

THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY

H. P. BLAVATSKY

The Key to Theosophy

[The Key to Theosophy](#)

[PREFACE](#)

[Second Preface](#)

[I.THEOSOPHY AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.](#)

[II.EXOTERIC AND ESOTERIC THEOSOPHY.](#)

[III.THE WORKING SYSTEM OF THE T.S.\[10\]](#)

[IV.THE RELATIONS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY TO THEOSOPHY.](#)

[V.THE FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF THEOSOPHY.](#)

[VI.THEOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS AS TO NATURE AND
MAN.](#)

[VII.ON THE VARIOUS POST MORTEM STATES.](#)

[VIII.ON RE-INCARNATION OR REBIRTH.](#)

[IX.ON THE KAMA-LOKA AND DEVACHAN.](#)

[X.ON THE NATURE OF OUR THINKING PRINCIPLE.](#)

[XI.ON THE MYSTERIES OF RE-INCARNATION.](#)

[XII.WHAT IS PRACTICAL THEOSOPHY?](#)

[XIII.ON THE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUTTHE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.](#)

[XIV.THE “THEOSOPHICAL MAHATMAS.”](#)

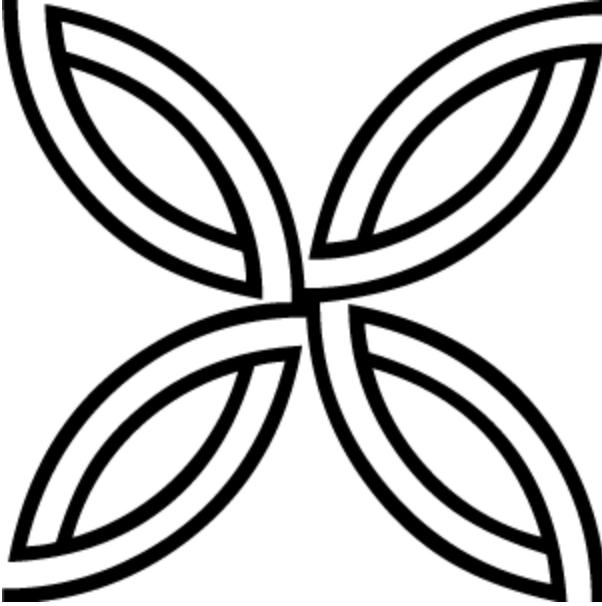
[CONCLUSION.](#)

[Footnotes:](#)

[Copyright](#)

The Key to Theosophy

H. P. Blavatsky



PREFACE

The purpose of this book is exactly expressed in its title, "The Key to Theosophy," and needs but few words of explanation. It is not a complete or exhaustive text-book of Theosophy, but only a key to unlock the door that leads to the deeper study. It traces the broad outlines of the Wisdom Religion, and explains its fundamental principles; meeting, at the same time, the various objections raised by the average Western enquirer, and endeavouring to present unfamiliar concepts in a form as simple and in language as clear as possible. That it should succeed in making Theosophy intelligible without mental effort on the part of the reader, would be too much to expect; but it is hoped that the obscurity still left is of the thought not of the language, is due to depth not to confusion. To the mentally lazy or obtuse, Theosophy must remain a riddle; for in the world mental as in the world spiritual each man must progress by his own efforts. The writer cannot do the reader's thinking for him, nor would the latter be any the better off if such vicarious thought were possible. The need for such an exposition as the present has long been felt among those interested in the Theosophical Society and its work, and it is hoped that it will supply information, as free as possible from technicalities, to many whose attention has been awakened, but who, as yet, are merely puzzled and not convinced.

Some care has been taken in disentangling some part of what is true from what is false in Spiritualistic teachings as to the post-mortem life, and to showing the true nature of Spiritualistic phænomena. Previous explanations of a similar kind have drawn much wrath upon the writer's devoted head; the Spiritualists, like too many others, preferring to believe what is pleasant rather than what is

true, and becoming very angry with anyone who destroys an agreeable delusion. For the past year Theosophy has been the target for every poisoned arrow of Spiritualism, as though the possessors of a half truth felt more antagonism to the possessors of the whole truth than those who had no share to boast of.

