

On Theosophy

BY J. HARRINGTON

THEOSOPHY is but one of the many mediums through which humanity seeks to escape from the actual facts of life. It arose, characteristically enough, at a time when the Christian religion had been driven to its last extremity through the revelations of Darwin, Lyall, Spencer, Haeckel and other mighty minds of the nineteenth century.

Its founder, Madam Blavatsky, belonged to that group of Russian state officials of whose mentality the Russian novelists give us a pitiful and, withal, terrible picture; father, mother and husband were all members of the bureaucracy. An Indian prince revealed the great secret to her and informed her what she was required to do, that the materialism which was sweeping the world might be halted. A number of years spent in India completed the education and, in conjunction with Colonel Olcott, an American army official, she formed the Theosophical Society in 1875. He seems to have been an excellent organizer, and Madam had a genius for mysticism and never lacked courage.

This influential couple, in 1889, had the good fortune to acquire the assistance of Annie Besant, already famous in the radical and secular movement and thus known to militants everywhere. Her association with Charles Bradlaugh in his attacks upon religion and her three nights' debate with G. W. Foote on "Is Socialism Sound?" she taking the affirmative, had established for her a premier place among advanced thinkers. She had few equals in the movement as an eloquent advocate and was equally effective with tongue or pen. After Olcott's death, in 1907, she became President of the Society and has been ever since.

Through her influence, scientific thought to some extent, and scientific terms to a larger extent are prevalent in the literature and on the platforms through which Theosophists speak. It is an insidious doctrine in consequence, and offers a substitute to those honest minds which cannot consistently reconcile the creed of ancient desert barbarians and their war god with modern science. Its Brotherhood of Man philosophy also, makes it particularly appealing to Socialists who lack an understanding of Marx—and to some who don't.

Notwithstanding the evidence of the telescope, the microscope, the spectroscope, the chemist's balance, those mechanical extensions of man's vision with which he has explored beyond Sirius, Orion and the Pleiades, and gazed into every nook and corner of the smallest grain of matter, man has yet found no spot whereon to lay his immortal soul, after his foolish body has stormed the trench impregnable, looked down the empty gun barrel, or advocated freedom in the land of the free. Notwithstanding this evidence man still hopes that somewhere in the infinite void is another world wherein happiness and life everlasting will reward his brief sojourn here. Some religions haste the fleeting soul with tempestuous speed to the blest abodes, and some have assigned a receiving depot, an actual haven from whose bounds the earth is somehow visible and might be visited.

Modern science plays havoc with these fond and foolish fancies. Theosophy is absolved from the need of finding this improbable haven. It conceives of all the earth, that is of all the things upon the earth, as being made up of two elements: the form, or material; the life, or spiritual element. Our sense perceptions reveal to us only half (if even half) of what actually exists in the universe. And as science merely records what can be conceived by an extension of our sense perceptions its findings are not important in the premises. Beyond the reach of even the instruments of science is much "finely attenuated matter partaking of the nature of gases but infinitely finer subtles. Some of this matter acts as ether, some as the covering or envelope in which our body lives and acts." Man also lives, actually lives, on a number of different planes, some of which are so pure and holy that but few men have ever

succeeded thereto. These planes are states of nature; they have definite names such as astral, mental, buddhic. On these planes exist and endure different aspects or conditions of life; on the physical plane, gross forms and corresponding gross manners; on the astral, finer forms and manners, and so on. The higher forms are hidden from the lower, but creatures on the lower planes are endowed with power with which, under the tutorship of frequenters of higher planes they may have revealed the higher wisdom. The learner is called a Chelas, the teacher a Guru. A Chelas need not be a mere beginner; his most profound highness one of the Mahatmas (the great masters) might be Chelas to a still higher Guru.

It will therefore be clearly understood that knowledge, or rather wisdom (for Theosophy means the Divine Wisdom), does not come by observation, is not developed, is not progressive but already exists, is already known and only requires to be revealed by the Guru to his Chelas. Various means of obtaining the revelations are recommended; meditation is one. The best method is to forget everything we ever knew, at first for five minutes, then for ten and so on. This is called banishing the physical world.

