Poor Law Guardians and in such a case the woman may be paid as cleaner of, say, Somerset House, by one State Department, and as pauper by another.

Another such source of help is that derived from husband's (or other members of family's) income which with the added "sweated wage" makes existence just possible for all. In this case part of the wage is being paid by the employer of the husband or other member of the family who is being paid at a better rate, the "sweated" trade here being parasitic, not on the Poor Rate, but on another industry. Yet another source of income exists—for women—in prostitution and some employers openly or tacitly acquiesce in this method of helping out their exchequer by being parasitic on the health and morality of their employees and being morally in the same position as the professional bully who lives on a woman's immoral earnings.

Lowness and insufficiency of wages, although in itself a great evil, is not the only evil, for there yawns constantly at the feet of the worker the pit of unemployment into which he may any day be tumbled. In certain occupations provision may be made against this through a benefit society, trade union or by private saving. But in many occupations there is too little organization and the wages are too small and too irregular to allow this. Some classes of occupations—such as those connected with building—are seasonal and are very slack in winter; others, such as dock labouring, waterside labouring and general labouring, are always largely casual or intermittent. And the ever-present possibility of unemployment staring the worker and the worker's wife in the face, means the ever-present sense of insecurity in the home.

Low wages and insecurity of life are not a solid foundation for material life. Men and women are thoughtless often, for it boots so little to be



## SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGES.

thrifty, improvident, for they dare hardly look more than a week ahead, wasteful, because they have not the opportunity to learn care. Who that knows the life of poor men and women in this country but has not been struck—not with their vices—which are obvious and simple, but with their virtues and their courage under so great difficulties and trials.

All of these evil conditions prevent well-being, all of these conditions must be changed. But social effort to change physical conditions will not be enough, we need a social moral change, the growth of a public opinion that shall make underpayment realised as the parasitism and theft of life which it is, that shall make it necessary that employers do not wait for the law to press upon them, but hasten to point the way to needed changes by their own social experiments.

It is necessary for well-being both that underpayment and insecurity should be abolished. And it may as well be realised abruptly that these are revolutionary changes. Yet nothing less will suffice. But it must also be realised that no one change will achieve our object. Underpayment and insecurity can only be guarded against by a large number of detailed alterations in law, in custom and in method of business organisation inspired by the general principle. But this general principle—that well-being (including security) for all without exception must be the foundation of the state—must be accepted by every political party and by public opinion and every Government in office must accept the responsibility of providing for this well-being in every case and in all cases, by ordinary means or by unusual means, no excuse being accepted for failure. The demand for the acceptance of this responsibility by the nation might well become the basis for a theosophist's politics, for it takes him beyond any ordinary party and bases his politics on the first need of the nation, the financial stability and security of its workers. Nothing

## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

less will suffice, in some way we must guarantee a regular and certain living wage to all. It is useless to provide houses men cannot afford to rent and an elaborate apparatus of life which is beyond them to live up to because they lack the prime necessity, money. Arrange and organise life so that income is sure, and we have a firm foundation for the state; all necessities can then be afforded and will be provided by private or by public enterprise.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL REFORM:

How the changes we need are to be accomplished might well be left to the expert discussion of special committees, but certain broad outlines have been made so clear by the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission and other recent work, that they can readily be indicated. Firstly the labour forces of the country must be so organised as to (1) abolish casual employment (2) minimise seasonal fluctuations in seasonal trades, (3) equalise trade fluctuations by reasonable distribution of national and municipal employment of labour over the year, (4) provide training colonies where men waiting for further work can improve their efficiency, (5) provide sanatorium colonies and convalescent colonies for all in need of medical care of this character, (6) provide morally remedial and penal colonies for wastrels, idlers, drunken, vicious and criminal persons. With this organisation of labour couple the drastic regulation of wages so that they never fall below the minimum level and such inspection and regulation of industries, as an extension of existing factory and mines regulation laws, as may seem desirable. Among these measures it may probably become necessary to assume government and municipal control of the prices of the chief necessities of life.

It is sometimes said that under these conditions certain kinds of business could not be carried on. This is probably true, but this only means that the businesses in question are from our standpoint illegitimate. And therefore it might almost at once become necessary for the State to provide an organisation which could manage such industries if they were socially—as apart from the employers' point of view—desirable. It is also possible that other industries whose conditions are tolerable or good at present would need to be regulated in order to control their rate of production and the prices of their products and this might also lead to national or state ownership and control. None of these changes, if they are requisite, need be shrunk from, for we are founding our building firmly on God's Law for the world and it is the present system, artificial and unmoral, which stands in the way.

In all these changes another great principle must be kept in view. The first I emphasised was the national responsibility for individual well-being, the second is the national responsibility for individual independence.