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

H. P. B.

Second Preface

The history of western magic started about 4000 years ago. And since then it has been adding something to western magic. Originally, the Latin word magus nominated the followers of the spiritualist-priest class, and later originated to elect 'clairvoyant, sorcerer' and in a judgmental sense also 'magician, trickster'. Thus, the initial meaning of the word 'magic' was the wisdoms of the Magi, that is the abilities of attaining supernatural powers and energy, while later it became practical critically to deceitful wizardry. The etymological descriptions specify three significant features in the expansion of the notion 'magic': 1) Magic as a discipline of celestial natural forces and in the course of formation 2) Magic as the exercise of such facts in divinations, visions and illusion 3) Fraudulent witchery. The latter belief played a significant part in the Christian demonization process. The growth of the western notion 'magic' directed to extensive assumptions in the demonological and astrophysical argument of the Neoplatonists. Their tactic was grounded on the philosophy of a hierarchically ordered outer space, where conferring to Plotinus (C205-C270 AD) a noetic ingredient was shaped as the outcome of eternal and countless radiation built on the ultimate opinion; this in its chance contributed to the rise of psychic constituent, which formed the basis of the factual world. Furthermore, these diverse phases of release came to be measured as convinced forces, which underneath the impact of innocent and evil views during late ancient times were embodied as humans. The hierarchical cosmos of Iamblichus simply demonstrates the legitimacy of this process. In his work, the Neoplatonic cosmology has initiated a channel through the syncretism distinctive of the late antiquity and in the essence of Greco-

Oriental dualism. Superior productions are taken closer to inferior ones by various midway creatures. The higher the site of the mediators, the further they bear a resemblance to gods and whizzes; the minor they are, the nearer they stand to the psychic-spiritual part. The aforementioned group of intermediaries has been settled in order of series on the origin of cosmic gravity. Proclus (c410–485 AD) has described the system of magic origin conversed above in better aspect: in the hierarchical shackles of cosmic rudiments the power and nature of a firm star god disturbs everything mediocre, and with growing distance the impact slowly becomes weaker. The Humanists approached the Platonic notions from the outlook of the bequest of late antiquity, and were thus first familiarized to the Neoplatonic form of the doctrine. And since Ficino's work has been inscribed in the spirit of emanation theory, and the author has been persuaded of the existence of the higher and lower spheres of magic and powers defined in Picatrix, he claims that planets and cosmic movements have much to do with power and magic spirit. Today's occult marketplace also offers, in addition to books, multifarious paraphernalia for practicing magic: amulets, talismans, pendulums and magic rods. Though added with modern essentials and pseudoscientific advices to give some weight to the fundamentals, they are nothing but the leftovers of the western ethnicities of magic.

I.THEOSOPHY AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME.

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

Theosophist. It is not. Theosophy is Divine Knowledge or Science.

Enq. What is the real meaning of the term?

Theo. "Divine Wisdom," Θεοσοφία (Theosophia) or Wisdom of the gods, as Θεογονία (theogonia), genealogy of the gods. The word Θεός means a god in Greek, one of the divine beings, certainly not "God" in the sense attached in our day to the term. Therefore, it is not "Wisdom of God," as translated by some, but Divine Wisdom such as that possessed by the gods. The term is many thousand years old.

Enq. What is the origin of the name?

Theo. It comes to us from the Alexandrian philosophers, called lovers of truth, Philatheians, from φιλ (phil) "loving," and ἀλήθεια (aletheia) "truth." The name Theosophy dates from the third century of our era, and began with Ammonius Saccas and his disciples, [\[1\]](#) who started the Eclectic Theosophical system.

Enq. What was the object of this system?

Theo. First of all to inculcate certain great moral truths upon its disciples, and all those who were "lovers of the truth." Hence the motto adopted by the Theosophical Society: "There is no religion higher than truth." [\[2\]](#) The chief aim of the Founders of the Eclectic Theosophical School was one of the three objects of its modern

successor, the Theosophical Society, namely, to reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities.

