

The Mission of Theosophy

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Theosophy has a special and particular mission for the present age — as for all ages.

That mission, expressed in the broadest and widest terms, is to assert *the divine nature of man*.

This is the root and essence of all Theosophical doctrine; and it is here that Theosophy joins issue with the teachings of dogmatic Christian theology on the one hand, and with materialistic science on the other.

Theosophy seeks to re-invest man with a dignity and heritage of which he has been deprived by both religion and science.

Understand that Theosophy is no new thing — it is the oldest thing in the world. Many through ignorance or wilfulness would represent Theosophy as being a new religion, a new sect, a new creed. It is nothing of the kind. The oldest records of religion, philosophy, or science, are the records of Theosophy. She claims them all, can trace them all back to their primordial source, back to that "Divine Hierarchy" which now, as through all the ages, watches and guides the evolution of the race.

And it is because the Ancient Wisdom comes from this Divine Hierarchy, that it claims the title of Theosophia (θεοσοφία) or *divine wisdom*. It is because man is by nature a *divine being*, that he may lay claim to this *divine wisdom* as his birthright.

Is this too large a claim to make? Is it too much to assert, that there is a divine degree of knowledge in the possession of those who have passed through the stage of evolution in which we now find ourselves; and that we, like these, may attain to this perfection of knowledge, when we have reached the fulness and fruition of our human nature — nay, not merely that we may, but that we must; for such is our destiny, in virtue of our spiritual nature, in virtue of that indwelling divine spark which makes of each human being, even now, the "temple of God", (I Cor. iii. 16.)

Let us examine this question a little more fully. Apart altogether from the universal belief in all ages that such a Divine Hierarchy does exist, apart from tradition or religious belief, we may consider the matter in connection with three concepts or factors with which we are familiar. These are (a) our human nature, (b) our spiritual nature, (c) the law of evolution.

We must content ourselves in the first place with a mere definition of each of these, and we shall be obliged to leave behind without any further comment those who cannot accept our definitions. We understand by the term, "our human nature", that physical body or organism, with its characteristic consciousness, which is the *temporary vehicle* for the manifestation on the phenomenal plane of those higher principles which constitute "our spiritual nature".

It will be found that at this point we shall at once part company with the materialist. Materialism denies in toto that man has any spiritual nature, and consequently cannot accept any definition which relates our physical nature to our spiritual life. In the view of the materialist, *consciousness* is simply a product of physical development, and mind and intelligence are functions of the brain. The materialist holds that outside of physical form there is no life, no consciousness, no mind.

By the term "our spiritual nature" we understand all that belongs to the *subjective* side of our nature — mind, thought, intelligence, consciousness, will — which we must conceive of as characteristic of the real Ego, that which survives the death of the physical organism, and is not a product of that organism, but functions in it during the period of life on the physical plane.

By the "law of evolution" we understand that process by which lower forms of organism on the physical plane develop into higher ones, and by which *consciousness* undergoes a corresponding extension or exaltation.

We must note in reference to this latter term, that the difference between our position and that of the materialistic evolutionist is this, that whereas the latter views *consciousness* as a product of the physical organism — and consequently regards those higher degrees of consciousness which accompany the higher forms of physical organism, as the result mainly of the evolution of physical form — in our view it is consciousness itself, considered as a part of our more permanent spiritual nature, which is evolving; and consequently requires, as it progresses, a more and more perfect vehicle for its manifestation. Thus though we see the evolution of consciousness running concurrently with the evolution of physical form — that is to say, that what is called evolution appears in its simplest expression to be a continual widening of the sphere of consciousness to embrace more and more of the environment of the individual — in our view consciousness is not the result of the evolution of physical form, but the evolution of physical form is the result of this ever-growing consciousness, is the result, in short, of the *experience* which the higher spiritual entity gains every time it clothes itself in a physical form.

And this is so because in our view the universe is simply *embodied consciousness*. We view the universe as one vast field of consciousness, of infinite degrees in its individualized aspect, from mineral to vegetable, from vegetable to animal, from animal to man, from man to still higher degrees, which it is the province of Theosophy to unfold.