It is the business of the State to guarantee well-being and security to all; it is equally the business of the State to see that this is done by establishing the individual economic independence of all adults. And this individual independence should be of such a character as to make sure and possible the discharge of all normal personal and family duties. The State cannot be the mother or father to all its children, for instance; the healthy up-bringing of the nation's children can only be accomplished by having every home suitably circumstanced.

Now there is a tendency at the present, arising out of the terrible conditions existing at the low levels of our civilised life, to put upon the shoulders of charitable organisations, of local authorities, or of the national Government very many duties which are properly the duties of parents, legislation to



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL REFORM.

secure the feeding of school children and certain departments (*e.g.* cleanliness) of medical inspection and treatment of school children, for instance. In some places infants' milk depots have been started to provide nursing infants with sterilised milk, and countless charities exist for the provision of boots, clothes, food and other ordinary necessities of life. Legislation and social action of this kind is inevitable at present and must be performed if only for the sake of the feelings of ordinary humanity. But while in some ways such legislation points the way to an organisation—*e.g.*, Medical Inspection—which will be needed under any circumstances, in others the work done is simply and only to be regarded as better than nothing. It would be ten thousand times better to have every home so provided with a regular income that no child from that home needed "school dinners" at the public expense, rather than have that child fed as at present. It would be better for the self-respect of the child and of the parents and better for the actual physical efficiency of the child. Much school feeding is extremely bad at present.

It may be said that meals at school are frequent in many higher grade and secondary schools. Precisely. But this is because it is convenient for parents and children, not because the children are starving. If the parents are financially able to provide a sufficiency of food, then make any convenient arrangements for the supply of dinners at school, if these are needed, that you may find desirable, for this is a position very far removed from the provision of meals on account of necessity and starvation. Let us accept existing powers of action and use them to the best, but many present social and legislative devices must be regarded as purely temporary expedients for dealing with overwhelming evils. We must aim at individual and family independence of State and Municipal Aid, and for excellent reasons. Work



done wholesale for large numbers of "the poor" is probably, more frequently than not, done badly. Meals are provided for necessitous children, but are inadequate, not continued long enough and served too often in a dirty and demoralizing way. Maintenance is provided for pauper infants and children in workhouses and institutions, and the conditions involve frequent moral contamination, very high death-rate, and the stamp of a peculiar "poor law lethargy" which is easy to distinguish at sight. The common necessities of life cannot be provided wholesale for children without the defects of the wholesale creeping; frequently grave abuses creep in—for examples of which I may refer my readers to the reports of the Poor Law Commission.

Experience shows that the most efficient way to supply the needs of children is in small groups, in "scattered homes," that is, in artificially constructed families. Which brings us back to the child's original family, the strengthening and supporting of which appears to be the most reasonable method of providing the suitable nest in which the child may gradually develop. But while we insist thus on independence it must not be forgotten that it is economic independence we mean, not a visionary "independence" of character in impossible circumstances. Another weighty reason for concentrating our attention on the securing of individual and family economic independence is the common-sense one that it is little use protecting and guarding the child until he is 13 or 14, as we do now, by all kinds of special legislation, and then letting him loose into a state of unguarded degradation of conditions where he must inevitably soon relapse. Guard the child through the parent, and not apart from him; in this way shall we secure a healthy foundation of independent individuals for our nation, instead of an insecure foundation of diseased, decrepit and demoralised slum dwellers.

And in selecting the legislation we desire to see carried out there is another danger we must avoid.



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL REFORM.

Many earnest reformers are driven to socialism by their studies of social conditions and, as we have seen, a good deal of what is called socialism will be necessary. But this does not therefore mean that any socialist measure is useful in any event and yet apparently it is so accepted by some socialists. No socialist proposal should be accepted for immediate practical application unless it helps on our object. For example, nationalisation of the railways will not touch our fundamental problems and therefore must wait until we have solved them, for the time, if ever, when it is found to be desirable for itself.

This criterion should be applied to all proposals for legislative or for social work. In order that our world may become the ordered sphere for spiritual evolution which it should be, men must be provided with suitable physical bodies and this means with other suitable physical surroundings. But it is useless building good houses if men have not money to rent them, or improving sanitary conditions and education if the abyss of poverty and destitution remains, making the effect of all these good things as nought. The only effective way to secure our object is to see that, (1) every adult individual is provided always under normal conditions with a wage at least sufficient for self-respecting existence, and secondly that any lapse from the normal is so dealt with as to prevent the possibility of even the hint of the approach of destitution.

There are countless reforms which may be attempted. Food Reform, Temperance Reform, Religious Reform, Education Reform, but all of these are secondary, all must be done in their proper order, the first things first, the foundation first and then the changes in the superstructure. This brings us to another general principle, those whose need is greatest should be helped first.