Enq. What have you to show that this is not an impossible dream; and that all the world's religions are based on the one and the same truth? Theo. Their comparative study and analysis. The "Wisdom-Religion" was one in antiquity; and the sameness of primitive religious philosophy is proven to us by the identical doctrines taught to the Initiates during the MYSTERIES, an institution once universally diffused. "All the old worships indicate the existence of a single Theosophy anterior to them. The key that is to open one must open all; otherwise it cannot be the right key." (Eclect. Philo.)

THE POLICY OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

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

Theo. By doing that which we again try to do now. The Neo-Platonists were a large body, and belonged to various religious philosophies [\[3\]](#) ; so do our Theosophists. In those days, the Jew Aristobulus affirmed that the ethics of Aristotle represented the esoteric teachings of the Law of Moses; Philo Judæus endeavoured to reconcile the Pentateuch with the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy; and Josephus proved that the Essenes of Carmel were simply the copyists and followers of the Egyptian Therapeutæ (the healers). So it is in our day. We can show the line of descent of every Christian religion, as of every, even the smallest, sect. The latter are the minor twigs or shoots grown on the larger branches; but shoots and branches spring from the same trunk—the WISDOM-RELIGION. To prove this was the aim of Ammonius, who endeavoured to induce Gentiles and Christians, Jews and Idolators, to lay aside their contentions and strifes,

remembering only that they were all in possession of the same truth under various vestments, and were all the children of a common mother. [4] This is the aim of Theosophy likewise.

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

Theo. An almost countless number of well-known writers. Mosheim, one of them, says that:—

“ Ammonius taught that the religion of the multitude went hand-in-hand with philosophy, and with her had shared the fate of being by degrees corrupted and obscured with mere human conceits, superstitions, and lies; that it ought, therefore, to be brought back to its original purity by purging it of this dross and expounding it upon philosophical principles; and the whole Christ had in view was to reinstate and restore to its primitive integrity the wisdom of the ancients; to reduce within bounds the universally-prevailing dominion of superstition; and in part to correct, and in part to exterminate the various errors that had found their way into the different popular religions.”

This, again, is precisely what the modern Theosophists say. Only while the great Philaletheian was supported and helped in the policy he pursued by two Church Fathers, Clement and Athenagoras, by all the learned Rabbis of the Synagogue, the Academy and the Groves, and while he taught a common doctrine for all, we, his followers on the same line, receive no recognition, but, on the contrary, are abused and persecuted. People 1,500 years ago are thus shown to have been more tolerant than they are in this enlightened century.

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

Theo. Not at all. He was born a Christian, but never accepted Church Christianity. As said of him by the same writer:

“ He had but to propound his instructions according to the ancient pillars of Hermes, which Plato and Pythagoras knew before, and from them constituted their philosophy. Finding the same in the prologue of the Gospel according to St. John, he very properly supposed that the purpose of Jesus was to restore the great doctrine of wisdom in its primitive integrity. The narratives of the Bible and the stories of the gods he considered to be allegories illustrative of the truth, or else fables to be rejected.” Moreover, as says the Edinburgh Encyclopedia , “he acknowledged that Jesus Christ was an excellent man and the ‘friend of God,’ but alleged that it was not his design entirely to abolish the worship of demons (gods), and that his only intention was to purify the ancient religion.”

THE WISDOM-RELIGION ESOTERIC IN ALL AGES.

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

Theo. Neither did Buddha, Pythagoras, Confucius, Orpheus, Socrates, or even Jesus, leave behind them any writings. Yet most of these are historical personages, and their teachings have all survived. The disciples of Ammonius (among whom Origen and Herennius) wrote treatises and explained his ethics. Certainly the latter are as historical, if not more so, than the Apostolic writings. Moreover, his pupils—Origen, Plotinus, and Longinus (counsellor of the famous Queen Zenobia)—have all left voluminous records of the Philaletheian System—so far, at all events, as their public profession of faith was known, for the school was divided into exoteric and esoteric teachings.

Enq. How have the latter tenets reached our day, since you hold that what is properly called the WISDOM-RELIGION was esoteric?

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

Enq. Where and by whom was it so preserved?

Theo. Among Initiates of every country; among profound seekers after truth—their disciples; and in those parts of the world where such topics have always been most valued and pursued: in India, Central Asia, and Persia.

