

THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY



By

H. P. BLAVATSKY

FIRST SIMPLIFIED
ADYAR EDITION

By

CLARA M. CODD

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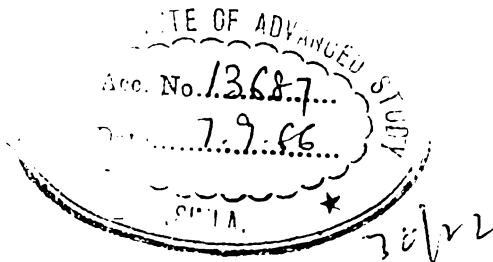


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DEDICATED

BY

"H. P. B."

To all her Pupils that they may learn
and teach in their turn

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is exactly expressed in its title, THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY, and needs but few words of explanation. It is not a complete or exhaustive text-book of Theosophy, but only a key to unlock the door that leads to the deeper study. It traces the broad outlines of the Wisdom Religion, and explains its fundamental principles; meeting, at the same time, the various objections raised by the average Western enquirer, and endeavouring to present unfamiliar concepts in a form as simple and in language as clear as possible. That it should succeed in making Theosophy intelligible without mental effort on the part of the reader, would be too much to expect; but it is hoped that the obscurity still left is of the thought, not of the language, is due to depth, not to confusion. To the mentally lazy or obtuse, Theosophy must remain a riddle; for in the world mental as in the world spiritual each man must progress by his own efforts. The writer cannot do the reader's thinking for him,

nor would the latter be any the better off if such vicarious thought were possible. The need for such an exposition as the present has long been felt among those interested in the Theosophical Society and its work, and it is hoped that it will supply information, as free as possible from technicalities, to many whose attention has been awakened, but who, as yet, are merely puzzled and not convinced.

Some care has been taken in disentangling some part of what is true from what is false in Spiritualistic teachings as to the post mortem life, and to showing the true nature of Spiritualistic phenomena.

Very hearty thanks are due from the author to many Theosophists who have sent suggestions and questions, or have otherwise contributed help during the writing of this book. The work will be the more useful for their aid, and that will be their best reward.

H. P. B.

LONDON, 1889.

COMPILER'S PREFACE

IN simplifying this work of H.P.B.'s I have omitted all Sanskrit terms except the words *karma* and *devachan* which have now passed into ordinary parlance, and in one place have retained the word *samadhi*, and the word *skandha*. I have taken out a great deal of matter dealing with abstruse and metaphysical ideas, also some references to Neo-Platonic authorities, and to some Victorian writers, as being difficult for the enquirer to grasp. In some places I have also telescoped paragraphs. My excuse for this seeming impertinence is an anxiety that the enquirers and beginners should at once imbibe the wide outlook, deep knowledge and heroic spirit of our great Founder. It is hoped that this will lead them to further study of her works.

I have retained the question and answer form of her book, as adding to its "aliveness".

Adyar, 1953.

CLARA M. CODD

Karma: the Law of Action and Re-action, or of Cause and Effect, on all planes of man's being.

Devachan: Literally the "home of the gods"; the state of compensatory bliss into which the Ego enters after death.

Samadhi: The name in India for spiritual ecstasy, induced by mystical contemplation.

Skandha: an attribute or trait of the personality.

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THEOSOPHY AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THE MEANING OF THE NAME

ENQUIRER—*Theosophy and its doctrines are often referred to as a new-fangled religion. Is it a religion?*

THEOSOPHIST—It is not. Theosophy is Divine Knowledge or Science.

Enq.—*What is the real meaning of the term?*

Theo.—Divine Wisdom, or the Wisdom of the Gods. The word "Theos" means a God in Greek, one of the divine beings, certainly not "God" in the sense attached in our day to the term. Therefore, it is not "Wisdom of God," as translated by some, but Divine Wisdom such as that possessed by the Gods. The term is many thousand years old.

Enq.—*What is the origin of the name?*

Theo.—It comes to us from the Alexandrian philosophers, called lovers of truth. The name

Theosophy dates from the third century of our era, and began with Ammonius Saccas and his disciples, who started the Eclectic Theosophical system.

Enq.—*What was the object of this system ?*

Theo.—First of all to inculcate certain great moral truths upon its disciples, and all those who were “lovers of the truth”. Hence also the motto adopted by the Theosophical Society: “There is no religion higher than truth.”

The chief aim of the Founders of the Eclectic Theosophical School was one of the three objects of its modern successor, the Theosophical Society, namely, to reconcile all religions, sects, and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities.

Enq.—*What have you to show that this is not an impossible dream; and that all the world's religions are based on the one and the same truth ?*

Theo.—Their comparative study and analysis.

Enq.—*In the days of Ammonius there were several great ancient religions, and the sects in Egypt and Palestine alone were numerous. How could he reconcile them ?*

Theo.—By doing that which we again try to do now. We can show the line of descent of every

Christian religion, as of every—even the smallest—sect. The latter are the minor twigs or shoots grown on the larger branches; but shoots and branches spring from the same trunk—the Wisdom-Religion. To prove this, was the aim of Ammonius, who endeavoured to induce Gentiles and Christians, Jews and Idolaters, to lay aside their contentions and strifes, remembering only that they were all in possession of the same truth under various vestments, and were all the children of a common mother. This is the aim of Theosophy likewise.

Enq.—*What are your authorities for saying all this of the ancient Theosophists of Alexandria?*

Theo.—An almost countless number of well-known writers. Only while the great Philaletheian was supported and helped in the policy he pursued by two Church Fathers, Clement and Athenagoras, by the learned Rabbis of the Synagogue, by the philosophers of the Academy and the Grove, and while he taught a common doctrine for all, we, his followers on the same line, receive little recognition.

Enq.—*Was Ammonius encouraged and supported by the Church because, notwithstanding his heresies, he taught Christianity and was a Christian?*

Theo.—Not at all. He was born a Christian, but never accepted Church Christianity.

Enq.—*Since Ammonius never committed anything to writing, how can one feel sure that such were his teachings?*

Theo.—Neither did Buddha, Pythagoras, Confucius, Orpheus, Socrates, nor even Jesus, leave behind them any writings. Yet most of these are historical personages, and their teachings have all survived. The disciples of Ammonius, among whom were Origen, Plotinus, and Longinus, have all left records of the Philaletheian System—so far, at all events, as their public profession of faith was known, for the School was divided into exoteric and *esoteric* teachings.

Enq.—*How have the latter tenets reached our day, since you hold that what is properly called the Wisdom-Religion was esoteric?*

Theo.—The Wisdom-Religion was ever one and the same, and being the last word of possible human knowledge, was, therefore, carefully preserved. It preceded by long ages the Alexandrian Theosophists, reached the modern, and will survive every other religion and philosophy.

Enq.—*Where and by whom was it so preserved?*

Theo.—Among Initiates of every country; among profound seekers after truth—their disciples; and

in those parts of the world where such topics have always been most valued and pursued.

Enq.—*Can you give me some proofs of its esotericism?*

Theo.—The best proof you can have of the fact is that every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric or outward public worship. Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that the Mysteries of the ancients comprised with every nation the Greater (secret) and Lesser (public) Mysteries—as, for instance, in the celebrated solemnities called the Eleusinian, in Greece. Do we not find the same also in early Christianity, among the Gnostics, and even in the teachings of Christ? Did he not speak to the multitudes in parables which had a two-fold meaning, and explain his reasons only to his disciples? “Unto you,” he says, “it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.” Examples might be brought from every country to this effect.

Enq.—*Can you attain the “Secret Wisdom” simply by study?*

Theo.—I think not. Ancient Theosophists claimed, and so do the modern, that the Infinite cannot be known by the finite—*i.e.*, sensed by the

finite self—but that the divine essence could be communicated to the higher spiritual Self in a state of ecstasy.

Enq.—*What is your explanation of it?*

Theo.—Real ecstasy was defined by Plotinus as “the liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, becoming one and identified with the Infinite.” This is the highest condition, and it is reached only by the very *very* few. It is, indeed, identical with that state which is known in India as Samadhi. The Theosophy of the Sages is well expressed in the assertion, “The Kingdom of God is within us.”

Enq.—*Theosophy, then, is not, as held by some, a newly devised scheme?*

Theo.—It is as old as the world, in its teachings and ethics, if not in name, as it is also the broadest and most catholic system among all.

Enq.—*How comes it, then, that Theosophy has remained so unknown to the nations of the Western Hemisphere, confessedly the most cultured and advanced?*

Theo.—We believe there were nations as cultured in days of old and certainly more spiritually, “advanced” than we are. But there are several reasons for this willing ignorance. One of them was given by St. Paul to the cultured Athenians—

a loss, for long centuries, of real spiritual insight, and even interest, owing to their too great devotion to things of sense and their long slavery to the dead letter of dogma and ritualism. But the strongest reason for it lies in the fact that real Theosophy has ever been kept secret.

Enq.—*You have brought forward proofs that such secrecy has existed ; but what was the real cause for it ?*

Theo.—The causes for it were : Firstly, the perversity of average human nature and its selfishness, always tending to the gratification of *personal* desires to the detriment of neighbours and next of kin. Such people could never be entrusted with *divine* secrets. Secondly, their unreliability to keep the sacred and divine knowledge from desecration. It is the latter which led to the perversion of the most sublime truths and symbols, and to the gradual transformation of things spiritual into anthropomorphic, concrete and gross imagery—in other words, to the dwarfing of the god-idea and to idolatry.

Enq.—*Are you all followers of Gautama Buddha ?*

Theo.—No more than musicians are all followers of Wagner.

Enq.—*But are not the ethics of Theosophy identical with those taught by Buddha?*

Theo.—Certainly, because these ethics are the soul of the Wisdom-Religion, and were once the common property of the Initiates of all nations. But Buddha was the first to embody these lofty ethics in his public teachings, and to make them the foundation and the very essence of his public system. It is herein that lies the immense difference between exoteric Buddhism and every other religion. For while in other religions ritualism and dogma hold the first and most important place, in Buddhism it is the ethics which have always been the most insisted upon. This accounts for the resemblance, amounting almost to identity, between the ethics of Theosophy and those of the religion of Buddha. Yet Theosophy is not Buddhism.

EXOTERIC AND ESOTERIC THEOSOPHY

WHAT THE MODERN THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IS NOT

ENQUIRER—*Your doctrines, then, are not a revival of Buddhism, nor are they entirely copied from the Neo-Platonic Theosophy?*

THEOSOPHIST—They are not. Let me quote Dr. J. D. Buck, F.T.S., before a Theosophical Convention, at Chicago, Ill., U. S. A. (April, 1889). “Individuals in every age have more or less clearly apprehended the Theosophical doctrines and wrought them into the fabric of their lives. These doctrines belong exclusively to no religion, and are confined to no society or time. They are the birthright of every human soul.”

Enq.—*Which system do you prefer or follow besides Buddhistic ethics?*

Theo.—None, and all. We hold to no religion, and to no philosophy in particular: we cull the

good we find in each. But here, again, it must be stated that, like all other ancient systems, Theosophy is divided into exoteric and esoteric sections.

Enq.—*What is the difference ?*

Theo.—The members of the Theosophical Society at large are free to profess whatever religion or philosophy they like, or none if they so prefer, provided they are in sympathy with, and ready to carry out one or more of the three objects of the Association. The Society is a philanthropic and scientific body for the propagation of the idea of brotherhood on practical instead of theoretical lines. The members may be Christians or Mussulmans, Jews or Parsis, Buddhists or Brahmans, Spiritualists or Materialists, it does not matter; but every member must be either a philanthropist, or a scholar, a searcher into Aryan and other old literature, or a psychic student. In short, he has to help, if he can, in the carrying out of at least one of the objects of the programme. Otherwise he has no reason for becoming a member. Such are the majority of the exoteric Society, composed of "attached" and "unattached" members.¹ These

¹ An "attached" member means one who has joined some particular Lodge of the Theosophical Society. An "unattached," one who belongs to the Society at large, has his diploma from the Headquarters (Adyar, Madras), but is connected with no Lodge.

may, or may not, become Theosophists *de facto*. Members they are, by virtue of their having joined the Society; but the latter cannot make a Theosophist of one who has no sense for the divine fitness of things, or of him who understands Theosophy in his own—if the expression may be used—sectarian and egotistic way.

THEOSOPHISTS AND MEMBERS OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Enq.—*This applies to lay members, as I understand. And what of those who pursue the esoteric study of Theosophy, are they the real Theosophists?*

Theo.—Not necessarily, until they have proven themselves to be such. They have entered the inner group and pledged themselves to carry out, as strictly as they can, the rules of the occult body. This is a difficult undertaking, as the foremost rule of all is the entire renunciation of one's personality—*i.e.*, a member has to become a thorough altruist, never to think of himself, and to forget his own vanity and pride in the thought of the good of his fellow-creatures, besides that of his fellow-brothers in the esoteric circle. He has to live, if the esoteric

instructions shall profit him, a life of abstinence in everything, of self-denial and strict morality, doing his duty by all men. The few real Theosophists in the T. S. are among these members. This does not imply that outside of the T. S. and the inner circle, there are no Theosophists; for there are, and more than people know of; certainly far more than are found among the ordinary members of the T. S.

Enq.—*Then what is the good of joining the Society in that case? Where is the incentive?*

Theo.—None, except the advantage of learning the genuine doctrines of the Esoteric Philosophy, and deriving much help from mutual aid and sympathy. Union is strength and harmony, and well-regulated simultaneous efforts produce wonders. This has been the secret of all associations and communities since mankind existed.

Enq.—*But why could not a man of well-balanced mind and singleness of purpose, one, say, of indomitable energy and perseverance, become an Occultist and even an Adept if he works alone?*

Theo.—He may; but there are ten thousand chances against one that he will fail. For one reason out of many others, no books on Occultism or Theurgy exist in our day which give out the secrets of Alchemy or mediæval Theosophy in plain

language. All are symbolical or in parables; and as the key to these has been lost for ages in the West, how can a man learn the correct meaning of what he is reading and studying? Therein lies the greatest danger, one that leads to unconscious black magic or the most helpless mediumship. He who has not an Initiate for a master had better leave the dangerous study alone. Look around you and observe. While two-thirds of "civilized" society ridicule the mere notion that there is anything in Theosophy, Occultism, Spiritualism, or in the Kabalah, the other third is composed of the most heterogeneous and opposite elements. Some believe in the mystical, and even in the supernatural (!), but each believes in his own way. Others will rush single-handed into the study of the Kabalah, Psychism, Mesmerism, Spiritualism, or some form or another of Mysticism. Result: no two men think alike, no two are agreed upon any fundamental occult principles, though many are those who claim for themselves the *ultima thule* of knowledge, and would make outsiders believe that they are full-blown Adepts. Not only is there no scientific and accurate knowledge of Occultism accessible in the West—not even of true Astrology, the only branch of Occultism which, in its *exoteric* teachings, has

definite laws and a definite system—but no one has any idea of what real Occultism means. Some limit ancient wisdom to the Kabbalah and the Jewish *Zohar*, which each interprets in his own way according to the dead letter of the Rabbinical methods. Others regard Swedenborg or Bohme as the ultimate expressions of the highest wisdom; while others again see in Mesmerism the great secret of ancient Magic. One and all of those who put their theory into practice are rapidly drifting, through ignorance, into black magic. Happy are those who escape from it, as they have neither test nor criterion by which they can distinguish between the true and the false.

Enq.—*Are we to understand that the inner group of the T. S. claims to learn what it does from the real Initiates or Masters of Esoteric Wisdom?*

Theo.—Not directly. The personal presence of such Masters is not required. Suffice it if They give instructions to some of those who have studied under Their guidance for years, and devoted their whole lives to Their service. Then, in turn, these can give out the knowledge so imparted to others, who had no such opportunity. A portion of the true sciences is better than a mass of undigested and

misunderstood learning. An ounce of gold is worth a ton of dust.

Enq.—*But how is one to know whether the ounce is real gold or only a counterfeit?*

Theo.—A tree is known by its fruit, a system by its results. When our opponents are able to prove to us that any solitary student of Occultism throughout the ages has become a saintly Adept like Ammonius Saccas, or even a Plotinus, or a Theurgist like Iamblichus, or achieved feats such as are claimed to have been done by St. Germain, without any master to guide him, and all this without being a medium, a self-deluded psychic, or a charlatan—then shall we confess ourselves mistaken. But till then Theosophists prefer to follow the proven natural law of the tradition of the Sacred Science. There are mystics who have made great discoveries in chemistry and physical sciences, almost bordering on Alchemy and Occultism; others who, by the sole aid of their genius, have re-discovered portions, if not the whole, of the lost alphabets of the “mystery language,” and are, therefore, able to read correctly Hebrew scrolls; others still, who, being seers, have caught wonderful glimpses of the hidden secrets of Nature. But all these are *specialists*. One is a theoretical inventor, another is Hebrew, *i. e.*, a

sectarian Kabbalist, a third a Swedenborg of modern times, denying all and everything outside of his own particular science or religion. Not one of them can boast of having produced a universal or even a national benefit thereby, or a benefit even to himself. With the exception of a few healers—of that class which the Royal College of Physicians or Surgeons would call quacks—none have helped with their science Humanity, or even a number of men of the same community. Where are the Chaldees of old, those who wrought marvellous cures, “not by charms but by simples”? Where is an Apollonius of Tyana, who healed the sick and raised the dead under any climate and circumstances? We know some specialists of the former class even in Europe, but of the latter, only in Asia, where the secret of the Yogi, “to live in death,” is still preserved.

Enq.—*Is the production of such healing adepts the aim of Theosophy?*

Theo.—Its aims are several; but the most important are those which are likely to lead to the relief of human suffering under any or every form, moral as well as physical. And we believe the former to be far more important than the latter. Theosophy has to inculcate ethics; it has to purify the soul, if it would relieve the physical body, whose

ailments, save cases of accidents, are all hereditary. It is not by studying Occultism for selfish ends, for the gratification of one's personal ambition, pride, or vanity that one can ever reach the true goal of helping suffering mankind. Nor is it by studying one single branch of the Esoteric Philosophy that a man becomes an Occultist, but by studying, if not mastering, them all.

Enq.—*Is help, then, to reach this most important aim, given only to those who study the Esoteric Sciences?*

Theo.—Not at all. Every member is entitled to general instruction if he only wants it; but few are willing to become what is called "working members," and most prefer to remain the "drones" of Theosophy. Let it be understood that private research is encouraged in the T. S., provided it does not infringe the limit which separates the exoteric from the esoteric, the *blind* from the *conscious* magic.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
THEOSOPHY AND OCCULTISM

Enq.—*You speak of Theosophy and Occultism; are they identical?*

Theo.—By no means. A man may be a very good Theosophist indeed, whether in or outside of the Society, without being in any way an Occultist. But no one can be a true Occultist without being a real Theosophist; otherwise he is simply a black magician, whether conscious or unconscious.

Enq.—*What do you mean?*

Theo.—I have said already that a true Theosophist must put in practice the loftiest moral ideal, must strive to realize his unity with the whole of humanity, and work ceaselessly for others. Now, if an Occultist does not do all this, he must act selfishly for his own personal benefit; and if he has acquired mere practical power than other ordinary men, he becomes forthwith a far more dangerous enemy to the world and those around him than the average mortal. This is clear.

Enq.—*Then is, an Occultist simply a man who possesses more power than other people?*

Theo.—Far more—if he is a practical and really learned Occultist, and not one only in name. Occult sciences are *not*, as described in Encyclopædia, “those *imaginary* sciences of the Middle Ages which related to the *supposed* action or influence of occult qualities or supernatural powers, as alchemy, magic, necromancy, and astrology,” for they are

real, actual, and very dangerous sciences. They teach the secret potency of things in Nature, developing and cultivating the hidden powers "latent in man," thus giving him tremendous advantages over more ignorant mortals. Hypnotism, now become so common and a subject of serious scientific enquiry, is a good instance in point. Hypnotic power has been discovered almost by accident; the way to it having been prepared by mesmerism. And now an able hypnotizer can do almost anything with it, from forcing a man, unconsciously to himself, to play the fool, to making him commit a crime—often by proxy for the hypnotizer, and for the latter's benefit. Is not this a terrible power if left in the hands of unscrupulous persons? And please to remember that this is only one of the minor branches of Occultism.

Enq.—*But are not all these occult sciences, magic, and sorcery, considered by the most cultured and learned people as relics of ancient ignorance and superstition?*

Theo.—Let me remind you that this remark of yours cuts both ways. The "most cultured and learned" among you regard also Christianity and every other religion as a relic of ignorance and superstition. People begin to believe now, at any rate, in hypnotism, and some—even of the most

cultured—in Theosophy and phenomena. But who among them, except preachers and blind fanatics, will confess to a belief in biblical miracles? And this is where the point of difference comes in. There are very good and pure Theosophists who may believe in the supernatural, divine “miracles” included, but no Occultist will do so. For an Occultist practises *scientific* Theosophy, based on accurate knowledge of Nature’s secret workings; but a Theosophist, practising the powers called abnormal, *minus* the light of Occultism, will simply tend toward a dangerous form of mediumship, because, although holding to Theosophy and its highest conceivable code of ethics, he practises it in the dark, on sincere but blind faith. Anyone, Theosophist, or spiritualist, who attempts to cultivate one of the branches of occult science—*e.g.*, hypnotism, mesmerism, or even the secrets of producing physical phenomena—without the knowledge of the philosophic *rationale* of those powers, is like a rudderless boat launched on a stormy ocean.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
THEOSOPHY AND SPIRITUALISM

Enq.—*But do you not believe in Spiritualism?*

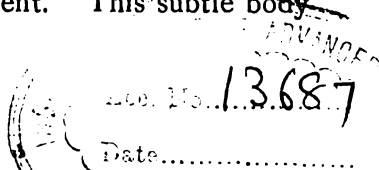
Theo.—If by “Spiritualism” you mean the explanation which Spiritualists give of some abnormal phenomena, then decidedly we do not. They maintain that these manifestations are all produced by the “spirits” of departed mortals, generally their relatives, who return to earth, they say, to communicate with those they have loved or to whom they are attached. We deny this. We assert that the spirits of the dead cannot return to earth—save in rare and exceptional cases, of which I may speak later; nor do they communicate with men except by entirely *subjective* means. That which appears *objectively*, is only the phantom of the ex-physical man. But in psychic, and so to say, *spiritual* Spiritualism, we do believe, most decidedly.

Enq.—*Do you reject the phenomena also?*

Theo.—Assuredly not—save cases of conscious fraud.

Enq.—*How do you account for them, then?*

Theo.—In many ways. The causes of such manifestations are by no means so simple as the Spiritualists would like to believe. Foremost of all, *deus ex machina* of the so-called “materializations” is usually the psychic body or “double” of the medium or of some one present. This subtle body



is also the producer or operating force in the manifestations of slate-writing, and so on.

Enq.—*You say “ usually ” ; then what is it that produces the rest ?*

Theo.—That depends on the nature of the manifestations. Sometimes the psychic remains of the vanished *personalities* that were ; at other times, elementals. “ Spirit ” is a word of manifold and wide significance. I really do not know what Spiritualists mean by the term ; but what we understand them to claim is that the physical phenomena are produced by the reincarnating Ego, the spiritual and immortal *individuality*. And this hypothesis we entirely reject. The conscious *individuality* of the disembodied *cannot materialize*, nor can it return from its own mental devachanic (heavenly) sphere to the plane of terrestrial objectivity.

Enq.—*But many of the communications received from the “ spirits ” show not only intelligence, but a knowledge of facts not known to the medium, and sometimes even not consciously present to the mind of the investigator or any of those who compose the audience.*

Theo.—This does not necessarily prove that the intelligence and knowledge you speak of belong to spirits, or emanate from *disembodied* souls.

Somnambulists have been known to compose music and poetry and to solve mathematical problems while in their trance state, without having ever learned music or mathematics. Others answered intelligently questions put to them, and even, in several cases, spoke languages, such as Hebrew and Latin, of which they were entirely ignorant when awake—all this in a state of profound sleep. Will you, then, maintain that this was caused by “spirits”?

Enq.—*But how would you explain it?*

Theo.—We assert that the divine spark in man being one and identical in its essence with the Universal Spirit, our “Spiritual Self” is practically omniscient, but that it cannot manifest its knowledge owing to the impediments of matter. Now the more these impediments are removed, in other words, the more the physical body is paralyzed, as to its own independent activity and consciousness, as in deep sleep or deep trance, or, again, in illness, the more fully can the *inner* Self manifest on this plane. This is our explanation of those truly wonderful phenomena of a higher order, in which undeniable intelligence and knowledge are exhibited. As to the lower order of manifestations, such as physical phenomena and the platitudes and common talk of the general “spirit,” to explain even the

most important of the teachings we hold upon the subject would take up more space and time than can be allotted to it at present. We have no desire to interfere with the belief of the Spiritualists any more than with any other belief. And at the present moment, while still convinced that the higher kind of manifestations occur through disembodied souls, the leaders of the Spiritualists and the most learned and intelligent among them are the first to confess that not *all* the phenomena are produced by spirits. Gradually they will come to recognize the whole truth; but meanwhile we have no right nor desire to proselytize them to our views. The less so, as in the cases of purely *psychic and spiritual manifestations* we believe in the inter-communication of the spirit of the living man with that of disembodied personalities.

We say that in such cases it is not the spirits of the dead who *descend* on earth, but the spirits of the living that *ascend* to the pure Spiritual Souls. In truth there is neither *ascending* nor *descending*, but a change of *state* or *condition* for the medium. The body of the latter becoming paralyzed, or entranced, the spiritual Ego is free from its trammels, and finds itself on the same plane of consciousness as the disembodied spirits. Hence, if there is

any spiritual attraction between the two *they can communicate*, as often occurs in dreams. The difference between a mediumistic and a non-sensitive nature is this: the liberated spirit of a medium has the opportunity and facility of influencing the passive organs of its entranced physical body, and making them act, speak, and write at its will. The Ego can make it repeat, echo-like, and in human language, the thoughts and ideas of the disembodied entity, as well as its own. But the non-receptive or non-sensitive organism of one who is very positive cannot be so influenced. Hence, although there is hardly a human being whose Ego does not hold free intercourse, during the sleep of its body, with those whom it loved and lost, yet, on account of the positiveness and non-receptivity of its physical envelope and brain, no recollection, or a very dim, dream-like remembrance, lingers in the memory of the person when once awake.

Enq.—*This means that you reject the philosophy of Spiritualism in toto?*

Theo.—If by “philosophy” you mean its crude theories, we do. But it has no philosophy, in truth. The best, the most intellectual and earnest defenders of Spiritualism say so. Their fundamental and only unimpeachable truth, namely, that phenomena occur

through mediums controlled by invisible forces and intelligences—no one, except a blind materialist of the Huxley “big toe” school, will or *can* deny.¹

Enq.—*I was told that the Theosophical Society was originally founded to crush Spiritualism and belief in the survival of the individuality in man.*

Theo.—You are misinformed. Our beliefs are all founded on that immortal Individuality. But then, like so many others, you confuse *personality* with *individuality*. Your Western psychologists do not seem to have established any clear distinction between the two. Yet it is precisely that difference which gives the key-note to the understanding of Eastern philosophy, and which lies at the root of the divergence between the Theosophical and Spiritualistic teachings. And though it may draw upon us still more the hostility of some Spiritualists, yet I must state here that it is Theosophy which is the true and unalloyed spiritualism, while the modern scheme of that name is, as now practised by the masses, simply transcendental materialism.

Enq.—*Please explain your idea more clearly.*

Theo.—What I mean is that though our teachings insist upon the identity of spirit and matter, and though we say that spirit is potential matter, and

¹ This is hardly true now.—C.M.C.

matter simply crystallized spirit, just as ice is solidified steam, yet since the original and eternal condition of the ALL is not spirit but "super-spirit," so to speak—visible and solid matter being simply its periodical manifestation—we maintain that the term spirit can only be applied to the *true Individuality*.

Enq.—*But what is the distinction between this "true Individuality" and the "I" or "Ego" of which we are all conscious?*

Theo.—Before I can answer you, we must argue upon what you mean by "I" or "Ego". We distinguish between the simple fact of self-consciousness, the simple feeling that "I am I," and the complex thought that "I am Mr. Smith or Mrs. Brown." Believing as we do in a series of births for the same Ego, or reincarnation, this distinction is the fundamental pivot of the whole idea. You see "Mr. Smith" really means a long series of daily experiences strung together by the thread of memory, and forming what "Mr. Smith" calls "himself". But none of these "experiences" are really the "I" or the Ego, nor do they give "Mr. Smith" the feeling that he is himself, for he forgets the greater part of his daily experiences, and they produce the feeling of *egoity* in him only while they last. We, Theosophists, therefore, distinguish

between this bundle of "experiences," which we call the *false* (because so finite and evanescent) *personality*, and that element in man to which the feeling of "I am I" is due. It is this "I am I" which we call the *true Individuality*; and we say that this Ego or Individuality, like an actor, plays many parts on the stage of life. Let us call every new life on earth of the same Ego a night on the stage of a theatre. One night the actor, or Ego, appears as Macbeth, the next as Shylock, the third as Romeo, the fourth as Hamlet or King Lear, and so on, until he has run through the whole cycle of incarnations. The Ego begins his life-pilgrimage as a sprite, an Ariel, or a Puck; he plays the part of a "super," is a soldier, a servant, one of the chorus; rises then to "speaking parts," playing leading *roles*, interspersed with insignificant parts, till he finally retires from the stage as Prospero, the *magician*.

Enq.—*I understand. You say, then, that this true Ego cannot return to earth after death. But surely the actor is at liberty, if he has preserved the sense of his individuality, to return if he likes to the scene of his former actions?*

Theo.—We say not; simply because such a return to earth would be incompatible with any state of

unalloyed bliss after death, as I am prepared to prove. We say that man suffers so much unmerited misery during his life, through the fault of others with whom he is associated, or because of his environment, that he is surely entitled to perfect rest and quiet, if not bliss, before taking up again the burden of life. However, we can discuss this later in detail.

WHY IS THEOSOPHY ACCEPTED ?