And it is just here that we base the existence of a Divine Hierarchy, as a logical deduction from the three concepts we have put forward. For if individually we are subject to this law of evolution, if our individual consciousness — while remaining a part of the universal consciousness, that which theology terms *God* — has in its individualized aspect passed through the lower stages of mineral, plant, animal, and now finds itself in the *human* stage, why should we break off there, and either deny any further progress, or

make that further progress the great exception in the universe, separating man both from the universe and from God ?

Theosophy teaches therefore that the next stage of man's evolutionary progress is that he shall become a *divine being*, by which is meant that he shall reach that perfection of his nature in which he will have become a self-conscious *spiritual* being, able to act consciously on those higher planes of nature which are at present *subjective*, and in which at present he merely builds all kinds of fancies according to his religious or emotional idiosyncrasies.

For let no man think that he will enter the spiritual world at death. The spiritual world is *here and now*, as an *actual* physical fact; and the full consciousness of that spiritual world is gradually dawning upon us, as we evolve out of that lower form of consciousness, which for the time being we term the human. And further, we must remain in the *human* until this higher consciousness is reached, and thus it is that we have to reincarnate over and over again, until through *experience* we reach the higher state.

It matters not what ideal *religion* may attach to the future of the individual, the *actual fact* is a process of nature. For what is the future but an extension of the present; and what is the *spiritual* world but an extension of the *natural*, or what is the *natural* world but an *aspect* of the *spiritual* ? There is no single atom of so-called *matter* which can be detached for a single moment, at any point of its inconceivable dimensions from the *spiritual* universe. Rightly considered, there is no distinction whatever between the *natural* and the *spiritual*. The universe is either all natural, or all spiritual, according as we view it from above or from below, that is, from its outermost or innermost aspect — for what is *spirit* but the *innermost* of all that exists — while even these terms are merely concessions to our finite intelligence.

The universe is a unity, consciousness is a unity, intelligence is a unity — yet how can we express these things in finite language. They must be grasped by the intuition. "Know of a truth", says Carlyle — "know of a truth that only the time-shadows have perished, or are perishable; that the real Being of whatever was, and whatever is, and whatever will be, is even now and for ever. This, should it unhappily seem new, thou mayest ponder at thy leisure; for the next twenty years, or the next twenty centuries; believe it thou must; understand it thou canst not,"

And to those who have not grasped this, we can but offer in broken language — suggestions, hints. Yet let us take this now as a *scientific fact* — by whatever method we may have arrived at that fact — that man as a whole, in all his aspects — not the mere finite being who stands before us in physical form — touches the whole universe, partakes of the nature of the whole universe; that the divine power which sustains the whole universe is within him, not outside of him; that his mind and consciousness, and will, are derived from, and part of, and one with the universal mind, and consciousness, and will — by whatever name these may be called.

We say again, to all who are prepared to listen, that the apparent isolation in which man stands from the spiritual world, from the guiding intelligence of the universe, and even from his fellow-men, is an *illusion*; not untraceable as to its cause and origin, and not without a remedy which has been plainly indicated by all those great teachers whom the world has first crucified and then deified. And it is the conquest of this *illusion* which is the goal of our human evolution. It is the rebecoming divine of that which, through its "fall

into matter", has lost its birthright, has lost touch with that larger consciousness of which it is a part.

We may observe now how this view of man's nature tends to harmonize science and religion. By *science* we mean in this connection the *facts* of nature. By *religion* we mean the *forms* in which man's aspirations after the divine have been clothed or set before the world from time to time by many great teachers. And we find in this view a perfect harmony between the scientific fact of man's spiritual nature, and the religious aspect of that nature given to us in the records known as the Old and New Testaments.

For this indwelling spiritual nature is the *Christ principle*; the *mystic Christos* of the Gnostics, of St. John's Gospel, and of the Apostle Paul.

Christ never was and never could be a *person*, for he belongs to all humanity, is indeed the indwelling spiritual life or principle of all humanity, and can only be individualized to the extent that this universal spiritual aspect of humanity has its individual aspect in each human entity. This spiritual and mystical *Christ* is identical with the mystical *Saviours* of all the olden religions and mythologies, and the allegories connected with his nature and character were borrowed from the older religions, and incorporated in the Gospel narratives, being grafted upon a slight historical narrative of an actual person called *Jesus of Nazareth*.