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

Theo. The best proof you can have of the fact is that every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric (outward public) worship. Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that the MYSTERIES of the ancients comprised with every nation the “greater” (secret) and “Lesser” (public) MYSTERIES— e.g. , in the celebrated solemnities called the Eleusinia , in Greece. From the Hierophants of Samothrace, Egypt, and the initiated Brahmins of the India of old, down to the later Hebrew Rabbis, all preserved, for fear of profanation, their real bona fide beliefs secret. The Jewish Rabbis called their secular religious series the Mercavah (the exterior body), “the vehicle,” or, the covering which contains the hidden soul — i.e. , their highest secret knowledge. Not one of the ancient nations ever imparted through its priests its real philosophical secrets to the masses, but allotted to the latter only the husks. Northern Buddhism has its “greater” and its “lesser” vehicle, known as the Mahayana , the esoteric, and the Hinayana , the exoteric, Schools. Nor can you blame them for such secrecy; for surely you would not think of feeding your flock of sheep on learned dissertations on botany instead of on grass? Pythagoras called his Gnosis “the knowledge of things that are,” or ἡ γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων, and preserved that knowledge for his pledged disciples only: for those

who could digest such mental food and feel satisfied; and he pledged them to silence and secrecy. Occult alphabets and secret ciphers are the development of the old Egyptian hieratic writings, the secret of which was, in the days of old, in the possession only of the Hierogrammatists, or initiated Egyptian priests. Ammonius Saccas, as his biographers tell us, bound his pupils by oath not to divulge his higher doctrines except to those who had already been instructed in preliminary knowledge, and who were also bound by a pledge. Finally, do we not find the same even in early Christianity, among the Gnostics, and even in the teachings of Christ? Did he not speak to the multitudes in parables which had a two-fold meaning, and explain his reasons only to his disciples? "To you," he says, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" (Mark iv. 11). "The Essenes of Judea and Carmel made similar distinctions, dividing their adherents into neophytes, brethren, and the perfect, or those initiated" (Eccl. Phil.). Examples might be brought from every country to this effect.

Enq. Can you attain the "Secret Wisdom" simply by study? Encyclopædias define Theosophy pretty much as Webster's Dictionary does, i.e., as "supposed intercourse with God and superior spirits, and consequent attainment of superhuman knowledge by physical means and chemical processes." Is this so?

Theo. I think not. Nor is there any lexicographer capable of explaining, whether to himself or others, how superhuman knowledge can be attained by physical or chemical processes. Had Webster said "by metaphysical and alchemical processes," the definition would be approximately correct: as it is, it is absurd. Ancient Theosophists claimed, and so do the modern, that the infinite cannot be known by the finite—i.e., sensed by the finite Self—but that the divine essence could be

communicated to the higher Spiritual Self in a state of ecstasy. This condition can hardly be attained, like hypnotism , by “physical and chemical means.”

Enq. What is your explanation of it?

Theo. Real ecstasy was defined by Plotinus as “the liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, becoming one and identified with the infinite.” This is the highest condition, says Prof. Wilder, but not one of permanent duration, and it is reached only by the very very few. It is, indeed, identical with that state which is known in India as Samadhi . The latter is practised by the Yogis, who facilitate it physically by the greatest abstinence in food and drink, and mentally by an incessant endeavour to purify and elevate the mind. Meditation is silent and unuttered prayer, or, as Plato expressed it, “the ardent turning of the soul toward the divine; not to ask any particular good (as in the common meaning of prayer), but for good itself—for the universal Supreme Good” of which we are a part on earth, and out of the essence of which we have all emerged. Therefore, adds Plato, “remain silent in the presence of the divine ones , till they remove the clouds from thy eyes and enable thee to see by the light which issues from themselves, not what appears as good to thee, but what is intrinsically good.” [\[5\]](#)

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

Theo. Only ignorant people can thus refer to it. It is as old as the world, in its teachings and ethics, if not in name, as it is also the broadest and most catholic system among all.

Enq. How comes it, then, that Theosophy has remained so unknown to the nations of the Western Hemisphere? Why should it have been a sealed book to races confessedly the most cultured and advanced?