I would not recommend this method to anyone desiring to become an "adept" in the art of digging coal, or who desires to master the science of botany, but—the Divine Wisdom—that is different. Having become proficient in forgetting we are now open to revelation. Then, having worn out one physical form, after we have "passed over" we come right back here—

"Back with the friends I used to know,
For oh: I was so happy there,"

Some comfort in that; no primitive hell; no dreary heaven. According to our deeds or misdeeds we ascend or descend. I think a suicide or murdered person has to hang around awhile on some plane 'till his proper span on the physical plane has matured. However, we go on from plane to plane, either up or down; this is called working out our Karma. It must be borne in mind that animals, insects, and, I fancy, minerals are all included in this Karma, and we might return as one of them. Besides these there is quite an assortment of fairies, goblins, satyrs, and such like companions of our childhood which, for some reason, cannot abide modern learning and generally depart by the time we achieve Long Division, sometimes returning late in life, as in the case of Conan Doyle and other dotards.

We are affected by the Karma law in relation to our own acts, to the acts of our family, our nation and our world. The Karma law is administered by the Lords of Karma. I do not know who they are; nor can I say if anyone does. So we come back and work out our Karma, rising higher and higher or sinking lower and lower. I don't know in which direction a nice warm climate with coco-nut trees lies, up or down, but I've heard many humans sigh for monkey land; I believe this shows good judgment. Between being a real monkey and making a figurative monkey of ourselves a choice of the former would indicate good sense.

The story C. W. Leadbeater tells of his first experience with the master KH is positively idiotic. It is too long to tell here, but part of it contains a scene where Madam Blavatsky had an honest-to-goodness letter delivered her in London, in the form of a white mist, solidifying into a paper envelope, despatched by psychic agency from India. This Divine Wisdom is supposed to have been brought from the planet Venus millions of years ago. As a matter of fact the whole business is an ungainly attempt to graft the Buddhist philosophy and all its additions due to its passage through Egyptian and other near eastern ancient civilizations, prolific in misery and mysticism. Buddha, unquestionably the greatest moral teacher we have any knowledge of,

five hundred years before Christ lead a revolt against the Hindu religion and its unalterable caste system. In that age of ignorance and despair, as also in the early days of Christianity, there was indeed reason for man to delude himself, if delusion can apply to such conditions as then existed. But in the practical affairs of life we today seek the latest information upon which to determine our course. What perversity, then, prompts us to thumb over the pages of ancient lore in search of the hereafter? But as to that, Buddha, while lacking the knowledge of steam or electrical energy had all the knowledge we possess or possibly ever can possess concerning abstract wisdom. And so far as the "hereafter" is concerned, "nature, red with tooth and claw" spoke as plainly to him as she does to us.

One thing we do know: The Divine Wisdom, nor any God within the ken of man has never solved one practical problem nor added one single item of information to our knowledge of this world. When a Saracen desired to know something about his own bodily structure he went to Aristotle, not to Mahomet. When a Theosophist desires information on the structure and nature of the electron he goes to Rutherford, not to his Guru.

Notwithstanding this very significant fact we are likely to have Mahomedan and Theosophist for many years. That is the real riddle of the universe, not how we came here and why, but how and why we believe such nonsense as that which has been always and everywhere associated with the utterances of our gods; and particularly why it is so with the man who possesses electrical energy and has achieved the conquest of the air.

I don't know of any books which expose or criticize Theosophy. No doubt there are many and a glance through any bookseller's catalogue should supply the information.

CURRENT TOPICS

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derstand but even a little of the science of sociology. The knowledge which we apply to the land, from which society gets its living, in order to take from it the things we need, is the product of no single mind, but is instead the sum-total of human experience throughout ages of endeavor. All inventions, then, which lead to an increase of wealth are social by nature. While, too, every branch of industrial activity is collective in character. The problem of enjoying to the full the fruits of labor is simple: produce for use instead of for profit.

Manitoba Provincial Election, 1922

Local (Winnipeg) No. 109, S. P. of C. has nominated Comrades George Armstrong and Sidney J. Rose as candidates. Contributions are needed to meet deposit (Provincial Govt.) fees. These may be sent to the secretary of Winnipeg Local:—

PETER L. DAVIDSON,
P. O. BOX 2354,
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Socialist Party of Canada

PROPAGANDA MEETINGS

STAR THEATRE, 300 Block, Main Street

Sunday June 18th.

Speaker: W. A. PRITCHARD.

Subject: "Spiritualism"

(Being the second of a series of two lectures on this subject).

MEETINGS EVERY SUNDAY.

All meetings at 8 p.m.

Questions. Discussion.