

## Light from the East Speeches

by Olcott, Sinnett, Burrows, Keightley, Judge, Besant

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### H.S. OLCOTT on THE ORIGIN OF THE T.S.

COLONEL OLCOTT: — Ladies and Gentlemen, my own remarks this evening will be confined to the origin of the Theosophical Society and the spread of the movement. It is one of the noted movements of modern times, whether regarded from a friendly or unfriendly standing point. That it has had an appreciable effect upon contemporary opinion is too evident to need any elaborate discussion. The literature of the subject has grown to considerable proportions, and has been disseminated throughout the world: throughout the English speaking Countries in the original, and throughout other countries by translations. Various magazines are maintained by the Society in different languages; for instance, in English in several places; in French, at Paris; in German, at Leipsic; in Scandinavian, at Stockholm, and in the Vernaculars of India, Japan and Ceylon in their respective countries. At the present moment the Society contains the following number of branches:— in India, about 125; the United States of America, 56; Europe, in branches and branches forming, 33; in Ceylon, 22; in Australasia, 7; in the West Indies, 3; a total of 246 branches, and new branches are being continually formed. The spread of the literature prepares the minds of the people to come into closer relations with the representatives of the movement, and, while we do not have missionaries or agents travelling around the world to make branches, we go to countries where we are invited and find the soil already prepared for us. Now this whole movement has grown up within the short space of about 15 years. In 1874, Madame Blavatsky and I, who became the founders of the movement, met at a farm house in America where I was pursuing some scientific enquiries into the subject of what is called materialisation; *i.e.*, the apparition of the forms of the dead. Our acquaintance at once ripened into a friendship. We found ourselves to be congenial in opinion, and she brought to our intercourse the great resources of a mind stored with a mass of erudition with regard to the arcane or esoteric philosophies of the ancient times. I found her the most intellectual woman I had ever met in my life, a very eccentric personage, but a person who compelled you to either like her very much or to be very antagonistic to her. She was in no sense a commonplace personage, and, while a person accustomed to the conventionalities of life might be at once repelled by the brusqueness of her manners, and so forth, yet, if he were a person of good sense and intelligence, he would very soon see that beneath this mask of unconventionality there lay a great soul, and a great and well [Page 4] furnished mind. Our acquaintance finally got to that point that I was enabled to share with her in a great literary work which she had undertaken, to wit, the writing of a voluminous book, called "Isis Unveiled". I assisted her at this task for about a year and a half or two years, giving all the spare time I could from my professional duties, and the acquaintance thus developed to my view such resources as I had found in no human being of either sex, and the most remarkable thing was that when I wrote to her family in Russia to ask where she had acquired this vast knowledge about these most recondite subjects, which were subjects of daily conversation between herself and her visitors, they replied that they had not the

least idea, for, as far as they knew, she had received only the education of a young lady of good family, and that beyond a superficial knowledge of current literature and the acquisition of two or three languages, that she had no more education; while, as for these subjects that I spoke of, they did not believe that up to the time when they last saw her she had even thought of them in her dreams. However that might be, I am a witness to the fact that daily during this time and the subsequent time we passed in the United States she was receiving specialists, who were authorities on such subjects as archaeology, the migration of creeds and peoples, the origin of creeds, the relation of ancient and modern science, the Kabala, the value of certain esoteric interpretations by great critics, upon the works of antiquity, the theory of cyclic evolutions, the scope and nature of the psychological powers of man, and a variety of other subjects which are embodied in her writings; and I have more than once heard these specialists say upon leaving that they had had light thrown upon their specialities which they had been searching for vainly for many years. I remember very well that a Jewish Kabbalist who had been studying the Kabala for thirty years told me before he left the room that he had learnt more about Kabala from Madame Blavatsky than he had been able to acquire in all his years of study; and at one time in India, when we passed some evenings with the learned professors of the Sanskrit College at Benares, the centre of ancient Sanskrit learning, the principal of the college, a German Orientalist, said that no Orientalist of Europe had thrown so much light upon the Sankhya school of philosophy as had been given by her on that occasion. This was the quality of the knowledge that she possessed, and so it is not to be wondered at that a person like myself, who, though what is called a successful man, yet was not specially interested in worldly affairs, and who had a strong taste for these things of higher import, should have been almost dazzled by this display of learning, and this variety of acquirements. Besides these extraordinary literary and mental accomplishments of hers, she also possessed in a very striking degree psychical powers such as we read about in the accounts of [Page 5] the lives of ancient sages and the proof of the reality of which powers was vouchsafed to many witnesses in America for years before we sailed from New York for India; so that naturally those of us who knew her in those times and subsequently, have been unaffected by all the imputations upon her character that have been so rife during the later years of her life. She was not perfect, yet conceding all her imperfections she was greater than her detractors and we loved her for herself and for her cause. It is not my intention nor is this the proper place to say anything in detail in regard to various base calumnies that have been uttered against her, but only to say this, that as her friend of seventeen years standing, her colleague, her most intimate associate in the work of the Theosophical Society, I bear my testimony to her possession of powers as extraordinary as any we have read about in the records of the ancient or modern times; psychical powers, I mean. Now it has been remarked that this movement was floated on phenomena. To a certain extent that is true, but the fault probably is more with myself than with her. The things she did were so novel and striking to me, they were so interesting to me as a veteran student of psychology, they had such an important scientific bearing upon the problem of the powers of man and the latent forces of nature, that naturally I urged her to continual displays of these powers before a variety of witnesses. Reluctantly she complied, and the result was most unfortunate; it vindicated the wisdom of that reticence which had been the policy of all the great sages and adepts in the past. The rule of the ancient school of occultism was — to know, to will, to dare, and to keep silent; for, as Jesus of Nazareth said, it was not proper or profitable to show these things to the ignorant, for it would be like casting pearls before swine or that which was holy to the dogs. So in his time Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion of India, when asked to perform a miracle, said " I have nothing to show that will interest you. The religious teacher's vindication rests entirely upon the purity of his doctrines". Now, we, as the friends and admirers of Madame Blavatsky take the position that her reputation for the future may safely be left to the critical examination of the principles which she taught, and the life which she led. Tested by those rules, I can say that we confidently believe that her reputation will become brighter and brighter with the lapse of time, as her mere personality fades out of memory and her teachings become better known; and as we treasure up now the writings of Paracelsus, Kunrath and all other mediaeval and ancient sages, so the

writings of our dear departed colleague will in future times be given a foremost place in the library of every student of Occultism.