For to the Theosophist the belief that Society is a great brotherhood is a real and living thing. This brotherhood feels its life in all and rests upon



## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

those who at the base of its structure support the life of those above. The base and foundation of our civilisation at present rests upon a morass, a slough of despond, a pit of destitution and physical and mental demoralisation the miasma from which poisons all our lives. How can we have order, beauty, love and gentleness in a world founded on this disorder, ugliness, hatred and brutality? And those who do not know the conditions at the base of our lives and doubt the accuracy of the description, let them go into the slums of any city and see for themselves.

Much modern legislation shirks this problem of the Abyss. Public Health dare not tackle measles and whooping cough, which are the two most deadly infectious diseases, because the extent of the poverty and demoralisation evil makes it impossible to treat them as scarlet fever and enteric fever are treated by ordinary public health machinery. The great Insurance Act leaves those at the bottom as "deposit contributors," that is in practically the same state as now. The Labour Party fights for special Trade Union legislation, but is hardly able to touch the lives of the great mass of the slum-dwellers. Liberals, Tories and Labour men are alike aghast at the evil, and alike, apparently, impotent to cure it. Undoubtedly we are getting near to the problem of making the foundations of our life clean and sound, but every political party is shirking what is one of the most sublime tasks to which man has ever been set. For to found the civilisation of one country clean, secure and solid is to start processes of change in every nation and in every country, to greatly urge on the time when nowhere on the habitable globe shall poverty and the preventable evils of life continue to exist.

These are no dreams, the accomplishment of this end is within the scope of our realized knowledge. We know much, let us insist that this knowledge is applied to life and not to a group



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL REFORM.

here or a group there—except as a stepping stone—but to all groups, to all classes, to the nations and empires as a whole.

When well-being is established as a permanent condition, then we can demand a level of efficiency and responsibility in the individual citizen which would now be chimerical. To demand efficiency and responsible conduct from the poorer of our fellow citizens now is to demand this from bodies and brains enfeebled by improper and insufficient food, hardened by dull and galling labour, their initiative and self-reliance bound around with the meshwork of poverty and their feet insecure upon a sliding morass which may any day land them in the pit of destitution. To demand efficiency and responsibility in such circumstances is to mock at the lives and sorrows of vast multitudes of men. But the responsibility is ours who know, who understand although only a little, who see clearly that mind and organisation can rescue men from these conditions—ours the responsibility to use the powers we see, ours the fate to suffer for our refusal if we let the time for using these powers go by.

And if indeed it prove necessary, as it may well do, that the State and the Municipality extend the sphere of their functions and acquire control over many kinds of businesses and private undertakings at present run as private enterprises, then we must face these changes also, only realising that a reconstruction of our machinery—outlined in the next chapter—will be requisite, and remembering that the power of ruling, of management and of direction must always be secured to be the right of knowledge and of wisdom and not of prejudice or party interest. The social changes and the reconstruction of Democracy must go hand in hand.

The working out of such a plan in England will not interfere with our existing relationships, with other powers nor with our position as a World

Empire. But the security and well-being we obtain in England it must be our endeavour to spread to all subjects of the Empire everywhere, to India, to the negro-races and to our colonies in so far as they may be led to copy our example. And on the basis of an internal national security, it may be increasingly possible to build up a world security, to found the peace of the world securely on the rock of international agreement and federation, so that the sword of war shall not be lifted again.

The world is ripe for peace and nations founded on well-being will understand better the value of peace, the meaning of brotherhood which is between the nations of the world as between the men of every country. For as we enable the bodies of men to be better built the civilisation made of those men will be saner, better balanced, showing forth more of that Divine Wisdom which guides the world and only waits for us to provide the sound vehicles through which it may manifest. And with this wisdom will grow the sense of responsibility and so the Peace be established for ever and war be a story of the old times.

It may be pointed out also that a state so founded on the well-being and security of its citizens would be a state which had hugely increased its market for all kinds of products; the demand for food, clothes, furniture, houses and all the necessities and luxuries of life would increase. Countries wage war to obtain possession of lands which may serve as markets for their products, and here at our doors is a market greater than the whole of Africa. Wealth would circulate freely, prosperity would abound, and, because founded solidly, there would exist the possibility of social growth and high individual development such as exists not to-day. And beauty could grow. Beauty which now hides its head away from the hearts of men or exists only as an adventitious luxury, an "ornament" added at cost to some bare necessity.



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL REFORM.