Theo. We believe there were nations as cultured in days of old and certainly more spiritually “advanced” than we are.

But there are several reasons for this willing ignorance. One of them was given by St. Paul to the cultured Athenians—a loss, for long centuries, of real spiritual insight, and even interest, owing to their too great devotion to things of sense and their long slavery to the dead letter of dogma and ritualism. But the strongest reason for its lies in the fact that real Theosophy has ever been kept secret.

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

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

THEOSOPHY IS NOT BUDDHISM.

Enq. You are often spoken of as “Esoteric Buddhists.” Are you then all followers of Gautama Buddha?

Theo. No more than musicians are all followers of Wagner. Some of us are Buddhists by religion; yet there are far more Hindus and Brahmins than Buddhists among us, and more Christian-born Europeans and Americans than converted Buddhists. The mistake has arisen from a misunderstanding of the real meaning of the title of Mr. Sinnett’s excellent work, “Esoteric Buddhism,” which last word ought to have been spelt with one, instead of two, d’s , as then Budhism would have meant what it was intended for, merely “Wisdom ism ” (Bodha, bodhi, “intelligence,” “wisdom”) instead of Buddhism , Gautama’s religious philosophy. Theosophy, as already said, is the WISDOM-RELIGION.

Enq. What is the difference between Buddhism, the religion founded by the Prince of Kapilavastu, and Buddhism, the "Wisdomism" which you say is synonymous with Theosophy?

Theo. Just the same difference as there is between the secret teachings of Christ, which are called "the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven," and the later ritualism and dogmatic theology of the Churches and Sects. Buddha means the "Enlightened" by Bodha, or understanding, Wisdom. This has passed root and branch into the esoteric teachings that Gautama imparted to his chosen Arhats only.

Enq. But some Orientalists deny that Buddha ever taught any esoteric doctrine at all?

Theo. They may as well deny that Nature has any hidden secrets for the men of science. Further on I will prove it by Buddha's conversation with his disciple Ananda. His esoteric teachings were simply the Gupta Vidya (secret knowledge) of the ancient Brahmins, the key to which their modern successors have, with few exceptions, completely lost. And this Vidya has passed into what is now known as the inner teachings of the Mahayana school of Northern Buddhism. Those who deny it are simply ignorant pretenders to Orientalism. I advise you to read the Rev. Mr. Edkins' Chinese Buddhism—especially the chapters on the Exoteric and Esoteric schools and teachings—and then compare the testimony of the whole ancient world upon the subject.

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

Theo. Certainly, because these ethics are the soul of the Wisdom-Religion, and were once the common property of the initiates of all nations. But Buddha was the first to embody these lofty ethics in his public teachings, and to make them the foundation and the very essence of his public system. It is herein that lies the immense difference between exoteric Buddhism and every other religion. For

while in other religions ritualism and dogma hold the first and most important place, in Buddhism it is the ethics which have always been the most insisted upon. This accounts for the resemblance, amounting almost to identity, between the ethics of Theosophy and those of the religion of Buddha.

Enq. Are there any great points of difference?

Theo. One great distinction between Theosophy and exoteric Buddhism is that the latter, represented by the Southern Church, entirely denies (a) the existence of any Deity, and (b) any conscious post-mortem life, or even any self-conscious surviving individuality in man. Such at least is the teaching of the Siamese sect, now considered as the purest form of exoteric Buddhism. And it is so, if we refer only to Buddha's public teachings; the reason for such reticence on his part I will give further on. But the schools of the Northern Buddhist Church, established in those countries to which his initiated Arhats retired after the Master's death, teach all that is now called Theosophical doctrines, because they form part of the knowledge of the initiates—thus proving how the truth has been sacrificed to the dead-letter by the too-zealous orthodoxy of Southern Buddhism. But how much grander and more noble, philosophical and scientific, even in its dead-letter, is this teaching than that of any other Church or religion. Yet Theosophy is not Buddhism.

II. EXOTERIC AND ESOTERIC THEOSOPHY.

WHAT THE MODERN THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IS NOT.