If the Society's career was accompanied at the outset by phenomena, at least we may say, that it has acquired its greatest strength since phenomena were kept private. The attack made upon [Page 6] her by the Psychical Research Society has been of the greatest service to us, for it threw all the members of the Society back upon an examination of the bases of the faith that was in us. We were forced then to look at the merits of the philosophy of the ancient times and of the principles that were involved in the platform of our society, and finding there everything that was admirable we became convinced that it was better for us to learn these principles and embody them in our lives, trying to live so as to commend our doctrines to the confidence of the world, than to try to dazzle with displays of psychical phenomena, when the laws by which they were produced were unknown even to the most advanced scientific men of the times. Now the growth of this movement, so phenomenal, has resulted from a spirit of religious unrest which characterises our generation. I am travelling over a large part of the world, addressing audiences in many different nations, and being brought into personal relations with the thoughtful, so that I can testify from personal observation that there is a universal enquiry going on into the bases of religious belief, not only in Christendom, but in India, among the Hindoos, in Ceylon and other Buddhist countries, among the Buddhists among the Parsees of Bombay, and among the Jews and other religious bodies. There is going on one of those natural reactions in the public mind against Formalism, coldness and selfishness in the religious teachers of the world, which have now, as they have in past epochs, begotten Materialism under the lead of science and the rationalistic spirit. Reaction has begotten this enormous movement of modern spiritualism, it is now giving a great interest to the researches of the hospitals in the subject of Hypnotism, and it is also at the bottom of this Salvation Army movement, this marvellous movement of our generation, legitimate successor to the Wesleyan tidal wave. Deep down is a desire of the people to find somewhere sincerity, somewhere sound ground upon which they may rest in their religious belief. Man is not anxious to give up his religious feelings, and our Society was distinctly formed for the purpose of aiding in the salvation of this religious spirit by the adoption of legitimate and scientific methods. It has no character of sectarianism nor shall it ever have while I am President and can prevent it. It is supposed by some ignorant of the facts that our Society is a mere Buddhistic Society, devoted particularly to a Buddhistic propaganda. This is not so. We are helping the Buddhists of Ceylon, Burmah, Siam, Japan, Cambodia, and other places to strip their religion of the excrescences which the ages have fastened upon the pure doctrine taught by Gautama Buddha. We are trying to show them how to separate true Buddhism from devil worship and nature worship and superstition of various kinds. We have succeeded to an extent beyond our wildest [Page 7] dreams. Neither Madame Blavatsky nor I, nor Mr. Judge, nor any of our original colleagues ever dreamed that this movement would take the proportions which it has already assumed in these few years. We simply knew that there was a great body of truth in the ancient writings which could be brought out, put into circulation and made part of the current wealth, the intellectual wealth of the times, and we determined with the assistance of the custodians of this ancient literature, the priests and pundits of these ancient countries, — as well as that of those hidden teachers, whose existence we personally knew of, and whose help we were guaranteed from the beginning — to bring out this long-buried mass of information in regard to nature and to man. So then, we are the friends of religion, and deserve the kind wishes of all true religionists. Occasionally we meet with Christian clergymen who are broad-minded enough to see this, and to see that our strict neutrality in regard to Sectarian matters is the principle which leads us to help the Buddhists to know Buddhism, the Hindoos to know Hindooism, and the other religionists to know their religion, as well as to help the Christians to understand the meaning of their own Scriptures; and so they occasionally come forward and join our Society. I have just returned from a tour in Australasia, and the other day at Brisbane one of the leading Anglican clergymen of the place, a noble-hearted man, respected by all sects out there, after hearing my

lecture, came to me and joined our Society. We have also a Christian bishop among our members, and we alone of societies of our class have the unique spectacle to present to the world of these prelates of the heathen and Christian religions sitting side by side in fraternal goodwill for the common object of discovering the bases of truth and spreading them throughout the world. Our Society has accomplished in India what no agency heretofore had been able to do, and that is to bring the people of the different races and creeds of India into friendly intercourse. Here is a photograph of the delegates, at our Annual Convention at Madras last December and there, if it were enlarged, you would all see the representatives of the different castes of India from Brahmin to Sudra, of the Parsees, the Buddhists, and Hindus, the followers of Buddha and Zoroaster, the worshippers of Vishnu and of Siva, who are seated together in this group and who attended as delegates to our Convention. I show you this for the purpose of giving you Western people an idea that we are not dreamers but are practical persons who can point to actual achievements. We can point to things done which are of a surprising character in themselves, and which any Society might be very glad to boast of. Among other things, we have begun to revive Sanskrit literature in India and Buddhist literature in Japan; to stud the Island of Ceylon with schools for Buddhist children under Buddhist certificated [Page 8] teachers; we have with local help taken in hand the education and elevation of women in Ceylon and Japan, and at Bombay and elsewhere have opened charitable dispensaries; we have established journals in Asiatic vernaculars and are printing and widely circulating books. We have also succeeded in bringing about the preliminaries for a friendly understanding between the hitherto divided portions of the Buddhist religion of the North and of the South. No Orientalist, and no one at all heretofore has even tried to bring about a friendly relation between these great portions of Buddhism, but our Society has succeeded in doing it, for, as the result of my tour of 1889 in Japan, the eight sects, uniting in a General Committee for general work, sent a number of young priests to Colombo to be educated in the Sanskrit and Pali languages, so that they might read the Scriptures of the Southern canon in the original tongues. Observe that despite obstacles which might have discouraged some, we have gone ahead in the spirit that was enunciated in that splendid declaration of Martin Luther when summoned to the Diet of Worms, and when the people went by thousands outside the city to meet him, and his friends cautioned him not to go into the City nor appear before the Diet, because his condemnation was determined upon. That brave man, voicing the spirit of the nineteenth Century in advance, said that "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles in the roofs of the houses I would still go on". That is the spirit of this age, and our Society is formed in that spirit of determination to enquire into the foundation of things; a determination to discourage that conceit which has taken possession of the modern mind, and which makes us believe that the dawn of knowledge has just come, and that our ancestors knew nothing that was worth knowing.

The Press, I see, has been asking, "What will become of the Theosophical Society now that Madame Blavatsky is dead?" My answer is simply that it will go on without a check or a jar, as though nothing had happened. It will do the same when Colonel Olcott dies. That is because the movement has already acquired an inherent vital impulse which makes it an independent entity. The principles we are teaching are far greater than any personality connected with their spread, and see the spectacle in the present Convention, which has been attended by Delegates from various European countries, many of whom are upon the platform about me; gentlemen from Sweden, from Spain, from France, from Germany, from Greece, and representatives of all the nations of the United Kingdom. In this Convention, I say, we have had the best possible proof that this movement has an independent vitality in it, which will carry it along the ages, and so now I, who have been in this thing from the beginning and who have borne the brunt of the day, feel now that at last I have come to that point where I can lie down in peace and in [Page 9] quiet, without a single apprehension about the future of the Theosophical movement. My share of the work has always been the practical executive one; Madame Blavatsky has been the writer and the teacher, and I have been simply the pioneer in breaking new ground, visiting new countries, forming branches, and

carrying on generally the executive management of the Society. The growth of the Society some time ago led, or rather, forced me, to group our branches into sections according to countries, giving these sections autonomy. The experiment, which began in America under the able management of my old colleague and friend, Mr. William Q. Judge, who will address you presently, has become a perfect success, and is just now being applied on a large scale to the whole of Europe. We have adopted a Constitution during the Convention of the last two days, have made all the necessary arrangements for carrying on the work in Great Britain and other European countries, and we are beginning this new chapter, in our history under what seem the most favourable auspices. Among the most potent agencies which have greatly helped the spread of the movement has been the writing and circulation of the works of my old friend, Mr. A. P. Sinnett. When his first book appeared letters came pouring in to him from all parts of the world wherever English speaking people were found, and the book attained an immediate success, and his second book, "*Esoteric Buddhism*", has also spread everywhere and has been translated into various languages.