Enq.—*I understand to a certain extent ; but I see that your teachings are far more complicated and metaphysical than either Spiritualism or current religious thought. Can you tell me, then, what has caused this system of Theosophy which you support to arouse so much interest and so much animosity at the same time ?*

Theo.—There are several reasons for it, I believe ; among other causes that may be mentioned are :
 (1) The great reaction from the crassly materialistic theories now prevalent among scientific teachers.
 (2) General dissatisfaction with the artificial theology of the various Christian Churches, and the number of daily increasing and conflicting sects.
 (3) An ever-growing perception of the fact that the creeds which are so obviously self- and mutually

contradictory *cannot* be true, and that claims which are unverified cannot be real. This natural distrust of conventional religions is only strengthened by their complete failure to preserve morals and to purify society and the masses. (4) A conviction on the part of many, and *knowledge* by a few, that there must be somewhere a philosophical and religious system which shall be scientific and not merely speculative. (5) Finally, perhaps, a belief that such a system must be sought for in teachings far antedating any modern faith.

Enq.—*But how did this system come to be put forward just now?*

Theo.—Just because the time was found to be ripe—a fact shown by the determined effort of so many earnest students to reach the truth, at whatever cost and wherever it may be concealed. Seeing this, its custodians permitted that some portions at least of that truth should be proclaimed. Had the formation of the Theosophical Society been postponed a few years longer, one half of the civilized nations would have become by this time rank materialists, and the other half anthropomorphists and phenomenalists.

Enq.—*Are we to regard Theosophy in any way as a revelation?*

Theo.—In no way whatever—nor even in the sense of a new and direct disclosure from some higher, supernatural, or, at least, *superhuman* beings; but only in the sense of an “unveiling” of old, very old, truths to minds hitherto ignorant of them, ignorant even of the existence and preservation of any such archaic knowledge.

It has become fashionable, especially of late, to deride the notion that there ever was, in the Mysteries of great and civilized peoples, such as the Egyptians, Greeks or Romans, anything but priestly imposture. Even the Rosicrucians were no better than half lunatics, half knaves. Numerous books have been written on them; and tyros, who had hardly heard the name a few years before, sallied out as profound critics and gnostics on the subject of alchemy, the fire-philosophers, and mysticism in general. Yet a long series of hierophants of Egypt, India, Chaldea, and Arabia, together with the greatest philosophers and sages of Greece and the West are known to have included under the designation of Wisdom and Divine Science all knowledge, for they considered the base and origin of every art and science as *essentially* divine. Plato regarded the Mysteries as most sacred, and Clemens Alexandrinus, who had been himself

initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries, has declared "that the doctrines taught therein contained in them the end of all human knowledge." Were Plato and Clemens two knaves or two fools, we wonder, or—both?

Enq.—*You spoke of "animosity". If truth is as represented by Theosophy, why has it met with such opposition, and with no general acceptance?*

Theo.—For many and various reasons again, one of which is the hatred felt by men for "innovations," as they call them. Selfishness is essentially conservative and hates being disturbed. It prefers an easy-going, unexacting lie to the greatest truth, if the latter requires the sacrifice of one's smallest comfort. The power of mental inertia is great in anything that does not promise immediate benefit and reward. Our age is pre-eminently unspiritual and matter of fact. Moreover, there is the unfamiliar character of Theosophic teachings; the highly abstruse nature of the doctrines, some of which contradict flatly many of the human vagaries cherished by sectarians, which have eaten into the very core of popular beliefs. If we add to this the personal efforts and great purity of life exacted of those who would become the disciples of the inner circle, and the very limited class to which an entirely

unselfish code appeals, it will be easy to perceive the reason why Theosophy is doomed to such slow, up-hill work. It is essentially the philosophy of those who suffer, and have lost all hope of being helped out of the mire of life by any other means. Moreover, the history of any system of belief or morals, newly introduced into a foreign soil, shows that its beginnings were impeded by every obstacle that obscurantism and selfishness could suggest. "The crown of the innovator is a crown of thorns" indeed! No pulling down of old, worm-eaten buildings can be accomplished without some danger.

Enq.—*All this refers rather to the ethics and philosophy of Theosophy. Can you give me a general idea of the Theosophical Society, its objects and statutes?*

Theo.—This has never been made secret. Ask, and you shall receive accurate answers.

THE WORKING SYSTEM OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THE OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

ENQUIRER—*What are the objects of the Theosophical Society?*

THEOSOPHIST—They are three, and have been so from the beginning: (1) To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, colour, sex, caste, or creed. (2) To promote the study of Aryan and other Scriptures, of the world's religions and sciences, and to vindicate the importance of old Asiatic literature, such as that of the Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian philosophies. (3) To investigate the hidden mysteries of Nature under every aspect possible, and the psychic and spiritual powers latent in man especially. These are, broadly stated, the three chief objects of the Theosophical Society.

Enq.—*Can you give me some more detailed information upon these?*

Theo.—We may divide each of the three objects into as many explanatory clauses as may be found necessary.

Enq.—*Then let us begin with the first. What means would you resort to, in order to promote such a feeling of brotherhood among races that are known to be of the most diversified religions, customs, beliefs, and modes of thought?*

Theo.—Allow me to add that which you seem unwilling to express. Of course we know that with the exception of two remnants of races—the Parsis and the Jews—every nation is divided, not merely against all other nations, but even against itself. This is found most prominently among the so-called civilized Christian nations. Hence your wonder, and the reason why our first object appears to you a Utopia. Is it not so?

Enq.—*Well, yes; but what have you to say against it?*

Theo.—Nothing against the fact; but much about the necessity of removing the causes which make Universal Brotherhood a Utopia at present.

Enq.—*What are, in your view, these causes?*

Theo.—First and foremost, the natural selfishness of human nature. This selfishness, instead of being eradicated, is daily strengthened and stimulated into a ferocious and irresistible feeling by the present religious education, which tends not only to encourage, but positively to justify it. People's ideas about right and wrong have been entirely perverted by the literal acceptance of the Jewish Bible. All the unselfishness of the altruistic teachings of Jesus has become merely a theoretical subject for pulpit oratory; while the precepts of practical selfishness taught in the Mosaic Bible, against which Christ so vainly preached, have become ingrained into the innermost life of the Western nations. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" has come to be the first maxim of your law. Now, I state openly and fearlessly that the perversity of this doctrine and of so many others Theosophy *alone* can eradicate.

THE COMMON ORIGIN OF MAN

Enq.—*How?*

Theo.—Simply by demonstrating on logical, philosophical, metaphysical, and even scientific grounds that: (a) All men have spiritually and physically the same origin, which is the fundamental teaching

of Theosophy. (b) As mankind is essentially of one and the same essence, and that essence is one—infinite, uncreate, and eternal, whether we call it God or Nature—nothing, therefore, can affect one nation or one man without effecting all other nations and all other men. This is as certain and as obvious as that a stone thrown into a pond will, sooner or later, set in motion every single drop of water therein.

Enq.—*But this is not the teaching of Christ, but rather a pantheistic notion.*

Theo.—That is where your mistake lies. It is purely Christian, although *not* Judaic, and therefore, perhaps, your biblical nations prefer to ignore it.

Enq.—*This is a wholesale and unjust accusation. Where are your proofs for such a statement?*

Theo.—They are ready at hand. Christ is alleged to have said: “Love one another,” and “love your enemies”; for “if ye love them (only) which love you, what reward (or merit) have ye? Do not even the publicans¹ the same?”

¹ Publicans—regarded as so many thieves and pickpockets in those days. Among the Jews the name and profession of a publican was the most odious thing in the world. They were not allowed to enter the temple, and Matthew (xviii. 17) speaks of a heathen and a publican as identical. Yet they were only Roman tax-gatherers occupying the same position as the British officials in India and other conquered countries.

And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even publicans so?" These are Christ's words. But *Genesis* (ix. 25) says: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." And, therefore, not Christians but biblical people prefer the law of Moses to Christ's law of love. It is upon the *Old Testament*, which panders to all their passions, that they base their laws of conquest, annexation, and tyranny over races which they call "inferior". What crimes have been committed on the strength of this—if taken in its dead-letter sense—infernal passage in *Genesis*, history alone gives us an idea, however inadequate.¹

¹ "At the close of the Middle Ages, slavery, under the power of moral forces, had mainly disappeared from Europe; but two momentous events occurred which overbore the moral power working in European society and let loose a swarm of curses upon the earth such as mankind had scarcely ever known. One of these events was the first voyaging to a populated and barbarous coast where human beings were a familiar article of traffic; and the other the discovery of a new world, where mines of glittering wealth were open, provided labour could be imported to work them. For four hundred years men and women and children were torn from all whom they knew and loved, and were sold on the coast of Africa to foreign traders; they were chained below decks—the dead often with the living—during the horrible 'middle passage,' and, according to Bancroft, an impartial historian, two hundred and fifty thousand out of three and a quarter millions were thrown into the sea on that fatal passage, while the remainder were consigned to nameless misery in the mines, or under the lash in the cane and rice fields. The guilt of this great crime rests on the Christian Church. 'In the name of the most Holy Trinity' the Spanish Government concluded more than ten treaties authorizing the sale of five hundred thousand human beings; in 1562: Sir John Hawkins sailed on his diabolical errand of buying slaves in Africa and selling them in the West Indies in a ship which bore the sacred name of Jesus; while Elizabeth, the Protestant Queen, rewarded him for his success.

Enq.—*I have heard you say that the identity of our physical origin is proved by Science, that of our spiritual origin by the Wisdom-Religion. Yet we do not find Darwinists exhibiting great fraternal affection.*

Theo.—Just so. This is what shows the deficiency of the materialistic systems, and proves that we Theosophists are in the right. The identity of our physical origin makes no appeal to our higher and deeper feelings. Matter, deprived of its soul and spirit, or its divine essence, cannot speak to the human heart. But the identity of the soul and spirit, of real, immortal man, as Theosophy teaches us, once proven and become deep-rooted in our hearts, would lead us far on the road of real charity and brotherly goodwill.

Enq.—*But how does Theosophy explain the common origin of man?*

Theo.—By teaching that the root of all nature, objective and subjective, and everything else in the universe, visible and invisible, is, was, and ever will be one absolute essence, from which all starts, and into which everything returns. With this object in

in this first adventure of Englishmen in that inhuman traffic by allowing him to wear as his crest 'a demi-Moor in his proper colour, bound with a cord,' or, in other words, a manacled negro slave.—*Conquests of the Cross*, quoted from the *Agnostic Journal*.

view, it is the duty of all Theosophists to promote in every practical way, and in all countries, the spread of non-sectarian education.

Enq.—*What else is to be done besides this ? On the physical plane, I mean.*

Theo.—The organization of society, depicted by Edward Bellamy, in his magnificent work *Looking Backward*, admirably represents the Theosophical idea of what should be the first great step towards the full realization of universal brotherhood. The state of things he depicts falls short of perfection, because selfishness still exists and operates in the hearts of men. But in the main, selfishness and individualism have been overcome by the feeling of solidarity and mutual brotherhood ; and the scheme of life there described reduces the causes tending to create and foster selfishness to a minimum.

Enq.—*Then as a Theosophist you will take part in an effort to realize such an ideal ?*

Theo.—Certainly. What is also needed is to impress men with the idea that, if the root of mankind is one, then there must also be one truth which finds expression in all the various religions.

Enq.—*This refers to the common origin of religions, and you may be right there. But how*

does it apply to practical brotherhood on the physical plane?

Theo.—First, because that which is true on the metaphysical plane must be also true on the physical. Secondly, because there is no more fertile source of hatred and strife than religious differences. When one party or another thinks itself the sole possessor of absolute truth, it becomes only natural that it should think its neighbour absolutely in the clutches of error or the “devil”. But once get a man to see that none of them has the *whole* truth, but that they are mutually complementary, that the complete truth can be found only in the combined views of all, after that which is false in each of them has been sifted out—then true brotherhood in religion will be established. The same applies in the physical world.

Enq.—*Please explain further.*

Theo.—Take an instance. A plant consists of a root, a stem, and many shoots and leaves. As humanity, as a whole, is the stem which grows from the spiritual root, so is the stem the unity of the plant. Injure the stem and it is obvious that every shoot and leaf will suffer. So it is with mankind.

Enq.—*Yes, but if you injure a leaf or a shoot, you do not injure the whole plant.*

Theo.—And therefore you think that by injuring *one* man you do not injure humanity? But how do you know? Are you aware that even materialistic science teaches that any injury to a plant, however slight, will affect the whole course of its future growth and development? Therefore, you are mistaken, and the analogy is perfect. If, however, you overlook the fact that a cut on the finger may often make the whole body suffer, and react on the whole nervous system, I would all the more remind you that there may well be other spiritual laws, operating on plants and animals as well as on mankind, although, as you do not recognize their action on plants and animals, you may deny their existence.

Enq.—*What laws do you mean?*

Theo.—We call them karmic laws; but you will not understand the full meaning of the term unless you study Occultism. However, my argument does not rest on the assumption of these laws, but really on the analogy of the plant. Expand the idea, carry it out to a universal application, and you will soon find that in true philosophy every physical action has its moral and everlasting effect. Injure a man by doing him bodily harm; you may think that his pain and suffering cannot spread by any means to his

neighbours, least of all to men of other nations. We affirm *that it will, in good time*. Therefore, we say, that unless every man is brought to understand, and accept *as an axiomatic truth*, that by wronging one man we wrong not only ourselves but the whole of humanity in the long run, no brotherly feelings such as preached by all the great reformers, pre-eminently by Buddha and Jesus, are possible on earth.

OUR OTHER OBJECTS

Enq.—*Will you now explain the methods by which you propose to carry out the second object?*

Theo.—To collect for the library of our Headquarters at Adyar, Madras, and by the members of the Lodges for their local libraries, all the good works upon the world's religions that we can. To put into written form correct information upon the various ancient philosophies, traditions, and legends, and disseminate the same in such practicable ways as the translation and publication of original works of value, and extracts from and commentaries upon the same, or the oral instructions of persons learned in their respective departments.

Enq.—*And what about the third object, to develop in man his latent spiritual or psychic powers?*

Theo.—This has to be achieved also by means of publications, in those places where no lectures and personal teachings are possible. Our duty is to keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions. To oppose and counteract—after due investigation and proof of its irrational nature—bigotry in every form, religious, scientific, or social. What we have to do is to seek to obtain knowledge of all the laws of Nature, and to diffuse it. To encourage the study of those laws least understood by modern people, the so-called Occult Sciences, based on the true knowledge of Nature, instead of, as at present, on superstitious beliefs based on blind faith and authority. Popular folk-lore and traditions, however fanciful at times, when sifted may lead to the discovery of long-lost, but important, secrets of Nature. The Society, therefore, aims at pursuing this line of enquiry, in the hope of widening the field of scientific and philosophical observation.

Enq.—*Have you any ethical system that you carry out in the Society?*

Theo.—The ethics are there, ready and clear enough for whomsoever would follow them. They are the essence and cream of the world's ethics, gathered from the teachings of all the world's great reformers. Therefore, you will find represented

therein Confucius and Zoroaster, Laotze and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the precepts of Gautama Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth, of Hillel and his school, as also of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and their schools.

Enq.—*Do the members of your Society carry out these precepts? I have heard of great dissensions and quarrels among them.*

Theo.—Very naturally, since although the reform, in its present shape, may be called new, the men and women to be reformed are the same human, sinning natures as of old. As already said, the earnest *working* members are few; but many are the sincere and well-disposed persons, who try their best to live up to the Society's and their own ideals. Our duty is to encourage and assist individual members in self-improvement, intellectual, moral, and spiritual; not to blame or condemn those who fail. Also, no member of the Society, whether exoteric or esoteric, has a right to force his personal opinions upon another member. This is one of the offences in the Society at large.

THE RELATIONS OF THE THEO- SOPHICAL SOCIETY TO THEOSOPHY

ON SELF-IMPROVEMENT

ENQUIRER—*Is moral elevation, then, the principal thing insisted upon in the Society?*

THEOSOPHIST—Undoubtedly! He who would be a true Theosophist must bring himself to live as one.

Enq.—*If so, then, as I remarked before, the behaviour of some members strangely belies this fundamental rule.*

Theo.—Indeed it does. But this cannot be helped among us, any more than amongst those who call themselves Christians and act like fiends. This is no fault of our statutes and rules, but that of human nature. The members have to bring their Divine Self to guide their every thought and action, every day and at every moment of their lives. A true Theosophist ought “to deal justly and walk humbly”.

Enq.—*What do you mean by this ?*

Theo.—Simply this: the one *Self* has to forget itself for the many *selves*. But how many do? All are willing to work for their own development and progress; very few for those of others. To quote a writer in *The Theosophist*:

“Men have been deceived and deluded long enough; they must break their idols, put away their shams, and go to work for themselves—nay, there is one little word too much or too many, for he who works for himself had better not work at all; rather let him work himself for others, for all. For every flower of love and charity he plants in his neighbour's garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from his own, and so this garden of the gods—Humanity—shall blossom as a rose. In all Bibles, all religions, this is plainly set forth—but designing men have at first misinterpreted and finally emasculated, materialized them. It does not require a new revelation. Let every man be a revelation unto himself. Let once man's immortal spirit take possession of the temple of his body, drive out the moneychangers and every unclean thing, and his own divine humanity will redeem him, for when he is thus at one with himself he will know the “builder of the Temple”.

Enq.—*This is pure altruism, I confess.*

Theo.—It is. And if only one member of the T. S. out of ten would practise it, ours would be a body of elect indeed. But there are those among

the outsiders who will always refuse to see the essential difference between Theosophy and the Theosophical Society, the idea and its imperfect embodiment. Such would visit every sin and shortcoming of the vehicle, the human body, on the pure spirit which sheds thereon its divine light. Is this just to either? They throw stones at an association that tries to work up to, and for the propagation of its ideal with most tremendous odds against it. Fairminded people, at any rate, ought to remember that the man who does all he can, does as much as he who has achieved the most, in this world of relative possibilities. This is a simple truism, an axiom supported for believers in the Gospels by the parable of talents, given by their Master: the servant who double his two talents was rewarded as much as the other fellow-servant who had received five. To every man it is given "according to his several ability".

Enq.—*Yet it is rather difficult to draw the line of demarcation between the abstract and the concrete in this case, as we have only the latter by which to form our judgment.*

Theo.—Then why make an exception for the T. S.? Justice, like charity, ought to begin at home. Will you revile and scoff at the Sermon on the

Mount because your social, political and even religious laws have, so far, not only failed to carry out its precepts in their spirit, but even in their dead letter? And why should you judge, if you would not be judged in your turn? Insist that between Theosophy and the Theosophical Society there is no difference, and forthwith you lay the system of Christianity and its very essence open to the same charges, only in a more serious form.

Enq.—*Why more serious?*

Theo.—Because, while the leaders of the Theosophical movement recognizing fully their shortcomings, try all they can to amend their ways and uproot the evil existing in the Society, and while their rules and bye-laws are framed in the spirit of Theosophy, the legislators and the churches of nations and countries which call themselves Christian do the reverse. Our members, even the worst among them, are no worse than the average Christian. Moreover, if the Western Theosophists experience so much difficulty in leading the true Theosophical life, it is because they are all the children of their generation. Every one of them was a Christian, bred and brought up in the sophistry of his Church, his social customs, and even his paradoxical laws. He was this before he became a Theosophist, or rather, a member of the

Theosophical Society, as it cannot be too often repeated that between the abstract ideal and its vehicle there is a most important difference.

THE ABSTRACT AND THE CONCRETE

Enq.—*Please elucidate this difference a little more.*

Theo.—The Society is a great body of men and women, composed of the most heterogeneous elements. Theosophy, in its abstract meaning, is Divine Wisdom, or the aggregate of the knowledge and wisdom that underlie the Universe—the homogeneity of eternal Good, and in its concrete sense it is the sum total of the same as allotted to man by Nature, on this earth, and no more. Some members earnestly endeavour to realize and, so to speak, to objectivize Theosophy in their lives; while others desire only to know of, not to practise it; and others still may have joined the Society merely out of curiosity, or a passing interest, or perhaps, again, because some of their friends belong to it. How, then, can the system be judged by the standard of those who would assume the name without any right to it? Is poetry or its muse to be measured only by those would-be poets who afflict

our ears? The Society can be regarded as the embodiment of Theosophy only in its abstract motives; it can never presume to call itself its concrete vehicle so long as human imperfections and weaknesses are all represented in its body. Theosophy is the shoreless ocean of universal truth, love, and wisdom, reflecting its radiance on the earth, while the Theosophical Society is only a visible bubble on that reflection. Theosophy is divine nature, visible and invisible, and its Society human nature trying to ascend to its divine parent. Theosophy, finally, is the fixed eternal sun, and its Society the evanescent comet trying to settle in an orbit to become a planet, ever revolving within the attraction of the sun of truth. It was formed to assist in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy exists, and to help them to ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities.

Enq.—*I thought you said you had no tenets or doctrines of your own?*

Theo.—Nor have we. The Society has no wisdom of its own to support or teach. It is simply the storehouse of all the truths uttered by the great seers, initiates, and prophets of historic and even prehistoric ages; at least, as many as it can get.

Therefore, it is merely the channel through which more or less of truth, found in the accumulated utterances of humanity's great teachers, is poured out into the world.

Enq.—*But is such truth unreachable outside of the Society? Does not every Church claim the same?*

Theo.—Not at all. The undeniable existence of great initiates — true “Sons of God”—shows that such wisdom was often reached by isolated individuals, never, however, without the guidance of a master at first. But most of the followers of such, when they became masters in their turn, have dwarfed the catholicism of these teachings into the narrow groove of their own sectarian dogmas. The commandments of a chosen master alone were then adopted and followed, to the exclusion of all others.—if followed at all, note well, as in the case of the Sermon on the Mount. Each religion is thus a bit of the divine truth, made to focus a vast panorama of human fancy which claims to represent and replace that truth.

Enq.—*But Theosophy, you say, is not a religion?*

Theo.—Most assuredly it is not, since it is the essence of all religion and of absolute truth, a drop

of which only underlies every creed. To resort once more to metaphor. Theosophy, on earth, is like the white ray of the spectrum, and every religion only one of the seven prismatic colours. Ignoring all the others, and cursing them as false, every special coloured ray claims not only priority, but to be that white ray itself, and anathematizes even its own tints from light to dark, as heresies. Yet, as the sun of truth rises higher and higher on the horizon of man's perception, and each coloured ray gradually fades out until it is finally reabsorbed in its turn, humanity will at last be cursed no longer with artificial polarizations, but will find itself bathing in the pure colourless sunlight of eternal truth. And this will be Theosophia.

Enq.—*Your claim is, then, that all the great religions are derived from Theosophy, and that it is by assimilating it that the world will be finally saved from the curse of its great illusions and errors?*

Theo.—Precisely so. And we add that our Theosophical Society is the humble seed which, if watered and let live, will finally produce the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil which is grafted on the Tree of Life Eternal. For it is only by studying the various great religions and philosophies of

humanity, by comparing them dispassionately and with an unbiassed mind, that men can hope to arrive at the truth. It is especially by finding out and noting their various points of agreement that we may achieve this result. For no sooner do we arrive—either by study, or by being taught by someone who knows—at their inner meaning, than we find, almost in every case, that it expresses some great truth in Nature.

Enq.—*We have heard of a Golden Age that was, and what you describe would be a Golden Age to be realized at some future day. When shall it be?*

Theo.—Not before humanity, as a whole, feels the need of it.

Enq.—*But surely those few who have felt the need of such truths must have made up their minds to believe in something definite? You tell me that, the Society having no doctrines of its own, every member may believe as he chooses and accept what he pleases. This looks as if the Theosophical Society were bent upon reviving the confusion of languages and beliefs of the Tower of Babel of old. Have you no beliefs in common?*

Theo.—What is meant by the Society having no tenets or doctrines of its own is that no special

doctrines or beliefs are *obligatory* on its members ; but, of course, this applies only to the body as a whole. The Society, as you were told, is divided into an outer and an inner body. Those who belong to the latter have, of course, a philosophy, or—if you so prefer it—a religious system of their own.

Enq.—*May we be told what it is ?*

Theo.—We make no secret of it. It was outlined a few years ago in *The Theosophist* and *Esoteric Buddhism*, and may be found still more elaborated in *The Secret Doctrine*. It is based on the oldest philosophy of the world, called the Wisdom-Religion or the Archaic Doctrine. If you like, you may ask questions and have them explained.

THE FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF THEOSOPHY

ON GOD AND PRAYER

ENQUIRER—*Do you believe in God ?*

THEOSOPHIST—That depends upon what you mean by the term.

Enq.—*I mean the God of the Christians, the Father of Jesus, and the Creator ; the Biblical God of Moses, in short.*

Theo.—In such a God we do not believe. We reject the idea of a personal, or an extra-cosmic and anthropomorphic God, who is but the gigantic shadow of man, and not even of man at his best. The God of theology, we say—and prove it—is a bundle of contradictions and a logical impossibility.

Enq.—*State your reasons, if you please.*

Theo.—They are many, and cannot all receive attention. But here are a few. This God is called by his devotees infinite and absolute, is he not ?

Enq.—*I believe he is.*

Theo.—Then, if infinite—*i.e.*, limitless—and especially if absolute, how can he have a form, and be a creator of anything? Form implies limitation, and a beginning as well as an end; and, in order to create, a Being must think and plan. How can the Absolute be supposed to think—*i.e.*, have any relation whatever to that which is limited, finite and conditioned? This is a philosophical, and a logical absurdity.

Enq.—*Then you are atheists?*

Theo.—Not that we know of, and not unless the epithet of “atheist” is to be applied to all those who disbelieve in an anthropomorphic God. We believe in a Universal Divine Principle, the root of All, from which all proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of Being.

Enq.—*This is the old, old claim of pantheism. If you are pantheists, you cannot be deists; and if you are not deists, then you have to answer to the name of atheists.*

Theo.—Not necessarily so. The term “pantheism” is again one of the many abused terms, whose real and primitive meaning has been distorted by blind prejudice and a one-sidedness of view. If

you accept the Christian etymology of this compound word, and form it of *pan*, "all," and *theos*, "god," and then imagine and teach that this means that every stone and every tree in Nature is a God or the One God, then, of course, you will be right, and make of pantheists fetich-worshippers, in addition to their legitimate name. But you will hardly be as successful if you etymologize the word pantheism esoterically, and as we do. When we speak of the Deity and make it identical, hence coeval, with Nature, the eternal and uncreate Nature is meant, and not your aggregate of flitting shadows and finite unrealities.

In short, our Deity is the eternal, incessantly evolving, not creating, builder of the universe; that universe itself unfolding out of its own essence, not being made. It is a sphere, without circumference, in its symbolism, which has but one ever-acting attribute embracing all other existing or thinkable attributes—Itself. It is the one law, giving the impulse to manifested, eternal, and immutable laws, within that never-manifesting, because absolute, Law, which in its manifesting periods is The Ever-Becoming.

Enq.—*Do you believe in prayer, and do you ever pray?*

Theo.—Not in prayer taught in so many words and repeated externally, if by prayer you mean the outward petition to an unknown God as the addressee, which was inaugurated by the Jews and popularized by the Pharisees. We act instead of talk.

Enq.—*Is there any other kind of prayer ?*

Theo.—Most decidedly ; we call it *will-prayer*, and it is rather an internal command than a petition. An Occultist or a Theosophist addresses his prayer to his “ Father ” *which is in secret* (read, and try to understand, *Matthew*, vi. 6), not to an extra-cosmic and therefore finite God ; and that “ Father ” is in man himself.

Enq.—*Then you make of man a God ?*

Theo.—Please say “ God ” and not “ a God.” In our sense, the inner man is the only God of whom we can have cognizance. And how can this be otherwise ? Grant us our postulate that God is a universally diffused, infinite principle, and how can man alone escape from being soaked through by, and in, the Deity ? We call our “ Father in heaven ” that deific essence of which we are cognizant within us, in our heart and spiritual consciousness, and which has nothing to do with the anthropomorphic conception we may form of it in our physical brain.

or its fancy: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of [the absolute] God dwelleth in you?" Yet, let no man anthropomorphize that essence in us. Let no Theosophist, if he would hold to divine, not human truth, say that this "God in secret" listens to, or is distinct from, either finite man or the infinite essence—for all are one. Nor, as just remarked, that a prayer is a petition. It is a mystery rather; an occult process by which finite and conditioned thoughts and desires, unable to be assimilated by the absolute spirit which is unconditioned, are translated into spiritual wills and the will; such process being called "spiritual transmutation". The intensity of our ardent aspirations changes prayer into the "philosopher's stone," or that which transmutes lead into pure gold.

Enq.—*Do you mean to say that prayer is an occult process bringing about physical results?*

Theo.—I do. *Will-power* becomes a living power. But woe unto those Occultists and Theosophists, who, instead of crushing out the desires of the lower personal *ego* or physical man, and saying, addressing their Higher Spiritual Ego, "Thy will be done, not mine," send up waves of will-power for selfish or unholy purposes! For this is spiritual

sorcery. Unfortunately, all this is the favourite occupation of our Christian statesmen and generals, especially when the latter are sending two armies to murder each other. Both before action indulge in a bit of such sorcery, when severally offering prayers to the same God of Hosts, each entreating his help to cut his enemies' throats.

Enq.—*David prayed to the Lord of Hosts to help him smite the Philistines and slay the Syrians and the Moabites, and "the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went."* In that we only follow what we find in the Bible.

Theo.—Of course you do. But since you delight in calling yourselves Christians, not Israelites or Jews, as far as we know, why do you not rather follow that which Christ says? And he distinctly commands you not to follow "them of old times," or the Mosaic law, but bids you do as he tells you, and warns those would take the sword, that they, too, will perish by the sword. Christ has given you one prayer of which you have made a lip-prayer and a boast, and which none but the *true* Occultist understands. In it you say, in your dead-sense meaning: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"—which you never do. Again, he told you to love your enemies and do good to them that

hate you. It is surely not the "meek prophet of Nazareth" who taught you to pray to your "Father" to slay, and give you victory over your enemies!

Enq.—*But how do you explain the universal fact that all nations and peoples have prayed to and worshipped a God or Gods?*

Theo.—It is explained by the fact that prayer has several other meanings besides that given to it by the Christians. It means not only a pleading or petition, but, in days of old, meant far more an invocation and incantation. The *mantra*, or the rhythmically chanted prayer of the Hindus, has precisely such a meaning, for the Brahmans hold themselves higher than the common Devas or "Gods". A prayer may be an appeal, or an incantation for malediction and a curse—as in the case of two armies praying simultaneously for mutual destruction—as much as for blessing. I repeat that we believe in "communion" and simultaneous action in unison with our "Father in secret"; and, in our moments of ecstatic bliss, in the mingling of our higher soul with the universal essence, attracted as it is towards its origin and centre; a state, called during life Samadhi, and, after death, Nirvana.