That which grows harmoniously and securely is beautiful, and common life in the future—as it has been in the past—will be beautiful because founded upon the security and order which is the first necessity of beauty. Then will be possible on a large scale that refinement of popular art and literature, that ordering of mental growth and education which will provide for the mass of men surroundings in which the best of their desires, emotions and feelings will be stimulated, the worse minimised, their minds left free to grow. To grow, to grow that is the keynote. Man is set here in this glorious world to develop all his powers. He is emerging from a period of disorder, ugliness, pain and confusion because it was necessary for him to learn the need of order and beauty for himself, to know it and not only to have been told. But the old day is dying, the new is dawning and if we now set our hands and our hearts to the work, then of a truth in our day we shall see the founding of that wondrous world civilisation of the future in which the Spiritual Evolution of man shall go on to heights undreamed of. But to do this we must do our part, must keep clearly in view the purpose for which we are here, the duty we have to perform and see to it that in the light of that duty and that purpose we do the first things first, and found our State secure on the well-being of its citizens.

### RESUMÉ OF NECESSARY REFORMS.

- (1) The assumption by the State of the obligation to so organise itself as to give well-being for all.
- (2) This must be done by organising the Labour market and controlling wages so that every adult is economically able to provide the material conditions of well-being for himself.
- (3) This organisation must base itself upon the economic independence of every adult and of every family through the adults.

## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

- (4) Those most in need of help must be dealt with first, that is, those at the base of the social structure.
- (5) No social changes, no reforms must be dealt with before these elementary things have been done; unless men are guaranteed well-being and economic independence no social changes, however excellent in theory or in intention will be helpful or useful.
- (6) We must be prepared for the State, through local authorities and representatives of government departments, to take over and manage various kinds of industry necessary for the community; this will necessitate alteration in the social machinery of administration, as indeed will all changes outlined. This reconstruction of democracy must go hand in hand with the social changes.



## CHAPTER V.

### PRESENT METHODS OF GOVERNMENT.

In Great Britain at the present time government is carried on partly by national and partly by local authorities. The national authority controls and administers through the various branches of the civil service, the local through the town, borough, county and other authorities dealing with local areas of different sizes and for different purposes. The work of the national government is controlled by Parliament, the members of which are elected by constituencies into which the country is divided. Local authorities are controlled by members of the local bodies who are elected by duly qualified persons resident in the area of the authority. Authorities and areas for different purposes frequently overlap, thus a County Council, a Borough Council and a Parliamentary constituency may all have a part of each in the area of another and yet be for the most part different from each other, like three circles whose circumferences partially intersect. With regard to the details of the system, no logical arrangement prevails, nor is perhaps to be expected, but there is instead a very great deal of confusion.

If one takes any two Parliamentary constituencies the number of electors who choose one representative may vary from nearly 50,000 to 2,000 or 3,000. And both of these representatives are members of Parliament whose vote and its influence are exactly equal. So it may well be that one member of Parliament represents only a small fraction of the population represented

## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

by another. When we come to consider the qualifications which are necessary for registration as a voter, we see that these too are arranged in an illogical manner, particularly in the sense that no women are enfranchised, while the voting test for men depends merely on length of residence in a certain house and capacity to pay a certain rental or own a certain property. There is no attempt made to prevent the most uninstructed person having a vote and there is no attempt made to see that the instructed portion of the community do have votes. The system itself can hardly be described as organised, it has grown up and been modified from time to time by legislative change, but beyond the principle that as many male people as possible should have the vote, a principle which has been opposed of course by those who would wish to keep voting power in the hands of the propertied classes, there does not seem to have been any guiding force at work.

Government for the people by the people is an ideal which has been interpreted as government by the largest number of votes of the largest number of male persons, and this ideal has gradually triumphed until the present government proposes to bring in a manhood suffrage bill, to be probably amended by the addition of womanhood suffrage, so that all the adults in the nation will have the power of voting at election time. It is undoubtedly desirable that women should be put on the voters' list on the same terms as men, but it is surely possible to devise a method of government which shall more fully answer the needs of the nation than our present clumsy expedients. By embodying adult suffrage as part of our constitutional machinery we shall have as it were increased the extent of the problem of government, but by no means solved it.

How does our democracy get its work done at present? If we take any individual constituency the larger number of the voters are not correctly informed on public affairs and at an election time



## PRESENT METHODS OF GOVERNMENT.

vote for candidates in whose selection they have had no real voice and on issues they very partially comprehend. The voters in a constituency are not organised in any real sense of the word, for although they may belong to local liberal, conservative or labour organisations, these bodies are not truly representative of opinion and in any case represent only a part and often a small part of the electorate.

The actual selection of the candidates who will be put before the constituency is made by committees of the local organisations who are for the most part self-elected caucuses, and these committees very often indeed bow to the wishes of the central committees of the political parties who wish for their own reasons to put this or that individual forward. These reasons are frequently purely financial, that is to say that if an otherwise respectable person is willing to put up money to fight the contest and perhaps make an additional contribution to party funds, he may very easily arrange that the electors of a constituency shall offer to have him as their candidate. The central political committee will suggest to some local caucus that Mr. So and so is a desirable individual and will indicate that all expenses will be paid and that the cost of keeping the party machinery going between the elections will also be met. The local caucus will then arrange a local party meeting at which a sprinkling of the party electors will hear Mr. So and So make a party speech, and after hearing this they will duly pass a resolution inviting him to contest the constituency. And when candidates are once selected there is practically no chance of another individual coming in. The independent candidate is almost certain to be unsuccessful for the simple reason that he has no party machinery to fall back on. This procedure means that while the selection of candidates is done with the acquiescence of those members of the electorate who are actively and energetically interested in local politics, it is certainly not done by the majority of the electorate



or by the electorate as an organised unit.