The other day, an American publisher asked permission to get out an edition, and his first issue was 3,250 copies, which, considering the metaphysical character of the work, is certainly a testimony to the prevalent interest in this subject. Mr. Sinnett's work has been of the very greatest value to our movement. It has brought it within the reach of the intellectual class, and it is an influence which is continually growing. Our movement in Great Britain has been enormously strengthened by the accession of this dear lady who is at my left, Mrs. Besant. Some years ago, the Secretary of an Infidel Secularist Society at Madras wrote to Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant to know whether a secularist could properly be a theosophist, and they answered editorially in their Journal that it was impossible for a person to be a consistent Secularist, and at the same time to belong to a Society like ours, which was dealing with superstition. Now, that was because neither of them had really any knowledge of Theosophy, but the character of Mrs. Besant's mind is such, her devotion to truth is so enthusiastic and unselfish, that she was led with an open mind to receive truth wherever it could be found, and having, as she thought, found truth in this movement, she courageously threw off her old associations and came forward herself as a willing helper to offer us her services. I have been extremely impressed [Page 10] with one fact. Here are two great religious movements of the day, each headed by a man and a woman; one the Secularist movement, represented by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, and intended to promote the rationalistic spirit as opposed to the religious; the other, the Theosophical movement, which tends to promote the very opposite feeling, the spirituality, the spiritual belief of mankind, also headed by a man and a woman, Madame Blavatsky and myself. Now observe that, by a curious concatenation of circumstances, it has happened that the man of the Secularist movement died, the woman of the Theosophical movement died, and the woman of the Secularist movement came over to be a most potent and splendid ally to me in carrying on this work. We have here on the platform the foreign delegates that I have spoken of, and if time would serve, they would have great pleasure in orally testifying to you the fact that Theosophical ideas are spreading in their respective countries. To some it may seem strange that the hard-headed Scandinavians should take a great liking to Theosophy, but you must remember that they carry in their blood the mystical tendencies that were fostered by their Norse mythology, and the key to this Norse mythology is exactly the key which opens the doors to Oriental Occultism. Wherever you find a school of Occultism, there you find it in agreement with every other school throughout the world, from the most ancient times to the modern, whereas the religions which have been the offshoots, the clothing of these religious ideas, vary as individuals vary in complexion and in characteristics. So that it is not really a thing to be surprised at, that we have in Stockholm the strongest branch outside of London, and that the ideas are spreading there, so that our literature, translated into Swedish, is on sale in the bookshops throughout the United Kingdom of Norway and Sweden. We have another splendid helper here in Mr. Xifré, of Spain, who, with his colleagues, is translating our works into the Spanish language, and while

the Iberian Peninsula might be thought the most unpromising soil in which to plant these seeds of Eastern thought, yet at the same time there is the work going on, and from the interest which is manifested, we see that in the Spanish heart there is some of the same religious unrest which is found in other parts of the world. Spain is, no doubt, intensely Roman Catholic, yet can we forget that under the Saracen dynasties the colleges of Cordova and Seville, Salamanca and Valladolid, were the beacon-fires of European thought, the centres of Oriental philosophy — mystical as well as rationalistic. Ladies and gentlemen, as I am now obliged to give the platform to my Associates, I simply say to you that we are facing brightest skies in Theosophy, that we find in all parts of the world great encouragement to go on with our work. We are weaving rapidly a girdle of golden ties round the world, uniting the hearts of well-meaning and broad minded people into a feeling of brotherhood. These [Page 11] holy influences are spreading out from this movement, and we do not arrogate to ourselves the least originality or the least credit for this; we are simply a knot of humble workers who are transmitting to the present and future ages the wisdom of the wiser people, the sages who came before us, and who left as a bequest to posterity the result of their researches into the laws of nature. We are determined to go on, and to deserve at any rate the respect and confidence of the world. We shall not consciously be parties to any concealments of hypocrisies, any falsehoods or dishonesties. We have no selfish object in view, we receive no worldly benefit personally out of this movement. We are paid no salaries, we cheerfully give our time and such education as we may have to this work of enlarging the boundaries of knowledge, and trying to help, cultivate and promote the spiritual ideal of the world.

We shall now have the pleasure of listening to Mr. Sinnett's remarks upon the "Connection of Modern Theosophy and Ancient Initiation".

### **A.P. SINNETT on SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION**

Mr. A.P. SINNETT: — Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. In the short time I have at my disposal to-night I want to put before you plainly one of the most important aspects of this great movement. To deal with the whole subject in any one speech is as impossible as it would be to compress the history of a life into five minutes, but what we can do in a very few words is to throw into the minds of people, however unfamiliar with this study, some of the leading ideas which may show the importance of the effort we are making; and in giving this explanation, of course I shall not stop to explain at every point the investigations which lead us to certain conclusions. For the establishment of some points that I shall take for granted, I shall refer you to the literature of the movement at large, but at the same time I think I can put some ideas which govern our action into a clear and comprehensive shape and into a coherent form. Now, the study that we have been enabled to undertake concerns what may roughly be called spiritual evolution. It concerns the laws which govern the progress of the soul of man, just as that which is called evolution in physical science relates to the development of physical forms. The laws which govern spiritual evolution point, we find, to some higher destinies for humanity than those we see around us now. We realise by the help of this teaching that human beings of the type we represent, are simply on a stage of the progress that nature has appointed as a possibility for the centres of consciousness within them which we call, sometimes loosely, their souls. What we find also is that this idea which we have grasped — which we of the Theosophical Movement have grasped—within relatively recent years, has been familiar to mankind at earlier stages of its progress in a way which was not rendered generally and popularly [Page 12] intelligible at the time, but, which we, looking back now can co-relate with our own work and recognize the importance of. What we find is this, that all those processes and ceremonies, which are spoken of as "initiations" in ancient times, which were carried on during the height of the

civilization of Egypt and were perpetuated to some extent, though in a very degraded form, during the civilization of Greece — those initiations were really concerned with the positive advance of the persons who became Neophytes in the knowledge of the laws governing spiritual evolution. There is in existence a great body of knowledge, which some of us in the Theosophical Society are now beginning to penetrate, but which, for the great masses of our own people around us, is entirely a sealed book, so absolutely sealed that the world generally disbelieves that such knowledge as I speak of was ever actually possessed. But we have very convincing proof that such knowledge was actually possessed by those who directed initiations in Egypt many thousand years ago; and many thousand years ago mankind was thus already advanced to that condition in which it became possible for those who were ready to develop their own evolution further, to take advantage of the teachings given to them and to progress along the road that conducts to a higher condition of being altogether than that which our humanity represents. It is well for us in the present day that there were such people at an earlier stage of the world's history ready even then to advance far beyond the level that ordinary mankind could attain to; because those who took up the great work in the days of which I speak, many thousand years ago, have in their turn become evolved in these later centuries into those teachers and masters on a higher plane of existence, to whom many references will be seen in all Theosophical writings. During a portion of the world's recent history, it was inevitable that these persons should remain in very great seclusion and reserve. It is perfectly true, as Colonel Olcott has just said, that in the beginning of the development of occult science in the world, one of the most commanding laws which ruled with persons who took part in it was that they should remain absolutely silent in regard to the teaching they obtained. The world was not ripe in those days for this extraordinary knowledge, which not only, when properly applied, may raise humanity to higher levels than those on which it is normally existing, but when improperly applied, may become an instrument of terrible evil. In that way it happened that for a long time, during what we call the Middle Ages, ordinary humanity ceased to have touch with the great truth I am speaking of, the fact that there is a pathway open to those who know how to enter it, to initiation and higher progress. That fact became forgotten by the world at large. It was pressed upon their attention so little by those who were familiar with it, that the masses of mankind practically forgot all about it, and it ran for [Page 13] a time in altogether hidden channels. We, with our present enlightenment on this subject can perceive evidences of its continued existence throughout the Middle Ages, even in Europe, because many of those Societies that were spoken of as Rosicrucian Societies, and by other names, and very much scoffed at and derided by people who knew nothing of what they were actually concerned with, were really in touch with some of the great secrets of initiation, but the time has come now when it is conceived by those who are in possession of the keys of this knowledge; that the absolute reserve which has for so many years, centuries, ruled the students and higher masters of occult wisdom must be to a considerable degree relaxed. The intensity of intellectual progress in our own time has conducted ordinary mankind to a condition in which we are in possession of so much knowledge concerning the secrets of nature that, as it were, almost at any moment the barrier may be broken through which divides what we call ordinary physical knowledge from that science which has to do with the psychic powers of humanity. And just because that may happen, so to speak, by accident almost at any time, it has been conceived to be more than desirable, it has become absolutely necessary that something should be done in a very large and more public way than has been done hitherto, to show mankind generally that there is an avenue open for those who are willing to pass through it, which will conduct them to a higher knowledge concerning the laws that govern spiritual things, and all those multiplicities of mysterious phenomena which from the point of view of students of occult science may be said to be in a middle kingdom, between that which is truly spiritual and that which is truly physical. Well, one all important reason why this knowledge should be partially open to mankind now I have already given; another all important reason is this, that up to a certain stage of spiritual development, mankind has drifted along the paths of evolution by natural forces so to speak, over which no individual has any control. The forces that have governed the evolution of the physical body up to now are, I need hardly tell you, forces over which mankind has no control, and