Enq.—*Christians would call this pride and blasphemy. Are they wrong?*

Theo.—Entirely so. Jesus recommends: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name (that of Christos) that will I do.” Of course, this quotation, if taken in its literal sense, goes against our argument. But if we accept it esoterically, with the full knowledge of the meaning of the term Christos, which to us represents the Higher Self, it comes to this: the only God we must recognize and pray to, or rather act in unison with, is that Spirit of God of which our body is the temple, and in which it dwelleth.

Enq.—*But did not Christ himself pray and recommend prayer?*

Theo.—It is so recorded, but those prayers are precisely of that kind of communion just mentioned with one’s “Father in secret”.

Enq.—*Where does a Theosophist look for power to subdue his passions and selfishness?*

Theo.—To his Higher Self, the divine spirit, or the God in him, and to his Karma.

Enq.—*How, then, do you account for man being endowed with a spirit and soul? Whence these?*

Theo.—From the Universal Soul. Certainly not bestowed by a Personal God.

Enq.—*We are distinctly told that most of the Buddhists do not believe in the soul's immortality?*

Theo.—Nor do we, if you mean by soul the *personal Ego*, or life-soul. But every learned Buddhist believes in the individual or divine Ego. Those who do not, err in their judgment. They are as mistaken on this point as those Christians who mistake the theological interpolations of the later editors of the Gospels about damnation and hell-fire for *verbatim* utterances of Jesus. Neither Buddha nor Christ ever wrote anything themselves, but both spoke in allegories and used "dark sayings," as all true Initiates did, and will do for a long time yet to come. Both scriptures treat of all such metaphysical questions very cautiously, and both Buddhist and Christian records sin by that excess of exotericism; the dead-letter meaning far overshooting the mark in both cases.

Enq.—*Do you mean to suggest that neither the teachings of Buddha nor those of Christ have been heretofore rightly understood?*

Theo.—What I mean is just as you say. Both Gospels, the Buddhist and the Christian, were preached with the same object in view. Both reformers were ardent philanthropists and practical altruists—preaching most unmistakably socialism of the noblest and highest type, self-sacrifice to the

bitter end. "Let the sins of the whole world fall upon me that I may relieve man's misery and suffering!" cries Buddha; "I would not let one cry whom I could save!" exclaims the prince-beggar, clad in the refuse rags of the burial-grounds. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," is the appeal to the poor and the disinherited made by the "man of sorrows," who had not where to lay his head. The teachings of both are boundless love for humanity, charity, forgiveness of injury, forgetfulness of self, and pity for the deluded masses; both show the same contempt for riches, and make no difference between *meum* and *tuum*. Their desire was, without revealing to all the sacred mysteries of initiation, to give the ignorant and the misled, whose burden in life was too heavy for them, hope enough and an inkling into the truth sufficient to support them in their heaviest hours. But the object of both reformers was frustrated, owing to excess of zeal of their later followers. The words of the Masters having been misunderstood and misinterpreted, behold the consequences!

Enq.—*But surely Buddha must have repudiated the soul's immortality, if all the Orientalists and his own priests say so?*

Theo.—The Arhats began by following the policy of their Master, and the majority of the priests who followed them were not initiated, just as in Christianity; and so, little by little, the great esoteric truths became almost lost. A proof in point is, that, out of the two existing sects in Ceylon, the Siamese believes death to be the absolute annihilation of individuality and personality, and the other explains Nirvana, as we Theosophists do.

Enq.—*But why, in that case, do Buddhism and Christianity represent the two opposite poles of such belief?*

Theo.—Because the conditions under which they were preached were not the same. In India the Brahmans, jealous of their superior knowledge, and excluding from it every caste save their own, had driven millions of men into idolatry and almost fetichism. Buddha had to give the death-blow to an exuberance of unhealthy fancy and fanatical superstition resulting from ignorance, such as has rarely been known before or after. Better a philosophical atheism than such ignorant worship for those—

Who cry upon their gods and are not heard
Or are not heeded—

and who live and die in mental despair. He had to arrest first of all this muddy torrent of superstition, to uproot errors before he gave out the truth. And as he could not give out all, for the same good reason as Jesus, who reminds his disciples that the Mysteries of Heaven are not for the unintelligent masses, but for the elect alone, and therefore he spoke to the people in parables (*Matth.* xiii. 10, 11)—so his caution led Buddha to conceal too much.

Enq.—*This refers to Gautama, but in what way does it touch the Gospels?*

Theo.—Read history and think over it. At the time the events narrated in the Gospels are alleged to have happened, there was a similar intellectual fermentation taking place in the whole civilized world, only with opposite results in the East and the West. The old gods were dying out. While the civilized classes drifted, in the train of the unbelieving Sadducees, into materialistic negations and mere dead-letter Mosaic form in Palestine, and into moral dissolution in Rome, the lowest and poorest classes ran after sorcery and strange gods. Once more the time for a spiritual reform had arrived. The cruel, anthropomorphic and jealous god of the Jews, with his sanguinary laws of “an

eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," of the shedding of blood and animal sacrifice, had to be relegated to a secondary place and replaced by the merciful "Father in secret". The latter had to be shown, not as an extra-cosmic god, but as a divine Saviour of the man of flesh, enshrined in his own heart and soul, in the poor as in the rich.

THEOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS AS TO NATURE AND MAN

THE UNITY OF ALL IN ALL

ENQUIRER—*Having told me what God, the soul, and man are not, in your views, can you inform me what they are, according to your teachings?*

THEOSOPHIST—In their origin and in eternity the three, like the universe and all therein, are one with the absolute unity, the unknowable deific essence I spoke about some time back. We believe in no creation, but in the periodical and consecutive appearances of the universe from the subjective on to the objective plane of being, at regular intervals of time, covering periods of immense duration.

Enq.—*Can you elaborate the subject?*

Theo.—Take as a first comparison, and a help towards a more correct conception, the solar year, and as a second, the two halves of that year,

producing each a day and a night of six months' duration at the North Pole. Now imagine, if you can, instead of a solar year of 365 days, eternity. Let the sun represent the universe, and the polar days and nights of six months each—days and nights lasting each 182 trillions and quadrillions of years, instead of 182 days each. As the sun rises every morning on our objective horizon out of its (to us) subjective and antipodal space, so does the universe emerge periodically on the plane of objectivity, issuing from that of subjectivity—the antipodes of the former. This is the “Cycle of Life”. And as the sun disappears from our horizon, so does the universe disappear at regular periods, when the “Universal Night” sets in. The Hindus call such alternations the “Days and Nights of Brahma”. The Westerns may call them Universal Days and Nights if they prefer. During the latter (the Nights) All is in All; every atom is resolved into one homogeneity.

EVOLUTION AND ILLUSION

Enq.—*But who is it that each time creates the universe?*

Theo.—No one creates it. Science would call the process evolution; the pre-Christian philosophers

and the Orientalists called it emanation; we, Occultists and Theosophists, see in it the only universal and eternal Reality casting a periodical reflection of Itself on the infinite spatial depths. This reflection, which you regard as the objective material universe, we consider as a temporary "illusion" and nothing else. That alone which is eternal is real.

Enq.—*At that rate, you and I are also "illusion".*

Theo.—As flitting personalities, today one person, tomorrow another—we are. Would you call the sudden flashes of the *aurora borealis*, the northern lights, a "reality," though it is as real as can be while you look at it? Certainly not; it is the cause that produces it, if permanent and eternal, which is the only reality, while the effect is but a passing illusion.

Enq.—*All this does not explain to me how this "illusion" called the universe originate; how the conscious to be, proceeds to manifest itself from the unconscious that is.*

Theo.—It is "unconsciousness" only to our finite consciousness. Verily may we paraphrase St. John (i. 5), and say: "And [absolute] light [which is darkness to us] shineth in darkness [which is illusionary material light]; and the darkness

comprehendeth it not." This absolute light is also absolute and immutable law. Whether by radiation or emanation—we need not quarrel over terms—the universe passes out of its homogeneous subjectivity on to the first plane of manifestation, of which planes there are seven, we are taught. With each plane it becomes more dense and material until it reaches this, our plane, on which the only world approximately known and understood in its physical composition by science is the planetary or solar system—one *sui generis*, we are told.

Enq.—*What do you mean by sui generis?*

Theo.—I mean that, though the fundamental law and the universal working of laws of Nature are uniform, still our solar system—like every other such system in the millions of others in cosmos—and even our earth, has its own programme of manifestations differing from the respective programmes of all others. We speak of the inhabitants of other planets and imagine that if they are men, *i.e.*, thinking entities, they must be as we are. The fancy of poets and painters and sculptors never fails to represent even the angels as a beautiful copy of man—*plus wings*. We say that all this is an error and a delusion; because, if on this little earth alone one finds such a diversity in its flora, fauna and

mankind—from the sea-weed to the cedar of Lebanon, from the jelly-fish to the elephant, from the Bushman and Negro to the Apollo Belvedere—alter the conditions, cosmic and planetary, and there must be as a result quite a different flora, fauna and mankind. The same laws will fashion quite a different set of things and beings even on this our planet, including in it all our planets. How much more different then must be external Nature in other solar systems, and how foolish is it to judge of other stars and worlds and human beings by our own, as physical science does!

Enq.—*But what are your data for this assertion?*

Theo.—What science in general will never accept as proof—the cumulative testimony of an endless series of seers who have testified to this fact. Their spiritual visions, real explorations by, and through, psychic and spiritual senses untrammelled by blind flesh, have been systematically checked and compared one with the other and their nature sifted. All that was not corroborated by unanimous and collective experience was rejected, while that only was recorded as established truth which, in various ages, under different climes, and throughout an untold series of incessant observations, was found to agree and receive constantly further corroboration. The

methods used by our scholars and students of the psycho-spiritual sciences do not differ from those of students of the natural and physical sciences, as you may see. Only our fields of research are on two different planes, and our instruments are made by no human hands; for which reason perchance they are but the more reliable. The retorts, accumulators, and microscopes of the chemist and naturalist may get out of order; the telescope and the astronomer's horological instruments may get spoiled; our recording instruments are beyond the influence of weather or the elements.

Enq.—*And therefore you have implicit faith in them?*

Theo.—Faith is a word not to be found in theosophical dictionaries; we say knowledge based on observation and experience. There is this difference, however, that while the observation and experience of physical science lead the scientists to about as many working hypotheses as there are minds to evolve them, our knowledge consents to add to its lore only those facts which have become undeniable, and which are fully and absolutely demonstrated. We have no two beliefs or hypotheses on the same subject.

ON THE SEPTENARY CONSTITUTION OF OUR
PLANET AND MAN

Enq.—*I understand that you describe our earth as forming part of a chain of earths ?*

Theo.—We do. But the other six “earth” or globes, are not on the same plane of objectivity as our earth is ; therefore we cannot see them.

Enq.—*Is that on account of the great distance ?*

Theo.—Not at all, for we see with our naked eye not only planets but even stars at immeasurably greater distances ; but it is owing to these six globes being outside our physical means of perception, or plane of being. It is not only that their material density, weight, or fabric are entirely different from those of our earth and the other known planets ; but they are (to us) in an entirely different layer of space, so to speak ; a layer not to be perceived or felt by our physical senses. And when I say “layer” please do not allow your fancy to suggest to you layers like strata or beds laid one over the other, for this would only lead to another absurd misconception. What I mean by “layer” is that plane of infinite space which by its nature cannot fall under our ordinary waking perceptions, whether mental or physical ; but which exists in Nature outside of our

normal mentality or consciousness, outside of our three dimensional space, and outside of our division of time. Each of the seven fundamental planes or layers, in space—of course as a whole, as the pure space of Locke's definition, not as our finite space—has its own objectivity and subjectivity, its own space and time, its own consciousness and set of senses. But all this will be hardly comprehensible to one trained in the modern ways of thought.

Enq.—*What do you mean by a different set of senses? Is there anything on our human "plane" that you could bring as an illustration of what you say, just to give a clearer idea of what you may mean by this variety of senses, spaces, and respective perceptions?*

Theo.—None; except, perhaps, that which for science would be rather a handy peg on which to hang a counter-argument. We have a different set of senses in dream-life, have we not? We feel, talk, hear, see, taste and function in general on a different plane; the change of state of our consciousness being evidenced by the fact that a series of acts and events embracing years, as we think, passes ideally through our mind in one instant. Well, that extreme rapidity of our mental operations in

dreams, and the perfect naturalness, for the time being, of all the other functions, show us that we are on quite another plane. Our philosophy teaches us that, as there are seven fundamental forces in Nature, and seven planes of being, so there are seven states of consciousness in which man can live, think, remember and have his being. To enumerate these here is impossible, and for this one has to turn to the study of Eastern metaphysics. But in these two states—the waking and the dreaming—every ordinary mortal, from a learned philosopher down to a poor untutored savage, has a good proof that such states differ.

Enq.—*You do not accept, then, the well-known explanations of biology and physiology to account for the dream-state ?*

Theo.—We do not. We reject even the hypotheses of your psychologists, preferring the teachings of Eastern Wisdom. Believing in seven planes of cosmic being and states of consciousness, with regard to the universe or the macrocosm, we stop at the fourth plane, finding it impossible to go with any degree of certainty beyond. But with respect to the microcosm, or man, we speculate freely on his seven states and principles.

Enq.—*How do you explain these ?*

Theo.—We find, first of all, two distinct beings in man; the spiritual and the physical, the man who thinks, and the man who records as much of these thoughts as he is able to assimilate. Therefore we divide him into two distinct natures: the upper or the spiritual being, composed of three “principles” or aspects; and the lower or the physical quaternary, composed of four—seven in all.¹

Enq.—*Is this the same as the division we call spirit and soul, and the man of flesh.*

Theo.—It is not. That is the old Platonic division. Plato regarded man as constituted of two parts—one eternal, formed of the same essence as the Absoluteness, the other mortal and corruptible. This is the division adopted by Paul, another initiate, who maintains that there is a psychical body which is sown in the corruptible (astral or physical body), and a spiritual body that is raised in incorruptible substance. Even James (iii. 15) corroborates the same by saying that the “wisdom” (of our lower soul) descendeth not from above, but is terrestrial, “psychical,” “demoniacal” (*vide* Greek text), while the other is heavenly wisdom.

¹ This way of classifying man's “aspects of consciousness” is described in the original of this book, and in other Theosophical books, but is omitted here on account of its abstruseness.—C. M. C.

Now what does Plato teach? He speaks of the interior man as constituted of two parts—one immutable and always the same, formed of the same substance as Deity, and the other mortal and corruptible.

Enq.—*Then you reject resurrection in the flesh?*

Theo.—Most decidedly we do! Our external powers perceive *phenomena*; our *nous* alone is able to recognize their *noumena*. It is the *logos* alone, or the *noumenon* that survives, because it is immortal in its very nature and essence, and the *logos* in man is the eternal Ego, that which reincarnates and lasts for ever. But how can the evanescent or external shadow, the temporary clothing of that divine *emanation* which returns to the source whence it proceeded, be that which is “raised in incorruptibility”? There is but one *real* man, enduring through the cycle of life and immortal in essence, if not in form, and this is Manas, the mind-man or embodied consciousness. The objection made by the materialists, who deny the possibility of mind and consciousness acting without matter, is worthless in our case. We do not deny the soundness of their argument; but we simply ask our opponents: Are you acquainted *with all the states of matter?*

VII AND VIII

ON REINCARNATION OR RE-BIRTH

ENQUIRER—*I am glad to hear you believe in the immortality of the soul.*

THEOSOPHIST—Not of the soul, but of the divine spirit; or rather in the immortality of the reincarnating Ego.

Enq.—*It is hardly necessary, I suppose, to ask you whether you believe in the Christian dogmas of paradise and hell, or in future rewards and punishments as taught by the orthodox churches?*

Theo.—As described in your catechisms, we reject them absolutely; least of all would we accept their eternity. But we believe firmly in what we call the *Law of Retribution*, and in the absolute justice and wisdom guiding this Law, or Karma. Hence we positively refuse to accept the cruel and unphilosophical belief in eternal reward or eternal punishment. We say with Horace :

Let rules be fixed that may our rage contain,
And punish faults *with a proportion'd pain* ;
But do not flay him who deserves alone
A whipping for the fault that he has done.

This is a rule for all men, and a just one. Have we to believe that God, of whom you make the embodiment of wisdom, love and mercy, is less entitled to these attributes than mortal man?

Enq.—*Have you any other reasons for rejecting this dogma?*

Theo.—Our chief reason for so doing is the fact of reincarnation. As already stated, we reject the idea of a new soul created for every newly-born babe.

Enq.—*But what is it that reincarnates, in your belief?*

Theo.—The spiritual thinking Ego, the permanent principle in man, that is connected with every personality it inhabits on earth.

But to make it clear, we have to say a few words first of all about reincarnation.

Enq.—*The most difficult thing for you will be to explain and give reasonable grounds for such a belief. No Theosophist has ever yet succeeded in bringing forward a single valid proof to shake my scepticism. First of all, you have against this theory of reincarnation the fact that no single man has yet been found to remember that he has lived, least of all who he was, during his previous life.*

Theo.—Your argument, I see, tends to the same old objection: the loss of memory in each of us of our previous incarnation. You think it invalidates our doctrine? My answer is that it does not; or that at any rate such an objection cannot be final.

Enq.—*I would like to hear your arguments.*

Theo.—They are short and few. Now what is memory in your conception, pray?

Enq.—*That which the generally accepted definition explains: the faculty in our mind of remembering and of retaining the knowledge of previous thoughts, deeds and events.*

Theo.—Please add to it that there is a great difference between the three accepted forms of memory. Besides memory in general you have *remembrance, recollection* and *reminiscence*, have you not? Have you ever thought over the difference? Memory, remember, is a generic name.

Enq.—*Yet, all these are only synonyms.*

Theo.—Indeed, they are not—not in philosophy, at all events. Memory is simply an innate power in thinking beings, and even in animals, of reproducing past impressions by an association of ideas principally suggested by objective things or by some action on our external sensory organs. Memory is a faculty depending entirely on the more or less

healthy and normal functioning of our physical brain ; and *remembrance* and *recollection* are the attributes and handmaidens of this memory. But *reminiscence* is an entirely different thing.

Locke, speaking of recollection and remembrance, says :

When an idea again recurs without the operation of the like object on the external sensory, it is *remembrance* ; if it be sought after by the mind, and with pain and endeavour found and brought again into view, it is *recollection*.

But even Locke leaves reminiscence without any clear definition, because it is no faculty or attribute of our *physical* memory, but an intuitional perception apart from and outside our physical brain ; a perception which, being called into action by the ever-present knowledge of our spiritual Ego, covers all those visions in man which are regarded as abnormal—from the pictures suggested by genius to the ravings of fever and even madness—and are classed by science as having no existence outside of our fancy. Occultism and Theosophy, however, regard reminiscence in an entirely different light. For us, while memory is physical and evanescent and depends on the physiological conditions of the brain, reminiscence is the memory of the soul. And

it is *this* memory which gives the assurance to almost every human being, whether he understands it or not, of his having lived before and having to live again. Indeed, as Wordsworth has it :

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath elsewhere had its setting,
And cometh from afar.

Enq.—*If it is on this kind of memory—poetry and abnormal fancies, on your own confession—that you base your doctrine, then you will convince very few, I am afraid.*

Theo.—I did not confess it was a fancy. I simply said that physiologists and scientists in general regard such reminiscences as hallucinations and fancy. We do not deny that such visions of the past and glimpses far back into the corridors of time are abnormal, as contrasted with our normal daily life experience and physical memory. But we do maintain with Professor W. Knight, that “the absence of memory of any action done in a previous state cannot be a conclusive argument against our having lived through it.”

Enq.—*But do you not think that these are too fine distinctions to be accepted by the majority of mortals?*

Theo.—Say rather by the majority of materialists. And to them we say: Behold, even in the short span of ordinary existence, memory is too weak to register all the events of a life-time. How frequently do even most important events lie dormant in our memory until awakened by some association of ideas, or aroused to function and activity by some other link? This is especially the case with people of advanced age, who are always found suffering from feebleness of recollection. When, then, we bear in mind what we know about the physical and the spiritual principles in man, it is not the fact that our memory has failed to record our precedent life and lives that ought to surprise us, but the contrary, were it to happen.

WHY DO WE NOT REMEMBER OUR PAST LIVES?

Enq.—*How do you account for our complete loss of any recollection of having lived before?*

Theo.—Reincarnation means that the Ego will be furnished with a *new* body, a *new* brain, and a *new* memory. Therefore it would be as absurd to expect this new memory to remember that which it has never recorded. To get convinced of the fact

of reincarnation and past lives, one must put oneself *en rapport* with one's real permanent Ego, not with one's evanescent memory.

Enq.—*But how can people believe in that which they do not know, nor have ever seen, far less put themselves en rapport with it?*

Theo.—If people, and they the most learned, will believe in “gravity,” “ether,” “force,” and what not of science, abstractions and working hypotheses, which they have neither seen, touched, smelt, heard, nor tasted—why should not other people believe, on the same principle, in the permanent Ego, a far more logical and important “working hypothesis” than any other?

Enq.—*What is, finally, this mysterious eternal principle? Can you explain its nature so as to make it comprehensible to all?*

Theo.—The Ego which reincarnates is the individual—not personal—and immortal “I”. Here is a paragraph from Colonel H.:S. Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* which bears directly upon the subject. It deals with the question as follows: .

The aged man remembers the incidents of his youth, despite his being physically and mentally changed. Why, then, is not the recollection of past lives brought over by us from our last birth into the present birth?

Because memory is changed with the new existence, a memory, the record of that particular existence, develops. Yet the record or reflection of all the past lives must survive, for when Prince Siddhartha became Buddha, the full sequence of his previous births were seen by him. . . . And any one who attains to the state of *jnana* can thus retrospectively trace the line of his lives.

This proves to you that while the undying qualities of the personality—such as love, goodness, charity, etc.—attach themselves to the immortal Ego, photographing on it, so to speak, a permanent image of the divine aspect of the man who was, his material impressions as evanescent as a flash of lightning, and cannot impress the new brain of the new personality, yet their failing to do so impairs in no way the identity of the reincarnating Ego.

Enq.—*Do you mean to infer that that which survives is only the soul-memory, as you call it, that soul or Ego being one and the same, while nothing of the personality remains?*

Theo.—Not quite; something of each personality must survive, as it leaves its eternal impress on the incarnating permanent Self or spiritual Ego. The personality is ever changing with every new birth. It is, as said before, only the part played by the actor, the true Ego, for one night. This is why we preserve no memory on the physical plane of

our past lives, though the *real* Ego has lived them over and knows them all.

Enq.—*Still there ought to be exceptions, and some ought to remember.*

Theo.—And so they do. But who believes in their report? Such sensitives are generally regarded as hallucinated hysteriacs by modern materialists. Let them read, however, works on this subject, pre-eminently *Reincarnation, a Study of Forgotten Truth*, by E. D. Walker, and see in it the mass of proofs which the able author brings to bear on this vexed question. Speak to some people of soul, and they ask: "What is soul? Have you ever proved its existence?" Of course it is useless to argue with those who are materialists. But even to them I would put the question: "Can you remember what you were or what you did when a baby? Have you preserved the smallest recollection of your life, thoughts, or deeds, or that you lived at all during the first eighteen months or two years of your existence? Then why not deny that you have ever lived as a babe, on the same principle?" When to all this we add that the reincarnating Ego, or individuality, retains during the devachanic period merely the essence of the experience of its past earth-life or personality, the whole physical experience

translated into spiritual *formulæ*; when we remember further that the term between two rebirths is said to extend from ten to fifteen centuries, during which the physical consciousness is totally and absolutely inactive, having no organs to act through, and therefore no *existence*, the reason for the absence of all remembrance in the purely physical memory is apparent.

It is the Ego which is held responsible for all the sins committed through, and in, every new body or personality—the evanescent masks which hide the true individual through the long series of rebirths.

Enq.—*But is this just? Why should this Ego receive punishment as the result of deeds which it has forgotten?*

Theo.—It has not forgotten them; it knows and remembers its misdeeds as well as you remember what you have done yesterday. Is it because the memory of that bundle of physical compounds called “body” does not recollect what its predecessor, the personality *that was*, did, that you imagine that the real Ego has forgotten them? As well say it is unjust that the new coat on the back of a boy, who is flogged for stealing apples, should be punished for that of which it knows nothing.

Enq.—*But are there no modes of communication between the spiritual and human consciousness or memory?*

Theo.—Of course there are; but they have never been recognized by your modern scientific psychologists. To what do you attribute intuition, the “voice of conscience,” premonitions, vague undefined reminiscences, etc., if not to such communications? Would that the majority of educated men, at least, had the fine spiritual perceptions of Coleridge, who shows how intuitional he is in some of his comments. Hear what he says with respect to the probability that “all thoughts are in themselves imperishable.”

If the intelligent faculty [sudden “revivals” of memory] should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and appropriate organization, the *body celestial* instead of the *body terrestrial*, to bring before every human soul *the collective experience of its whole past existence* [existences, rather].

And this *body celestial* is our Ego.

ON THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT OF THE EGO

Enq.—*I have heard you say that the Ego, whatever the life of the person he incarnated in*

may have been on earth, is never visited with post mortem punishment.

Theo.—Never, save in very exceptional and rare cases of which we will not speak here, as the nature of the “punishment” in no way approaches any of your theological conceptions of damnation.

Enq.—*But if the Ego is punished in this life for the misdeeds committed in previous lives, then it ought to be rewarded also, whether here, or when disincarnated.*

Theo.—And so it is. If we do not admit of any punishment outside of this earth, it is because the only state the spiritual Self knows of, hereafter, is that of unalloyed bliss.

Enq.—*What do you mean?*

Theo.—Simply this: *crimes and sins committed on a plane of objectivity and in a world of matter, cannot receive punishment in a world of pure subjectivity.* We believe in no hell or paradise as localities; in no objective hell-fires and worms that never die, nor in any Jerusalems with streets paved with sapphires and diamonds. What we believe in is a *post mortem* state or mental condition, such as we are in during a vivid dream. We believe in an immutable law of absolute Love, Justice, and Mercy. And believing in it, we say: Whatever was the

sin and whatever were the dire results of the original karmic transgression of the now incarnated Egos, no man—or the outer material and periodical form of the spiritual entity—can be held, with any degree of justice, responsible for the consequences of his birth. He does not ask to be born, nor can he choose the parents that will give him life. In every respect he is a victim to his environment, the child of circumstances over which he has no control ; and if each of his transgressions were impartially investigated, it would be found that in nine out of every ten cases he was the one sinned against, rather than the sinner. Life is at best a heartless play, a stormy sea to cross, and a heavy burden often too difficult to bear. The greatest philosophers have tried in vain to fathom and find out its *raison d'être*, and—except those who had the key to it, namely, the Eastern sages—have all failed. Life is, as Shakespeare describes it :

. . . . but a walking shadow—a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Nothing in its separate parts, yet of the greatest importance in its collectivity or series of lives. In

any case, almost every individual life is, in its full development, a sorrow. And are we to believe that poor, helpless man, after being tossed about like a piece of rotten timber on the angry billows of life, is, if he proves too weak to resist them, to be punished by a sempiternity of damnation, or even a temporary punishment? Never! Whether a great or an average sinner, good or bad, guilty or innocent, once delivered of the burden of physical life, the tired and worn-out *manu*, or "thinking Ego," has won the right to a period of absolute rest and bliss. The same unerringly wise and just, rather than merciful, Law, which inflicts upon the incarnated Ego the karmic punishment for every sin committed during the preceding life on earth, has provided for the now disembodied entity a long lease of mental rest, and the entire oblivion of every sad event, aye, to the smallest painful thought, that took place in its last life as a personality, leaving in the soul-memory nothing but the reminiscence of that which was bliss, or which led to happiness. Plotinus, who said that our body was the true river of Lethe, for "souls plunged into it forget all," meant more than he said. For, as our terrestrial body on earth is like Lethe, so is our *celestial body* in Devachan, and much more.

Enq.—*Then am I to understand that the murderer, the transgressor of law divine and human in every shape, is allowed to go unpunished ?*

Theo.—Whoever said that ? Our philosophy has a doctrine of punishment as stern as that of the most rigid Calvinist, only far more philosophical and consistent with absolute justice. No deed, no sinful thought even, will go unpunished. In fact the latter are even more severely punished than the former, as a thought is far more potent in creating evil results than deeds. We believe in an unerring law of retribution, called Karma, which asserts itself in a natural concatenation of causes and their unavoidable results.

Enq.—*And how, or where, does it act ?*

Theo.—Every labourer is worthy of his hire, saith Wisdom in the Gospel ; every action, good or bad, is a prolific parent, saith the Wisdom of the Ages. Put the two together, and you will find the “ why ”. After allowing the soul, when escaped from the pangs of personal life, a sufficient, aye, a hundredfold compensation, Karma, with its army of *skandhas*, waits at the threshold of Devachan, whence the Ego re-emerges to assume a new incarnation. It is at this moment that the future destiny

of the, now rested Ego trembles in the scales of just retribution, as *it* now falls once again under the sway of active karmic law. It is in this rebirth which is ready for *it*, a rebirth selected and prepared by this mysterious, inexorable—but, in the equity and wisdom of its decrees, infallible—Law, that the sins of the previous life of the Ego are punished. Only it is into no imaginary hell, with theatrical flames and ridiculous tailed and horned devils, that the Ego is cast, but verily on to this earth, the plane and region of his sins, where he will have to atone for every bad thought and deed. As he has sown, so will he reap. Reincarnation will gather round him all those other Egos who have suffered, whether directly or indirectly, at the hands, or even through the unconscious instrumentality, of the past personality. They will be thrown by Nemesis in the way of the *new* man, concealing the *old*, the eternal Ego, and

Enq.—*But where is the equity you speak of, since these new personalities are not aware of having sinned or been sinned against?*

Theo.—Has the coat torn to shreds from the back of the man who stole it, by another man who was robbed of it and recognizes his property, to be regarded as fairly dealt with? The new personality

is no better than a fresh suit of clothes with its specific characteristics, colour, form and qualities ; but the real man who wears it is the same culprit as of old. It is the individuality which suffers through its personality. And it is this, and this alone, that can account for the terrible *seeming* injustice in the distribution of lots in life to man. When your modern philosophers will have succeeded in showing us good reason why so many apparently innocent and good men are born only to suffer during a whole life-time ; why so many are born poor unto starvation in the slums of great cities, abandoned by fate and men ; why, while these are born in the gutter, others open their eyes to light in palaces ; why a noble birth and fortune seem often given to the worst of men and only rarely to the worthy ; why there are beggars whose *inner* selves are peers to the highest and noblest of men ; when this, and much more, is satisfactorily explained by either your philosophers or theologians, then only, but not till then, you will have the right to reject the theory of reincarnation. The highest and grandest poets have dimly perceived this truth of truths. Shelley believed in it, Shakespeare must have thought of it when writing on the worthlessness of birth. Remember his words :

Why should my birth keep down my mounting
spirit?