A large number of voters who do not happen to be specially interested in local politics, do not belong to the local organisations, and take no part in their deliberations, may yet take an enlightened interest in public affairs. Such men are often the most sensible and serious persons in the constituency, their opinion at any rate is just as well worth having as is that of those who because of their special interest in public life, manage as it were to make a corner in politics and in political machinery.

This might not be so serious if efforts were made to put national questions before the electors in a plain straightforward way, but this is so rarely if ever done, as to be practically outside the range of ordinary consideration. The electors are as a rule ill-informed about public matters and at an election time they do not improve their education. For whatever questions may be before the country are put before them in so biassed and so exaggerated a way as to make it almost impossible to get at the truth of the matter.

An election is a sorry business altogether, for electors who may know little or nothing of national needs go to hear speeches which may inflame them or disgust them, read literature which may be accurate or inaccurate and listen to the arguments of canvassers who are, at least, not disinterested, and after this they walk into the polling booth on election day, make a cross on a piece of paper and walk out with their citizen's duty discharged. These crosses are subsequently added up together and the candidate's name against which the largest number of crosses stands is declared elected. This method may be, and probably is, superior to oligarchic government of the old type, but it certainly cannot be described as a method of ascertaining the will of the people. It is the will of the caucus, of the party committee, of the party elector if you like, modified by any



strong surge of public opinion one way or another, but the people have been all the time too much occupied with their daily concerns to either inform themselves of, or know much of the questions about which the candidates for Parliament anathematise each other. Unbiased information on public questions is one of the gravest needs of present day politics and yet we have, among all the provisions for the conduct of elections, none whatsoever providing for the education of the electorate in the questions which are to be decided. None making it obligatory even on the elected member to render an account to his constituency of the work which he has performed. Nor have we penalties for false representations, except of the grossest possible type ; we have no penalties against the subtle corruption exercised by the canvasser and by election literature. These methods may have been good enough for the past, they are emphatically not good enough for the present. We shall never get wisdom by adding up the votes of large numbers of uninformed people after party appeals made to them more or less accurately and more or less for the public good. Nor do we get the expression of the will of the people, for this can only be expressed by an instructed educated public opinion. Our present government is a pretended democracy and an actual government of party machinery.

One might carry this criticism of democratic machinery much farther and point out how in parliament itself the executive authority has largely been taken away from the assembly of members and vested in the Cabinet, chosen from the party in power, which controls foreign affairs, and has a power over the army and the navy and the great departments of the Civil Service which can hardly be checked or restrained.

Turning from national affairs to local, the matter is only less serious because the interests affected are less vital to the nation as a whole.



Present machinery is not adequate to cope with modern needs, the confusion of authorities is very great, the powers of these authorities are frequently hampered and limited in a way which interferes with their performing the work they are supposed to do, and the areas and functions of different local authorities frequently overlap. All kinds of confusion is created, all kinds of local work made difficult and different authorities hinder instead of helping each other's work. This is seen for instance when the education authorities and the poor law authorities quarrel over the question of feeding necessitous children. And when a local borough to satisfy its own aspirations will obstruct the claims of a great county authority and, for instance, prevent the running of a tramway through its district. Local public health authorities and county education authorities may differ absurdly on the subject of the closing of schools in connection with infection, and in fact one has only got to dip into the questions of local government to find it is a mass of seething incongruities, often of absurdities. In the matter both of national and local government it is not meant to imply that very much good work is not done, that is also obvious, but there is so much in need of reform that we should endeavour to find principles of change by the use of which we may gradually construct more efficient machinery.

Two principles which we have recognised in former chapters will make a vital difference to our conceptions of government. The first is the principle of universal brotherhood conceived as a spiritual reality, but not implying that all men are equal as they appear in the world. Indeed this principle of brotherhood implies that all men are unequal, being at different stages of their evolution and like brothers in a family, some are older and some younger. The recognition of the principle of spiritual evolution must go hand in hand with the recognition of the principle of spiritual brother-



## PRESENT METHODS OF GOVERNMENT.

hood. All men are equal in their divinity, but the degree in which the divine powers of the soul are manifested here depends on the length of the evolutionary period behind them. Some men are much older in evolution than others, some are much younger and the duties and functions of men depend upon their position in evolution, upon the powers which they are able to show forth. It is on the recognition of these two principles that democracy must be reconstructed, and applying them to government they mean that while it is necessary to gain the fullest possible conception of the needs and desires of the whole nation, it is also necessary that these needs and desires shall be guided by the measured wisdom of those who are older in evolution. That is to say that something of the hierarchical principle must be added to the democratic principle if we wish to have both the representation of the wishes of all, with the representation of the wisdom of the nation, which is also the wisdom of all, because those who are older in evolution are but expressing that which comes to them because of their stage of development.