although every human being from the time that he has become human until now has, without knowing it, very seriously modified the character of his own progress through life and through successive lives by his actions during each in turn, still he has not done that with a full knowledge of what he was doing, and therefore the spiritual effect of his action has been very much lower and less than that it would have been otherwise. But a time comes when a human being cannot be developed by the mere automatic pressure of natural forces beyond a certain point, and when he attains that point he must take into his own hands the task of co-operating with nature and of developing by that creative force within him, which we call his soul, a new being out of himself which shall attain to a more god like [Page 14] condition than that he now occupies. Now, the commencement of that great effort is one which is only possible in association with a very great degree of knowledge as well as with purity of purpose and loftiness of motive. Therefore, something more is necessary than that the knowledge I speak of should be communicated as a scientific truth to mankind, which, mind you, would be very easy to do if that were the only point to be attained, but it is not the only point at all. It is absolutely necessary in order that it shall be effective in promoting the healthy evolution of mankind that the higher knowledge should be conveyed to our generation in association with the very lofty ethical ideas which may guide the application of it by people who became possessed of it, into effective channels, and into channels leading to a really higher evolution. Now, that double purpose has been the end in view of those who from regions which are inaccessible to most of us, have guided the beginnings of this undertaking. This movement has been thrown into the world as a splendid and magnificent offer to mankind. It remains to be seen entirely whether mankind will appreciate it and take advantage of it. If it does, the results that will happen in the future are so inconceivably great that imagination almost staggers at the attempt to define them. Because if any great number of people already, in our time, with set purpose enter this, which we call the path of initiation, the higher path of spiritual progress, then the advent of results which may come in a very remote futurity in any case will be enormously accelerated. Very much loftier conditions of life will then prevail, higher motives will operate with those who control and guide the affairs of the world and thus society at large will be redeemed from many of the terrible evils which beset it. And this result will be attained besides that which I may speak of as the primary purpose in view, the fulfilment of the great purpose of nature and the development of mankind into something higher than mankind — into that kingdom which we may call the divine kingdom. Now, this teaching is absolutely harmonious — if people will only look at the whole subject with cool dispassionate intelligence — it is absolutely harmonious with the spirit and teaching of all great religious systems. Though designed wherever they are truly great, by those who have possessed occult knowledge in a very high degree, in the shape in which they have been presented to mankind, for the most part they have been made to assume an exoteric aspect; an aspect which simply renders them very useful guides to conduct among people who are not absolutely, as yet, entrusted with the terrible responsibility of guiding their own spiritual evolution. Religion in even the most simple, crude, dogmatic, form, is a necessary guide to humanity up to a certain point, but a time ultimately comes when it must be wielded with such higher knowledge as will show the vast scientific spiritual truths underlying its dogmas and towards the realization of which [Page 15] mankind must struggle in order to accomplish the real result in view. Now, I cannot go on much longer and if I were to go on any longer at all, I think I should have to break fresh ground, which would tempt me into protracting my remarks further than I wish; I prefer, therefore, to leave the matter with you there, and to leave this statement of the purposes which I conceive the Theosophical movement to be concerned with, to filter into any minds to which it may be new and strange, and at all events I hope that this one idea I have been able to put before you in an intelligible shape, so that you may not go away simply with a vague conception that there are a number of people connected with the movement called the Theosophical movement, animated by a more or less lofty purpose, but that you will carry away from this room some definite view of what really this purpose is, and what it may lead to, if those of us who are working hard at the task prove worthy of the effort on which we are engaged.



**HERBERT BURROWS on REAL SCIENCE**

MR. HERBERT BURROWS: — Mr. Chairman and Friends. This meeting is a large one, but the subject on which I am to speak is infinitely larger than the meeting. I am to talk about the relation of Theosophy to Science, meaning by Science our Western science, and not one but fifty meetings would be required to touch even the fringe of the subject, and as I am only to speak for a quarter of an hour, I shall hardly be able even to approach that fringe. I shall only find it possible to place before you one or two of the leading ideas which we Theosophists have in our own minds, as to the relations of our Eastern science to the Western science of the day. Now, at the outset I want to remove, if I can, one or two misconceptions which may be present in the minds of some of those in the room who are not Theosophists. It is possible that you may think that we Theosophists are opposed to all Western science, that we do not believe in any of the scientific ideas of the day, that we put forward what are supposed to be by our enemies and by our opponents, the old, misty, antiquated ideas of the East, and that we build our lives and our hopes of the future entirely on those misty and ancient conceptions, putting on one side all the researches and the results of Western science for the last two centuries. But that is not true; there is no man or woman who believes more than a Theosophist believes in the good that Western science has done during the last century or two. We recognise its great patience and its exceeding accuracy of research, and we also recognise to the full the debt which we owe to a large portion of even what I may call materialist science, in that it has often rescued men and women from the grasp of the old theological dogmas and ecclesiastical superstitions. We believe that Western science is good as far as it has gone, but we do not believe that it has gone all the way; we object altogether to the barriers which some Western scientists [Page 16] are inclined to set up against farther research in the direction of spiritual knowledge, and we claim that our Theosophy, while taking all the best results of Western science, goes far beyond those results and points mankind to a spiritual path which leads to spiritual knowledge, a self-knowledge, and a knowledge of the universe as in its essence spiritual which the Western modern science and materialistic scientists have never been able to give. Personally, I owe a debt to modern science, but I owe that debt as a former materialist, and the real battleground between our Theosophical science and Western science lies just here. Putting it very roughly and briefly, the ordinary materialist science of the day — and in using the word materialism, I do not intend to imply for a moment that all the great scientific leaders dub themselves materialists; you who know science know that is not true; you know that Huxley above all men deprecates the term materialism as applied to his own science, although with him it seems to be only a matter of phrases — gives to its philosophy of life a physical foundation. This foundation is the belief that the thought and consciousness, which we Theosophists are convinced is the permanent thing in man and in the universe and can be separated from man even here on earth, is dependent on the changes in the combinations of the molecules of the brain, and that when at death those molecules disintegrate and man's physical body returns to the elements, there is at once and for ever an end of the individual consciousness and thought, which has been the moving spring of the man's or woman's earthly life. There we Theosophists traverse the conclusions of Western science, and in the few words that I want to address to you I shall endeavour to take up one or two of the leading ideas of the best scientists of the day, and attempt to prove to you that, arguing from them, you have a bridge which will lead you on to our Theosophical science. As I understand the two fundamental ideas of the best science of the day, and I use that word best advisedly, because science is of course changing from time to time, progressing in the cycle of evolution, they are these — first, the unity of force, and next, in spite of the materialist foundation of science, the permanence of force and life, not a permanence of course of man's life apart from the body, but the permanence of life as energy in the universe, for neither matter, life, nor force, can be argued away out of the universe. Taking then those two leading ideas, the unity of force and the persistence of energy, the Theosophist finds in them a clue to those problems of life and of mind which must present themselves to every thinking, intelligent person, especially to the