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

Theo. They are not. But to these questions I cannot give you a better answer than by quoting from a paper read on "Theosophy" by Dr. J. D. Buck, F.T.S., before the last Theosophical Convention, at Chicago, America (April, 1889). No living theosophist has better expressed and understood the real essence of Theosophy than our honoured friend Dr. Buck:—

" The Theosophical Society was organized for the purpose of promulgating the Theosophical doctrines, and for the promotion of the Theosophic life. The present Theosophical Society is not the first of its kind. I have a volume entitled: 'Theosophical Transactions of the Philadelphian Society,' published in London in 1697; and another with the following title: 'Introduction to Theosophy, or the Science of the Mystery of Christ; that is, of Deity, Nature, and Creature, embracing the philosophy of all the working powers of life, magical and spiritual, and forming a practical guide to the sublimest purity, sanctity, and evangelical perfection; also to the attainment of divine vision, and the holy angelic arts, potencies, and other prerogatives of the regeneration,' published in London in 1855. The following is the dedication of this volume:

' To the students of Universities, Colleges, and schools of Christendom: To Professors of Metaphysical, Mechanical, and Natural Science in all its forms: To men and women of Education generally, of fundamental orthodox faith: To

Deists, Arians, Unitarians, Swedenborgians, and other defective and ungrounded creeds, rationalists, and sceptics of every kind: To just-minded and enlightened Mohammedans, Jews, and oriental Patriarch-religionists: but especially to the gospel minister and missionary, whether to the barbaric or intellectual peoples, this introduction to Theosophy, or the science of the ground and mystery of all things, is most humbly and affectionately dedicated.'

In the following year (1856) another volume was issued, royal octavo, of 600 pages, diamond type, of 'Theosophical Miscellanies.' Of the last-named work 500 copies only were issued, for gratuitous distribution to Libraries and Universities. These earlier movements, of which there were many, originated within the Church, with persons of great piety and earnestness, and of unblemished character; and all of these writings were in orthodox form, using the Christian expressions, and, like the writings of the eminent Churchman William Law, would only be distinguished by the ordinary reader for their great earnestness and piety. These were one and all but attempts to derive and explain the deeper meanings and original import of the Christian Scriptures, and to illustrate and unfold the Theosophic life. These works were soon forgotten, and are now generally unknown. They sought to reform the clergy and revive genuine piety, and were never welcomed. That one word, "Heresy," was sufficient to bury them in the limbo of all such Utopias. At the time of the Reformation John Reuchlin made a similar attempt with the same result, though he was the intimate and trusted friend of Luther. Orthodoxy never desired to be informed and enlightened. These reformers were informed, as was Paul by Festus, that too much learning had made them mad, and that it would be dangerous to go farther. Passing by the verbiage, which was partly a matter of habit and education with these writers, and partly due to religious restraint through

secular power, and coming to the core of the matter, these writings were Theosophical in the strictest sense, and pertain solely to man's knowledge of his own nature and the higher life of the soul. The present Theosophical movement has sometimes been declared to be an attempt to convert Christendom to Buddhism, which means simply that the word 'Heresy' has lost its terrors and relinquished its power. Individuals in every age have more or less clearly apprehended the Theosophical doctrines and wrought them into the fabric of their lives. These doctrines belong exclusively to no religion, and are confined to no society or time. They are the birthright of every human soul. Such a thing as orthodoxy must be wrought out by each individual according to his nature and his needs, and according to his varying experience. This may explain why those who have imagined Theosophy to be a new religion have hunted in vain for its creed and its ritual. Its creed is Loyalty to Truth, and its ritual 'To honour every truth by use.'

How little this principle of Universal Brotherhood is understood by the masses of mankind, how seldom its transcendent importance is recognised, may be seen in the diversity of opinion and fictitious interpretations regarding the Theosophical Society. This Society was organized on this one principle, the essential Brotherhood of Man, as herein briefly outlined and imperfectly set forth. It has been assailed as Buddhistic and anti-Christian, as though it could be both these together, when both Buddhism and Christianity, as set forth by their inspired founders, make brotherhood the one essential of doctrine and of life. Theosophy has been also regarded as something new under the sun, or at best as old mysticism masquerading under a new name. While it is true that many Societies founded upon, and united to support, the principles of altruism, or essential brotherhood, have borne various names, it is also true that many have also been called Theosophic, and with principles and aims as the present society bearing that

name. With these societies, one and all, the essential doctrine has been the same, and all else has been incidental, though this does not obviate the fact that many persons are attracted to the incidentals who overlook or ignore the essentials.”