Are not all creatures subject unto time?

There's legions now of beggars on the earth,

That their original did spring from kings.

And many monarchs now, whose fathers were

The riff-raff of their age.

Alter the word "fathers" into Egos—and you
will have the truth.

ON LIFE AFTER DEATH

ENQUIRER—*How long does the incarnating Ego remain in the devachanic state ?*

THEOSOPHIST—This, we are taught, depends on the degree of spirituality and the merit or demerit of the last incarnation. The average time is from ten to fifteen centuries, as I have already told you.

Enq.—*But why could not this Ego manifest and communicate with mortals as Spiritualists will have it ? What is there to prevent a mother from communicating with the children she left on earth, a husband with his wife, and so on ? It is a most consoling belief, I must confess ; nor do I wonder that those who believe in it are so averse to give it up.*

Theo.—Nor are they forced to, unless they happen to prefer truth to fiction, however “consoling”. Uncongenial our doctrines may be to Spiritualists ; yet, nothing of what we believe in

and teach is half as selfish and cruel as what they preach.

Enq.—*I do not understand you. What is selfish?*

Theo.—Their doctrine of the return of spirits, the real “personalities” as they say; and I will tell you why. If Devachan—call it “paradise” if you like, a “place of bliss and of supreme felicity,” if it is anything—is such a place, or say *state*, logic tells us that no sorrow nor even a shade of pain can be experienced therein. “God shall wipe away all the tears” from the eyes of those in paradise, we read in the book of many promises. And if the “spirits of the dead” are able to return and see all that is going on on earth, and especially *in their homes*, what kind of bliss can be in store for them?

WHY THEOSOPHISTS DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE
RETURN OF PURE “SPIRITS”

Enq.—*What do you mean? Why should this interfere with their bliss?*

Theo.—It is quite simple; let us take an instance. A mother dies, leaving behind her little helpless children, whom she adores, perhaps a

beloved husband also. We say that her spirit or Ego—that individuality which is now wholly impregnated, for the entire devachanic period, with the noblest feelings held by its late personality, with love for her children, pity for those who suffer, and so on—is now entirely separated from the “vale of tears,” that its future bliss consists in the blessed ignorance of all the woes it left behind. Spiritualists, on the contrary, say that it is as vividly aware of them, *and more so than before*, for “spirits see more than mortals in the flesh do.” We say that the bliss of the Devachani consists in its complete conviction that it has never left the earth, and that there is no such thing as death at all; that the *post mortem* spiritual consciousness of the mother will cause her to think that she lives surrounded by her children and all those whom she loved; that no gap, no link, will be missing to make her disembodied state the most perfect and absolute happiness. The Spiritualists deny this point blank. According to their doctrine, an unfortunate man is not liberated even by death from the sorrows of this life. Not a drop from the life-cup of pain and suffering will miss his lips; and *nolens volens*, since he sees everything then, shall he drink it to the bitter dregs. Thus, *the loving wife, who*

during her life-time was ready to save her husband sorrow at the price of her heart's blood, is now doomed to see, in utter helplessness, his despair, and to register every hot tear he sheds for her loss. Worse than that, she may see the tears dry too soon, and another beloved face smile on him, the father of her children; find another woman replacing her in his affections; doomed to hear her children give the holy name of "mother" to one indifferent to them, and to see those little ones neglected, if not ill-treated. According to this doctrine, the "gentle wafting to immortal life" becomes the way into a new path of mental suffering without any transition. And yet, the columns of the *Banner of Light*, the veteran journal of the American Spiritualists, are filled with messages from the dead, the "dear departed ones," who all write to say how very *happy* they are! Is such a state of knowledge consistent with bliss? Then "bliss" stands in such a case for the greatest curse, and orthodox damnation must be a relief in comparison to it!

Enq.—*But how does your theory avoid this? How can you reconcile the theory of the soul's omniscience with its blindness to that which is taking place on earth?*

Theo.—Because such is the law of love and mercy. During every devachanic period the Ego, omniscient as it is *per se*, clothes itself, so to say, with the *reflection* of the personality that was. I have just told you that the *ideal* efflorescence of all the abstract, and therefore undying and eternal qualities or attributes—such as love and mercy, the love of the good, the true and the beautiful—which ever spoke in the heart of the living personality, after death, cling to the Ego, and therefore follow it into Devachan. For the time being, then, the Ego becomes the ideal reflection of the human being it was when last on earth, and his bliss in Devachan is complete. It is an *absolute* oblivion of all that gave it pain or sorrow in the past incarnation, and even oblivion of the fact that such things as pain or sorrow exist at all. The Devachani lives its intermediate cycle between two incarnations surrounded by everything it had aspired to in vain, and in the companionship of everyone it loved on earth. It has reached the fulfilment of all its soul-yearnings. And thus it lives throughout long centuries an existence of *unalloyed* happiness, which is the reward for its sufferings in earth-life. In short, it bathes in a sea of uninterrupted felicity spanned only by events of still greater felicity in degree.

Enq.—*But this is more than simple delusion, it is an existence of insane hallucinations!*

Theo.—From your standpoint it may be; not so from that of philosophy. Besides, is not our whole terrestrial life filled with such delusions? Have you never met men and women living for years in a fool's paradise? And because you should happen to learn that the husband, whom a wife adores and believes herself loved in turn by him, is untrue to her, would you go and break her heart and beautiful dream by rudely awakening her to the reality? I think not. I say it again, such oblivion and hallucination, if you call it so, are only a merciful law of Nature and strict justice. To believe that a pure spirit can feel happy while doomed to witness the sins, mistakes, treachery, and, above all, the sufferings of those from whom it is severed by death and whom it loves best, without being able to help them, would be a maddening thought.

Enq.—*There is something in your argument. I confess to having never seen it in this light.*

Theo.—Just so, and one must be selfish to the core and utterly devoid of the sense of retributive justice, to have ever imagined such a thing. We are with those whom we have lost in material form, and far, far nearer to them now, than when they

were alive. And it is not only in the fancy of the Devachani, as some may imagine, but in reality. For pure divine love is not merely the blossom of a human heart, but has its roots in eternity. Spiritual holy love is immortal, and Karma sooner or later brings all those who loved each other with such a spiritual affection to incarnate once more in the same family group. Again we say that love beyond the grave, illusion though you may call it, has a magic and divine potency which reacts on the living. A mother's Ego filled with love for the imaginary children it sees near itself, living a life of happiness, as real to *it* as when on earth, will ever cause that love to be felt by the children in flesh. It will manifest in their dreams, and often in various events—in "providential" protections and escapes, for love is a strong shield, and is not limited by space or time. As with this devachanic "mother," so with the rest of human relationships and attachments, save the purely selfish or material. Analogy will suggest to you the rest.

Enq.—*In no case, then, do you admit the possibility of the communication of the living with the disembodied spirit?*

Theo.—Yes; there are exceptions to the rule. The first case is during the few days that

immediately follow the death of a person and before the Ego passes into the devachanic state. But whether any living mortal has derived much benefit from the return of the spirit into the *objective* plane is another question. Perhaps it may be so in a few exceptional cases, when the intensity of the desire in the dying person to return for some purpose forced the higher consciousness *to remain awake*, and therefore it was really the *individuality*, the "spirit" that communicated. But in general the spirit is dazed after death and falls very soon into what we call "pre-devachanic unconsciousness".

Enq.—*To this science would never subscribe, not even modern psychology. For science and psychology, no portion of intelligence can survive the physical brain. What would you answer to this?*

Theo.—I would not even go to the trouble of answering, but would simply say, in the words given to "M. A. Oxon.":

Intelligence is perpetuated after the body is dead. Though it is not a question of the brain only. . . . It is reasonable to propound the indestructibility of the human spirit from what we know.

Enq.—*But "M.A. Oxon" was a Spiritualist?*

Theo.—Quite so, and the only true Spiritualist I know of, though we may still disagree with him on

many a minor question. Apart from this, no Spiritualist comes nearer to the occult truths than he does. Like any one of us he speaks incessantly "of the surface dangers that beset the ill-equipped, feather-headed muddler with the occult, who crosses the threshold without counting the cost". Our only disagreement rests in the question of "spirit identity". Otherwise, I, for one, almost entirely agree with him, and accept the three propositions he embodied in his address of July, 1884. It is this eminent Spiritualist, rather, who disagrees with us, not we with him.

Enq.—*What were these propositions ?*

Theo.—They are as follows :

1. That there is a life coincident with, and independent of the physical life of the body.
2. That, as a necessary corollary, this life extends beyond the life of the body. [We say it extends throughout Devachan.]
3. That there is communication between the denizens of that state of existence and those of the world in which we now live.

All depends, you see, on the minor and secondary aspects of these fundamental propositions. Everything depends on the views we take of spirit and soul, or *individuality* and *personality*. Spiritualists

confuse the two "into one"; we separate them, and say that, with the exceptions above enumerated, no spirit will re-visit the earth, though the lower personality may. But let us return once more to our direct subject, the *skandhas* (impressions or attributes).

Enq.—*I begin to understand better now. It is the spirit, so to say, of those impressions that are the most ennobling, which, attaching itself to the incarnating Ego, survives, and is added to the stock of its angelic experiences. And it is the attributes connected with the material side of things with selfish and personal motives, which, disappearing from the field of action between two incarnations, re-appear at the subsequent incarnation as karmic results to be atoned for. Is it so?*

Theo.—Very nearly so. If you add to this that the law of retribution, or Karma, rewarding the highest and most spiritual attributes in Devachan, never fails to reward them again on earth by giving them a further development, and by furnishing the Ego with a body fitted for it—then you will be quite correct.

Enq.—*What becomes of the other, the lower attributes of the personality, after the death of the body? Are they quite destroyed?*

Theo.—They are and yet they are not—a fresh metaphysical and occult mystery for you. They are destroyed as the working stock in hand of the personality; they remain as *karmic effects*, as germs, hanging in the atmosphere of the terrestrial plane, ready to come to life, and to attach themselves to the new personality of the Ego when it reincarnates.

Enq.—*This really passes my comprehension, and is very difficult to understand.*

Theo.—Not once that you have assimilated all the details. For then you will see that for logic, consistency, profound philosophy, divine mercy and equity, this doctrine of reincarnation has not its equal on earth. It is a belief in a perpetual progress for each incarnating Ego, or divine soul, in an evolution from the outward, into the inward, from the material to the spiritual, arriving at the end of each state at absolute unity with the divine principle. From strength to strength, from the beauty and perfection of one plane to the greater beauty and perfection of another, with accessions of new glory, of fresh knowledge and power in each cycle, such is the destiny of every Ego, which thus becomes its own saviour in each world and incarnation.

Enq.—*But Christianity teaches the same. It also preaches progression.*

Theo.—Yes, only with the addition of something else. It tells us of the *impossibility* of attaining salvation without the aid of a miraculous saviour, and moreover dooms to perdition all those who will not accept the dogma. This is just the difference between Christian theology and Theosophy. The former enforces belief in the descent of the spiritual Ego into the lower *self*; the latter inculcates the necessity of endeavouring to elevate oneself to the Christos or Buddhi state. If you still insist that it is the perishable form and finite qualities that make up the *immortal* man, then we shall hardly understand each other. And if you do not understand that, by limiting the existence of every Ego to one life on earth, you make of Deity a cruel Moloch, a god who makes an inextricable mess on earth, and yet claims thanks for it, then the sooner we drop the conversation the better.

Enq.—*But let us return to the question of the consciousness which survives death. This is the point which interests most people. Do we possess more knowledge in Devachan than we do in earth-life?*

Theo.—In one sense, we can acquire more knowledge; that is, we can develop further any faculty which we loved and strove after during life,

provided it is concerned with abstract and ideal things, such as music, painting, poetry, etc., since Devachan is merely an idealized and subjective continuation of earth-life.

Enq.—*But if in Devachan the spirit is free from matter, why should it not possess all knowledge?*

Theo.—Because the Ego is, so to say, wedded to the memory of its last incarnation. Thus, if you think over what I have said, and string all the facts together, you will realize that the devachanic state is not one of omniscience, but a transcendental continuation of the personal life just terminated. It is the rest of the soul from the toils of life.

Enq.—*But the scientific materialists assert that after the death of man nothing remains; that the human body simply disintegrates into its component elements; and that what we call soul is merely a temporary self-consciousness produced as a bye-product of organic action, which will evaporate like steam. Is not theirs a strange state of mind?*

Theo.—Not at all strange, as far as I see. If they say that self-consciousness ceases with the body, then in their case they simply utter an unconscious prophecy, for once they are firmly

convinced of what they assert, no conscious after-life is possible for them. But there *are* exceptions to every rule.

Enq.—*But if human self-consciousness survives death as a rule, why should there be exceptions?*

Theo.—In the fundamental principles of the spiritual world no exception is possible. But there are rules for those who see, and rules for those who prefer to remain blind.

Enq.—*Quite so, I understand. This is but an aberration of the blind man, who denies the existence of the sun because he does not see it. But after death his spiritual eyes will certainly compel him to see. Is this what you mean?*

Theo.—He will not be compelled, nor will he see anything. Having persistently during life denied the continuance of existence after death, he will be unable to see it, because his spiritual capacity having been stunted in life cannot develop after death, and he will remain blind. Karma acts incessantly: we reap *in our after-life* only the fruit of that which we have ourselves sown in this.

Enq.—*But if my Ego can, after the destruction of my body, become plunged in a state of entire unconsciousness, then where can be the punishment for the sins of my past life?*

Theo.—Our philosophy teaches that karmic punishment reaches the Ego only in its next incarnation. After death it receives only the reward for the unmerited sufferings endured during its past incarnation. The whole punishment after death, even for the materialist, consists, therefore, in the absence of any reward, and the utter loss of the consciousness of one's bliss and rest. Karma is the child of the terrestrial Ego, the fruit of the actions of the tree which is the objective personality visible to all, as much as the fruit of all the thoughts and even motives of the spiritual "I"; but Karma is also the tender mother, who heals the wounds inflicted by her during the preceding life, before she begins to torture the Ego by inflicting new wounds. It may be said that there is not a mental or physical suffering in the life of a mortal which is not the direct fruit and consequence of some sin in a preceding existence; on the other hand, since the man does not preserve the slightest recollection of it in his actual life, feels himself not deserving of such punishment, and therefore thinks he suffers for no guilt of his own, he is thus sufficiently entitled to the fullest consolation, rest, and bliss in his *post mortem* existence. Death ever comes to our spiritual selves as a deliverer and friend. For the materialist,

who, notwithstanding his materialism, was not a bad man, the interval between the two lives will be like the unbroken and placid sleep of a child, either entirely dreamless, or filled with pictures of which he will have no definite perception; while for the average mortal it will be a dream as vivid as life, and full of realistic bliss and visions.

Enq.—*Then the personal man must always go on suffering blindly the karmic penalties which the Ego has incurred?*

Theo.—Not quite so. At the solemn moment of death every man, even when death is sudden, sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him, in its minutest details. For one short instant the *personal* becomes one with the *individual* and all-knowing Ego. But this instant is enough to show him the whole chain of causes which have been at work during his life. He sees and now understands himself as he is, unadorned by flattery or self-deception. He reads his life, remaining as a spectator looking down into the arena he is quitting; he feels and knows the justice of all the suffering that has overtaken him.

Enq.—*Does this happen to everyone?*

Theo.—Without any exception. Very good and holy men see, we are taught, not only the life they

are leaving, but even several preceding lives in which were produced the causes that made them what they were in the life just closing. They recognize the law of Karma in all its majesty and justice.

Enq.—*Is there anything corresponding to this before rebirth?*

Theo.—There is. As the man at the moment of death has a retrospective insight into the life he has led, so, at the moment he is reborn on to earth, the Ego, awaking from the state of Devachan, has a prospective vision of the life which awaits him, and realizes all the causes that have led to it. He realizes them, and sees futurity, because it is between Devachan and rebirth that the Ego regains his full consciousness, and rebecomes for a short time the god he was, before, in compliance with karmic law, he first descended into matter and incarnated in the first man of flesh. The “golden thread” sees all its “pearls” and misses not one of them.

Enq.—*I have heard some Theosophists speak of a golden thread on which their lives were strung. What do they mean by this?*

Theo.—In the Hindu sacred books it is said that that which undergoes periodical incarnation is the *sutratma*, which means literally the “thread soul”.

It is a synonym of the reincarnating Ego which absorbs the manasic recollections of all our preceding lives. It is so called, because, like the pearls on a thread, so is the long series of human lives strung together on that one thread. In one of the Upanishads these recurrent rebirths are likened to the life of a mortal which oscillates periodically between sleep and waking.

Enq.—*This, I must say, does not seem very clear, and I will tell you why. For the man who awakes, another day commences, but he is the same in soul and body as he was the day before; whereas at every incarnation a full change takes place not only of the external envelope, sex, and personality, but even of the mental and psychic capacities. The simile does not seem to me quite correct. The man who arises from sleep remembers quite clearly what he has done yesterday, the day before, and even months and years ago. But none of us has the slightest recollection of a preceding life or of any fact or event concerning it. I may forget in the morning what I have dreamed during the night, still I know that I have slept and have the certainty that I lived during sleep; but what recollection can I have of my past incarnation until the moment of death? How do you reconcile this?*

Theo.—Some people do recollect their past incarnations during life; but these are Buddhas and Initiates. This is what the Yogis call *samma-sambuddha*, or the knowledge of the whole series of one's past incarnations.

Enq.—*But we ordinary mortals who have not reached samma-sambuddha, how are we to understand this simile?*

Theo.—By studying it and trying to understand more correctly the three kinds and characteristics of sleep. Sleep is a general and immutable law for man as for beast, but there are different kinds of sleep and still more different dreams and visions.

Enq.—*But this takes us to another subject. Let us return to the materialist who, though not denying dreams—for he could hardly do so—yet denies immortality in general and the survival of his own individuality.*

Theo.—And the materialist, without knowing it, is right. In order to live a conscious life in the world to come, one has first of all to believe in that life during terrestrial existence. On these two aphorisms of the Secret Science all the philosophy as to *post mortem* consciousness and the immortality of the soul is built. The Ego receives always

according to its deserts. After the dissolution of the body, there commences for it a period of full awakened consciousness, or a state of chaotic dreams, or an utterly dreamless sleep undistinguishable from annihilation, and these are the three kinds of sleep. If our physiologists find the cause of dreams and visions in an unconscious preparation for them during the waking hours, why cannot the same be admitted for the *post mortem* dreams? I repeat it: *death is sleep*. After death, before the spiritual eyes of the soul, begins a performance according to a programme learned and very often unconsciously composed by ourselves: the practical carrying out of *correct* beliefs or of illusions which have been created by ourselves. The Methodist will be a Methodist, the Mussulman a Mussulman, at least for some time—in a perfect fool's paradise of each man's creation and making. These are the *post mortem* fruits of the tree of life. Naturally, our belief or unbelief in the fact of conscious immortality is unable to influence the unconditioned reality of the fact itself, once that it exists; but the belief or unbelief in that immortality as the property of independent or separate entities, cannot fail to give colour to that fact in its application to each of these entities. Now do you begin to understand it?

Enq.—*I think I do. The materialists, disbelieving in everything that cannot be proven to them by their five senses, or by scientific reasoning, based exclusively on the data furnished by these senses in spite of their inadequacy, and rejecting every spiritual manifestation, accept life as the only conscious existence. Therefore according to their beliefs so will it be unto them. They will plunge into a dreamless sleep until a new awakening. Is it so?*

Theo.—Almost so. Remember the practically universal teaching of the two kinds of conscious existence—the terrestrial and the spiritual. The latter must be considered real from the very fact that it is inhabited by the eternal, changeless and immortal Spirit; whereas the incarnating Ego dresses itself up in new garments which are entirely different from those of its previous incarnations, and in which all except its spiritual prototype is doomed to a change so radical as to leave no trace behind.

Enq.—*How so? Can my conscious terrestrial "I" perish not only for a time, like the consciousness of the materialist, but so entirely as to leave no trace behind?*

Theo.—According to the teaching, it must so perish in its entirety, all except the principle which,

by uniting itself with the Spirit, thereby becomes a purely spiritual and indestructible essence, one with it in the eternity. But in the case of an out-and-out materialist, in whose personal "I" no Spiritual thought has ever reflected itself, how can it carry away into the eternity one particle of that terrestrial personality? Your spiritual "I" is immortal; but from your present self it can carry away into eternity only that which has become worthy of immortality, namely, the simple aroma of the flower that has been mown down by death.

Enq.—*Well, and the flower, the terrestrial "I" ?*

Theo.—The flower, as all past and future flowers which have blossomed and will have to blossom on the mother bough, the *sutratma*, all children of one root, will return to dust. Your present "I," as you yourself know, is not the body now sitting before me, nor yet is it what I would call Manas-Sutratma, but Sutratma-Buddhi.

Enq.—*But this does not explain to me, at all, why you call life after death immortal, infinite and real, and the terrestrial life a simple phantom or illusion; since even that post mortem life has limits, however much wider they may be than those of terrestrial life.*

Theo.—No doubt. The spiritual Ego of man moves in eternity like a pendulum between the hours of birth and death. But if these hours, marking the periods of life terrestrial and life spiritual, are limited in their duration, and if even the very number of such stages in eternity between sleep and awakening, illusion and reality, is also limited, on the other hand, the spiritual pilgrim is eternal. And so the only reality in our conception is the hours of man's *post mortem* life, when, disembodied—during the period of that pilgrimage which we call “the cycle of re-births”—he stands face to face with truth and not the mirages of his transitory earthly existences. Such intervals, however, their limitation notwithstanding, do not prevent the Ego, while ever perfecting itself, from following undeviatingly, though gradually and slowly, the path to its last transformation, when, having reached its goal, it becomes a divine being. These intervals and stages help towards this final result instead of hindering it; and without such limited intervals the divine Ego could never reach its ultimate goal. I have given you once already a familiar illustration by comparing the Ego, or the individuality, to an actor, and its numerous and various incarnations to the parts he plays. Will you call these parts or their

costumes the individuality of the actor himself? Like that actor, the Ego is forced, during the cycle of necessity, which continues up to the very threshold of *parinirvana*, to play many parts which may be unpleasant to it. But as the bee collects its honey from every flower, leaving the rest as food for the earthly worms, so does our spiritual individuality, whether we call it *sutratma* or Ego. Collecting from every terrestrial personality, into which Karma forces it to incarnate, the nectar alone of the spiritual qualities and self-consciousness, it unites all these into one whole and emerges from its chrysalis as the glorified god.

Enq.—*But why call sleep the reality, and waking the illusion?*

Theo.—It is simply a comparison made to facilitate the grasping of the subject, and from the standpoint of terrestrial conceptions it is a very correct one.

Enq.—*And still I cannot understand, if the life to come is based on justice and merited retribution for all our terrestrial suffering, how in the case of materialists, many of whom are really honest and charitable men, there should remain of their personality nothing but the refuse of a faded flower.*

Theo.—Such a thing was never stated. No materialist, however unbelieving, can die for ever in the fullness of his spiritual individuality. What was said is that consciousness can disappear either fully or partially in the case of a materialist.

Enq.—*But surely this is annihilation?*

Theo.—Certainly not. One can sleep a dead sleep and miss several stations during a long railway journey, without the slightest recollection or consciousness, and awake at another station and continue the journey past innumerable other halting places till the end of the journey or the goal is reached. Three kinds of sleep were mentioned to you: the dreamless, the chaotic, and the one which is so real, that dreams become full realities to the sleeper. If you believe in the latter why can you not believe in the former? According to the after-life a man has believed in and expected, such is the life he will have. He who expected no life to come will have an absolute blank in the interval between the two births. This is just the carrying out of the programme we spoke of, a programme created by the materialists themselves. But there are various kinds of materialists, as you say. A selfish, wicked egoist, one who never shed a tear for any one but himself, thus adding entire indifference to the whole world

to his unbelief, will, at the threshold of death, drop his personality. But those materialists who erred in nothing but their disbelief will oversleep but one station. And the time will come when such ex-materialists will perceive themselves in the eternity and perhaps repent that they lost even one day, one station, from the life eternal.

Enq.—*Still, would it not be more correct to say that death is birth into a new life, or a return once more into eternity?*

Theo.—You may if you like. With your fixed Western ideas about material life, the words “living” and “being” are quite inapplicable to the pure subjective state of *post mortem* existence. Save in a few philosophers who are not read by the many, and who themselves are too confused to present a distinct picture of it, your Western ideas of life and death have become so narrow, that on the one hand they have led to crass materialism, and on the other, to the still more material conception of the other life, which the Spiritualists have formulated in their “summer-land”. There the souls of men eat, drink, marry, and live in a paradise quite as sensual as that of Mohammed, and even less philosophical. Nor are the average conceptions of the uneducated Christians any better; if possible,

they are still more material. What between truncated angels, brass trumpets, golden harps, and material hell-fires, the Christian heaven seems like a fairy scene at a Christmas pantomime.

It is because of these narrow conceptions that you find such difficulty in understanding. It is just because the life of the disembodied soul, while possessing all the vividness of reality, as in certain dreams, is devoid of every grossly objective form of terrestrial life, that the Eastern philosophers have compared it with visions of sleep. The first, and positively the clearest of our theosophical writers, Mr. A. P. Sinnett, has some comprehensive and admirably-written passages on this. Here are a few passages which will show you how clear and comprehensive is all that he writes on the subject :

The human soul, once launched on the streams of evolution as a human individuality, passes through alternate periods of physical and relatively spiritual existence. It passes from the one plane, or stratum, or condition of nature to the other under the guidance of its karmic affinities; living in incarnations the life which its Karma has pre-ordained; modifying its progress within the limitation of circumstances, and—developing fresh Karma by its use or abuse of opportunities—it returns to spiritual existence (Devachan) after each physical life—through the

intervening region of the psychic plane¹—for rest and refreshment and for the gradual absorption into its essence, as so much cosmic progress, of the life's experience gained "on earth" or during physical existence. We—the souls within us—are not as it were altogether adrift in the ocean of matter. We clearly retain some surviving interest or rights in the shore from which, for a time, we have floated off. The process of incarnation, therefore, is not fully described when we speak of an *alternate* existence on the physical and spiritual planes, and thus picture the soul as a complete entity slipping entirely from the one state of existence to the other. The more correct definitions of the process would probably represent incarnation as taking place on this physical plane of nature by reason of an efflux emanating from the soul. The spiritual realm would all the while be the proper habitat of the soul, which would never entirely quit it; *and that non-materializable portion of the soul which abides permanently on the spiritual plane may fitly, perhaps, be spoken of as the Higher Self.*

This "Higher Self" is "non-materializable," as Mr. Sinnett says. Even more, it can never be objective under any circumstances, even to the highest spiritual perception. For the "Higher Self" is really the Absolute, and indistinguishable

¹ The length of this "transfer" depends, however, on the degree of spirituality in the ex-personality of the disembodied Ego. For those whose lives were very spiritual this transfer, though gradual, is very rapid. The time becomes longer with the materialistically inclined.

from it. In hours of *samadhi* (ecstasy), the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed in the One Essence.

ON THE NATURE OF OUR THINKING PRINCIPLE

ENQUIRER—*At the present moment I am not quite clear in my mind as to what it is precisely that survives, and I would like to have it explained. What is it?*

THEOSOPHIST—I have just explained that the reincarnating principle, or that which we call the divine man, is indestructible throughout the life-cycle; indestructible as a thinking *entity*, and even as an ethereal form. It carries the spiritualized *remembrance*, during the devachanic period, of the ex-personality—Mr. A. or Mrs. B.—with which the Ego identifies itself during that period. Since the devachanic period is but the continuation of the earth-life, so to say—the very acme and pith, in an unbroken series, of the few happy moments in that now past existence—the Ego has to identify itself with the personal consciousness of that earth-life.

Enq.—*This means that the Ego, notwithstanding its divine nature, passes every such period between two incarnations in a state of mental obscuration.*

Theo.—You may regard it as you like. We view it as a very natural sequence or development of the terrestrial life. What is life? A bundle of the most varied experiences, of daily changing ideas, emotions and opinions. In our youth we are often enthusiastically devoted to an ideal, to some hero or heroine whom we try to follow and revive; a few years later, when the freshness of our youthful feelings has faded out and sobered down, we are the first to laugh at our fancies. And yet there was a day when we had so thoroughly identified our own personality with that of the ideal in our mind—especially if it was that of a living being—that it became entirely merged and lost in our ideal. Can it be said of a man of fifty that he is the same being that he was at twenty? The inner man is the same; the outward living personality is completely transformed and changed. Would you also call these changes in the human mental states obscuration?

Enq.—*How would you name them, and especially how would you explain the permanence of one and the evanescence of the other?*

Theo.—We have our own doctrine ready, and to us it offers no difficulty. The clue lies in the double consciousness of our mind, and also, in the dual nature of the mental principle. There is a spiritual consciousness—the mind illumined by the light of the spirit—which subjectively perceives abstractions, and a sentient consciousness—the lower light of the mind—inseparable from our physical brain and senses. The latter consciousness is held in subjection by the brain and physical senses, and, being in its turn equally dependent on them, must of course fade out and finally die with the disappearance of the brain and physical senses. It is only the spiritual consciousness, whose root lies in eternity, which survives and lives for ever, and may, therefore, be regarded as immortal. Everything else belongs to passing illusions.

Enq.—*What do you really understand by illusion in this case?*

Theo.—It is very well described in the above mentioned essay on the “Higher Self,” in which the author says:

The theory we are considering (the interchange of ideas between the Higher Ego and the lower self) harmonizes very well with the treatment of this world in which we live as a phenomenal world of illusion, the

spiritual planes 'of nature being on the other hand the noumenal world or plane of reality. That region of nature in which, so to speak, the permanent soul is rooted is more real than that in which its transitory blossoms appear for a brief space to wither and fall to pieces, while the plant recovers energy for sending forth a fresh flower. Supposing flowers only were perceptible to ordinary senses, and their roots existed in a state of nature intangible and invisible to us, philosophers in such a world who divined that there were such things as roots in another plane of existence would be apt to say of the flowers : These are not the real plants ; they are of no relative importance, merely illusive phenomena of the moment.