thinking, intelligent materialistic scientist. Those of you who know, as I daresay a large number of you do, the thought of Professor Tyndall, especially the thought which he elaborates in his Belfast address and in that wonderful lecture of his on the "Scientific use of the Imagination", know that he [Page 17] says that in his scientific thought he is continually brought face to face with problems which his materialism and his science cannot solve; but both he and Huxley are practically content for the time being to be satisfied with that science, and to leave the further elucidation of those problems to other thinkers, to other scientists, or to people who may come after them. Now here is where the Theosophist parts company with the Western scientist. The Theosophist is not satisfied to rest here, and so we on this platform and the Theosophists present are in this position — two courses are open to thinkers in studying themselves and in studying the universe. They can rest satisfied with what they know, or they can say to themselves that they are dissatisfied and that they want to know more. As Theosophists we want to know. It is possible that in this audience there may be a class of persons who answer to the first description. There may be some of you who for a good part of your lives were brought up on materialistic science, as I was, and as my friend and colleague Mrs. Besant was, and who have arrived at the conclusion that that science does offer to you an explanation of all the facts of your own life and the facts of the universe, and you do not wish to investigate further. That is not my position and never was when I was a materialist. When I was an agnostic I was continually brought face to face with problems of life and of mind, which my materialism and agnosticism were never able to solve. Now the laws of my mind, of my own existence, lead me and always have led me to investigate. I want to know more than I know now; I want to know more about myself; I want to know more about my fellow men, and I want to know more about the laws and facts of the universe, in order that increasing knowledge may be useful for good. For many years I could get no clue to farther knowledge about myself, about other men and women, or the underlying vital forces of nature, and it was only when I came to study Theosophy that I got that clue which I believe, and the more I study Theosophy the greater is my belief, will at last land me on the other side of the dead wall which Western science and Western materialism placed, as it seemed to me, in the way of my knowledge. Curiously enough it was Professor Huxley himself who set me years ago on this track, a track which I was not able to follow out to the full till I came under the wonderful teaching and the wonderful knowledge of our honoured leader who has just left us, Madame Blavatsky. There are, I know, Scotchmen in this room, friends of my own, who have come here tonight, and they will remember that some thirty years ago Professor Huxley gave to them at Edinburgh, in a course of lectures which was got up by a clergyman, that famous discourse of his on "Protoplasm, the Physical Basis of Life", and in that lecture he laid down a thought which troubled me in my materialism and agnosticism, and continued to trouble me till I came across Theosophical ideas. He said, in talking of protoplasm, [Page 18] that if our ears were fine enough as we walked through the corn fields on a summer's evening, we could hear the ceaseless movement of the protoplasm in the stalks and ears of corn, and it would appear to us like the sound of the rushing waves of the mighty sea. Then when I came to study optics and acoustics, I found out, what to me now is the real fact, that instead of our five senses being avenues of knowledge to the real and the vital universe, they are, in their present form, practically barriers, and that, following out Huxley's clue and Huxley's lead, if we could develop these senses, of sight, of hearing, of touch and the other senses, we could gain little by little a knowledge of the underlying universe, and of those finer, subtler forces which every materialist is bound to acknowledge as existing, although he has no actual knowledge of the laws of their operation. Now the Theosophic position with regard to that is this: We say that it is possible by good physical, mental, moral, and spiritual training to refine these five senses, and also to develop what may be termed a sixth sense, which if developed properly by this physical, mental and moral training, it being, of course, a long process, will bring us into conscious relation here on earth as we are now, as men and women, with other planes of being, peopled by other intelligences — will bring us as proved spiritual beings into connection with a proved spiritual universe. To me, that is an object which is above all things worthy of being pursued. I want to know about these other planes of existence, I want to know about these other intelligences, and I want to know all I can know about this

spiritual universe. But to guard myself in my Theosophical thought, to guard against possible delusions, I try to be scientific, and my scientific thought leads me in this direction. Suppose I were to go to Huxley and say that I wanted to learn biology, and that I knew little or nothing about it. He would perhaps invite me to attend a course of his lectures on the subject. In the first lecture which he would give he would in all probability mention certain nerves in the body, about the functions of which I knew absolutely nothing. He would tell me that I should be very foolish if I denied the existence of these nerves, if I denied their functions, simply because I had not before had an opportunity of studying them. He would tell me, and I suppose every man and woman in this audience would say the same, that I should be an exceedingly stupid man if, wanting to learn biology, I got up in the middle of his lecture and left because he was telling me things which I did not previously know. Now, I apply that line to my Theosophical ideas and to my Theosophical endeavours. The Theosophist teacher tells me this — "I do not ask you to believe anything because I tell you". There we are different from the ordinary orthodox religions and some of the ordinary orthodox philosophers. The Theosophist says, if you choose to enter upon a course of training, this physical, moral, mental and spiritual training [Page 19] which I mentioned, if you choose to be patient in your endeavours to learn, and willing to open your mind to every avenue of knowledge, I can place you on a path of thought and study which by-and-bye, if you are true to yourself and to your own self-consciousness, true to those around you, and true to the facts of the universe as you find them, will show you far more about the universe, about nature's laws and the laws of your own being than you know now. I want to learn; I believe it to be my duty to learn and therefore I have made up my mind to enter as a Theosophist upon this line of knowledge, the usefulness and beauty of which to me lies here. Madame Blavatsky was the first teacher whom I have ever met who could take up the loose ends of all the threads of my thought and weave them together into one coherent whole, and Theosophy is the only line of thought upon which I have ever entered which does give to me an explanation of these problems of life, of mind, and of consciousness which troubled me as a materialist. Let me take one special and familiar point. I suppose that there are persons in the hall who are not Theosophists. I wish that were not so, but I can hardly hope that every person in this large audience is a thorough-going Theosophist. It is possible that among you there are people whose foundation of life has a materialist basis. I throw out this challenge to you, and I throw it out, if I may be so bold as a humble thinker, to Professor Tyndall, to Professor Huxley and their school. I ask them and you to explain from the materialist and agnostic basis the facts of hypnotism, of mesmerism and of clairvoyance. It is no use for you to say that those facts do not exist, because if you do say that you put yourself outside of a very large portion of the scientific facts of the age. Dr. Charcot and his experiments in the hospital of Salpêtrière, at Paris, are as much facts as are Professor Huxley and Professor Tyndall themselves, and as are the biological facts of the one, and the facts which the other puts forward about Light, Heat, and Sound. Now, I challenge any materialist in this room or outside it to explain these facts of clairvoyance, hypnotism and mesmerism from the ordinary materialist standpoint, that standpoint being that thought and consciousness depend simply on the changes of the molecules of your brain, and are not separable from your body during life, dying when the brain disintegrates. The value of Theosophy to me is this, that it does explain, and all my Theosophy leads me in this direction. That being the case I should be unscientific if I did not pursue my investigations. I may be told that I make certain assumptions and hypotheses, although I have made none yet, and it is quite open to anyone in the room, who does not believe in our Theosophy, to say that assumption and hypothesis are not the bridge which will lead him from Western to Eastern science. But are there no assumptions nor hypotheses in Western science itself? Why Huxley himself [Page 20] says that matter is but a name for the unknown and hypothetical cause of the states of our own consciousness. I take two of the great leading scientific ideas. What scientist is there, from Tyndall or Huxley downwards, who has ever seen an atom, who can dissect an atom, who has any instrument by which he can test an atom? and yet the foundation of all your physical molecular science is the existence of atoms. What scientist, what materialist is there who has invented any instrument, however delicate, by which he can test, weigh and measure ether, and yet ether, as every physicist will tell you, is

the foundation of the undulatory theory of light; on the existence of ether (a pure hypothesis) depends much of the physical science of the day, and Professor Tyndall himself speaking of ether in connection with the undulatory theory of light, says that scientists are bound to argue as if this ether existed. And so I take their own scientific thought, and I apply it to our Theosophical thought, and I say that in turn I argue as if I were a spiritual being, as if the universe were a spiritual universe, and as if I could bring myself into conscious relation as a spiritual being with this universe; and doing this I can explain from the Theosophical standpoint these puzzling problems of mind and of thought, as to which I challenge explanation from the Materialists and the Agnostics, either here or outside this hall. And following out this line of thought it gives me a new and firm basis for a system of morals, because it eventually affords a scientific foundation for the real unity of mankind. It is, of course, perfectly open to any person who is not a public teacher, and to any Materialist who is simply satisfied with his own personal thought, to say, "don't want to know any more"; but if that Materialist attempts to put forward, for the benefit of mankind, a system of morals based on his materialism, then he is bound to open out his mind to every avenue of knowledge, and not to say, as Huxley does about a great many things, that he does not care to investigate. To me the investigations which I have carried on since I became a Theosophist, taking, as I did, my previous scientific training into that Theosophy, have led me more and more in the direction, not of assumption but of certainty; they have proved to me, and in like manner to others on this platform, by scientific experiment and demonstration, which is open to any man or woman in this hall, who chooses to enter upon the proper training, that here in life now, thought and consciousness are separable from the body, and can exist as independent entities apart from the body. It would be unphilosophical in you to accept that on my assertion, but it would be unscientific in you to deny, because that denial would be a declaration that your knowledge is the sum of all other knowledge, and no wise persons would commit themselves to that position. To suspend your judgment till you investigate for yourself is the wiser course.