No better or more explicit answer—by a man who is one of our most esteemed and earnest Theosophists—could be given to your questions.

Enq. Which system do you prefer or follow, in that case, besides Buddhistic ethics?

Theo. None, and all. We hold to no religion, as to no philosophy in particular: we cull the good we find in each. But here, again, it must be stated that, like all other ancient systems, Theosophy is divided into Exoteric and Esoteric Sections.

Enq. What is the difference?

Theo. The members of the Theosophical Society at large are free to profess whatever religion or philosophy they like, or none if they so prefer, provided they are in sympathy with, and ready to carry out one or more of the three objects of the Association. The Society is a philanthropic and scientific body for the propagation of the idea of brotherhood on practical instead of theoretical lines. The Fellows may be Christians or Mussulmen, Jews or Parsees, Buddhists or Brahmins, Spiritualists or Materialists, it does not matter; but every member must be either a philanthropist, or a scholar, a searcher into Aryan and other old literature, or a psychic student. In short, he has to help, if he can, in the carrying out of at least one of the objects of the programme. Otherwise he has no reason for becoming a “Fellow.” Such are the majority of the exoteric Society, composed of “attached” and “unattached” members. ^[6] These may, or may not, become Theosophists de facto . Members they are, by virtue of their having joined the Society; but the latter cannot make a

Theosophist of one who has no sense for the divine fitness of things, or of him who understands Theosophy in his own—if the expression may be used—sectarian and egotistic way. “Handsome is, as handsome does” could be paraphrased in this case and be made to run: “Theosophist is, who Theosophy does.”

THEOSOPHISTS AND MEMBERS OF THE “T.S.”

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

Theo. Not necessarily, until they have proven themselves to be such. They have entered the inner group and pledged themselves to carry out, as strictly as they can, the rules of the occult body. This is a difficult undertaking, as the foremost rule of all is the entire renunciation of one’s personality— i.e. , a pledged member has to become a thorough altruist, never to think of himself, and to forget his own vanity and pride in the thought of the good of his fellow-creatures, besides that of his fellow-brothers in the esoteric circle. He has to live, if the esoteric instructions shall profit him, a life of abstinence in everything, of self-denial and strict morality, doing his duty by all men. The few real Theosophists in the T.S. are among these members. This does not imply that outside of the T.S. and the inner circle, there are no Theosophists; for there are, and more than people know of; certainly far more than are found among the lay members of the T.S.

Enq. Then what is the good of joining the so-called Theosophical Society in that case? Where is the incentive?

Theo. None, except the advantage of getting esoteric instructions, the genuine doctrines of the “Wisdom-Religion,” and if the real programme is carried out, deriving much help from mutual aid and sympathy. Union is strength and harmony, and well-regulated simultaneous efforts produce wonders. This has been the secret of all associations and communities since mankind existed.

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

Theo. He may; but there are ten thousand chances against one that he will fail. For one reason out of many others, no books on Occultism or Theurgy exist in our day which give out the secrets of alchemy or mediæval Theosophy in plain language. All are symbolical or in parables; and as the key to these has been lost for ages in the West, how can a man learn the correct meaning of what he is reading and studying? Therein lies the greatest danger, one that leads to unconscious black magic or the most helpless mediumship. He who has not an Initiate for a master had better leave the dangerous study alone. Look around you and observe. While two-thirds of civilized society ridicule the mere notion that there is anything in Theosophy, Occultism, Spiritualism, or in the Kabala, the other third is composed of the most heterogeneous and opposite elements. Some believe in the mystical, and even in the supernatural (!), but each believes in his own way. Others will rush single-handed into the study of the Kabala, Psychism, Mesmerism, Spiritualism, or some form or another of Mysticism. Result: no two men think alike, no two are agreed upon any fundamental occult principles, though many are those who claim for themselves the ultima thule of knowledge, and would make outsiders believe that they are full-blown adepts. Not only is there no scientific and accurate knowledge of Occultism accessible in the West—not even of true astrology, the only branch of Occultism which, in its exoteric teachings, has definite laws and a definite system—but no one has any idea of what real Occultism means. Some limit ancient wisdom to the Kabala and the Jewish Zohar, which each interprets in his own way according to the dead-letter of the Rabbinical methods. Others regard Swedenborg or Boehme as the ultimate