This is what I mean. It is not the world in which blossom the transitory and evanescent flowers of personal lives which is the real permanent world ; but that one in which we find the root of consciousness, the root which is beyond illusion and dwells in the eternity.

Enq.—*What do you mean by the root dwelling in eternity ?*

Theo.—I mean by this root the thinking entity, the Ego which incarnates, whether we regard it as an angel, a spirit, or a force. Of that which falls under our sensuous perceptions only what grows directly from, or is attached to, this invisible root above, can partake of its immortal life. Hence

every noble thought, idea and aspiration, of the personality it informs, proceeding from and fed by this root, must become permanent. As to the physical consciousness, it must disappear. It is the higher consciousness which displays activity, while the body is asleep; our memory registering but feebly and inaccurately—because automatically—such experiences, and often failing to be even slightly impressed by them.

Enq.—*But how is it that mind, although you call it nous, a "god," is so weak during its incarnations, as to be actually conquered and fettered by its body?*

Theo.—I might retort with a similar question and ask: How is it that he, whom you regard as "God of Gods" and the One Living God, is so weak as to allow evil (or the devil) to have the best of *him* as much as of all his creatures, both while in heaven, and also during the time he was incarnated on this earth? You are sure to reply again: This is a mystery; and we are forbidden to pry into the mysteries of God. But as we are not forbidden to do so by our religious philosophy, I answer that, unless a God descends as an *avatara*, no divine principle can be otherwise than cramped and paralyzed by turbulent animal matter. Spiritual and

divine powers lie dormant in every human being; and the wider the sweep of his spiritual vision the mightier will be the God within him. But few men can feel that God. As an average rule, deity is always bound and limited in our thought by earlier conceptions, ideas inculcated in us from childhood, therefore, it is so difficult for you to understand our philosophy.

Enq.—*And is it this Ego of ours which is our God?*

Theo.—Not at all; “a God” is not the universal deity, but only a spark from the one ocean of Divine Fire. Our God *within* us, or “our Father in secret” is what we call the Higher Self, Atma. Our incarnating Ego was a God in its origin, as were all the primeval emanations of the One Unknown Principle. But, since its “fall into matter,” having to incarnate throughout the cycle, in succession, from first to last, it is no longer a free and happy God, but a poor pilgrim on his way to regain that which he has lost. I can answer you more fully by repeating what is said of the Inner Man in *Isis Unveiled* (ii. 593):

From the remotest antiquity *mankind* as a whole *have always been convinced of the existence of a personal spiritual entity within the personal physical man.* This

inner entity was more or less divine, according to its proximity to the *crown*. . . . The closer the union, the more serene man's destiny, the less dangerous the external conditions. This belief is neither bigotry nor superstition, only an ever-present, instinctive feeling of the proximity of another spiritual and invisible world, which, though it be subjective to the senses of the outward man, is perfectly objective to the inner ego. Furthermore, they believed that *there are external and internal conditions which affect the determination of our will upon our actions*. They rejected fatalism, for fatalism implies a blind course of some still blinder power. But they believed in *destiny* (or Karma), which from birth to death every man is weaving thread by thread around himself, as a spider does his cobweb; and this destiny is guided either by that presence termed by some the guardian angel, or by our more intimate astral inner man, who is but too often the evil genius of the man of flesh (or the personality). Both these lead on . . . *man*, but one of them must prevail; and from the very beginning of the invisible affray the stern and implacable *law of compensation (and retribution)* steps in and takes its course, following faithfully the fluctuations (of the conflict). When the last strand is woven, and man is seemingly enwrapped in the net-work of his own doing, then he finds himself completely under the empire of this *self-made* destiny.

Such is the destiny of the *man*—the true Ego. It is for this *man* to become the conqueror over matter.

THE COMPLEX NATURE OF THE MIND

Enq.—*But you wanted to tell me something of the essential nature of mind, and of the relation in which the attributes of physical man stand to it.*

Theo.—It is this nature, mysterious, protean, beyond any grasp, and almost shadowy in its correlations, that is so difficult to realize, and still more difficult to explain. Mind is a principle, and yet it is an entity and individuality, or Ego. He is a God, and yet he is doomed to an endless cycle of incarnations, for each of which he is made responsible, and for each of which he has to suffer. Try to imagine a spirit, a celestial being, whether we call it by one name or another, divine in its essential nature, yet not pure enough to be one with the ALL, and consequently, having to purify its nature so that it may finally reach that goal. It can do so only by passing *individually* and *personally*, *i.e.*, spiritually and physically, through every experience and feeling that exists in the manifold or differentiated universe. It has, therefore, after gaining experience in the lower kingdoms, and having ascended higher and still higher with every rung on the ladder of being, to pass through

every experience on the human planes. In its very essence it is *thought*, and is, therefore, called in its plurality "sons of the (universal) mind". This individualized thought is what we Theosophists call the real human Ego, the thinking entity imprisoned in a case of flesh and bones. This is surely a spiritual entity, not matter, and such entities are the incarnating Egos, informing the bundle of animal matter called mankind. But once imprisoned, or incarnate, their essence becomes dual; that is to say, the *rays* of the eternal Divine Mind, considered as individual entities, assume a two-fold attribute: (a) their *essential* inherent characteristic, heaven-aspiring mind or higher mind, and (b) the human quality of thinking, or animal cogitation, rationalized owing to the superiority of the human brain, the downward-tending or lower mind. One gravitates toward the Spirit, the other tends downward, to the seat of passions and animal desires. The latter have no room in Devachan, nor can they associate with the divine part which ascends into mental bliss. Yet it is the Ego which is held responsible for all the sins of the lower attributes, just as a parent is answerable for the transgressions of the child, so long as the latter remains irresponsible.

Enq.—*Is this "child" the personality?*

Theo.—It is. The body, which was only the objective symbol of Mr. A. or Mrs. B., fades away with all the visible expressions of it. But all that which during life constituted the *spiritual* bundle of experiences, the noblest aspirations, undying affections, and *unselfish* nature of Mr. A. or Mrs. B., clings for the time of the devachanic period to the Ego, and the Ego is identified with the spiritual portion of the terrestrial entity, which has now passed away out of sight. The *actor* is so imbued with the *role* he has lately played that he dreams of it during the whole devachanic night, and this *vision* continues till the hour strikes for him to return to the stage of life to enact another part.

Enq.—*But how is it that this doctrine, which you say is as old as thinking men, has found no room, say, in Christian theology?*

Theo.—You are mistaken, it has; only theology has disfigured it out of all recognition, as it has many other doctrines. Theology calls the Ego the angel that God gives us at the moment of our birth, *to take care of our soul*. Theological logic instead of holding that “angel” responsible for the transgressions of the poor helpless “soul,” makes the latter punishable for all the sins of both flesh and mind! It is the soul, the immaterial “breath” of

God, which is doomed to burn in a material hell without ever being consumed, while the "angel" escapes scot-free, after folding his white pinions and wetting them with a few tears.

Enq.—*To this the adherents of this belief might answer, that if even the orthodox dogma does promise the impenitent sinner and materialist a bad time of it in a rather too realistic inferno, it gives them, on the other hand, a chance for repentance to the last minute. Moreover they do not teach annihilation, or loss of personality, which comes to the same thing.*

Theo.—If the Church teaches nothing of the kind, on the other hand, Jesus does; and that is something to those, at least, who place Christ higher than Christianity.

Enq.—*Does Christ teach anything of the sort?*

Theo.—He does; and every well-informed Occultist and even Kabalist will tell you so. Christ, or the fourth Gospel at any rate, teaches reincarnation and also the annihilation of the personality, if you will only forget the dead letter and hold to the esoteric spirit. Remember verses 1 and 2 in chapter xv of St. John. What does the parable speak about if not of the spirit in man? He is the "husbandman"—the spiritual Ego, or Christos, the

“vine,” while the personality is the “branch”. “I am the *true* vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine; ye are the branches. . . . If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch, and is *withered*”—and cast into the fire and burned.

Now we explain it in this way. Disbelieving in the hell-fires which theology discovers as underlying the threat to the “branches,” we say that “husbandman” is the symbol for the infinite, impersonal principle, while the “vine” stands for the spiritual soul, Christos, and each “branch” represents a new incarnation.

Enq.—*But what proofs have you to support such an arbitrary interpretation?*

Theo.—Universal symbology is a warrant for its correctness and that it is not arbitrary. The Ego is the “man-god” of Plato, who crucifies himself in “space,” or the duration of the life cycle, for the redemption of matter. This he does by incarnating over and over again, thus leading mankind onward to perfection, and making thereby room for lower forms to develop into higher. Not for even one life

does he cease progressing himself and also helping all physical nature to progress.

Enq.—*But does not the author of "Isis Unveiled" stand accused of having preached against reincarnation?*

Theo.—By those who have misunderstood what was said, yes. At the time that work was written reincarnation was not believed in by any spiritualists, either English or American, and what is said there of reincarnation was directed against the French Spiritists, whose theory is as unphilosophical and absurd as the Eastern teaching is logical and self-evident in its truth. The reincarnationists of the Allan Kardec school believe in an arbitrary and immediate reincarnation. With them, the dead father can incarnate in his own unborn daughter, and so on. They have neither Devachan, Karma, nor any philosophical theory that would warrant or prove the necessity of consecutive rebirths. But how can the author of *Isis Unveiled* argue against *karmic* reincarnation, at long intervals varying between 1,000 and 1,500 years, when it is the fundamental belief of both Buddhists and Hindus?

Enq.—*Then you reject the theories of both the Spiritists and the Spiritualists, in their entirety?*

Theo.—Not in their entirety, but only with regard to their respective fundamental beliefs. Both rely on what their “spirits” tell them; and both disagree as much with each other as Theosophists disagree with both. Truth is one; and when we hear the French spooks preaching reincarnation, and the English spooks denying and denouncing the doctrine, we say that either the French or the English “spirits” do not know what they are talking about. We believe with the Spiritualists and the Spiritists in the existence of “spirits,” or invisible beings endowed with more or less intelligence. But, while in our teachings their kinds and *genera* are legion, our opponents admit of no other than human disembodied “spirits,” which, to our knowledge, are mostly personality remnants.

Enq.—*You seem very bitter against “spirits”.* As you have given me your views and your reasons for disbelieving in the materialization of, and direct communication in, seances with the disembodied spirits—or the “spirits of the dead”—would you mind enlightening me as to one more fact? Why are some Theosophists never tired of saying how dangerous is intercourse with spirits, and mediumship? Have they any particular reason for this?

Theo.—We must suppose so. I know I have. Owing to my familiarity for over half a century with these invisible, but only too tangible and undeniable “influence,” from the conscious elementals and semi-conscious remains, down to the utterly senseless and non-descript spooks of all kinds, I claim a certain right to my views.

Enq.—*Can you give an instance or instances to show why these practices should be regarded as dangerous?*

Theo.—This would require more time than I can give you. Every cause must be judged by the effects it produces. Go over the history of Spiritualism for the last fifty years, ever since its reappearance in this century in America—and judge for yourself whether it has done its votaries more good or harm. Pray understand me. I do not speak against real spiritualism, but against the modern movement which goes under that name, and the so-called philosophy invented to explain its phenomena.

Enq.—*Do you not believe in their phenomena at all?*

Theo.—It is because I believe in them with too good reason, and—save some cases of deliberate fraud—know them to be as true as that you and I live, that all my being revolts against them. Once

more I speak only of physical, and mental or even psychic phenomena. Like attracts like. There are several high-minded, pure, good men and women, known to me personally, who have passed years of their lives under the direct guidance and even protection of high "spirits," whether disembodied or planetary. But *these* intelligences are not of the type of the "John Kings" and the "Ernests" who figure in *seance*-rooms. These intelligences guide and control mortals only in rare and exceptional cases to which they are attracted and magnetically drawn by the karmic past of the individual. It is not enough to sit "for development" in order to attract them. That only opens the door to a swarm of spooks, good, bad and indifferent, to which the medium becomes a slave for life. It is against such promiscuous mediumship and intercourse with goblins that I raise my voice, not against spiritual mysticism. The latter is ennobling and holy; the former is of just the same nature as the phenomena of two centuries ago, for which so many witches and wizards have been made to suffer. Read Glanvil and other authors on the subject of witchcraft, and you will find recorded there the parallels of most, if not all, of the physical phenomena of nineteenth century "Spiritualism".

Enq.—*Do you mean to suggest that it is all witchcraft and nothing more?*

Theo.—I mean that, whether conscious or unconscious, all this dealing with the dead is necromancy, and a most dangerous practice. For ages before Moses such raising of the dead was regarded by all the intelligent nations as sinful and cruel, inasmuch as it disturbs the rest of the souls and interferes with their evolutionary development into higher states. The collective wisdom of all past centuries has ever been loud in denouncing such practices. Finally, I say, what I have never ceased repeating orally and in print for fifteen years: While some of the so-called "spirits" do not know what they are talking about, repeating merely, like poll-parrots, what they find in the mediums' and other people's brains, others are most dangerous, and can only lead one to evil. These are too self-evident facts. Go into spiritualistic circles of the Allan Kardec school, and you find "spirits" asserting reincarnation and speaking like Roman Catholics born. Turn to the "dear departed ones" in England and America, and you will hear them denying reincarnation through thick and thin, denouncing those who teach it, and holding to Protestant views. Your best, your most powerful

mediums, have all suffered in health of body and mind. Think of the sad end of Charles Foster, who died in an asylum, raving lunatic; of Slade, an epileptic; of Eglinton—the best medium now in England—subject to the same disease. Look back over the life of D. D. Home, a man whose mind was steeped in gall and bitterness, who never had a good word to say of anyone whom he suspected of possessing psychic powers, and who slandered every other medium to the bitter end. This Calvin of Spiritualism suffered for years from a terrible spinal disease, brought on by his intercourse with the “spirits,” and died a perfect wreck. Think again of the sad fate of poor Washington Irving Bishop. I knew him in New York, when he was fourteen, and he was undeniably a medium. It is true that the poor man stole a march on his “spirits,” and baptized them “unconscious muscular action”. But his end was a sad one.

Enq.—*Bút is your inference a correct one?*

Theo.—What would you infer if the best pupils of a particular school of singing broke down from overstrained sore throats? That the method followed was a bad one? So I think the inference is equally fair with regard to Spiritualism when we see their best mediums fall a prey to such a fate. We can

only say: Let those who are interested in the question judge the tree of Spiritualism by its fruits, and ponder over the lesson. We Theosophists have always regarded the Spiritualists as brothers having the same mystic tendency as ourselves, but they have always regarded us as enemies. We, being in possession of an older philosophy, have tried to help and warn them; but they have repaid us by reviling and traducing us and our motives in every possible way. Nevertheless, the best English Spiritualists say just as we do, wherever they treat of their belief seriously. Hear "M. A. Oxon." confessing this truth.

Spiritualists are too much inclined to dwell exclusively on the intervention of external spirits in this world of ours *and to ignore the powers of the incarnate Spirit.*

Why vilify and abuse us, then, for saying precisely the same? And now let us return to reincarnation.

THE MYSTERIES OF REINCARNATION

PERIODICAL REBIRTHS

ENQUIRER—*You mean, then, that we have all lived on earth before, in many past incarnations, and shall go on so living?*

THEOSOPHIST—I do. The life-cycle, or rather the cycle of conscious life, begins with the separation of the mortal animal-man into sexes, and will end with the close of the last generation of men in the Seventh Round and Seventh Race of mankind. Considering we are only in the Fourth Round and Fifth Race, its duration is more easily imagined than expressed.

Enq.—*And we keep on incarnating in new personalities all the time?*

Theo.—Most assuredly so; because this life-cycle or period of incarnation may be best compared

to human life. As each such life is composed of days of activity separated by nights of sleep or of inaction, so, in the incarnation-cycle, an active life is followed by a devachanic rest.

Enq.—*And it is this succession of births that is generally defined as reincarnation ?*

Theo.—Just so. It is only through these births that the perpetual progress of the countless millions of Egos toward final perfection, and a final rest, as long as was the period of activity, can be achieved.

Enq.—*And what is it that regulates the duration or special qualities of these incarnations ?*

Theo.—Karma, the universal law of retributive justice.

Enq.—*Is it an intelligent law ?*

Theo.—For the materialist, who calls the law of periodicity which regulates the marshalling of bodies, and all the other laws in Nature, blind forces and mechanical laws, no doubt Karma would be a law of chance and no more. For us, no adjective or qualification could describe that which is impersonal, and not an entity, but a universal operative law. If you question me about the causative intelligence in it, I must answer you, I do not know. But if you ask me to define its effects and tell you what these are in our belief, I may say that the experience

of thousands of ages has shown us that they are absolute and unerring equity, wisdom, and intelligence. For Karma in its effects is an unfailing redresser of human injustice, and of all the failures of Nature; a stern adjuster of wrongs; a retributive law which rewards and punishes with equal impartiality. It is, in the strictest sense, "no respecter of persons," though, on the other hand, it can neither be propitiated nor turned aside by prayer. This is a belief common to Hindus and Buddhists, who believe in Karma.

Enq.—*In this Christian dogmas contradict both, and I doubt whether any Christian will accept the teaching.*

Theo.—No; and Inman gave the reason for it many years ago. As he put it:

The Christians will accept any nonsense, if promulgated by the Church as a matter of faith . . . the Buddhists hold that nothing which is contradicted by sound reason can be a true doctrine of the Buddha.

The Buddhists do not believe in any pardon for their sins, except after an adequate and just punishment for each evil deed or thought in a future incarnation, and a proportionate compensation to the parties injured.

Enq.—*Where is it so stated?*

Theo.—In most of their sacred works. In the *Wheel of the Law* (p. 57) you may find the following theosophical tenet :

Buddhists believe that every act, word or thought has its consequence, which will appear sooner or later in the present or in the future state. Evil acts will produce evil consequences, good acts will produce good consequences, prosperity in this world, or birth in heaven [Devachan] . . . in the future state.

Enq.—*Christians believe the same thing, do they not ?*

Theo.—Oh, no ; they believe in the pardon and the remission of all sins. They are promised that if they only believe in the blood of the Christ—an *innocent* victim !—in the blood offered by Him for the expiation of the sins of the whole of mankind, it will atone for every mortal sin. And we believe neither in vicarious atonement, nor in the possibility of the remission of the smallest sin by any god, not even by a *personal* Absolute or Infinite, if such a thing could have any existence. What we believe in is strict and impartial justice. Our idea of the unknown Universal Deity, represented by Karma, is that it is a power which cannot fail, and can, therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, but only absolute equity, which leaves every cause, great or

small, to work out its inevitable effects. The saying of Jesus, "with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again," (*Matt.*, vii. 2), neither by expression nor implication points to any hope of future mercy or salvation by proxy. This is why, recognizing as we do in our philosophy the justice of this statement, we cannot recommend too strongly mercy, charity, and forgiveness of mutual offences. "Resist not evil," and "render good for evil," are Buddhist precepts, and were first preached in view of the implacability of karmic law. For man to take the law into his own hands is in any case a sacrilegious presumption. Human law may use restrictive, not punitive measures; but a man who, believing in Karma, still revenges himself, still refuses to forgive every injury, whereby he would render good for evil, is a criminal and only hurts himself. As Karma is sure to punish the man who has wronged another by seeking to inflict an additional punishment on one's enemy, and instead of leaving that punishment to the great Law adding to it one's own mite, we only beget thereby a cause for the future reward of our enemy and a future punishment for ourselves. The unfailing "regulator" in each incarnation affects the quality of its successor, and the sum of the merit or demerit in

preceding incarnations determines the following rebirth.

Enq.—*Are we, then, to infer a man's past from his present?*

Theo.—Only so far as to believe that his present life is what it justly should be, to atone for the sins of the past life. Of course—seers and great adepts excepted—we cannot as average mortals know what those sins were. From our paucity of data, it is impossible for us to determine even what an old man's youth must have been: neither can we, for like reasons, draw final conclusions merely from what we see in the life of some man, as to what his past life may have been.

WHAT IS KARMA?

Enq.—*But what is Karma?*

Theo.—As I have said, we consider it as the *ultimate law* of the universe, the source, origin, and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like

produces like, Karma is that unseen and unknown law which *adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself unknowable, its action is perceivable.

Enq.—*Then it is the “absolute,” the “unknowable” again, and is not of much value as an explanation of the problems of life.*

Theo.—On the contrary. For, though we do not know what Karma is *per se*, and in its essence, we do know *how* it works, and we can define and describe its mode of action with accuracy. We only do *not* know its ultimate *cause*, just as modern philosophy universally admits that the *ultimate* cause of a thing is “unknowable”.

Enq.—*And what has Theosophy to say in regard to the solution of the more practical needs of humanity? What is the explanation which it offers of the awful suffering and dire necessity prevalent among the so-called “lower classes”?*

Theo.—To be pointed: according to our teaching, all these great social evils—the distinction of classes in society, and of the sexes in the affairs of life, the unequal distribution of capital and of labour—all are due to what we tersely but truly denominate Karma.

Enq.—*But, surely, all these evils which seem to fall upon the masses somewhat indiscriminately are not actual merited and individual Karma?*

Theo.—No, they cannot be so strictly defined in their effects as to show that each individual environment, and the particular conditions of life in which each person finds himself, are nothing more than the retributive Karma which the individual has generated in a previous life. We must not lose sight of the fact that every atom is subject to the general law governing the whole body to which it belongs, and here we come upon the wider track of the Karmic law. Do you not perceive that the aggregate of individual Karma becomes that of the nation to which those individuals belong, and further, that the sum total of national Karma is that of the world? The evils that you speak of are not peculiar to the individual or even to the nation, they are more or less universal; and it is upon this broad line of human interdependence that the law of Karma finds its legitimate and equitable issue.

Enq.—*Do I, then, understand that the law of Karma is not necessarily an individual law?*

Theo.—That is just what I mean. It is impossible that Karma could readjust the balance of power in the world's life and progress, unless it had a broad

and general line of action. It is held as a truth among Theosophists that the interdependence of humanity is the cause of what is called distributive Karma, and it is this law which affords the solution to the great question of collective suffering and its relief. It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way no one can sin, nor suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality, there is no such thing as "separateness"; and the nearest approach to that selfish state, which the laws of life permit, is in the intent or motive.

Enq.—*And are there no means by which the distributive or national Karma might be concentrated or collected, so to speak, and brought to its natural and legitimate fulfilment without all this protracted suffering?*

Theo.—As a general rule, and within certain limits which define the age to which we belong, the law of Karma cannot be hastened or retarded in its fulfilment. But of this I am certain, the point of possibility in either of these directions has never yet been touched. Listen to the following recital of one phase of national suffering, and then ask yourself whether, admitting the working power of

individual, relative, and distributive Karma, these evils are not capable of extensive modification and general relief. What I am about to read to you is from the pen of a national saviour,¹ one who, having overcome *self*, and being free to choose, has elected to serve humanity, in bearing at least as much as a woman's shoulders can possibly bear of national Karma. This is what she says :

Yes. Nature always does speak, don't you think ? Only sometimes we make so much noise that we drown her voice. That is why it is so restful to go out of the town and nestle awhile in the Mother's arms. I am thinking of the evening on Hampstead Heath when we watched the sun go down ; but oh ! upon what suffering and misery that sun had set ! A lady brought me yesterday a big hamper of wild flowers. I thought some of my East-end family had a better right to it than I, and so I took it down to a very poor school in Whitechapel this morning. You should have seen the pallid little faces brighten ! Thence I went to pay for some dinners at a little cookshop for some children. It was in a back street, narrow, full of jostling people ; stench indescribable, from fish, meat, and other comestibles, all reeking in a sun that, in Whitechapel, festers instead of purifying. The cook-shop was the quintessence of all the smells. Indescribable meat-pies at 1d., loathsome lumps of " food " and swarms of flies, a very altar of Beelzebub. All about, babies on the prowl

¹ Dr. Annie Besant.—C. M. C.

for scraps, one with the face of an angel gathering up cherry-stones as a light and nutritious form of diet. I came westward with every nerve shuddering and jarred, wondering whether anything can be done with some parts of London save swallowing them up in an earthquake and starting their inhabitants afresh, after a plunge into some purifying Lethe, out of which not a memory might emerge! And then I thought of Hampstead Heath, and—pondered. If by any sacrifice one could win the power to save these people, the cost would not be worth counting; but, you see, *they* must be changed—and how can that be wrought? In the condition they now are, they would not profit by any environment in which they might be placed; and yet, in their present surroundings they must continue to putrefy. It breaks my heart, this endless, hopeless misery, and the brutish degradation that is at once its outgrowth and its root. It is like the banyan tree; every branch roots itself and sends out new shoots. What a difference between these feelings and the peaceful scene at Hampstead! and yet we who are the brothers and sisters of these poor creatures, have only a right to use Hampstead Heaths to gain strength to save Whitechapels. [*Signed by a name too respected and too well known to be given to scoffers.*]

Enq.—*That is a sad but beautiful letter, and I think it presents with painful conspicuity the terrible workings of what you have called “relative” and “distributive” Karma. But alas! there seems no immediate hope of any relief*

short of an earthquake, or some such general ingulfment.

Theo.—What right have we to think so while one-half of humanity is in a position to effect an immediate relief of the privations which are suffered by their fellows? When every individual has contributed to the general good what he can of money, of labour, and of ennobling thought, then, and only then, will the balance of national Karma be struck, and until then we have no right nor any reasons for saying that there is more life on the earth than Nature can support. It is reserved for the heroic souls, the saviours of our race and nation, to find out the cause of this unequal pressure of retributive Karma, and by a supreme effort to readjust the balance of power, and save the people from a moral ingulfment a thousand times more disastrous and more permanently evil than the like physical catastrophe, in which you seem to see the only possible outlet for this accumulated misery.

Enq.—*Well, then, tell me generally how you describe this law of Karma?*

Theo.—We describe Karma as that law of readjustment which ever tends to restore disturbed equilibrium in the physical, and broken harmony in

the moral world. We say that Karma does not act in this or that particular way always; but that it always *does* act so as to restore harmony and preserve the balance of equilibrium, in virtue of which the universe exists.

Enq.—*Give me an illustration.*

Theo.—Later on I will give you a full illustration. Think now of a pond. A stone falls into the water and creates disturbing waves. These waves oscillate backwards and forwards till at last, owing to the operation of what physicists call the law of the dissipation of energy, they are brought to rest, and the water returns to its condition of calm tranquillity. Similarly *all* action, on every plane, produces disturbance in the balanced harmony of the universe, and the vibrations so produced will continue to roll backwards and forwards, if the area is limited, till equilibrium is restored. But since each such disturbance starts from some particular point, it is clear that equilibrium and harmony can only be restored by the reconverging *to that same point* of all the forces which were set in motion from it. And here you have proof that the consequences of a man's deeds, thoughts, etc., must all react upon *himself* with the same force with which they were set in motion.

Enq.—*But I see nothing of a moral character about this law. It looks to me like the simple physical law that action and reaction are equal and opposite.*

Theo.—I am not surprised to hear you say that. Europeans have got so much into the ingrained habit of considering right and wrong, good and evil, as matters of an arbitrary code of law laid down either by men, or imposed upon them by a personal God. We, Theosophists, however, say that “good” and “harmony,” and “evil” and “disharmony,” are synonymous. Further we maintain that all pain and suffering are results of want of harmony, and that the one terrible and only cause of the disturbance of harmony is *selfishness* in some form or other. Hence Karma gives back to every man the *actual consequences* of his own actions, without any regard to their moral character ; but since he receives his due for *all*, it is obvious that he will be made to atone for all sufferings which he has caused, just as he will reap in joy and gladness the fruits of all the happiness and harmony he had helped to produce. I can do no better than quote for your benefit certain passages from books and articles written by those of our Theosophists who have a correct idea of Karma.

Enq.—*I wish you would, as your literature seems to be very sparing on this subject.*

Theo.—Because it is *the* most difficult of all our tenets. Some short time ago there appeared the following objection from a Christian pen :

Granting that the teaching in regard to Theosophy is correct, and that “man must be his own saviour, must overcome self and conquer the evil that is in his dual nature, to obtain the emancipation of his soul”—what is man to do after he has been awakened and converted to a certain extent from evil or wickedness? How is he to get emancipation, or pardon, or the blotting out of the evil or wickedness he has already done?

To this Mr. J. H. Connelly replies very pertinently that no one can hope to “make the theosophical engine run on the theological track”. As he has it :

The possibility of shirking individual responsibility is not among the concepts of Theosophy. In this faith there is no such thing as pardoning, or “blotting out of evil or wickedness already done,” otherwise than by the adequate punishment therefor of the wrong-doer and the restoration of the harmony in the universe that had been disturbed by his wrongful act. The evil has been his own, and while others must suffer its consequences, atonement can be made by nobody but himself.

The condition contemplated . . . in which a man shall have been “awakened and converted to a certain

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extent from evil or wickedness," is that in which a man shall have realized that his deeds are evil and deserving of punishment. In that realization a sense of personal responsibility is inevitable, and just in proportion to the extent of his awakening or "converting" must be the sense of that awful responsibility. While it is strong upon him is the time when he is urged to accept the doctrine of vicarious atonement.

He is told that he must also repent, but nothing is easier than that. It is an amiable weakness of human nature that we are quite prone to regret the evil we have done when our attention is called, and we have either suffered from it ourselves or enjoyed its fruits. Possibly, close analysis of the feeling would show us that that which we regret is rather the necessity that seemed to require the evil as a means of attainment of our selfish ends than the evil itself.

Attractive as this prospect of casting our burden of sins "at the foot of the cross" may be to the ordinary mind, it does not commend itself to the Theosophic student. He does not apprehend why the sinner by attaining knowledge of his evil can thereby merit any pardon for the blotting out of his past wickedness; or why repentance and future right living entitle him to a suspension in his favour of the universal law of relation between cause and effect. The results of his evil deeds continue to exist; the suffering caused to others by his wickedness is not blotted out. The Theosophical student takes the result of wickedness upon the innocent into his problem. He considers not only the guilty person, but his victims.

Evil is an infraction of the laws of harmony governing the universe, and the penalty thereof must fall upon the violator of the law himself. Christ uttered the warning, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee," and St. Paul said, "Work out your own salvation. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." That, by the way, is a fine metaphoric rendering of the sentence of the *Puranas*, far antedating him, that "every man reaps the consequences of his own acts."