Our present democratic organisation is in reality a makeshift. It is a way out of the difficulty of oligarchical control, a stage on the road to the reconstruction of a really organically built society. And there is extremely little reality behind the phrases and pretences with which it is decked out. Everyone who has ever gone through a Parliamentary election knows that the phrase "government by the people for the people" is a mere shibboleth and that the state is truly governed by a comparatively few persons who make use of party machinery.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC RECONSTRUCTION.

In considering the outline of the method of democratic reconstruction two considerations should be borne in mind, firstly that any detailed change in machinery must be regarded as secondary to the social changes already indicated, and secondly that detailed change in machinery must necessarily be spread over a long period. What changes we need at first must be accomplished, so to speak, as we go along. We must work with the tools to hand, remembering that as our society improves generally the work will become increasingly easier. But despite these facts, or perhaps because of these facts, it is essential to get our changes in machinery started in the right direction.

The present system both of local and national administration is much more complicated than it need be, and there is not sufficient organic relation between the national and the local authorities and between the different kinds of national and local authorities. We should, at least, hold the idea in our minds of a system of government which, starting from the smallest parish council area, should go upward step by step, council to council, until we finally reached Parliament itself. This is the purely administrative or business side of the matter, but the quite distinct problem connected with our method of selecting representatives must also be considered.



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC RECONSTRUCTION.

A member of Parliament is elected by the registered voters in a particular constituency and, having been elected, takes his place as a member of the legislative assembly which deals with the work of the nation as a whole. The local councillor is elected by the voters who live in a certain area, but is elected to do the work of that area, town, county council or other authority as the case may be. It is important to realise this difference. An "M.P." is elected by the people living in a certain place to do the nation's work, a local councillor is elected by the people living in a certain place to do local work. There are certain considerations of an elementary nature that show clearly why this distinction has arisen, but there is no reason why it should continue in force, there is no reason, that is to say why a member thought fit to control a local authority in the North of England should not be fit to control a local authority in the South of England. We "pool" our national representatives, why not, to a certain extent at least, our "local" representatives.

A local councillor at present is tied to his area, and as the work of local authorities is hedged about by all kinds of purely arbitrary restrictions and kept within quite artificial boundaries, a good deal of administrative ability is wasted.

Up till a comparatively recent date this purely local way of looking at affairs did not matter, because living was essentially a localised business, but nowadays, when towns are connected by inter-linking train and tramway systems when electric power can be distributed economically over hundreds of miles, and when town populations are so large that it is necessary to tap the great watersheds of the country in order to supply them with water, it becomes increasingly difficult to administer the things of our lives by means of the local machinery suited to an earlier age. And it will simplify our consideration of the method of reform if we keep clear the fact that the problem of election of



## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

representatives and that of administration of things are matters quite separate and distinct one from the other.

Thus, suppose for the moment, that the whole local administrative machinery of England was put into the melting pot, but that the local election areas remained the same; then if local representatives were elected, they would form an enormous body of persons who might conceivably be turned on to administer local affairs anywhere according to the needs of new machinery which might be created and irrespective of the places by which they had been elected. Some affairs are of their nature local, and these are probably best administered by purely local representatives, but other affairs, such as the control of electric power and of water transcend the boundaries not only of towns but of counties, and are really no more "local" than the affairs with which Parliament deals. And if it becomes necessary in the future for Government to assume a great degree of control of some of the larger industries, such as the cotton, boot and wool trades for instance, then it will become increasingly necessary to have a progressive and flexible business administration by means of which these trades can be managed.

For, constituted as they are at present, the national administration and the local governing bodies are both overburdened with work, so that new functions cannot be assigned to them without creating new machinery for their use. The new machinery will have to be of the nature of a purely business organisation, managed to a considerable extent in the way in which an ordinary business is managed. Imagine a series of committees of directors of this or that undertaking, chosen from publicly elected persons, or from a panel (to be afterwards referred to) of co-optable persons, and we have the business organisation of a government of the future, the machinery side that is.

The changes in administrative machinery



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC RECONSTRUCTION.

necessary, and the changes in method of election of public representatives are two distinct problems, as has been stated above. And, while our administrative machinery is certainly defective, our present method of electing representatives for Parliament or for local work is one of the weakest spots in the democratic organization. For we do not, by this method, discover the best men and women for the work. Nor have we any non-party method of educating the electorate in a knowledge of public questions, nor any method whatsoever of testing their capability of using the vote.