The proof of this lies in the fact that the mythical and miraculous events related in the Gospels are common to the older systems, more especially to the *Egyptian Horus* and the *Hindu Krishna*. All these follow the so-called history of Christ almost incident for incident, commencing with a miraculous conception and birth from a virgin, and ending with crucifixion.

But the Church, having lost the key to the nature of the inner divine principle of humanity, represented by the allegorical Krishna, Horus, or *Christ*, has identified absolutely the historical *Jesus*, and the mythical *Christ*. But when these two are again separated, and the nature of *Christ* studied not merely in the light of the gospel allegories, but also in the light of the older systems, all the difficulties which surround the gospel narratives will vanish; for the true historical portion relating to Jesus of Nazareth can be treated on its own ground on literary and historical evidences, while the mystical, mythical, and allegorical teaching concerning the *Christ* are left to those whose training or disposition will allow of their entering into the deeper mysteries of their own spiritual nature.

Therefore it is that today Theosophy preaches *Christianity* — not ecclesiasticism, or dogmatic theology. It preaches Christianity because it restores that ideal of a perfect humanity, of the human become *divine*, of which Christ is the type, and of which Jesus of Nazareth, and each one of those "Elder Brothers" of the Race, who have already reached the perfection of their nature, are the pledge and example.

And here we may note another error which is associated with the teachings of ecclesiastical Christianity. The Church has made of *Christ* an individual and separate divine being, a single personality occupying a unique position in the universe and in relation to "God ". But the term *Christ* is derived from the Gnostic *Christos*, meaning simply anointed, or *initiated*. It is synonymous with the Hindu term *Buddha*, or enlightened.

It means equally in each case, any individual who has reached the state of *adeptship*, who has reached that perfection of his nature which Paul describes as "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). And Jesus being such an one was rightly Jesus *Christ* and so also Gautama is termed Gautama *Buddha*. We thus see how it is that Theosophy can embrace both Christianity and Buddhism. Not of course in their exoteric forms, but in their inner or *esoteric meaning*. Gautama and Jesus being both *Initiates*, taught exactly the same truths with regard to man's spiritual nature, with regard to ethics and morality, and laid down the same rules for the attainment of that degree of perfection which each had reached.

It is the mission of Theosophy then to bring before the world once more the pure teachings of Gautama the Buddha, and Jesus the Christ; to hold up to mankind once more the divine ideal of man's nature which these two not merely taught, but exemplified in their lives and works.

And this it can do because the key has once more been given out in clear and unmistakable language, by that Divine Hierarchy which preserves the pure truth, of which mankind is continually losing sight, in its folly and selfish greed for those allurements which the world offers to the senses in such abundance.

For it is true now,, as it was and always will be, as Jesus and Buddha and all great teachers have taught — "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him". And so, as long as men follow the promptings of their lower nature, as long as they spend their time and energies in gaining the approval or worship of their fellow men, in getting *for themselves* all the good things of this world, utterly regardless of the cries of the oppressed, or unthinking of the share they take from others in order that their own pride or desires may be gratified, so long will they individually, and the race to which they belong, miss that higher goal which is their birthright, and be thrown back again and yet again into this lower life in which their consciousness is centred. For "where the treasure is, there will the heart be also"; and how shall they hope to attain to heaven, or any spiritual state whatever, whose whole nature is soaked through and through with the dregs of earth ?

But this Hierarchy of Initiates, who-ever watch over humanity in its cycles of evolution, and ever preserve the sacred truth from defilement, lose no opportunity when the individual is ready or the time is ripe to impart the knowledge they possess. " When the pupil is ready, the master will be found", is true of the race as of the individual. And the time is ripe, now at this latter end of the nineteenth century; and so once again, after the darkness of centuries, the lamp of truth is lit, and held on high, that all those who are *ready* may recognise the guiding light. Those who are not ready scoff and mock at it, as they have done in all ages. The loss is theirs.

And those who are ready are those who are willing to lose their life in order that they may find it. Self-sacrifice even to the "endless end" is the keynote of the *practical* teaching which Theosophy presents again as the only pledge which will avail to open the [road to the highest good.