This is the principle of the law of Karma which is taught by Theosophy. Sinnett, in his *Esoteric Buddhism*, rendered Karma as "the law of ethical causation". "The law of retribution," as Madame Blavatsky translates its meaning is better. It is the power which

Just though mysterious leads us on unerring
Through ways unmarked from guilt to punishment.

But it is more. It rewards merit as unerringly and amply as it punishes demerit. It is the outcome of every act, of thought, word and deed, and by it men mould themselves, their lives and happenings. Eastern philosophy rejects the idea of a newly created soul for every baby born. It believes in a limited number of monads, evolving and growing more and more perfect through their assimilation of many successive personalities. Those personalities are the product of Karma, and it is by Karma and reincarnation that the human monad in time returns to its source—absolute deity.

E. D. Walker, in his *Reincarnation*, offers the following explanation :

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Briefly, the doctrine of Karma is that we have made ourselves what we are by former actions, and are building our future eternity by present actions. There is no destiny but what we ourselves determine. There is no salvation or condemnation except what we ourselves bring about Because it offers no shelter for culpable actions and necessitates a sterling manliness, it is less welcome to weak natures than the easy religious tenets of vicarious atonement, intercession, forgiveness and death-bed conversions. . . . In the domain of eternal justice the offence and the punishment are inseparably connected as the same event, because there is no real distinction between the action and its outcome. . . . It is Karma, or our old acts, that draws us back into earthly life. The Spirit's abode changes according to its Karma, and this Karma forbids any long continuance in one condition, because *it* is always changing. So long as action is governed by material and selfish motives, just so long must the effect of that action be manifested in physical rebirths. Only the perfectly selfless man can elude the gravitation of material life. Few have attained this, but it is the goal of mankind.

And then the writer quotes from *The Secret Doctrine* :

Those who believe in Karma have to believe in destiny, which, from birth to death, every man is weaving, thread by thread, around himself, as a spider does his cobweb; and this destiny is guided either by the heavenly voice of the invisible prototype outside of us, or by our more intimate astral or inner man, who is but too often the

evil genius of the embodied entity called man. Both these lead on the outward man, but one of them must prevail; and from the very beginning of the invisible affray the stern and implacable law of compensation steps in and takes its course, faithfully following the fluctuations. When the last strand is woven, and man is seemingly enwrapped in the network of his own doing, then he finds himself completely under the empire of this self-made destiny. . . .

An Occultist or a philosopher will not speak of the goodness or cruelty of Providence; but, identifying it with Karma, Nemesis, he will teach that, nevertheless, it guards the good and watches over them in this as in future lives; and that it punishes the evil-doer—aye, even to his seventh rebirth—so long, in short, as the effect of his having thrown into perturbation even the smallest atom in the infinite world of harmony has not been finally re-adjusted. For the only decree of Karma—an eternal and immutable decree—is absolute harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through and along with Nature, abiding by the laws on which that harmony depends, or break them.

Nor would the ways of Karma be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of those ways—which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate; while another sees in them the action of blind fatalism; and a third, simple chance, with neither gods nor

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devils to guide them—would surely disappear if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause. . . .

We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making and the riddles of life that we will not solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. But verily there is not an accident of our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or in another life. . . .

The law of Karma is inextricably interwoven with that of reincarnation. . . . It is only this doctrine that can explain to us the mysterious problem of good and evil, and reconcile man to the terrible and apparent injustice of life. Nothing but such certainty can quiet our revolted sense of justice. For, when one unacquainted with the noble doctrine looks around him and observes the inequalities of birth and fortune, of intellect and capacities; when one sees honour paid to fools and profligates, on whom fortune has heaped her favours by mere privilege of birth, and their nearest neighbour, with all his intellect and noble virtues—far more deserving in every way—perishing for want and for lack of sympathy; when one sees all this and has to turn away, helpless to relieve the undeserved suffering, one's ears ringing and heart aching with the cries of pain around him—that blessed knowledge of Karma alone prevents him from cursing life and men as well as their supposed creator. . . .

This law, whether conscious or unconscious, predestines nothing and no one. It exists from and in eternity truly, for it is eternity itself; and as such, since no act can be co-equal with eternity, it cannot be said to act, for it is

action itself. It is not the wave which drowns the man, but the personal action of the wretch who goes deliberately and places himself under the impersonal action of the laws that govern the ocean's motion. Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plants and creates causes, and karmic law adjusts the effects, which adjustment is not an act but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, like a bough, which, bent down too forcibly, rebounds with corresponding vigour. If it happen to dislocate the arm that tried to bend it out of its natural position, shall we say it is the bough which broke our arm or that our own folly has brought us to grief? Karma has never sought to destroy intellectual and individual liberty, like the god, invented by the monotheists. It has not involved its decrees in darkness purposely to perplex man, nor shall it punish him who dares to scrutinize its mysteries. On the contrary, he who through study and meditation unveils its intricate paths, and throws light on those dark ways, in the windings of which so many men perish owing to their ignorance of the labyrinth of life, is working for the good of his fellow-men. Karma is an absolute and eternal law in the world of manifestation; and as there can be only one Absolute, as one eternal, ever-present Cause, believers in Karma cannot be regarded as atheists or materialists, still less as fatalists, for Karma is one with the Unknowable, of which it is an aspect, in its effects in the phenomenal world.

Another able Theosophic writer, Mrs. P. Sinnett, in her *Purpose of Theosophy*, says :

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Every individual is making Karma either good or bad in each action and thought of his daily round, and is at the same time working out in this life the Karma brought about by the acts and desires of the last. When we see people afflicted by congenital ailments it may be safely assumed that these ailments are the inevitable results of causes started by themselves in a previous birth. It may be argued that, as these afflictions are hereditary, they can have nothing to do with a past incarnation; but it must be remembered that the Ego, the real man, the individuality, has no spiritual origin in the parentage by which it is re-embodied, but it is drawn by the affinities which its previous mode of life attracted round it into the current that carries it, when the time comes for rebirth, to the home best fitted for the development of those tendencies. . . . This doctrine of Karma, when properly understood, is well calculated to guide and assist those who realize its truth to a higher and better mode of life, for it must not be forgotten that not only our actions but our thoughts also are most assuredly followed by a crowd of circumstances that will influence for good or for evil our own future, and, what is still more important, the future of many of our fellow-creatures. If sins of omission and commission could in any case be only self-regarding, the fact on the sinner's Karma would be a matter of minor consequence. The effect that every thought and act through life carries with it for good or evil a corresponding influence on other members of the human family renders a strict sense of justice, morality, and unselfishness so necessary to future happiness or progress. A crime once committed, an evil

thought sent out from the mind, are past recall—no amount of repentance can wipe out their results in the future. Repentance, if sincere, will deter a man from repeating errors; it cannot save him or others from the effects of those already produced, which will most unerringly overtake him either in this life or in the next rebirth.

Mr. J. H. Connelly proceeds :

The believers in a religion based upon such doctrine are willing it should be compared with one in which man's destiny for eternity is determined by the accidents of a single, brief earthly existence, during which he is cheered by the promise that "as the tree falls so shall it lie"; in which his brightest hope, when he wakes up to a knowledge of his wickedness is the doctrine of vicarious atonement, and in which even that is handicapped, according to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith.

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting Life and others foreordained to ever-lasting death.

"These angels and men thus predestinated and fore-ordained are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. . . . As God hath appointed the elect unto glory. . . . Neither are any other redeemed by Christ effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

"The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he

extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin to the praise of his glorious justice."

This is what the able defender says. Nor can we do any better than wind up the subject as he does, by a quotation from a magnificent poem. As he says :

The exquisite beauty of Edwin Arnold's exposition of Karma in *The Light of Asia* tempts to its reproduction here, but it is too long for quotation in full. Here is a portion of it :

Karma—all that total of a soul
Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,
The " self " it wove with woof of viewless time
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts.

* * * *

Before beginning and without an end,
As space eternal and as surety sure,
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
Only its laws endure.

It will not be contemned of anyone ;
Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains ;
The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,
The hidden ill with pains.

It seeth everywhere and marketh all,
Do right—it recompenseth ! Do one wrong—

The equal retribution must be made,
Though Dharma tarry long.

It knows not wrath nor pardon ; utter-true,
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs ;
Times are as naught, to-morrow it will judge
Or after many days.

* * * *

Such is the law which moves to righteousness,
Which none at last can turn aside or stay ;
The heart of it is love, the end of it
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey.

And now I advise you to compare our Theosophic views upon Karma, the law of retribution, and say whether they are not both more philosophical and just than this cruel and idiotic dogma which makes of "God" a senseless fiend; the tenet, namely, that the "elect only" will be saved, and the rest doomed to eternal perdition!

Enq.—*Yes, I see what you mean generally ; but I wish you could give some concrete example of the action of Karma.*

Theo.—That I cannot do. We can only feel sure, as I said before, that our present lives and circumstances are the direct results of our own deeds and thoughts in lives that are past. But we, who are not seers or Initiates, cannot know anything

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about the details of the working of the law of Karma.

Enq.—*Can anyone, even an Adept or seer, follow out this karmic process of readjustment in detail?*

Theo.—Certainly; “those who know” can do so by the exercise of powers which are latent even in all men.

WHO ARE THOSE WHO KNOW?

Enq.—*Does this hold equally of ourselves as of others?*

Theo.—Equally. As just said, the same limited vision exists for all, save for those who have reached, in the present incarnation, the acme of spiritual vision and clairvoyance. We can only perceive that, if things ought to have been different with us, they would have been different; that we are what we have made ourselves, and have only what we have earned for ourselves.

Enq.—*I am afraid such a conception would only embitter us.*

Theo.—I believe it is precisely the reverse. It is disbelief in the just law of retribution that is more likely to awaken every combative feeling in man. A child, as much as a man, resents a punishment, or

even a reproof, he believes to be unmerited, far more than he does a severer punishment, if he feels that it is merited. Belief in Karma is the highest motive for reconciliation to one's lot in this life, and the very strongest incentive towards effort to better the succeeding rebirth. Both of these, indeed, would be destroyed if we supposed that our lot was the result of anything but strict *law*, or that destiny was in any other hands than our own.

Enq.—*You have just asserted that this system of reincarnation under karmic law commended itself to reason, justice, and the moral sense. But, if so, is it not at some sacrifice of the gentler qualities of sympathy and pity, and thus a hardening of the finer instincts of human nature?*

Theo.—Only apparently, not really. No man can receive more or less than his deserts without a corresponding injustice or partiality to others; and a law which could be averted through compassion would bring about more misery than it saved, more irritation and curses than thanks. Remember also, that we do not administer the law, if we do create causes for its effects; it administers itself; and again, that the most copious provision for the manifestation of *just* compassion and mercy is shown in the state of Devachan.

Enq.—*You speak of Adepts as being an exception to the rule of our general ignorance. Do they really know more than we do of reincarnation and after-states ?*

Theo.—They do, indeed. By the training of faculties we all possess, but which they alone have developed to perfection, they have entered in spirit these various planes and states we have been discussing. For long ages, one generation of Adepts after another has studied the mysteries of being, of life, death, and rebirth, and all have taught in their turn some of the facts so learned.

Enq.—*And is the production of Adepts the aim of Theosophy ?*

Theo.—Theosophy considers humanity as an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto. At an advanced point upon the path, Adeptship is reached by those who have devoted several incarnations to its achievement. For, remember well, no man has ever reached adeptship in the Secret Sciences in one life; but many incarnations are necessary for it after the formation of a conscious purpose and the beginning of the needful training. Many may be the men and women in the very midst of our Society who have begun this uphill work towards illumination several incarnations ago,

and who yet, owing to the personal illusions of the present life, are either ignorant of the fact, or on the road to losing every chance, in this existence, of progressing any farther. They feel an irresistible attraction toward occultism and the "higher life," and yet are too personal and self-opinionated, too much in love with the deceptive allurements of mundane life and the world's ephemeral pleasures, to give them up; and so lose their chance in their present birth. But, for ordinary men, for the practical duties of daily life, such a far-off result is inappropriate as an aim and quite ineffective as a motive.

Enq.—*What, then, may be their object or distinct purpose in joining the Theosophical Society?*

Theo.—Many are interested in our doctrines and feel instinctively that they are truer than those of any dogmatic religion. Others have formed a fixed resolve to attain the highest ideal of man's duty.

•

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAITH AND
KNOWLEDGE; OR, BLIND AND REASONED FAITH

Enq.—*You say that they accept and believe in the doctrines of Theosophy. But, as they do not belong to those Adepts you have just mentioned,*

then they must accept your teachings on "blind faith". In what way does this differ from that of conventional religions ?

Theo.—As it differs on almost all the other points, so it differs on this one. What you call "faith," and that which is "blind faith," in reality, with regard to the dogmas of the Christian religions, becomes with us *knowledge*, the logical sequence of things we *know*, about *facts* in Nature. Your doctrines are based upon interpretation, therefore upon the *second-hand* testimony of seers ; ours upon the unvarying and invariable testimony of seers.

Enq.—*Very well ; and this, given out on knowledge, not faith ?*

Theo.—If it is the difference between the two that you want to know, I mean that between *faith on authority* and *faith on one's spiritual intuition*, there is a very great difference.

Enq.—*And is it this "intuition" which forces you to reject God as a personal father, ruler and governor of the universe ?*

Theo.—Precisely. We believe in an ever unknowable Principle, for only blind aberration can make one maintain that the universe, thinking man, and all the marvels contained even in the world of matter, could have grown without some

intelligent powers to bring about the extraordinarily wise arrangement of all its parts. Nature may err, and often does in its details and the external manifestations of its materials, never in its inner causes and results. Ancient pagans held far more philosophical views on this question than modern philosophers, whether Agnostics, Materialists or Christians; and no pagan writer has ever yet advanced the proposition that cruelty and mercy are not finite feelings, and can therefore be made the attributes of an *infinite* God. Their gods, therefore, were all finite. The Siamese author of the *Wheel of the Law*, expresses the same idea about your personal God as ourselves; he says (p. 25):

A Buddhist might believe in the existence of a God, sublime above all human qualities and attributes—a perfect God, above love, and hatred, and jealousy, calmly resting in a quietude that nothing could disturb, and of such a God he would speak no disparagement, not from a desire to please him or fear to offend him, but from natural veneration; but he cannot understand a God with the attributes and qualities of men, a God who loves and hates, and shows anger; a Deity who, whether described as by Christian missionaries or by Mahometans or Brahmins, or Jews, falls below his standard of even an ordinary good man.

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Enq.—*Faith for faith, is not the faith of the Christian who believes, in his human helplessness and humility, that there is a merciful Father in Heaven who will protect him from temptation, help him in life, and forgive him his transgressions, better than the cold and proud, almost fatalistic faith of the Buddhists, Vedantins, and Theosophists ?*

Theo.—Persist in calling our belief “faith” if you will. But once we are again on this ever-recurring question, I ask in my turn: Faith for faith, is not the one based on strict logic and reason better than the one which is based simply on human authority or hero-worship? Our “faith” has all the logical force of the arithmetical truism that two and two will produce four. Your faith is like the logic of some emotional women, of whom Tourgenyeff said that for them two and two were generally five. Yours is a faith, moreover, which clashes not only with every conceivable view of justice and logic, but which, if analyzed, leads man to his moral perdition, checks the progress of mankind, and, positively making of might, right; transforms every second man into a Cain to his brother Abel.

Enq.—*To what do you allude ?*

Theo.—To the doctrine of “atonement”; I allude to that dangerous dogma in which you believe, and which teaches us that no matter how enormous our crimes against the laws of God and of man, we have but to believe in the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of mankind, and his blood will wash out every stain. It is now twenty years that I have preached against it, and I may now draw your attention to a paragraph from *Isis Unveiled*, written in 1875. This is what Christianity teaches, and what we combat :

God's mercy is boundless' and unfathomable. It is impossible to conceive of a human sin so damnable that the price paid in advance for the redemption of the sinner would not wipe it out if a thousandfold worse. And furthermore, it is never too late to repent. Though the offender wait until the last minute of the last hour of the last day of his mortal life, before his blanched lips utter the confession of faith, he may go to Paradise; the dying thief did so, and so may all others as vile. These are the assumptions of the Church.

Enq.—*Does it not make the Christian happier than the Buddhist or Brahmin?*

Theo.—No; not the educated man, at any rate, since the majority of these have long since virtually lost all belief in this cruel dogma. But it leads those who still believe in it more easily to the

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threshold of every conceivable crime, than any other I know of. Let me quote to you from Isis Unveiled once more (ii. 542, 543) :

If we step outside the little circle of creed and consider the universe as a whole balanced by the exquisite adjustment of parts, how all sound logic, how the faintest glimmering sense of justice, revolts against this Vicarious Atonement! If the criminal sinned only against himself, and wronged none but himself; if by sincere repentance he could cause the obliteration of past events not only from the memory of man, but also from that imperishable record, which no deity—not even the Supremest of the Supreme—can cause to disappear, then this dogma might not be incomprehensible. But to maintain that one may wrong his fellowman, kill, disturb the equilibrium of society and the natural order of things, and then—through cowardice, hope, or compulsion, matters not—be forgiven by believing that the spilling of one blood washes out the other blood spilt—this is preposterous! Can the *results* of a crime be obliterated even though the crime itself should be pardoned? The effects of a cause are never limited to the boundaries of the cause, nor can the results of crime be confined to the offender and his victim. Every good as well as evil action has its effects, as palpably as the stone flung into calm water. The simile is trite, but it is the best ever conceived, so let us use it. The eddying circles are greater and swifter as the disturbing object is greater or smaller, but the smallest pebble, nay, the tiniest speck, makes its ripples. And this disturbance is not alone visible and on the surface.

Below, unseen, in every direction—outward and downward—drop pushes drop until the sides and bottom are touched by the force. More, the air above the water is agitated, and this disturbance passes, as the physicists tell us, from stratum to stratum out into space for ever and ever; an impulse has been given to matter, and that is never lost, can never be recalled!

So with crime, and so with its opposite. The action may be instantaneous, the effects are eternal. When, after the stone is once flung into the pond, we can recall it to the hand, roll back the ripples, obliterate the force expended, restore the etheric waves to their previous state of non-being, and wipe out every trace of the act of throwing the missile, so that Time's record shall not show that it ever happened, then, *then* we may patiently hear Christians argue for the efficacy of this Atonement.

And cease to believe in Karmic Law. As it now stands, we call upon the whole world to decide, which of our two doctrines is the most appreciative of deific justice, and which is more reasonable, even on simple human evidence and logic.

Enq.—*Yet millions believe in the Christian dogma and are happy.*

Theo.—Pure sentimentalism overpowering their thinking faculties, which no true philanthropist or altruist will ever accept. It is not even a dream of selfishness, but a nightmare of the human intellect. Look where it leads to, and tell me the name of

that pagan country where crimes are more easily committed or more numerous than in Christian lands. Look at the long and ghastly annual records of crimes committed in European countries; and behold Protestant and Biblical America. There, *conversions* effected in prisons are more numerous than those made by public *revivals* and preaching.

See how the ledger-balance of Christian justice (!) stands. Red-handed murderers, urged on by the demons of lust, revenge, cupidity, fanaticism, or mere brutal thirst for blood, who kill their victims, in most cases, without giving them time to repent or call on Jesus. These, perhaps, died sinful, and, of course—consistently with theological logic—met the reward of their greater or lesser offences. But the murderer, overtaken by human justice, is imprisoned, wept over by sentimentalists, prayed with and at, pronounces the charmed words of conversion, and goes to the scaffold a redeemed child of Jesus! Except for the murder, he would not have been prayed with, redeemed, pardoned. Clearly this man did well to murder, for thus he gained eternal happiness! And how about the victim, and his, or her family, relatives, dependents, social relations; has justice no recompense for them? Must they suffer in this world and the next, while he who wronged them sits beside the “holy thief” of Calvary, and is for ever blessed? On this question the clergy keep a prudent silence.¹

¹ *Isis Unveiled.*

And know you now why Theosophists—whose fundamental belief and hope is justice for all, in heaven as on earth, and in Karma—reject this dogma.

Enq.—*The ultimate destiny of man, then, is not a heaven presided over by God, but the gradual transformation of matter into its primordial element, spirit?*

Theo.—It is to that final goal to which all tends in Nature.

Enq.—*Do not some of you regard this association or “fall of spirit into matter” as evil, and rebirth as a sorrow?*

Theo.—Some do, and therefore strive to shorten their period of probation on earth. It is not, however, an unmixed evil, since it ensures the experience upon which we mount to knowledge and wisdom. I mean that experience which *teaches* that the needs of our spiritual nature can never be met by other than spiritual happiness. As long as we are in the body, we are subjected to pain, suffering and all the disappointing incidents occurring during life. Therefore, and to palliate this, we finally acquire knowledge which alone can afford us relief and hope of a better future.

WHAT IS PRACTICAL THEOSOPHY ?

DUTY

ENQUIRER—*Why, then, the need for rebirths, since all alike fail to secure a permanent peace ?*

THEOSOPHIST—Because the final goal cannot be reached in any way but through life experiences, and because the bulk of these consists in pain and suffering. It is only through the latter that we can learn. Joys and pleasures teach us nothing; they are evanescent, and can only in the long run bring satiety. Moreover, our constant failure to find any permanent satisfaction in life which would meet the wants of our higher nature, shows us plainly that those wants can be met only on their own plane, to wit—the spiritual.

Enq.—*Is the natural result of this a desire to quit life by one means or another ?*

Theo.—If you mean by such desire “suicide,” then I say, most decidedly not. Such a result can

never be a "natural" one, but is ever due to a morbid brain disease, or to most decided and strong materialistic views. It is the worst of crimes and dire in its results. But if by desire, you mean simply aspiration to reach spiritual existence, and not a wish to quit the earth, then I would call it a very natural desire indeed. Otherwise voluntary death would be an abandonment of our present post and of the duties incumbent on us, as well as an attempt to shirk karmic responsibilities, and thus involve the creation of new Karma.

Enq.—*But if actions on the material plane are unsatisfying, why should duties, which are such actions; be imperative?*

Theo.—First of all, because our philosophy teaches us that the object of doing our duties to all men first and to ourselves last is not the attainment of personal happiness, but of the happiness of others; the fulfilment of right for the sake of right, not for what it may bring us. Happiness, or rather contentment, may indeed follow the performance of duty, but is not and must not be the motive for it.

Enq.—*What do you understand precisely by "duty" in Theosophy? It cannot be the Christian duties preached by Jesus and his Apostles, since you recognize neither.*

Theo.—You are once more mistaken. What you call “Christian” duties were inculcated by every great moral and religious reformer ages before the Christian era. All that was great, generous, heroic, was, in days of old, not only talked about and preached from pulpits as in our own time, but *acted upon* sometimes by whole nations. The history of the Buddhist reform is full of the most noble and most heroically unselfish acts. “Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing”—was practically carried out by the followers of Buddha, several centuries before Peter. The ethics of Christianity are grand, no doubt; but as undoubtedly they are not new, and have originated as “Pagan” duties.

Enq.—*And how would you define these duties, or “duty,” in general, as you understand the term?*

Theo.—Duty is that which is *due* to humanity, to our fellow-men, neighbours, family, and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves. This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and moral bankrupts in our next incarnation. Theosophy is the quintessence of duty.

Enq.—*So is Christianity when rightly understood and carried out.*

Theo.—No doubt it is; but then, were it not a *lip-religion* in practice, Theosophy would have little to do amidst Christians. Unfortunately it is but such lip-ethics. Those who practise their duty towards all, and for duty's own sake, are few; and fewer still are those who perform that duty, remaining content with the satisfaction of their own secret consciousness. It is—

The public voice

Of praise that honours virtue and rewards it—

which is ever uppermost in the minds of the "world-renowned" philanthropists. Modern ethics are beautiful to read about and hear discussed; but what are words unless converted into actions? Finally: if you ask me how we understand theosophical duty practically and in view of Karma, I may answer you that our duty is to drink to the last drop without a murmur, whatever contents the cup of life may have in store for us, to pluck the roses of life only for the fragrance they may shed on others, and to be ourselves content but with the thorns, if that fragrance cannot be enjoyed without depriving some one else of it.

Enq.—*All this is very vague. What do you do more than Christians do?*

Theo.—It is not what we members of the Theosophical Society do—though some of us try our best—but how much farther Theosophy leads to good than modern Christianity does. I say—*action*, enforced action, instead of mere intention and talk. A man may be what he likes, the most worldly, selfish and hard-hearted of men, even a deep-dyed rascal, and it will not prevent him from calling himself a Christian, or others from so regarding him. But no Theosophist has the right to this name, unless he is thoroughly imbued with the correctness of Carlyle's truism: "The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest"—and unless he sets and models his daily life upon this truth. The profession of a truth is not yet the enactment of it; and the more beautiful and grand it sounds, the more loudly virtue or duty is talked about instead of being acted upon, the more forcibly it will always remind one of the Dead Sea fruit. *Cant* is the most loathsome of all vices; and cant is the most prominent feature of the greatest Protestant country of this century—England.

Enq.—*What do you consider as due to humanity at large?*

Theo.—Full recognition of equal rights and privileges for all, without distinction of race, colour, social position, or birth.

Enq.—*When would you consider such due not given?*

Theo.—When there is the slightest invasion of another's right—be that other a man or a nation; when there is any failure to show him the same justice, kindness, consideration or mercy which we desire for ourselves. The whole present system of politics is built on the oblivion of such rights, and the most fierce assertion of national selfishness. The French say: "Like master, like man"; they ought to add: "Like national policy, like citizen."

Enq.—*Do you take any part in politics?*

Theo.—As a society, we carefully avoid them, for the reasons given below. To seek to achieve political reforms before we have effected a reform in human nature, is like putting new wine into old bottles. Make men feel and recognize in their innermost hearts what is their real, true duty to all men, and every old abuse of power, every iniquitous law in the national policy, based on human, social or political selfishness, will disappear of itself. Foolish is the gardener who tries to weed his

flower-bed of poisonous plants by cutting them off from the surface of the soil, instead of tearing them out by the roots. No lasting political reform can be ever achieved with the same selfish men at the head of affairs as of old.

THE RELATIONS OF
THE T. S. TO POLITICAL REFORMS

Enq.—*The Theosophical Society is not, then, a political organization?*

Theo.—Certainly not. It is international in the highest sense in that its members comprise men and women of all races, creeds, and forms of thought, who work together for one object, the improvement of humanity; but as a society it takes absolutely no part in any national or party politics.

Enq.—*Why is this?*

Theo.—For the very reasons I have mentioned. Moreover, political action must necessarily vary with the circumstances of the time and with the idiosyncrasies of individuals. While, from the very nature of their position as Theosophists, the members of the T. S. are agreed on the principles of Theosophy, or they would not belong to the Society at all, it does not thereby follow that they agree on every other subject. As a society they

can only act together in matters which are common to all—that is, in Theosophy itself; as individuals, each is left perfectly free to follow out his or her particular line of political thought and action, so long as this does not conflict with Theosophical principles or hurt the Theosophical Society.

Enq.—*But surely the T. S. does not stand altogether aloof from the social questions which are now so fast coming to the front?*

Theo.—The very principles of the T. S. are a proof that it does not—or, rather, that most of its members do not—so stand aloof. If humanity can only be developed mentally and spiritually by the enforcement, first of all, of the soundest and most scientific physiological laws, it is the bounden duty of all who strive for this development to do their utmost to see that those laws shall be generally carried out. All Theosophists are only too sadly aware that, in Occidental countries especially, the social condition of large masses of the people renders it impossible for either their bodies or their spirits to be properly trained, so that the development of both is thereby arrested. As this training and development is one of the express objects of Theosophy, the T. S. is in thorough sympathy and harmony with all true efforts in this direction.

Enq.—*But what do you mean by “true efforts”?* Each social reformer has his own panacea, and each believes his to be the one and only thing which can improve and save humanity.

Theo.—Perfectly true, and this is the real reason why so little satisfactory social work is accomplished. In most of these panaceas there is no really guiding principle, and there is certainly no one principle which connects them all. Valuable time and energy are thus wasted; for men instead of co-operating, strive one against the other, often, it is to be feared, for the sake of fame and reward rather than for the great cause which they profess to have at heart, and which should be supreme in their lives.

Enq.—*How, then, should Theosophical principles be applied so that social co-operation may be promoted and true efforts for social amelioration be carried on?*

Theo.—Let me briefly remind you what these principles are: Universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Law of Karma; Reincarnation. These are the four links of the golden chain which should bind humanity into one family, one Universal Brotherhood.

Enq.—*How?*

Theo.—In the present state of society, especially in so-called civilized countries, we are continually brought face to face with the fact that large numbers of people are suffering from misery, poverty and disease. Their physical condition is wretched, and their mental and spiritual faculties are often almost dormant. On the other hand, many persons at the opposite 'end of the social scale are leading lives of careless indifference, material luxury, and selfish indulgence. Neither of these forms of existence is mere chance. Both are the effects of the conditions which surround those who are subject to them, and the neglect of social duty on the one side is most closely connected with the stunted and arrested development on the other. In sociology, as in all branches of true science, the law of universal causation holds good. But this causation necessarily implies, as its logical outcome, that human solidarity on which Theosophy so strongly insists. If the action of one reacts on the lives of all and this is the true scientific idea, then it is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained. It is this action and interaction, this

true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all and all for each, which is one of the fundamental Theosophical principles that every Theosophist should be bound, not only to teach, but to carry out in his or her individual life.

Enq.—*All this is very well as a general principle, but how would you apply it in a concrete way?*

Theo.—Look for a moment at what you would call the concrete facts of human society. Contrast the lives not only of the masses of the people, but of many of those who are called the middle and upper classes, with what they might be under healthier and nobler conditions, where justice, kindness, and love were paramount, instead of the selfishness, indifference, and brutality which now too often seem to reign supreme. All good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character, and this character is, and has been, conditioned by the endless chain of cause and effect. But this conditioning applies to the future as well as to the present and the past. Selfishness, indifference, and brutality can never be the normal state of the race—to believe so would be to despair of humanity, and that no Theosophist can do. Progress can be attained, and only attained, by the development

of the nobler qualities. Now, true evolution teaches us that by altering the surroundings of the organism we can alter and improve the organism; and in the strictest sense this is true with regard to man. Every Theosophist, therefore, is bound to do his utmost to help on, by all the means in his power, every wise and well-considered social effort which has for its object the amelioration of the condition of the poor. Such efforts should be made with a view to their ultimate social emancipation, or the development of the sense of duty in those who now so often neglect it in nearly every relation of life.