But if all this be so, if you cannot argue force and life out of the universe, [Page 21] as even the materialist will tell you, then thought and consciousness even in their lowest aspects, being a form of force, must be permanent elements not only in human nature, but in the universe at large. And here is the foundation of our morals. They are built up on man as a spiritual being, on the universe as a spiritual universe, and on the conscious relations of the two. We shall I am confident, if not in our day, yet in the days to come, give to mankind by our Theosophy, a system of science, a system of philosophy and a system of religion which, welded together as a trinity of thought into one great unity of moral force, will build for man and woman in the future, a fit spiritual dwelling-place in the universe, a temple and a palace, whose foundation shall be self-knowledge, whose pinnacle shall be self-sacrifice, and whose twin pillars shall be, the one the sisterhood of woman, the other the brotherhood of man.

THE CHAIRMAN :— The remaining speakers— I may state this for the information of persons who have come in since— are, Mr. Bertram Keightley, M.A. of Cambridge, Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, an address on the subject of "Re-Incarnation" ; Mr. William Q. Judge, barrister, of New York, Vice-President of this Society and Secretary of the American Section, a discourse on "Karma " ; and the concluding address will be made by Mrs. Besant.

**BERTRAM KEIGHTLEY on RE-INCARNATION**

MR. BERTRAM KEIGHTLEY: — Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen; Taking up the thread of thought dropped by the last speaker when he pointed out to you that the teaching of the best modern science provided him with the bridge upon which he found it possible to cross over from the blank and hopeless materialism, which is rapidly invading our life and thought here in the West, to the brighter haven of Eastern science and knowledge — taking up the thought at that point, and crossing the bridge which he alluded to, I propose to invite your attention for a few very brief moments to one of the grand leading fundamental conceptions of that Eastern science of life and evolution to which he alluded. I refer to that thought, that conception; which we call by the name of re-incarnation. Mr. Burrows spoke of one life and one force, the unity of life and the unity of force which science cannot deny. He implied, but did not specifically mention, the third great aspect or factor in the universe, the unity of consciousness. Starting then from this unity of consciousness as pervading the entire universe, whether manifested or unmanifested, we come, passing over the intermediate stages, to that state in which we find ourselves as a congeries of individualized and seemingly separated centres of consciousness. Let me make a comparison: — in the air about us, up to the extreme limits of the atmosphere, is found the invisible vapour of water, invisible, intangible, [Page 22] imperceptible to our physical senses. It is comparable to what we Theosophists are accustomed to call the unmanifested consciousness or spirit in the universe. That water vapour, though we see it not while it continues in that state, nevertheless becomes visible to us in the first faint, barely perceptible clouds on which the setting sun paints its roseate hues. From that faint and filmy stage the watery vapour condenses stage by stage to the black clouds of a thunderstorm, till finally it descends upon earth in heavy drops of rain. This comparison will serve to illustrate the conception that we Theosophists hold with regard to the way in which this one universal spirit or consciousness becomes, stage by stage in the long cycles of evolution, individualised into the human beings, the thinking intelligent centres which we know, and which we call ourselves.

Among the innumerable stages of gradually increasing limitation, through which this universal spirit or consciousness passes in the cycle of evolution, we may distinguish, as in the blending colours of the solar spectrum, two that are especially distinct and marked. The higher, subtler, and less definitely limited of these we Theosophists term the Individuality, or immortal Ego in man. This is the soul, properly speaking. It does not form part of the normal waking consciousness of ordinary men, its presence being indicated, however, by the voice of conscience, as well as our higher and more unselfish aspirations.

The second of the two stages I have mentioned, is that of our ordinary waking consciousness, called by us the personality. Now we believe that this personality, our usual, every day self, is not the real man or woman, but merely the reflection in the physical body of the soul of Individuality which overshadows it. Thus, while the Individuality is immortal and imperishable, the Personality is fleeting and temporary.

And we thus believe that the whole purpose and meaning of universal evolution is a gradual development from out the bosom of this one universal spirit or consciousness of individualised centres, which attain step by step to full and perfect self-consciousness in the personalities of human beings. How then does evolution and growth take place? In our view — it takes place by the successive embodiment or manifestation of these higher spiritual centres or Individualities in varying forms and degrees, and through all the kingdoms of nature right up from the stony rocks and minerals to the higher type of human evolution, and then onwards and upwards through the perfection of glorified humanity to that stage of divine existence to which Mr. Sinnett alluded in the speech to which you have listened. Again, to use an

illustration, let us compare the pure, spiritual individuality, this evolving centre of consciousness, to a clear crystal ball. Starting at any point you please with that ball of pure white crystal suppose that in any one human life, a definite design, or pattern, in many [Page 23] colours is wrought on its surface. Then follows the death, as we call it, of man, the disappearance and dissolution of his physical body, but upon the crystal ball of his spiritual individuality is left impressed a coloured design or pattern, representing the experience, growth and development of that life. These colours at first are vivid, distinct, and their design well marked. As time passes the colours fade, and are absorbed into the substance of the glass, into the actual spiritual essence of the man's individuality, and merge and become perfectly one with it. They are not lost, they never disappear or cease to exist, but viewed from the outside they become merged into the crystal ball, leaving simply that lovely iridescent quality, such as one can see on the balls of so called iridescent glass. I use this as a comparison in order to lead up to an answer to one of the objections most often put forward against this doctrine of re-incarnation. It is urged that when we find ourselves here in physical life, we have no recollection of any past existence here upon earth. I can only answer that objection very briefly, and I answer it in this way: first, by pointing out the fact that in our view the detailed experience of the last life has become merged into the spiritual individuality of man, and no longer preserves on the surface of this spiritual individuality its former degree of sharpness and distinctness. The other answer applies more to the physical plane, and it is simply this; that in the conditions under which we ordinarily live, our knowledge, our consciousness, our memory and experience are entirely limited to what has been impressed on the physical organism, and do not even embrace the whole of that. As a matter of fact, our memory of events which have taken place here in this world, and have been impressed upon the physical brain, is shockingly bad in most cases; therefore, it is not to be wondered at that, since the brain and organism which this spiritual individuality is now using in this life had no existence till now, it therefore bears, and can bear, no possible trace of the experience of a past existence. It is not to be wondered at, I say, that we should in the vast majority of cases fail to recall specifically anything concerning these past lives of which I have been speaking. I must close, only pointing out to you that this conception of re-incarnation supplies a clue to the problem of life as it surrounds us, gives an explanation of the suffering and misery which befall every human being, gives hope for the future, strength to live and to suffer, confidence to go on learning and struggling and striving to attain to higher grades of knowledge, greater powers of well-doing, larger fields of usefulness. It explains to us clearly and scientifically how and why it is that we human beings may look forward to a day when from the misery and mists of the life we are now leading, from the struggles, social and political, moral and physical, by which we are now surrounded, we may reach a point at which humanity, both individual and collective, shall merge into a glorified state, in which, [Page 24] by slow but sure degrees, the individual unit of the whole will become as perfect as the models and exemplars of public and private virtue, to whom we look back in our history; while, in point of intellect, in spiritual knowledge, in brotherly good feeling, in wisdom and knowledge, they will far surpass anything that history has to recall.