Tertullian — one of those delightful "Church Fathers" who helped to found the jumble of superstition and intolerance which has imposed itself upon the world for centuries under the title of *Christianity* — offered it as one of the joys of heaven, that the "elect" would witness the tortures of the "damned" in hell. And if it be said that such teaching is not possible now, we would refer to a recent "declaration of faith" by a

prominent Baptist minister and his confrères; for whether these good Christians would or would not take a lively delight in witnessing the tortures of their fellow beings in hell, they can at all events contemplate with perfect satisfaction a "scheme of salvation" which will separate humanity into the "lost" and the "saved", and place the latter in a paradise of individual bliss, where they will be for ever separated from their less fortunate fellows — it may be those who were nearest and dearest to them on earth — and cannot if they wish to — which is doubtful — do anything more for the "lost".

Not so Theosophy. It repudiates with scorn such unmeasured selfishness. Listen to its teachings: — "Now bend thy head and listen well, O Bodhisattva — compassion speaks and saith: "Can there be bliss where all that lives must suffer ? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry ? "

" Now thou hast heard that which was said.

"Thou shalt attain the seventh step and cross the gate of final knowledge but only to wed woe — if thou would'st be Tathâgata, follow upon thy predecessor's steps, remain unselfish till the endless end.

"Thou art enlightened — choose thy way."

And so the Great Ones of the Earth, having reached the goal, having won Nirvana — put the prize aside, that they may help sinning, suffering, struggling humanity to attain, even as they have attained.

What a contrast to the teachings of the so-called *Evangelical* Christian Church; for that teaching is opposed in all its essentials to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and Gautama Buddha. For the Church has substituted creed for conduct — it is enough now if a man "believes" at the last moment of his life, he shall surely thereby be "saved", though his whole nature be saturated with sin and sensuality.

But whatever *ideal* Christianity may offer, the *reality* is ever the same. And that reality — fortunately for humanity — is that those who have attained to the Christ or Buddha state, do for the most part "remain unselfish to the endless end", and form the "guardian wall" which protects humanity during its long cycle of evolution.

From the SILENT WATCHER down to the Nirmânakâyas, and from the Nirmânakâyas, down to those *Adepts* who still incarnate in physical bodies that they may better help humanity in some special way, there is an unbroken stream of evolution, and an unbroken purpose.

And it is to these *Adepts* we owe our knowledge of the *Secret Doctrine*, which is now presented to the world in plainer, clearer, and more unmistakable form than ever before.

To some members of the Theosophical Society these Adepts are personally known. Others who have not met them personally have been in constant communication with them.

But though the existence of these "Masters of Wisdom" is an established fact, and is the key, and the only key, to the existence of a store of knowledge held in trust for the race, and given out from time to time, and also to the existence and spread of the organization known as the Theosophical Society, yet no one is asked to accept any of the teachings of Theosophy, save on the authority of his own reason and individual judgment.

For it is not in Theosophy as in Christianity a matter of dying in belief or unbelief, and so settling our future destiny for all eternity; neither is it a matter of one life-time of evolution, but of many lives, each the natural result and sequence of the others. Those who have not accomplished that stage of evolution known as the *human*, must be reborn over and over again until it is accomplished: and therefore those who have not yet learnt the *reality*, the "scientific fact" of their nature, in connection with the higher plains of life and consciousness by which they are surrounded, must go on until the experience of many lives has brought them the requisite knowledge.

For physical man is but the vehicle, the temporary garment of spiritual man, that "divine spark" — which having set out ages and ages ago on its long pilgrimage through the universe, through those varying states of consciousness, which in their sum total is the universe — having now accomplished its "descent into matter", allegorically represented in *Genesis* by the "fall", is now seeking to return to its divine source, to become that which in the New Testament is allegorically typified by the resurrected Christ.

Here then is our doctrine:—

Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;
Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit for ever ;
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the home of it seems! "

"Nay, but as when one layeth
His worn-out robes away,
And, taking new ones, sayeth,
'These will I wear today !'
So putteth by the spirit
Lightly its garb of flesh,
And passeth to inherit
A residence afresh."

Bhagavad-Gita.