Enq.—*Agreed. But who is to decide whether social efforts are wise or unwise?*

Theo.—No one person and no society can lay down a hard-and-fast rule in this respect. Much must necessarily be left to the individual judgment. One general test may, however, be given. Will the proposed action tend to promote that true brotherhood which it is the aim of Theosophy to bring about? No real Theosophist will have much difficulty in applying such a test; once he is satisfied of this, his duty will lie in the direction of forming public opinion. And this can be attained only by inculcating those higher and nobler

conceptions of public and private duties which lie at the root of all spiritual and material improvement. In every conceivable case he himself must be a centre of spiritual action, and from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow-men.

Enq.—*But why should he do this? Are not he and all, as you teach, conditioned by their Karma, and must not Karma necessarily work itself out on certain lines?*

Theo.—It is this very law of Karma which gives strength to all that I have said. The individual cannot separate himself from the race, nor the race from the individual. The law of Karma applies equally to all, although all are not equally developed. In helping on the development of others, the Theosophist believes that he is not only helping them to fulfil their Karma, but that he is also, in the strictest sense, fulfilling his own. It is the development of humanity, of which both he and they are integral parts, that he has always in view, and he knows that any failure on his part to respond to the highest within him retards not only himself but all, in their progressive march. By his actions, he can make it either more difficult or more easy for humanity to attain the next higher plane of being.

Enq.—*How does this bear on the fourth of the principles you mentioned, viz., reincarnation?*

Theo.—The connection is most intimate. If our present lives depend upon the development of certain principles which are a growth from the germs left by a previous existence, the law holds good as regards the future. Once grasp the idea that universal causation is not merely present, but past, present and future, and every action on our present plane falls naturally and easily into its true place, and is seen in its true relation to ourselves and to others. Every mean and selfish action sends us backward and not forward, while every noble thought and every unselfish deed are stepping-stones to the higher and more glorious planes of being. If this life were all, then in many respects it would indeed be poor and mean; but regarded as a preparation for the next sphere of existence, it may be used as the golden gate through which we may pass, not selfishly and alone, but in company with our fellows, to the palaces which lie beyond.

ON SELF-SACRIFICE

Enq.—*Is equal justice to all and love to every creature the highest standard of Theosophy?*

Theo.—No; there is an even far higher one.

Enq.—*What can it be?*

Theo.—The giving to others *more* than to oneself—*self-sacrifice*. Such was the standard and abounding measure which marked so pre-eminently the greatest teachers and masters of humanity—such as Gautama Buddha in history, and Jesus of Nazareth in the gospels. This trait alone was enough to secure them the perpetual reverence and gratitude of the generations of men that came after them. We say, however, that self-sacrifice has to be performed with discrimination; and such a self-abandonment, if made without justice, or blindly regardless of subsequent results, may often prove not only to have been made in vain, but even to be harmful. One of the fundamental rules of Theosophy is, justice to oneself—viewed as a unit of collective humanity, not as a personal self—justice, not more but not less than to others; unless, indeed, by the sacrifice of oneself we can benefit the many.

Enq.—*Could you make your idea clearer by giving an instance?*

Theo.—There are many instances to illustrate it in history. Self-sacrifice for the practical good of many, or several people, Theosophy holds far higher than self-abnegation for a sectarian idea, such as

that of "saving the heathen from damnation," for instance. In our opinion, Father Damien, the young man of thirty who offered his whole life in sacrifice for the benefit and alleviation of the sufferings of the lepers at Molokai, who, after living for eighteen years alone with them, finally caught the loathsome disease and died, has not died in vain. He has given relief and relative happiness to thousands of miserable wretches. He has brought them consolation, mental and physical. He threw a streak of light into the black and dreary night of an existence, the hopelessness of which is unparalleled in the records of human suffering. He was a true Theosophist, and his memory will live for ever in our annals. In our sight, this poor Belgian priest stands immeasurably higher than, for instance, all those sincere but vain-glorious fools, the missionaries who have sacrificed their lives in the South Sea Islands or China. What good have they done? They went in one case to those who were not yet ripe for any truth; and in the other to a nation whose systems of religious philosophy are as grand as any, if only the men who have them would live up to the standard of their Confucius and other sages. They died victims of irresponsible cannibals and savages, and of popular fanaticism and hatred.

Whereas, by going to the slums of Whitechapel, or some other such locality of those that stagnate right under the blazing sun of our civilization, full of Christian savages and mental leprosy, they might have done real good, and preserved their lives for a better and worthier cause.

Enq.—*But the Christians do not think so.*

Theo.—Of course not, for they act on an erroneous belief. They think that by baptizing the body of an irresponsible savage they save his soul from damnation. One church forgets her martyrs, the other beatifies and raises statues to such men as Labre, who sacrificed his body for forty years only to benefit the vermin which it bred. Had we the means to do so, we would raise a statue to Father Damien, the true, practical saint, and perpetuate his memory for ever as a living exemplar of Theosophical heroism and of Buddha- and Christ-like mercy and self-sacrifice.

Enq.—*Then you regard self-sacrifice as a duty?*

Theo.—We do; and explain it by showing that altruism is an integral part of self-development. But we have to discriminate. A man has no right to starve himself *to death* that another man may have food, unless the life of that man is obviously more useful to the many than is his own life. But

it is his duty to sacrifice his own comfort, and to work for others if they are unable to work for themselves. It is his duty to give all that is wholly his own and can benefit no one but himself if he selfishly keeps it from others. Theosophy teaches self-abnegation, but does not teach rash and useless self-sacrifice, nor does it justify fanaticism.

Enq.—*But how are we to reach such an elevated status?*

Theo.—By the enlightened application of our precepts to practice. By the use of our higher reason, spiritual intuition and moral sense, and by following the dictates of what we call “the still small voice” of our conscience, which is that of our Ego, and speaks louder in us than the earthquakes and the thunders of Jehovah, wherein “the Lord is not”.

Enq.—*If such are our duties to humanity at large, what do you understand by our duties to our immediate surroundings?*

Theo.—Just the same, *plus* those that arise from special obligations with regard to family ties.

Enq.—*Then it is not true, as it is said, that no sooner does a man enter into the Theosophical Society than he begins to be gradually severed from his wife, children, and family duties?*

Theo.—It is a groundless calumny, like so many others. The first of the Theosophical duties is to do one's duty by all men, and especially by those to whom one's *specific* responsibilities are due, because one has either voluntarily undertaken them—such as marriage ties—or because one's destiny has allied one to them—such as those we owe to parents or next of kin.

Enq.—*And what may be the duty of a Theosophist to himself?*

Theo.—To control and conquer, through the Higher Self, the lower self. To purify himself inwardly and morally; to fear no one, and nought, save the tribunal of his own conscience. Never to do a thing by halves; *i.e.*, if he thinks it the right thing to do, let him do it openly and boldly, and if wrong, never touch it at all. It is the duty of a Theosophist to lighten his burden by thinking of the wise aphorism of Epictetus, who says:

Be not diverted from your duty by any idle reflection the silly world may make upon you, for their censures are not in your power, and consequently should not be any part of your concern.

Enq.—*But suppose a member of your Society should plead inability to practise altruism to other people, on the ground that "charity begins at*

home," urging that he is too busy, or too poor, to benefit mankind or even any of its units—what are your rules in such a case?

Theo.—No man, on any pretext whatever, has a right to say that he can do nothing for others. "By doing the proper duty in the proper place, a man may make the world his debtor," says an English writer. A cup of cold water given in time to a thirsty wayfarer is a nobler duty and of more worth than a dozen dinners given away, out of season, to men who can afford to pay for them. No man who has not got it in him will ever become a Theosophist; but he may remain a member of our Society all the same. We have no rules by which we can force any man to become a practical Theosophist, if he does not desire to be one.

Enq.—*Then why does he enter the Society at all?*

Theo.—That is best known to him who does so. For, here again, we have no right to prejudge a person, not even if the voice of a whole community should be against him, and I may tell you why. In our day, *vox populi*—so far as regards the voice of the educated, at any rate—is no longer *vox dei*, but ever that of prejudice, of selfish motives, and often

simply of unpopularity. Our duty is to sow seeds broadcast for the future, and see they are good; not to stop to enquire *why* we should do so, and how and wherefore we are obliged to lose our time, since those who will reap the harvest in days to come will never be ourselves.

ON CHARITY

Enq.—*How do you Theosophists regard the Christian duty of charity?*

Theo.—What charity do you mean? Charity of mind, or practical charity on the physical plane?

Enq.—*I mean practical charity, as your idea of universal brotherhood would include, of course, charity of mind.*

Theo.—Then you have in your mind the practical carrying out of the commandments given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount?

Enq.—*Precisely so.*

Theo.—Then why call them “Christian”? For, although their Saviour preached and practised them, the last thing the Christians of today think of is to carry them out in their lives.

Enq.—*And yet many are those who pass their lives in dispensing charity.*

Theo.—Yes, out of the surplus of their great fortunes. But point out to me that Christian, among the most philanthropic, who would give the shivering and starving thief who steals his coat his cloak also; or offer his right cheek to him who smites him on the left, and never think of resenting it?

Enq.—*Ah, but you must remember that these precepts have not to be taken literally. Times and circumstances have changed since Christ's day. Moreover, He spoke in parables.*

Theo.—Then why do not your Churches teach that the doctrine of damnation and hell-fire is to be understood as a parable too? Why do some of your most popular preachers, while virtually allowing these parables to be understood as you take them, insist on the literal meaning of the fires of hell and the physical tortures of an "asbestos-like" soul? If one is a parable, then the other is. If hell-fire is a literal truth, then Christ's commandments in the Sermon on the Mount have to be obeyed to the very letter. And I tell you that many who do not believe in the divinity of Christ—like Count Leo Tolstoi and more than one Theosophist—do carry out these noble and universal precepts literally; and many more good men and women would do so,

were they not more than certain that such a walk in life would very probably land them in a lunatic asylum—so Christian are your laws!

Enq.—*But surely every one knows that millions and millions are spent annually on private and public charities?*

Theo.—Oh, yes; and half of it sticks to the hands it passes through before getting to the needy; while a good portion of the remainder gets into the hands of professional beggars, who are too lazy to work, thus doing no good whatever to those who are really in misery and suffering. Have you not heard that the first result of the great outflow of charity towards the East-end of London was to raise the rents in Whitechapel by some 20 per cent?

Enq.—*What would you do, then?*

Theo.—Act individually and not collectively; follow the Northern Buddhist precepts:

Never put food into the mouth of the hungry by the hand of another.

Never let the shadow of thy neighbour [a third person] come between thyself and the object of thy bounty.

Never give to the sun time to dry a tear before thou hast wiped it.

Never give money to the needy, or food to the priest, who begs at thy door, *through thy servants*, lest thy money should diminish gratitude, and thy food turn to gall.

Enq.—*But how can this be applied practically?*

Theo.—The Theosophical idea of charity means *personal* exertion for others; *personal* mercy and kindness; *personal* interest in the welfare of those who suffer; *personal* sympathy, forethought and assistance in their troubles or needs. Theosophists do not believe in giving money through other people's hands or organizations. We believe in giving to the money a thousandfold greater power and effectiveness by our personal contact and sympathy with those who need it. We believe in relieving the starvation of the soul, as much if not more than the emptiness of the stomach; for gratitude does more good to the man who feels it, than to him for whom it is felt. Where is the gratitude which your "millions of pounds" should have called forth, or the good feelings provoked by them? Is it shown in the hatred of the East-end poor for the rich, in the growth of the party of anarchy and disorder, or by those thousands of unfortunate working girls, victims to the "sweating" system, driven daily to eke out a living by going on the streets? Do your helpless old men and women thank you for the workhouses; or your poor for the poisonously unhealthy dwellings in which they are allowed to breed new generations

of diseased, scrofulous and rickety children, only to put money into the pockets of the insatiable Shylocks who own houses? Therefore it is that every sovereign of all those "millions," contributed by good and would-be charitable people, falls like a burning curse instead of a blessing on the poor whom it should relieve. We call this *generating national Karma*, and terrible will be its results on the day of reckoning.

THEOSOPHY FOR THE MASSES

Enq.—*And you think that Theosophy would, by stepping in, help to remove these evils, under the practical and adverse conditions of our modern life?*

Theo.—Had we more money, and had not most of the Theosophists to work for their daily bread, I firmly believe we could.

Enq.—*How? Do you expect that your doctrines could ever take hold of the uneducated masses, when they are so abstruse and difficult that well-educated people can hardly understand them?*

Theo.—You forget one thing; that your much-boasted modern education is precisely that which makes it difficult for you to understand Theosophy.

Your mind is so full of intellectual subtleties and preconceptions that your natural intuition and perception of truth cannot act. It does not require metaphysics or education to make a man understand the broad truths of Karma and reincarnation. Look at the millions of poor and uneducated Buddhists and Hindus, to whom Karma and reincarnation are solid realities, simply because their minds have never been cramped and distorted by being forced into an unnatural groove. They have never had the innate human sense of justice perverted in them by being told to believe that their sins would be forgiven because another man had been put to death for their sakes. And the Buddhists, note well, live up to their beliefs without a murmur against Karma, or what they regard as a just punishment; whereas the Christian populace neither lives up to its moral ideal, nor accepts its lot contentedly. Hence murmuring and dissatisfaction, and the intensity of the struggle for existence in Western lands.

Enq.—*But this contentedness, which you praise so much, would do away with all motive for exertion and bring progress to a standstill.*

Theo.—And we, Theosophists, say that your vaunted progress and civilization are no better than a host of will-o'-the-wisps, flickering over a marsh

which exhales a poisonous and deadly miasma. This, because we see selfishness, crime, immorality, and all the evils imaginable, pouncing upon unfortunate mankind from this Pandora's box which you call an age of progress, and increasing *pari passu* with the growth of your material civilization. At such a price, better the inertia and inactivity of Buddhist countries, which have resulted only as a consequence of ages of political slavery.

Enq.—*Then are all these metaphysics and mysticism, with which you occupy yourself so much, of no importance?*

Theo.—To the masses, who need only practical guidance and support, they are not of much consequence; but for the educated, the natural leaders of the masses, those whose modes of thought and action will sooner or later be adopted by these masses, they are of the greatest importance. It is only by means of the philosophy that an intelligent and educated man can avoid the intellectual suicide of believing on blind faith; and it is only by assimilating the strict continuity and logical coherence of the Eastern, if not Esoteric, doctrines, that he can realize their truth. Conviction breeds enthusiasm, and "enthusiasm," says Bulwer Lytton, "is the genius of sincerity, and truth accomplishes no

victories without it"; while Emerson most truly remarks that "every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm." And what is more calculated to produce such a feeling than a philosophy so grand, so consistent, so logical, and so all-embracing as our Eastern doctrines?

Enq.—*And yet its enemies are very numerous, and every day Theosophy acquires new opponents.*

Theo.—And this is precisely what proves its intrinsic excellence and value. People hate only the things they fear, and no one goes out of his way to overthrow that which neither threatens nor rises beyond mediocrity.

Enq.—*Do you hope to impart this enthusiasm, one day, to the masses?*

Theo.—Why not; since history tells us that the masses adopted Buddhism with enthusiasm, while, as said before, the practical effect upon them of this philosophy of ethics is still shown by the smallness of the percentage of crime amongst Buddhist populations as compared with every other religion? The chief point is, to uproot that most fertile source of all crime and immorality—the belief that it is possible for men to escape the consequences of their own actions. Once teach them that greatest

of all laws, Karma and Reincarnation, and besides feeling in themselves the true dignity of human nature, they will turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger.

HOW MEMBERS CAN HELP THE SOCIETY

Enq.—*How do you expect the members of your Society to help in the work?*

Theo.—First by studying and comprehending the theosophical doctrines, so that they may teach others, especially the young people. Secondly, by taking every opportunity of talking to others and explaining to them what Theosophy is and what it is not; by removing misconceptions and spreading an interest in the subject. Thirdly, by assisting in circulating our literature, by buying books when they have the means, by lending and giving them and by inducing their friends to do so. Fourthly, by defending the Society from the unjust aspersions cast upon it, by every legitimate device in their power. Fifth, and most important of all, by the example of their own lives.

Enq.—*But all this literature, to the spread of which you attach so much importance, does not seem to me of much practical use in helping mankind. This is not practical charity.*

Theo.—We think otherwise. We hold that a good book which gives people food for thought, which strengthens and clears their minds, and enables them to grasp truths which they have dimly felt but could not formulate—we hold that such a book does a real, substantial good. As to what you call practical deeds of charity, to benefit the bodies of our fellow-men, we do what little we can ; but, as I have already told you, most of us are poor, whilst the Society itself has not even the money to pay a staff of workers. All of us, who toil for it, give our labour gratis, and in most cases money as well. The few who have the means of doing what are usually called charitable actions, follow the Buddhist precepts and do their work themselves, not by proxy or by subscribing publicly to charitable funds. What the Theosophist has to do above all is to forget his personality.

WHAT A THEOSOPHIST OUGHT NOT TO DO

Enq.—*Have you any prohibitory laws or clauses for Theosophists in your Society ?*

Theo.—Many, but, alas ! none of them are enforced. They express the ideal of our organization—but the practical application of such things

we are compelled to leave to the discretion of the members themselves. Unfortunately, the state of men's minds in the present century is such that, unless we allow these clauses to remain, so to speak, obsolete, no man or woman would dare to risk joining the Theosophical Society. This is precisely why I feel forced to lay such a stress on the difference between true Theosophy and its hard-struggling and well-intentioned, but still unworthy vehicle, the Theosophical Society.

Enq.—*May I be told what are these perilous reefs in the open sea of Theosophy?*

Theo.—Well may you call them reefs, as more than one otherwise sincere and well-meaning member has had his Theosophical canoe shattered into splinters on them! And yet to avoid certain things seems the easiest thing in the world to do. For instance, here is a series of such negatives, screening positive Theosophical duties :

No Theosophist should be silent when he hears evil reports or slanders spread about the Society, or innocent persons, whether they be his colleagues or outsiders.

Enq.—*But suppose what one hears is the truth, or may be true without one knowing it?*

Theo.—Then you must demand good proofs of the assertion, and hear both sides impartially before you permit the accusation to go uncontradicted. You have no right to believe in evil, until you get undeniable proof of the correctness of the statement.

Enq.—*And what should you do then ?*

Theo.—Pity and forbearance, charity and long-suffering, ought to be always there to prompt us to excuse our sinning brethren, and to pass the gentlest sentence possible upon those who err. A Theosophist ought never to forget what is due to the shortcomings and infirmities of human nature.

Enq.—*Ought he to forgive entirely in such cases ?*

Theo.—In every case, especially he who is sinned against.

Enq.—*But if by so doing, he risks injuring or allows others to be injured ? What ought he to do then ?*

Theo.—His duty ; that which his conscience and higher nature suggest to him ; but only after mature deliberation. Justice consists in doing no injury to any living being ; but justice commands us also never to allow injury to be done to the many, or even to one innocent person, by allowing the guilty one to go unchecked.

Enq.—*What are the other negative clauses ?*

Theo.—No Theosophist ought to be contented with an idle or frivolous life, doing no real good to himself and still less to others. He should work for the benefit of the few who need his help if he is unable to toil for humanity, and thus work for the advancement of the Theosophical cause.

Enq.—*This demands an exceptional nature, and would come rather hard upon some persons.*

Theo.—Then they had better remain outside of the T. S. instead of sailing under false colours. No one is asked to give more than he can afford, whether in devotion, time, work or money.

Enq.—*What comes next ?*

Theo.—No working member should set too great value on his personal progress or proficiency in Theosophic studies; but must be prepared rather to do as much altruistic work as lies in his power. He should not leave the whole of the heavy burden and responsibility of the Theosophical movement on the shoulders of the few devoted workers. Each member ought to feel it his duty to take what share he can in the common work, and help it by every means in his power.

Enq.—*This is but just. What comes next ?*

Theo.—No Theosophist should place his personal vanity, or feelings, above those of his Society as a body. He who sacrifices the latter, or other people's reputations on the altar of his personal vanity, worldly benefit, or pride, ought not to be allowed to remain a member. One cancerous limb diseases the whole body.

Enq.—*Is it the duty of every member to teach others and preach Theosophy?*

Theo.—It is indeed. No fellow has a right to remain idle, on the excuse that he knows too little to teach. For he may always be sure that he will find others who know still less than himself. And also it is not until a man begins to try to teach others that he discovers his own ignorance and tries to remove it. But this is a minor clause.

Enq.—*What do you consider, then, to be the chief of these negative Theosophical duties?*

Theo.—To be ever prepared to recognize and confess one's faults. To rather sin through exaggerated praise than through too little appreciation of one's neighbour's efforts. Never to backbite or slander another person. Always to say openly and direct to his face anything you have against him. Never to make yourself the echo of anything you

may hear against another, nor harbour revenge against those who happen to injure you.

Enq.—*But it is often dangerous to tell people the truth to their faces. Do you not think so? I know of one of your members who was bitterly offended, left the Society, and became its greatest enemy, only because he was told some unpleasant truths to his face, and was blamed for them.*

Theo.—Of such we have had many. No member, whether prominent or insignificant, has ever left us without becoming our bitter enemy.

Enq.—*How do you account for it?*

Theo.—It is simply this. Having been, in most cases, intensely devoted to the Society at first, and having lavished upon it the most exaggerated praises, the only possible excuse such a backslider can make for his subsequent behaviour and past short-sightedness, is *to pose as an innocent and deceived victim*, thus casting the blame from his own shoulders on to those of the Society in general, and its leaders especially. Such persons remind one of the old fable about the man with a distorted face, who broke his looking-glass in the belief that it reflected his countenance crookedly.

Enq.—*But what makes these people turn against the Society?*

Theo.—Wounded vanity in some form or other, almost in every case. Generally, because their *dicta* and advice are not taken as final and authoritative; or else, because they are of those who would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven. Because, in short, they cannot bear to stand second to anybody in anything. So, for instance, one member—a true “Sir Oracle”—criticized, and almost defamed every member in the T. S. to outsiders as much as to Theosophists, under the pretext that they were all “untheosophical,” blaming them precisely for what he was himself doing all the time. Finally, he left the Society, giving as his reason a profound conviction that we were all (the founders especially)—frauds! Another one, after intriguing in every possible way to be placed at the head of a large Section of the Society, finding that the members would not have him, turned against the founders of the T. S., and became their bitterest enemy, denouncing one of them whenever he could, simply because the latter could not, and would not, force him upon the members. This was simply a case of an outrageous wounded vanity.

Enq.—*What would you do with such characters?*

Theo.—Leave them to their Karma. Because one person does evil that is no reason for others to do so.

Enq.—*But, to return to slander, where is the line of demarcation between backbiting and just criticism to be drawn? Is it not one's duty to warn one's friends and neighbours against those whom one knows to be dangerous associates?*

Theo.—If by allowing them to go on unchecked other persons may thereby be injured, it is certainly our duty to obviate the danger by warning them privately. But true or false, no accusation against another person should ever be spread abroad. If true, and the fault hurts no one but the sinner, then leave him to his Karma. If false, then you will have avoided adding to the injustice in the world. Therefore, keep silent about such things with every one not directly concerned. But if your discretion and silence are likely to hurt or endanger others, then I add: Speak the truth at all costs, and say, with Annesly: "Consult duty, not events." There are cases when one is forced to exclaim: "Perish discretion, rather than allow it to interfere with duty."

Enq.—*Methinks, if you carry out these maxims, you are likely to reap a nice crop of troubles!*

Theo.—And so we do. We have to admit that we are now open to the same taunt as the early Christians were. "See, how these Theosophists

love one another !” may now be said of us without a shadow of injustice.

Enq.—*Admitting yourself that there is at least as much, if not more, backbiting, slandering, and quarrelling in the T. S., as in the Christian Churches, let alone Scientific Societies ; what kind of brotherhood is this, may I ask ?*

Theo.—A very poor specimen, indeed, as at present, and until carefully sifted and re-organized, no better than all others. Remember, however, that human nature is the same in the Theosophical Society as out of it. Its members are no saints ; they are at best sinners trying to do better, and liable to fall back owing to personal weakness. Add to this that our “Brotherhood” is no recognized or established body, and stands, so to speak, outside of the pale of jurisdiction. Besides which, it is in a chaotic condition, and more unjustly unpopular than any other body. What wonder, then, that those members who fail to carry out its ideal should, after leaving the Society, turn for sympathetic protection to our enemies, and pour all their gall and bitterness into their too willing ears ! Knowing that they will find support, sympathy, and ready credence for every accusation, however absurd, that it may please them to launch against the Theosophical Society,

they hasten to do so, and vent their wrath on the innocent looking-glass, which reflected too faithfully their faces. People never forgive those whom they have wronged. The sense of kindness received, and repaid by them with ingratitude, drives them into a madness of self-justification before the world and their own consciences.

Enq.—*Your position does not seem to me a very enviable one.*

Theo.—It is not. But do you not think that there must be something very noble, very exalted, very true, behind the Society and its philosophy, when the leaders and the founders of the movement still continue to work for it with all their strength? They sacrifice to it all comfort, all worldly prosperity and success, even to their good name and reputation—aye, even to their honour—to receive in return incessant and ceaseless obloquy, relentless persecution, untiring slander, constant ingratitude, and misunderstanding of their best efforts, blows and buffets from all sides—when by simply dropping their work they would find themselves immediately released from every responsibility, shielded from every further attack.

Enq.—*I confess, such a perseverance seems to me very astounding, and I wondered why you did all this.*

Theo.—Believe me for no self-gratification ; only in the hope of training a few individuals to carry on our work for humanity with its original programme when the founders are dead and gone. They have already found a few such noble and devoted souls to replace them. The coming generations, thanks to these few, will find the path to peace a little less thorny, and the way a little widened, and thus all this suffering will have produced good results, and their self-sacrifice will not have been in vain. At present, the main, fundamental object of the Society is to sow germs in the hearts of men, which may in time sprout, and under more propitious circumstances lead to a healthy reform, conducive of more happiness to the masses than they have hitherto enjoyed.

ON THE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THEOSOPHY AND ASCETICISM

ENQUIRER—*I have heard people say that your rules require all members to be vegetarians, celibates, and rigid ascetics; but you have not told me anything of the sort yet. Can you tell me the truth once for all about this?*

THEOSOPHIST—The truth is that our rules require nothing of the kind. The Theosophical Society does not even expect, far less require, of any of its members that they should be ascetics in any way, except—if you call *that* asceticism—that they should try and benefit other people and be unselfish in their own lives.

Enq.—*But still many of your members are strict vegetarians, and openly avow their intention of remaining unmarried. This, too, is most often*

the case with those who take a prominent part in connection with the work of your Society.

Theo.—That is only natural, because most of our really earnest workers are members of the inner section of the Society, about which I told you before.

Enq.—*Oh! then you do require ascetic practices in that inner section?*

Theo.—No; we do not require or enjoin them even there; but I see that I had better give you an explanation of our views on the subject of asceticism in general, and then you will understand about vegetarianism and so on.

Enq.—*Please proceed.*

Theo.—As I have already told you, most people who become really earnest students of Theosophy, and active workers in our Society, wish to do more than study theoretically the truths we teach. They wish to *know* the truth by their own direct personal experience, and to study occultism with the object of acquiring the wisdom and power, which they feel they need in order to help others, effectually and judiciously, instead of blindly and at haphazard. Therefore, sooner or later, they join the inner section.

Enq.—*But you said that "ascetic practices" are not obligatory even in that inner section.*

Theo.—No more they are ; but the first thing which the members learn there is a true conception of the relation of the body, or physical sheath, to the inner, the true man. The relation and mutual interaction between these two aspects of human nature are explained and demonstrated to them, so that they soon become imbued with the supreme importance of the inner man over the outer case or body. They are taught that blind unintelligent asceticism is mere folly ; that such conduct as that of St. Labre of which I spoke before, or that of the Indian fakirs and jungle ascetics, who cut, burn, and macerate their bodies in the most cruel and horrible manner, is simply self-torture for selfish ends, *i.e.*, to develop will-power, but is perfectly useless for the purpose of assisting true spiritual, or theosophic, development.

Enq.—*I see, you regard only moral asceticism as necessary. It is as a means to an end, that end being the perfect equilibrium of the inner nature of man, and the attainment of complete mastery over the body with all its passions and desires.*

Theo.—Just so. But these means must be used intelligently and wisely, not blindly and foolishly ; like an athlete who is training and preparing for a great contest, not like the miser who starves himself

into illness that he may gratify his passion for gold.

Enq.—*I understand now your general idea ; but let us see how you apply it in practice. How about vegetarianism, for instance ?*

Theo.—One of the great German scientists has shown that every kind of animal tissue, however you may cook it, still retains certain marked characteristics of the animal to which it belonged, and these characteristics can be recognized. Apart from that also, every one knows by the taste what meat he is eating. We go a step farther, and prove that when the flesh of animals is assimilated by man as food, it imparts to him, physiologically, some of the characteristics of the animal it came from. Moreover, occult science teaches and proves this to its students by ocular demonstration, showing also that this “coarsening” or “animalizing” effect on man is greatest from the flesh of the larger animals, less for birds, still less for fish and other cold-blooded animals, and least of all when he eats only vegetables.

Enq.—*Then would it be better not to eat at all ?*

Theo.—If he could live without eating, of course it would. But as the matter stands, he must eat to live, and so we advise really earnest students to eat such food as will least clog and weight their

brains and bodies, and will have the smallest effect in hampering and retarding the development of their intuition, their inner faculties and powers.

Enq.—*Then you do not adopt all the arguments which vegetarians in general are in the habit of using?*

Theo.—Certainly not. Some of their arguments are very weak, and often based on assumptions which are quite false. But on the other hand, many of the things they say are quite true. For instance, we believe that much disease, and especially the great predisposition to disease which is becoming so marked a feature in our time, is very largely due to the eating of meat, and especially of tinned meats. But it would take too long to go thoroughly into this question of vegetarianism on its merits; so please pass on to something else.

Enq.—*One question more. What are your members of the inner section to do with regard to their food when they are ill?*

Theo.—Follow the best practical advice they can get, of course. Do you not grasp yet that we never impose any hard and fast obligations in this respect? Remember once for all that in all such questions we take a rational, and never a fanatical, view of things. If from illness or long habit a man

cannot go without meat, why, by all means let him eat it. It is no crime; it will only retard his progress a little; for after all is said and done, the purely bodily actions and functions are of far less importance than what a man *thinks* and *feels*, what desires he encourages in his mind, and allows to take root and grow there.