THE CHAIRMAN :— We will now hear Mr. Judge, of New York, on the subject of "Karma"

### WILLIAM Q. JUDGE on KARMA

MR. WILLIAM Q. JUDGE:— Ladies and Gentlemen: — All men and women, I take it, are in the pursuit of happiness. If they do not find happiness here they seek it after death. They think that if they are not happy now they may be happy when they shall have died, and so I suppose, the poor people who live in

your East End, which is a blot on your civilisation, brought about by the wrong philosophy which those living in the other end believe and practise, they, I suppose, in the degradation in which they are compelled to exist, are also in the pursuit of happiness. They cannot get it now in London, they expect it sometime, and in the other circles of your Society, amongst those who are not condemned by nature or by God to have been born in the East End without their consent, even they are full of disappointment, unable to secure the ends they have in view, compelled to work hard for the living which they cannot secure, they also are in the pursuit of happiness. Is it not so ? And is it not also so that in both places the individuals of each class demand justice? and "Karma", about which I am to speak is justice and nothing else. The poor man in your slums, the poor man through all your cities, asks, " Why was I born poor ? Why was I born a wretch unable to rise, condemned all my life to be a degradation to myself and to my country ?" The Church gives him no answer; it says, "My friend, it is one of the mysteries of God, you cannot enquire into it". The others at the other end, who do not care, do not answer him either. Now, as Jesus of Nazareth said, "The poor are always with us". You are not all rich, you are all in different conditions of life, you know every day you are struggling with disappointment, with want of success, with poverty, and with various things which you cannot understand on any principle of justice in the Universe, unless of course you belong to that class of dogmatic religionists who say the Lord has seen fit to place me in this position whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, and I cannot explain it. Now , the doctrine of Karma which we talk about means that as this being, to whom Brother Keightley and Brother Burrows referred, passes from life to life, he is under the government of law, and not of injustice. Is not the world governed by law, or is it governed by favour ? Now, the religious systems of the day in the West show that their teachers [Page 25] believe the Universe to be governed by favour, by prayer, by partiality, by the absence of law; the theologians say, "If the Lord made law, he can also refuse to obey the law", but the Theosophist says, "If the Lord made law to govern the Universe, he must obey the law", and the great law governing man in his progress through life, in all the relations of life and of the Universe is Justice, and that law of justice says that as you sow so shall you reap, and that was enunciated by Jesus of Nazareth, just as all the teachers before him and since have enunciated it in all places and times. Now if that law enunciated by Jesus is true, that as you sow so shall you reap, and as ye judge so shall ye be judged, where is the justice of having a human being born in degradation without his consent, unless you adopt our doctrines of Re-incarnation and Karma ? Karma means Justice, compensation for every act good or bad which you do in your life. Seventy years is not enough time in this life to reap by experience and to receive justice for all your deeds. Do you not know that although this saying of Jesus is believed, "As you sow, so shall you reap ", that hundreds of men now live sixty or seventy years of wicked life, and they do not get apparently what they have sown. When will they get it, if there is no justice ? Similarly you see good men living sixty and seventy years of life; where do they get what they have sown? You may say some of you, one reaps up in Heaven and the other in Hell; but if you say that, at the same time there is another doctrine which you admit, that the wicked man merely by believing at the last moment may reap yet his just reward. For what ? for being wicked all his life, and at the end simply saying, "I believe in something that is not justice". . . If there is justice in the Universe it must govern us always, and we believe in Re-incarnation, that you and I have been here before, that I have been here before and will be here again, and that you have: if this be true, and I think it is, and also the other principle of justice, the principle of perfect compensation and balance in nature, then the whole Universe is vindicated; but if you look at it in any other way, God becomes unjust and no one believes that he is so. The Universe becomes something governed by caprice, for do not the theologians and the churches, all churches in this country, and every other country which are dogmatic, say that you can alter the course of nature by prayer, that when the mother prays for the child who is on a journey, that child is saved from a horrible wreck, and forty other children and brothers and sisters are killed because their mothers did not pray. Is that justice ? No. Justice means that for every act you perform, every thought you think, every thing you do, you will receive an exact equivalent some time; and seventy years of life, as I told you, is not long enough, it is not long enough to reap by experience, to account for the savages being savages, to

account for your poor people being poor and degraded. Nothing will account for these [Page 26] things but our doctrines of Karma and Re-incarnation, and that these people have come over from other lives where they did those acts which condemn them now to suffer the compensation. The Christian must believe in this, because St. Matthew says, "For every act, word and thought, you must give account". Giving account does not mean to say "I did it", and then get no reward and no compensation. It means to give account, and to render and give up, and to receive the fine or the punishment, and in St. John's Revelation it also says, "I saw the Book of Life open, and men were judged for their acts"; so that in the Christian Bible, we find that this doctrine of Karma, that perfect justice must rule, that you must receive the compensation for every act and thought was taught, and that this compensation can only be accomplished by Re-incarnation. For it is unjust that the savages should be savages; it is useless to say to me, "it is a mystery of the Lord's, he made them savages, we cannot enquire into it". "I must enquire into it", as Brother Burrows said, and enquiring into it I find that Re-incarnation explains that these people are savages because they are coming up in the scale of evolution, and are waiting for the time when they shall go into human bodies under conditions where things will be more favourable. That is what the law of Karma means. Karma means action, the result of action, the cause and the effect, and human beings are always setting in motion causes, and those causes must reap effects, must bring about effects here or hereafter, and hereafter does not mean in a mythical place which no man can find, but here on this earth; that you must come again and again to reap the results of your acts, good or bad, to progress from life to life on this earth, to continue civilisation higher and higher, so that at last these pinnacles may be reached to which Mr. Sinnett referred, of which Mr. Burrows spoke, until at last the whole world will admit that it is one family going on to perfection, not that other parts in it are in the favour of some Almighty presence, which, by reason of their supplication, gives them benefits which it will not give to anyone else just as worthy. The Theosophist says that justice rules the world, and justice is the English equivalent of the word Karma, or of the old, most ancient doctrine, that man is ruled by law and must give account, must suffer or enjoy in various, several, lives on earth, for every act, word and deed which he may have done or performed.

THE CHAIRMAN:— The concluding address of the evening will now be delivered by Mrs. Annie Besant.

### **ANNIE BESANT on HUMAN DUTY**

ANNIE BESANT: — Mr. President, Friends: — In speaking the last words of this meeting only, but of the two days' Convention that has been held by the "Theosophical Society in Europe". surely it is right and [Page 27] fit that those words should deal with human duty, with that to which our Philosophy and our Science alike lead up, the great doctrine of human brotherhood, the need for a perfect system of ethics that shall bind man into one great body and Society into one perfect whole. For, of what avail our science, of what avail our philosophy, unless both go to the building up of the perfect man, unless indeed both out of the knowledge that is garnered, out of the lofty thoughts that are at once man's privilege and man's duty, he is able to learn the lesson of love, of self-sacrifice, the lesson of true humanity, that lesson which alone can redeem the world, and build it up into what ideally it should become. Everywhere around us there are religious hatreds, from every side come sounds of discord, and harmony is nowhere to be found. And yet, if it be true that the Universe is ruled by law, what can that law be save the very expression in space and time of the nature of the manifesting principle, not law imposed from without, but nature manifesting from within? and only as we place ourselves in harmony with that inner manifestation