expressions of the highest wisdom; while others again see in mesmerism the great secret of ancient magic. One and all of those who put their theory into practice are rapidly drifting, through ignorance, into black magic. Happy are those who escape from it, as they have neither test nor criterion by which they can distinguish between the true and the false.

Enq. Are we to understand that the inner group of the T.S. claims to learn what it does from real initiates or masters of esoteric wisdom?

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

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

Theo. A tree is known by its fruit, a system by its results. When our opponents are able to prove to us that any solitary student of Occultism throughout the ages has become a saintly adept like Ammonius Saccas, or even a Plotinus, or a Theurgist like Iamblichus, or achieved feats such as are claimed to have been done by St. Germain, without any master to guide him, and all this without being a medium, a self-deluded psychic, or a charlatan—then shall we confess ourselves mistaken. But till then, Theosophists prefer to follow the proven natural law of the tradition of the Sacred Science. There are mystics who have made great discoveries in chemistry and physical sciences, almost bordering on alchemy and Occultism; others who, by the sole aid of their genius, have rediscovered portions, if not the whole, of the lost

alphabets of the “Mystery language,” and are, therefore, able to read correctly Hebrew scrolls; others still, who, being seers, have caught wonderful glimpses of the hidden secrets of Nature. But all these are specialists . One is a theoretical inventor, another a Hebrew, i.e. , a Sectarian Kabalist, a third a Swedenborg of modern times, denying all and everything outside of his own particular science or religion. Not one of them can boast of having produced a universal or even a national benefit thereby, not even to himself. With the exception of a few healers—of that class which the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons would call quacks—none have helped with their science Humanity, nor even a number of men of the same community. Where are the Chaldees of old, those who wrought marvellous cures, “not by charms but by simples”? Where is an Apollonius of Tyana, who healed the sick and raised the dead under any climate and circumstances? We know some specialists of the former class in Europe, but none of the latter—except in Asia, where the secret of the Yogi, “to live in death,” is still preserved.

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

Theo. Its aims are several; but the most important of all are those which are likely to lead to the relief of human suffering under any or every form, moral as well as physical. And we believe the former to be far more important than the latter. Theosophy has to inculcate ethics; it has to purify the soul, if it would relieve the physical body, whose ailments, save cases of accidents, are all hereditary. It is not by studying Occultism for selfish ends, for the gratification of one’s personal ambition, pride, or vanity, that one can ever reach the true goal: that of helping suffering mankind. Nor is it by studying one single branch of the esoteric philosophy that a man becomes an Occultist, but by studying, if not mastering, them all.

Enq. Is help, then, to reach this most important aim, given only to those who study the esoteric sciences?

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

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEOSOPHY AND SPIRITUALISM.

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

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

Enq. What do you mean?

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

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

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

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

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

Theo. Let me remind you that this remark of yours cuts both ways. The “most cultured and learned” among you regard also Christianity and every other religion as a relic of ignorance and superstition. People begin to believe now, at any rate, in hypnotism , and some—even of the most cultured —in Theosophy and phenomena. But who among them, except preachers and blind fanatics, will confess to a belief in Biblical miracles ? And this is where the point of difference comes in. There are very good and pure Theosophists who may believe in the supernatural, divine miracles included, but no Occultist will do so. For an Occultist practices scientific Theosophy, based on accurate knowledge of Nature’s secret workings; but a Theosophist, practising the powers called abnormal, minus the light of Occultism, will simply tend toward a dangerous form of mediumship, because, although holding to Theosophy and its highest conceivable code of ethics, he practises it in the dark, on sincere but blind faith. Anyone, Theosophist or