Enq.—*Then with regard to the use of wine and spirits, I suppose you do not advise people to drink them?*

Theo.—They are worse for his moral and spiritual growth than meat, for alcohol in all its forms has a direct, marked, and very deleterious influence on man's psychic condition. Wine and spirit drinking is only less destructive to the development of the inner powers, than the habitual use of hashish, opium, and similar drugs.

THEOSOPHY AND MARRIAGE

Enq.—*Now to another question: must a man marry or remain a celibate?*

Theo.—It depends on the kind of man you mean. If you refer to one who intends to live in the world, one who, even though a good, earnest Theosophist, and an ardent worker for our cause, still has ties

and wishes which bind him to the world, who, in short, does not feel that he has done for ever with what men call life, and that he desires one thing and one thing only—to know the truth, and to be able to help others—then for such a one I say there is no reason why he should not marry, if he likes to take the risks of that lottery where there are so many more blanks than prizes. Surely you cannot believe us so absurd and fanatical as to preach against marriage altogether? On the contrary, save in a few exceptional cases of practical occultism, marriage is the only remedy against immorality.

Enq.—*But why cannot one acquire this knowledge and power when living a married life?*

Theo.—My dear sir, I cannot go into physiological questions with you; but I can give you an obvious and, I think, a sufficient answer, which will explain to you the moral reasons we give for it. Can a man serve two masters? No! Then it is equally impossible for him to divide his attention between the pursuit of occultism and a wife. If he tries to, he will assuredly fail in doing either properly; and, let me remind you, practical occultism is far too serious and dangerous a study for a man to take up, unless he is in the most deadly earnest, and ready to sacrifice *all, himself first of all*, to

gain his end. But this does not apply to the members of our inner section. I am only referring to those who are determined to tread that path of discipleship which leads to the highest goal. Most, if not all of those who join our inner section, are only beginners, preparing themselves in this life to enter in reality upon that path in lives to come.

THEOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

Enq.—*One of your strongest arguments for the inadequacy of the existing forms of religion in the West, as also to some extent the materialistic philosophy which is now so popular, but which you seem to consider as an abomination of desolation, is the large amount of misery and wretchedness which undeniably exists, especially in our great cities. But surely you must recognize how much has been, and is being done to remedy this state of things by the spread of education and the diffusion of intelligence.*

Theo.—The future generations will hardly thank you for such a “diffusion of intelligence,” nor will your present education do much good to the poor starving masses.

Enq.—*Ah! but you must give us time. It is only a few years since we began to educate the people.*

Theo.—And what, pray, has your Christian religion been doing ever since the fifteenth century, once you acknowledge that the education of the masses has not been attempted till now—the very work, if ever there could be one, which a Christian, *i.e.*, a Christ-following church and people, ought to perform?

Enq.—*Well, you may be right; but now——*

Theo.—Just let us consider this question of education from a broad standpoint, and I will prove to you that you are doing harm, not good, with many of your boasted improvements. The schools for the poorer children, though far less useful than they ought to be, are good in contrast with the vile surroundings to which they are doomed by your modern society. The *infusion* of a little practical Theosophy would help a hundred times more in life the poor suffering masses than all this infusion of useless intelligence.

Enq.—*But, really——*

Theo.—Let me finish, please. You have opened a subject on which we Theosophists feel deeply, and I must have my say. I quite agree that there is a

great advantage to a small child bred in the slums, having the gutter for playground, and living amid continued coarseness of gesture and word, in being placed daily in a bright, clean school-room hung with pictures, and often gay with flowers. There it is taught to be clean, gentle, orderly; there it learns to sing and to play; has toys that awaken its intelligence; learns to use its fingers deftly; is spoken to with a smile instead of a frown; is gently rebuked or coaxed instead of cursed. All this humanizes the children, arouses their brains and renders them susceptible to intellectual and moral influences. The schools are not all they might be and ought to be; but, compared with the homes, they are paradises; and they are slowly reacting on the homes. But while this is true of many of the Board Schools, your system deserves the worst one can say of it.

Enq.—*So be it; go on.*

Theo.—What is the real object of modern education? Is it to cultivate and develop the mind in the right direction; to teach the disinherited and hapless people to carry with fortitude the burden of life allotted them by Karma; to strengthen their will; to inculcate in them the love of one's neighbour and the feeling of mutual interdependence and

brotherhood; and thus to train and form the character for practical life? Not a bit of it. And yet, these are undeniably the objects of all true education. No one denies it; all your educationists admit it, and talk very big indeed on the subject. But what is the practical result of their action? Every young man and boy, nay, every one of the younger generation of schoolmasters will answer: "The object of modern education is to pass examinations," a system not to develop right emulation, but to generate and breed jealousy, envy, hatred almost, in young people for one another, and thus train them for a life of ferocious selfishness and struggle for honours and emoluments instead of kindly feeling.

Enq.—*I must admit you are right there.*

Theo.—And what are these examinations—the terror of modern boyhood and youth? They are simply a method of classification by which the results of your school teaching are tabulated. In other words, they form the practical application of the modern science method to the *genus homo, qua* intellection. Now science teaches that intellect is a result of the mechanical interaction of the brain-stuff; therefore it is only logical that modern education should be almost entirely mechanical—a

sort of automatic machine for the fabrication of intellect by the ton. Very little experience of examinations is enough to show that the education they produce is simply a training of the physical memory, and, sooner or later, all your schools will sink to this level. As to any real, sound cultivation of the thinking and reasoning power, it is simply impossible while everything has to be judged by the results as tested by competitive examinations. Again, school training is of the very greatest importance in forming character, especially in its moral bearing. Now, from first to last, your modern system is based on the so-called scientific revelations: "the struggle for existence" and the "survival of the fittest". All through his early life, every man has these driven into him by practical example and experience, as well as by direct teaching, till it is impossible to eradicate from his mind the idea that "self," the lower, personal, animal self, is the end-all, and be-all of life. Here you get the great source of all the after-misery, crime, and heartless selfishness, which you admit as much as I do. Selfishness, as said over and over again, is the curse of humanity, and the prolific parent of all the evils and crimes in this life; and it is your schools which are the hotbeds of such selfishness.

Enq.—*That is all very fine as generalities, but I should like a few facts, and to learn also how this can be remedied.*

Theo.—Very well, I will try and satisfy you. There are three great divisions of scholastic establishments, board, middle-class and public schools, running up the scale from the most grossly commercial to the idealistic classical, with many permutations and combinations. The practical commercial begets the modern side, and the ancient and orthodox classical reflects its heavy respectability even as far as the School Board pupil teacher's establishments. Here we plainly see the scientific and material commercial supplanting the effete orthodox and classical. Neither is the reason very far to seek. The objects of this branch of education are, then, pounds, shillings, and pence, the *summum bonum* of the nineteenth century. Thus, the energies generated by the brain molecules of its adherents are all concentrated on one point, and are, therefore, to some extent, an organized army of educated and speculative intellects of the minority of men, trained against the hosts of the ignorant, simple-minded masses doomed to be vampirized, lived and sat upon by their intellectually stronger brethren. Such training is not only untheosophical, it is simply

unchristian. Result: the direct outcome of this branch of education is an overflowing of the market with money-making machines, with heartless selfish men—animals—who have been most carefully trained to prey on their fellows and take advantage of the ignorance of their weaker brethren!

Enq.—*Well, but you cannot assert that of our great public schools, at any rate.*

Theo.—Not exactly, it is true. But though the *form* is different, the animating spirit is the same: untheosophical and unchristian, whether Eton and Harrow turn out scientists or divines and theologians.

Enq.—*Surely you do not mean to call Eton and Harrow "commercial"?*

Theo.—No. Of course the classical system is above all things *respectable*, and in the present day is productive of some good. It still remains the favourite at our great public schools, where not only an intellectual, but also a social education is obtainable. It is, therefore, of prime importance that the dull boys of aristocratic and wealthy parents should go to such schools to meet the rest of the young life of the "blood" and money classes. But unfortunately there is a huge competition even for entrance; for the moneyed

classes are increasing, and poor but clever boys seek to enter the public schools by the rich scholarships, both at the schools themselves and from them to the universities.

Enq.—*According to this view, the wealthier "dullards" have to work even harder than their poorer fellows.*

Theo.—It is so. But, strange to say, the faithful of the cult of the "survival of the fittest" do not practise their creed; for their whole exertion is to make the naturally unfit supplant the fit. Thus, by bribes of large sums of money, they allure the best teachers from their natural pupils to mechanize their naturally unfit progeny into professions which they uselessly overcrowd.

Enq.—*And you attribute all this to what?*

Theo.—All this is owing to the perniciousness of a system which turns out goods to order, irrespective of the natural proclivities and talents of the youth. The poor little candidate for this progressive paradise of learning, comes almost straight from the nursery to the treadmill of a preparatory school for sons of gentlemen. Here he is immediately seized upon by the workmen of the materio-intellectual factory, and crammed with Latin, French and Greek Accidence, Dates and Tables, so that if he have

any natural genius it is rapidly squeezed out of him by the rollers of what Carlyle has so well-called "dead vocables".

Enq.—*But surely he is taught something besides "dead vocables," and much of that which may lead him direct to Theosophy, if not entirely into the Theosophical Society?*

Theo.—Not much. For of history, he will attain only sufficient knowledge of his own particular nation to fit him with a steel armour of prejudice against all other peoples, and be steeped in the foul cesspools of chronicled national hate and blood-thirstiness; and surely, you would not call that—Theosophy?

Enq.—*What are your further objections?*

Theo.—Added to this is a smattering of selected, so-called, biblical facts, from the study of which all intellect is eliminated. It is simply a memory lesson, the *why* of the teacher being a *why* of circumstances and not of reason.

Enq.—*Yes; but I have heard you congratulate yourself at the ever-increasing number of the agnostics and atheists in our day, so that it appears that even people trained in the system you abuse so heartily do learn to think and reason for themselves.*

Theo.—Yes; but it is rather owing to a healthy reaction from that system than due to it. We immeasurably prefer agnostics, and even rank atheists, in our Society, to bigots of whatever religion. An agnostic's mind is ever opened to the truth; whereas the latter blinds the bigot like the sun does an owl. The best—*i.e.*, the most truth-loving, philanthropic, and honest—of our members were, and are, agnostics and atheists, in the sense of disbelievers in a *personal* God. But there are no free-thinking boys and girls, and generally early training will leave its mark behind in the shape of a cramped and distorted mind. A proper and sane system of education should produce the most vigorous and liberal mind, strictly trained in logical and accurate thought, and not in blind faith. How can you ever expect good results, while you pervert the reasoning faculty of your children by bidding them believe in the miracles of the *Bible* on Sunday, while for the six other days of the week you teach them that such things are scientifically impossible?

Enq.—*What would you have, then?*

Theo.—If we had money, we would found schools which would turn out something else than reading and writing candidates for starvation. Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all

men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum, and devote the time to the development and training of the inner senses, faculties and latent capacities. We would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfoldment of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their full natural development. We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, *unselfish*. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by proper and truly theosophical education.

WHY, THEN, IS THERE SO MUCH PREJUDICE
AGAINST THE T. S. ?

Enq.—*If Theosophy is even half of what you say, why should there exist such a terrible ill-feeling against it? This is even more of a problem than anything else.*

Theo.—It is; but you must bear in mind how many powerful adversaries we have aroused ever since the formation of our Society. As I just said,

if the Theosophical movement were one of those numerous modern crazes, as harmless at the end as they are evanescent, it would be simply laughed at—as it is now by those who still do not understand its real purport—and left severely alone. But it is nothing of the kind. Intrinsically, Theosophy is the most serious movement of this age; and one, moreover, which threatens the very life of most of the time-honoured humbugs, prejudices, and social evils of the day—those evils which fatten and make happy the upper ten and their imitators and sycophants, the wealthy dozens of the middle classes, while they positively crush and starve out of existence the millions of the poor. Think of this, and you will easily understand the reason of such a relentless persecution by those others who, more observant and perspicacious, do see the true nature of Theosophy, and therefore dread it.

Enq.—*Do you mean to tell me that it is because a few have understood what Theosophy leads to, that they try to crush the movement? But if Theosophy leads only to good, surely you cannot be prepared to utter such a terrible accusation of perfidious heartlessness and treachery even against those few.*

Theo.—I am so prepared, on the contrary. I do not call the enemies we have had to battle with during the first nine or ten years of the Society's existence either powerful or dangerous; but only those who have arisen against us in the last three or four years. And these neither speak, write nor preach against Theosophy, but work in silence and behind the backs of the foolish puppets who act as their visible marionettes. Yet, if invisible to most of the members of our Society, they are well known to the true Founders and the protectors of our Society. But they must remain for certain reasons unnamed at present.

Enq.—*And are they known to many of you, or to yourself alone?*

Theo.—I never said that *I* knew them. I may or may not know them—but I know of them, and this is sufficient; and I defy them to do their worst. They may achieve great mischief and throw confusion into our ranks, especially among the faint-hearted, and those who can judge only by appearances. They will not crush the Society, do what they may. Apart from these truly dangerous enemies—dangerous, however, only to those Theosophists who are unworthy of the name, and whose place is rather outside than within the T. S.

—the number of our opponents is more than considerable.

Enq.—*I have heard many Theosophists speak of a “power behind the Society” and of certain “Mahatmas,” mentioned also in Mr. Sinnett’s works, that are said to have founded the Society, to watch over and protect it.*

Theo.—You may laugh, but it is so.

THE THEOSOPHICAL "MAHATMAS"

ARE THEY "SPIRITS OF LIGHT" OR
"GOBLINS DAMN'D" ?

ENQUIRER—*Who are, then, those whom you call your "Masters" ? Some say they are "spirits," or some other kind of supernatural beings, while others call them "myths" .*

THEOSOPHIST—They are neither. But if you listen to what people say, you will never have a true conception of them. In the first place they are *living men*, born as we are born, and doomed to die like every other mortal.

Enq.—*Yes, but it is rumoured that some of them are a thousand years old. Is this true ?*

Theo.—As true as the miraculous growth of hair on the head of Meredith's Shagpat. The more we try to set people right, the more absurd do the inventions become. I have heard of Methuselah being 969 years old; but, not being forced to

believe in it, have laughed at the statement, for which I was forthwith regarded by many as a blasphemous heretic.

Enq.—*Seriously, though, do they outlive the ordinary age of men?*

Theo.—What do you call the ordinary age? I remember reading in the *Lancet* of a Mexican who was almost 190 years old; but I have never heard of mortal man, layman, or adept, who could live even half the years allotted to Methuselah. Some adepts do exceed, by a good deal, what you would call the ordinary age; yet there is nothing miraculous in it, and very few of them care to live very long.

Enq.—*But what does the word "Mahatma" really mean?*

Theo.—Simply "great soul"—great through moral elevation and intellectual attainment. If the title of "great" is given to a drunken soldier like Alexander, why should we not call those "great" who have achieved far greater conquests in Nature's secrets than Alexander ever did on the field of battle? Besides, the term is an Indian and a very old word.

Enq.—*And why do you call them "Masters,"?*

Theo.—We call them "Masters" because they are our teachers; and because from them we have

derived all the Theosophical truths, however inadequately some of us may have expressed, and others understood, them. They are men of great learning, and still greater holiness of life, whom we term Initiates. They are not ascetics in the ordinary sense, though they certainly remain apart from the turmoil and strife of your Western world.

Enq.—*But is it not selfish thus to isolate themselves?*

Theo.—Where is the selfishness? Does not the fate of the Theosophical Society sufficiently prove that the world is neither ready to recognize them nor to profit by their teaching? Of what use would Professor Clark Maxwell have been to instruct a class of little boys in their multiplication table? Besides, they isolate themselves only from the West. In their own country they go about as publicly as other people do.

Enq.—*Do you not ascribe to them supernatural powers?*

Theo.—We believe in nothing supernatural, as I have told you already. Had Edison lived and invented his phonograph two hundred years ago, he would most probably have been burnt along with it, and the whole attributed to the devil. The powers which they exercise are simply the development of

potencies lying latent in every man and woman, and the existence of which even official science begins to recognize.

Enq.—*Is it true that these men inspire some of your writers, and that many, if not all, of your Theosophical works were written under their dictation?*

Theo.—Some of them have done so. There are passages entirely dictated by them *verbatim*, but in most cases they only inspire the ideas and leave the literary form to the writers.

Enq.—*But this in itself is miraculous; is in fact a miracle. How can they do it?*

Theo.—My dear Sir, you are labouring under a great mistake, and it is science itself that will refute your arguments at no distant day. Why should it be a "miracle," as you call it? A miracle is supposed to mean some operation which is supernatural, whereas there is really nothing above or beyond Nature and Nature's laws. Among the many forms of the "miracle" which have come under modern scientific recognition, there is hypnotism, and one phase of its power is known as "suggestion," a form of thought transference, which has been successfully used in combating particular physical diseases. The time is not far distant when the

world of science will be forced to acknowledge that there exists as much interaction between one mind and another, no matter at what distance, as between one body and another in closest contact. When two minds are sympathetically related, and the instruments through which they function are tuned to respond magnetically and electrically to one another, there is nothing which will prevent the transmission of thoughts from one to the other, at will; for since the mind is not of such a tangible nature, that distance can divide it from the subject of its contemplation, it follows that the only difference that can exist between two minds is a difference of *state*. So if this latter hindrance is overcome, where is the "miracle" of thought transference, at whatever distance?

Enq.—*But you will admit that hypnotism does nothing so miraculous or wonderful as that?*

Theo.—On the contrary, it is a well-established fact that a hypnotist can affect the brain of his subject so far as to produce an expression of his own thoughts, and even his words, through the organism of his subject; and although the phenomena attaching to this method of actual thought transference are as yet few in number, no one, I

presume, will undertake to say how far their action may extend in the future, when the laws that govern their production are more scientifically established. And so, if such results can be produced by the knowledge of the mere rudiments of hypnotism, what can prevent the adept in psychic and spiritual powers from producing results which, with your present limited knowledge of these laws, you are inclined to call "miraculous"?

Enq.—*Then why do not our physicians experiment and try if they could not do as much?*

Theo.—Because, first of all, they were not adepts with a thorough understanding of the secrets and laws of psychic and spiritual realms, but materialists, afraid to step outside the narrow groove of matter; and secondly, because they *must fail* at present, and indeed until they are brought to acknowledge that such powers are attainable.

Enq.—*And could they be taught?*

Theo.—Not unless they were first of all prepared, by having the materialistic dross they have accumulated in their brains swept away to the very last atom.

Enq.—*This is very interesting. Tell me, have the adepts thus inspired or dictated to many of your Theosophists?*

Theo.—No, on the contrary, to very few. Such operations require special conditions. An unscrupulous but skilled adept of the “Black Brotherhood”—“Brothers of the Shadow,” we call them—has far less difficulties to labour under. For, having no laws of a spiritual nature to trammel his actions, such a sorcerer will most unceremoniously obtain control over any mind, and subject it entirely to his evil powers. But our Masters will never do that. They have no right—if they would escape falling into “black magic”—to obtain entire mastery over anyone’s immortal Ego, and can therefore act only on the physical and psychic nature of the subject, leaving thereby the free will of the latter wholly undisturbed. Hence, unless a person has been brought into psychic relationship with the Masters, and is assisted by virtue of his full faith in, and devotion to, his Teachers, the latter, whenever transmitting their thoughts to one with whom these conditions are not fulfilled, experience great difficulties in penetrating into the cloudy chaos of that person’s sphere. But this is no place to treat of a subject of this nature. Suffice it to say, that if the power exists, then there are Intelligences (embodied or disembodied) which guide this power, and living conscious instruments through whom it is

transmitted and by whom it is received. We have only to beware of "*black magic*".

Enq.—*But what do you really mean by "black magic" ?*

Theo.—Simply abuse of psychic powers, or of any secret of Nature; the fact of applying to selfish and sinful ends the powers of Occultism. A hypnotizer, who, taking advantage of his powers of "suggestion," forced a subject to steal or murder, would be called by us a "black magician".

Enq.—*But this is mediæval belief in witchcraft and sorcery! Even the Law itself has ceased to believe in such things.*

Theo.—So much the worse for the Law, as it has been led, through such lack of discrimination, into committing more than one judiciary mistake and crime. It is the term alone that frightens you with its "superstitious" ring in it. Would not Law punish an abuse of hypnotic powers, as I just mentioned? Nay, it has so punished it already in France and Germany; yet it would indignantly deny that it applied punishment to a crime of evident "sorcery". You cannot believe in the efficacy and reality of the powers of suggestion by physicians and mesmerizers, or hypnotizers, and then refuse to

believe in the same powers when used for evil motives. And if you do, then you believe in "sorcery"! You cannot believe in good and disbelieve in evil, accept genuine money and refuse to credit such a thing as false coin. Nothing can exist without its contrast, and no day, no light, no good could have any representation as such in your consciousness, were there no night, no darkness, no evil to offset and contrast them.

Enq.—*Indeed, I have known men, who, while thoroughly believing in that which you call great psychic, or magic powers, laughed at the very mention of witchcraft and sorcery.*

Theo.—What does it prove? Simply that they are illogical. So much the worse for them, again. And we, knowing as we do of the existence of good and holy adepts, believe as thoroughly in the existence of bad and unholy adepts.

Enq.—*But if the Masters exist, why do they not come out before all men and refute once for all the many charges which are made against Madame Blavatsky and the Society?*

Theo.—What charges?

Enq.—*That they do not exist, and that she has invented them. Does not all this injure her reputation?*

Theo.—In what way can such an accusation injure her in reality? Did she ever make money on their presumed existence, or derive benefit, or fame, therefrom? I answer that she has gained only insults, abuse, and calumnies, which would have been very painful had she not learned long ago to remain perfectly indifferent to such false charges. For what does it amount to, after all? Why, to an implied compliment, which, if her accusers were not carried away by their blind hatred, they would have thought twice before uttering. To say that she has invented the Masters comes to this, that she must have invented every bit of philosophy that has ever been given out in Theosophical literature. She must be the author of the letters from which *Esoteric Buddhism* was written; the sole inventor of every tenet found in *The Secret Doctrine*, which, if the world were just, would be recognized as supplying many of the missing links of science, as will be discovered a hundred years hence. By saying what they do, they are also giving her the credit of being far cleverer than the hundreds of men (many very clever and not a few scientific men), who believe in what she says—inasmuch as she must have fooled them all! If they speak the truth, then she must be several Mahatmas rolled into one.

Enq.—*They say that from beginning to end they were a romance which Madame Blavatsky has woven from her own brain.*

Theo.—Well, she might have done many things less clever than this. At any rate, we have not the slightest objection to this theory. As she always says now, she almost prefers that people should not believe in the Masters. She declares openly that she would rather people should seriously think that the only “Mahatma-land” is the grey matter of her brain, and that, in short, she has evolved them out of the depths of her own inner consciousness, than that their names and grand ideal should be so infamously desecrated as they are at present. At first she used to protest indignantly against any doubts as to their existence. Now she never goes out of her way to prove or disprove it. Let people think what they like.

Enq.—*But if you have such wise and good men to guide the Society, how is it that so many mistakes have been made?*

Theo.—The Masters do *not* guide the Society, not even the founders; and no one has ever asserted that they did; they only watch over, and protect it. This is amply proved by the fact that no mistakes have been able to cripple it, and no scandals

from within, nor the most damaging attacks from without, have been able to overthrow it. The Masters look at the future, not at the present, and every mistake is so much more accumulated wisdom for days to come. That other "Master" who sent out the man with the five talents did not tell him how to double them, nor did he prevent the foolish servant from burying his one talent in the earth. Each must acquire wisdom by his own experience and merits. The Christian Churches, who claim a far higher Master, the very Holy Ghost itself, have ever been and are still guilty not only of "mistakes," but of a series of bloody crimes throughout the ages. Yet, no Christian would deny, for all that, his belief in *that* Master.

THE ABUSE OF SACRED NAMES AND TERMS

Enq.—*Then, what I have heard, namely, that many of your Theosophical writers claim to have been inspired by these Masters, or to have seen and conversed with them, is not true?*

Theo.—It may or it may not be true. How can I tell? The burden of proof rests with them. Some of them, a few—very few, indeed—have either distinctly lied or were hallucinated when

boasting of such inspiration; others were truly inspired by great adepts. The tree is known by its fruits; and as all Theosophists have to be judged by their deeds and not by what they write or say, so *all* Theosophical books must be accepted on their merits, and not according to any claim to authority which they may put forward.

Enq.—*But would Madame Blavatsky apply this to her own works—“The Secret Doctrine,” for instance?*

Theo.—Certainly; she says expressly in the Preface that she gives out the doctrines that she has learnt from the Masters, but claims no inspiration whatever for what she has lately written. As for our best Theosophists they would also in this case far rather that the names of the Masters had never been mixed up with our books in any way. With few exceptions, most of such works are not only imperfect, but positively erroneous and misleading. Great are the desecrations to which the names of two of the Masters have been subjected. There is hardly a medium who has not claimed to have seen them. Every bogus swindling society, for commercial purposes, now claims to be guided and directed by “Masters,” often supposed to be far higher than ours! Many and heavy are the sins of those who

have advanced these claims, prompted either by desire for lucre, vanity, or irresponsible mediumship. Many persons have been plundered of their money by such societies, which offer to sell the secrets of power, knowledge, and spiritual truth for worthless gold. Worst of all, the sacred names of Occultism and the holy keepers thereof have been dragged in this filthy mire, polluted by being associated with sordid motives and immoral practices, while thousands of men have been held back from the path of truth and light through the discredit and evil report which such shams, swindles, and frauds have brought upon the whole subject. I say again, every earnest Theosophist regrets today, from the bottom of his heart, that these sacred names and things have ever been mentioned before the public, and fervently wishes that they had been kept secret within a small circle of trusted and devoted friends.

CONCLUSION

THE FUTURE OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

ENQUIRER—*Tell me, what do you expect for Theosophy in the future?*

THEOSOPHIST—If you speak of THEOSOPHY, I answer that, as it has existed eternally throughout the endless cycles upon cycles of the Past, so it will ever exist throughout the infinitudes of the Future, because Theosophy is synonymous with EVERLASTING TRUTH.

Enq.—*Pardon me; I meant to ask you rather about the prospects of the Theosophical Society.*

Theo.—Its future will depend almost entirely upon the degree of selflessness, earnestness, devotion, and last, but not least, on the amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by those members, on whom it will fall to carry on the work, and to direct the Society after the death of the founders.

Enq.—*I quite see the importance of their being selfless and devoted, but I do not quite grasp how their knowledge can be as vital a factor in the*

question as these other qualities. Surely the literature which already exists, and to which constant additions are still being made, ought to be sufficient.

Theo.—I do not refer to technical knowledge of the esoteric doctrine, though that is most important ; I spoke rather of the great need which our successors in the guidance of the Society will have of unbiassed and clear judgment. Every such attempt as the Theosophical Society has hitherto ended in failure, because, sooner or later, it has degenerated into a sect, set up hard-and-fast dogmas of its own, and so lost by imperceptible degrees that vitality which living truth alone can impart. You must remember that all our members have been bred and born in some creed or religion, that all are more or less of their generation both physically and mentally, and consequently that their judgment is but too likely to be warped and unconsciously biassed by some or all of these influences. If, then, they cannot be freed from such inherent bias, or at least taught to recognize it instantly and so avoid being led away by it, the result can only be that the Society will drift off onto some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die.

Enq.—*But if this danger be averted ?*

Theo.—Then the Society will live on into and through the twentieth century. It will gradually leaven and permeate the great mass of thinking and intelligent people with its large-minded and noble ideas of Religion, Duty, and Philanthropy. Slowly but surely it will burst asunder the iron fetters of creeds and dogmas, of social and caste prejudices ; it will break down racial and national antipathies and barriers, and will open the way to the practical realization of the Brotherhood of all men. Through its teaching, through the philosophy which it has rendered accessible and intelligible to the modern mind, the West will learn to understand and appreciate the East at its true value. Further, the development of the psychic powers and faculties, the premonitory symptoms of which are already visible in America, will proceed healthily and normally. Mankind will be saved from the terrible dangers, both mental and bodily, which are inevitable when that unfolding takes place, as it threatens to do, in a hotbed of selfishness and all evil passions. Man's mental and psychic growth will proceed in harmony with his moral improvement, while his material surroundings will reflect the peace and fraternal goodwill which will reign in his mind,

instead of the discord and strife which is everywhere apparent around us today.

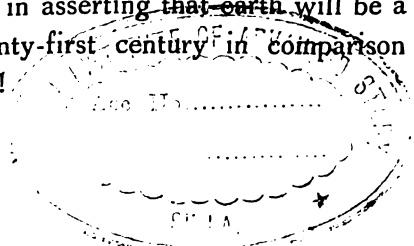
Enq.—*A truly delightful picture ! But tell me, do you really expect all this to be accomplished in one short century ?*

Theo.—Scarcely. But I must tell you that during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those Masters, of whom I have spoken,¹ to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way. Towards the close of each century you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality—or call it mysticism if you prefer—has taken place. Some one or more persons have appeared in the world as Their agents, and a greater or less amount of occult knowledge and teaching has been given out. If you care to do so, you can trace these movements back, century by century, as far as our detailed historical records extend.

Enq.—*But how does this bear on the future of the Theosophical Society ?*

Theo.—If the present attempt, in the form of our Society, succeeds better than its predecessors have done, then it will be in existence as an organized, living and healthy body when the time comes for the effort of the twentieth century. The general

condition of men's minds and hearts will have been improved and purified by the spread of its teachings, and, as I have said, their prejudices and dogmatic illusions will have been, to some extent at least, removed. Not only so, but besides a large and accessible literature ready to men's hands, the next impulse will find a numerous and *united* body of people ready to welcome the new torch-bearer of Truth. He will find the minds of men prepared for his message, a language ready for him in which to clothe the new truths he brings, an organization awaiting his arrival, which will remove the merely mechanical, material obstacles and difficulties from his path. Think how much one, to whom such an opportunity is given, could accomplish. Measure it by comparison with what the Theosophical Society actually *has* achieved in the last few years, without any of these advantages and surrounded by hosts of hindrances which would not hamper the new leader. Consider all this, and then tell me whether I am too sanguine when I say that if the Theosophical Society survives and lives true to its mission, to its original impulses through the next hundred years—tell me, I say, if I go too far in asserting that ~~earth will be a~~ heaven in the twenty-first century in comparison with what it is now!



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