can the possibility of outer progress be secured. Theosophy gives us the true basis for our brotherhood. It lies in the spiritual unity of the race, and in that doctrine of continued re-incarnation of which our brother Keightley spoke, and on which the whole scheme of our ethics must inevitably turn. For what can we be save brothers, if step by step we traverse the cycle of human experience ? What can matter our rank, our classes, our differences, in face of this one great fact that in turn each has every experience, in turn each passes through every stage of progress, rich it may be today, poor it may be tomorrow, but whether rich or poor, worthy just in so far as the experience is utilised, and one more lesson is garnered in that building up of the great self-conscious spirit which is the end and aim of evolution. Only by that fact of the re-incarnating spirit can the truth of human progress be explained; without it evolution is bereft of its goal, and growth becomes a mere temporary incident to be followed by inevitable decay. What avail to build up, if only to pull down again ? What avail to evolve with pain and agony, if only to dissolve when the evolution is over ? What gain in the lessons of experience if that experience is never to be utilised ? What use in all the struggle of humanity, if out of it nothing but destruction is at last to result ? But the very spirit of evolution is this guiding and evolving intelligence, learning as it evolves, and garnering the lessons it has learnt. Rich and poor but stages in our progress — and let me say for fear you should mistake the meaning, led astray by the glance at the outer surface, that neither wealth nor poverty is in itself of the nature of reward or of penalty; each is experience, each is teaching, and many a one is not yet strong enough for the lesson of suffering that comes late, and not early, in the evolving growth of the spirit of man. Take, as you may well take, this doctrine as the basis [Page 28] of your ethics, and at once it throws a flood of light on human life and human destiny. Mr. Sinnett spoke of entry into the path that leads to the heights of spiritual perfection. That path will in time be trodden by every child of man, but the lower lessons must first be learnt, the alphabet of human duty must be fully and rightly known. The heights of attainment are preceded by the valleys of useful human discharge of every tie and duty that comes in our path in life. Life's lessons must be learnt, and back you come over and over again until the learning is complete. If the scholar says, "I will not learn", if the scholar be idle, lazy, or indifferent, if he rebel against the tuition and prefer pleasure to instruction, then back on the wheel of life, over and over again he must ever return, until the lesson is learnt in other lives, refused in this, and so every step of the long ladder is trodden by the ascending spirit. You may say, "how shall I know that, that fact is true?" It is of vital importance to you to find out its truth or its error; for, if it be true, you in your daily life are building the man you shall be in the days to come. Every word, and still more, every thought — for thought is more potent than word, thought is more vital than action — every thought of yours is moulding that which you shall be in days to come; the selfish and the idle, the indolent and the careless, are making barriers that hereafter they must over climb by added effort, and if this be true, your knowledge or your ignorance alters not the facts. Facts in Nature remain, no matter whether you know or are unknowing of their truth. Do you want proofs of Re-incarnation ? look around you on every side. You may see within the limits of one life a man who is highly educated, another who is grossly ignorant. How does a man prove the fact of his education ? He cannot tell you every book from which he has gleaned every fact that furnishes his mental equipment. He cannot refer you to every page from which he has gained some truth, some thought, some new idea; the fact of the education is not in his memory of every page that he has ever read, it is in the knowledge and the cultured intellect that prove themselves to everyone with whom he comes in contact. And so your education by your past lives does not depend for its proof on your memory of every page over which you have plodded in bygone times; the memory of the individual is in, the faculties that you find him utilising in his present life; not in the memory of the past life-books he has studied, but in the faculties and the knowledge that they have evolved in him; and your differing capacities, your power of understanding, your strength of intuition, your grip of the realities of life — all these are what you have learnt in your past livings, and the qualities of mind and spirit are the memory of the true self, signs of the battles in which these spoils were won. And if this be true, if this be the fact, then you have an explanation of the strength of the movement known by the name of [Page 29] Theosophy today, the explanation of its rapid progress throughout all the countries of the world. For if you

to whom I speak are yourselves reincarnated spirits, if the doctrine be true that in past lives you thought and suffered, learnt and experienced, then from within yourselves will come the echo of the doctrines to which you listen, and gradually they will approve themselves to your reason and your spirit without very much outer argument from other lips. Why does the movement grow, why in every country of Europe is there a growing band of believers in the doctrines ? Why alike in India and Australia, alike in Europe and in America, do you find man after man and woman after woman of approved knowledge, of thought, of culture, joining us, not the thoughtless and the indifferent but the earnest workers for mankind? It is they who come to swell the ranks of the Theosophical Society; they come by virtue of their past learning, recognising echoes of the truths that formerly they knew. They come because before them it opens up fresh avenues of moral and spiritual growth. It gives a rational basis for religion, it sheds new light on science, and those who are seeking the light need not the light should prove itself when it comes. The sun when you see it proves its own existence, and the truth of man's destiny shines out before the consciences of men, needing no demonstration save its own brightness, no proof save that fact which it places before the eyes of man. "How, they say, "does your movement stand today " ? It is stronger than it ever was before. But from all sides the question comes, "Have you not lost your teacher, have you not lost one of your Founders, she from whom the whole message of Theosophy has come?" We have not lost her: for the thought of the living spirit does not die when the physical instrument drops to the earth to which it belongs; that teaching remains, that inspiration is as strong today as in the years past in which it spoke from visible lips, spoke in audible voice. The teaching remains; it preceded her physical life, it remains beyond it; and the Society which she and the other two on this platform founded is strong to go on its way. She did not leave it till its life was secured, and the spirit which she breathed into it, the inspiration which she gave it, will carry it on beyond the lives of you and me far into the centuries that lie beyond. Great the loss may be to those who love her. There is no true loss, however, for Theosophy, for a science and a religion such as ours, based on eternal truths that cannot change, guided by wisdom that cannot falter, directed by intelligence that knows its work and carries it on. Our movement has its beginning not in this century but far back in the past antiquity of man; passing on from century to century, gathering force millennium after millennium, it comes into the outer world today, as Mr. Sinnett told you, just because man is evolved far enough to receive it, and the race has reached the point from which the light can be seen. And [Page 30] now, in speaking these last words, what shall I say to you who listen? many of you students of the philosophy for which this meeting has been held: many of you pupils of that great teacher whose name will be joined to this century as long as memory endures; some of you to whom the whole philosophy is a dream, who know nothing of its evidence, nothing of its strength, nothing of its inspiration; the last word to you shall be, that if you do not recognise our basis in philosophy, if you know nothing of the experiments of our science, if you do not accept our doctrines nor take them as bases for conduct, then at least you will accept with us the doctrine of human brotherhood and of the great progress of the race of which we all are part; some of you may be Christian in your thought, some of you materialist in your belief, some looking forward to joy in heaven, others content to work to make paradise on earth alone; it matters not what you are, your humanity is greater than your dissensions; it matters not what you may be, the brotherhood is stronger than the controversies that divide; one In your humanity, you are one in your objects, one in your sufferings, and one in your hopes for the future. Let us then work as brothers, not as foes; let us cast aside our hatreds and bind ourselves together in love. Let us put aside contempt, controversy, bitterness and suspicion, and work together to find the common truth and bind mankind in one. Our President told you how Buddhist priest and Christian prelate met on one platform to search for the common truth. Did not our great poet, Milton, tell us, that truth had been scattered all the world over, fragments of her body thrown to every clime. No one religion can find them all; no one human mind can grasp them; truth belongs to all, not to one religion nor to one belief. We are gathering up the fragments of that sacred body. The Hindoo brings one portion, the Buddhist another portion, the Christian another, the Jew another, the Materialist and the Agnostic bring each their fragments. Let us bring them together on one common platform, build the scattered fragments into one

perfect image, which once seen complete shall convert all humanity by the magic of her beauty, by that voice of truth to which we must answer, because at the core of things we are truth and not a lie; because we hold that perfect belief in a perfect future which moves alike the religionist and the unbeliever, that devotion to truth, that alone is at once human and divine, the only Saviour of men's lives and the only basis of a society that can endure.

THE CHAIRMAN :— On behalf of the Theosophical Society I thank you for your attendance and the close attention which you have given to the different presentations of this subject, and I now declare the meeting closed.