The question can be considered under several heads, (a) the qualifications of and registration of the voter, (b) the size of the election area, (c) the method of election.

(a) We are on the verge of what will amount to Adult Suffrage and the problem of the education of the voter in public questions is therefore urgent. This should not be left to the Parties, but become a matter for non-party instruction by the Government. And this instruction should take the form of definite classes held for all persons between the ages of 14 and 21 at which methods of government, social questions, civic duty and public affairs generally should be dealt with in a simple and yet thorough manner by men and women appointed as teachers, demonstrators and lecturers. Attendance at these should be compulsory and if necessary the age of half-timers should be raised to make this, and other forms of education possible. Every person before being added to the voters' roll would be required to show proof of having attended such classes regularly and of having attained a reasonable degree of knowledge of the subjects taught. But the voter should be required to keep his knowledge of public questions up-to-date, and for this purpose there should be held in every election area (to be defined below) regular public meetings, under non-party auspices, at which matters of local and national interest could be discussed by any elector

*education for election by public*



## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

with an impartial chairman in control of the meeting. And in order to maintain his name on the register of voters, every person should be required to attend a minimum number of these meetings in every year. At certain of these meetings local and parliamentary representatives should attend and give an account of their work and answer questions of public interest.

These are quite simple and easily workable suggestions, but they would transform the face of English political life and tend to largely reduce the objectionable features of party warfare. An educated and non-party instructed electorate would not be susceptible to illegitimate influence, nor would they easily tolerate misrepresentation, either from the platform or through the Press.

(b) The aim of democratic reconstruction should be to do away with the confusion of election areas which at present exists and bring them down to a simple pattern. By election area above is meant the smallest area existing as a unit and electing local representatives. Such areas in the country might correspond with Parish Councils and in towns with the wards of constituencies or with two or more wards joined together. The determining considerations should be size and number of population. The object should be to make each unit election area an organic social unit with a common life and expressing a large degree of consciousness of itself as a social entity. The education of the voters and the regular non-party political meetings referred to above would make this possible, but the number of persons forming such a social unit is necessarily limited, probably not extending beyond a few thousand, and the area in which they live is important, as, if too scattered, a common life is not possible.

These unit election areas would be those from which were elected the first class of local representatives, and it is obvious what advantages in the selection of these would accrue from the statutory



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC RECONSTRUCTION.

public meetings. At these meetings the most capable men and women in the district would naturally come forward, so that they would be elected for local service almost before ever they went up for election by the ballot. And an election of this character is the soundest and most satisfactory kind of election.

For purposes beyond those of a merely local character these unit areas could be grouped together to form such constituencies, for various purposes, as were found desirable. A group of such areas would form a parliamentary constituency for instance, and here again the habit of each area regarding itself as a social entity would make elections more expressive of the real "will of the people" than any mere piling up of votes, although this voting would, of course, continue. And if any other election areas were found desirable they should be built up by grouping the unit areas.

(c) Method of election would continue to be by ballot, and no doubt the different parties would continue to make their party appeals; but under different conditions. The real election would be made in the statutory public meetings and the parties would have to deal in vital questions of public interest, in matters of principle and not of prejudice and ignorance, if they wished to get support. The ballot box would only register opinion soundly conceived.

It is not my intention here to more than indicate main lines of reconstruction, and therefore I do not attempt to go into the detailed consideration involved in the adaptation of this outline plan to existing conditions. Probably in the end it would be found sufficient to have two classes of election areas, (a) the small unit areas from which all local representatives could be elected, and (b) the parliamentary constituencies consisting of federations of such areas, from which parliamentary and perhaps the more important county and inter-county representatives could be elected.

## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

The machinery of government might well consist of a hierarchy of Parish, Urban and Rural District and County Councils as it does now, but these should be linked up with the national government directly, and strengthened by the appointment of committees for administration of various services on business lines as already suggested. And it would add stability and value to this machinery if the chairman and perhaps the vice-chairman of each body were nominated to it from its own body, and from a panel of co-optable persons, by the authority above it or by some government department.

Besides the elected element a greater use should be made of our existing powers for the "co-opting" on to various committees of persons distinguished in the work (*e.g.*, Education or Public Health) for which Committees exist. And to facilitate this co-option there should be kept in every unit election area a panel of co-optable persons who should be nominated on to any committee by the various councils or by the government. The attainment of inclusion in this panel might well come to be regarded as a reward for public service in the fields of science, politics, literature, religion or in any other way useful to humanity. If the panel were in degrees its usefulness would be increased, the first degree being that of men and women co-optable for purely local work, the next for work of a more extended scope and so on up to a panel which might admit to nomination to the equivalent of our present House of Commons or House of Lords, where the principle in fact already exists.

Organisation on the lines considered concerns not only the external machinery, but the much more important factor, the social mind of the community. And more and more as our civilisation increases in complexity and becomes aware of its responsibilities will it be necessary to undertake reconstruction on these lines. From the administrative point of view,



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC RECONSTRUCTION.

under some such purely business scheme, English local affairs would be managed by a network of councils and committees adapted to the very numerous different functions necessary on purely business lines. The committee or council or governing body controlling water supply, or electric supply, or inter-local transit by tramways and light railways, would be as large as need be, and operate over the total area, just as a business company would, whereas the authority for managing local paving or the parish hall would be as small as convenient, and deal with limited matters. Such a business organisation could be easily correlated with a system of Parliamentary Committees, and with government departments, and would indeed provide a system by means of which a very great deal of the work of Parliament and of various government departments could be devolved on to bodies composed of local representatives.

But we must look on the matter from the standpoint of the men and women who will control the machinery also.

It was said earlier that we must look to those more evolved than their fellows for the directing wisdom and self-sacrificing service which shall enable social reconstruction to be carried out. It is these persons who must largely staff the network of local councils and committees before referred to, and these who must be elected to Parliament. And this means not only that different people must replace some of those at present doing this work, but perhaps even more that those at present doing this work must wake up to a sense of their responsibilities and a knowledge of their place in evolution. Such men and women would naturally come to the front at the statutory public meetings in the unit election areas, just as the incapable would naturally show forth their incapacity and their pretence. But to increase this sense of responsibility the rapid permeation of all classes of thinking people by theosophical ideas is imperative.



## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

Those who are in positions of power and authority, however limited this may be, must be men and women who believe in God's plan for the world, evolution, and who are in their own way and in their own sphere doing what they can to help this on; without such a permeation of thought, without such a feeling of duty, and such a belief in the reality of the evolving Spirit under the guise of every day, among those carrying on public work, no mere change in machinery, no new provision of legislation will prove effective.

The change here implied in those older in evolution will inevitably be followed by a corresponding change in those younger. Men being in fact older and younger in evolution, a stable system must be based on an acknowledgment of this fact, but the acknowledgment is one not easy to put into machinery unless it be first felt in the hearts of men and realised in their intelligence. And this acknowledgment means greater responsibility for older and younger alike, responsibility to do the duty which is before them at the stage where they are. It will, however, be easier both to assume and to discharge these responsibilities in a society in which social consciousness and public spirit are deliberately educated, and this education made part of the fabric of public life.

Great strides forward are being made at the present in the direction of social reform, schemes of a vastness not before contemplated are not only proposed but carried into law. But we lack the certain knowledge of world law which the spiritual science of Theosophy gives, and we lack the social organisation that can build firmly on that law.

Changes such as these can only be accomplished with any degree of perfection by an increasing realisation of the omnipresence of law, in the mental, moral and spiritual life no less than in the physical. We must look in the future to the deepening of the sense of the verities of religion under whatever form, in whatever guise. The



## THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC RECONSTRUCTION.

State of the future indeed may deem it wise not to disestablish or to disendow this church or that, but to establish or endow every church, chapel, religious or ethical organisation which has sufficient claims on public support to justify its help.

So will the organisation of the State come out of the confusion of the present into order, into serenity, all its parts and all sections of its people doing different work, discharging different functions, but each doing its work knowing it necessary for all, and doing this because the recognition of duty and place in evolution will come to be one of the fundamental conceptions, not only of the philosopher, but of all men and of everyday life.

If changes of the magnitude and on the scale of those outlined are to be brought about then society must make ready for them by understanding and by investigation of social and of spiritual questions, and by becoming permeated throughout its length and breadth by ideals of high service. The spread of theosophical ideas will make this more easily possible in the modern world, by giving to it a science of the mind and of spiritual things which shall enable it to perceive again, through the medium of scientific thought, the truths of religion which once were seen by faith. The presence of God in the world, the existence of a Divine Plan of Evolution for the world, are for the Theosophist not abstractions, but certainties and realities. Ours the duty of conforming our little human plans to that great plan, of helping to work out our human destiny to its divine end.

And in the present we have an especial duty, for this is a time of great changes, of a great reshaping of life. At such times in the world's life the great hierarchy of Divine Beings who rule and direct our evolution send forth from Themselves One whom we know as the World Teacher. He has been in the world as the founder of Egyptian, Greek and Indian religion, as Hermes, Zoroaster, Orpheus, Buddha, Krishna, and latest of all as

## THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

Christ. Him we expect again now, to re-proclaim the eternal verities, to re-unveil the profoundest religious truths, to set again on its way the new and more splendid civilisation which shall emerge out of the pain and confusion of the present.

Ours to prepare the way, to be ready to carry out his commands, to be ready to build as He shall direct.



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