

A SERMON  
ON  
THEOSOPHY,

PREACHED BY

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IN THE  
BAPTIST CHAPEL,  
EAST HILL, WANDSWORTH,

ON  
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AND ON  
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*(Having been repeated at request of the Church and Congregation.)*

# THEOSOPHY.

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“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?”—Job xi. 7.



IF the events of recent years, none has been more remarkable than the rise of Theosophy. Amid a materialistic and sceptical age we have witnessed the appearance of a school, marked by intense belief in the spiritual and in spiritual agencies, claiming to supersede alike the existing science, philosophy and religion of the day. The very magnitude of the claim has aroused interest and awakened enquiry. The reception given to Theosophy has been, however, a very varied one, varying according to the standpoint of those to whom it has made its appeal. Some have met Theosophy only with ridicule, but ridicule does not disprove a theory, and is a weapon which tends to recoil upon him who employs it. Some have met it with denunciation, but denunciation does not refute, its chief effect is to annoy the opponent and to embitter the discussion. Others have met Theosophy with silence, but silence is liable to misinterpretation. It may be taken as indifference; it may even seem like acquiescence; it is very likely to be construed as inability to reply. We cannot afford to ignore Theosophy. It is one of the forces of our day, and is full of significance. Men on every side are thinking about it, especially the educated, and surely it is our duty to consider a matter which is exciting such deep interest among the more thoughtful of our countrymen. The policy of ignoring has injured the Church more, perhaps, than any other policy which she has adopted of late years. Political and social and intellectual movements have arisen, and the Church has stood apart from them in silence, or has even looked upon them with suspicion, until some men have come to regard the Church of Christ as a fossil, preserving the memory of a dead past, rather than as a living organism, possessing vital relations with the actual present. Whether we will or no, Theosophy is here amongst us; it has a right to be heard, and to be heard respectfully. It has a message, and a message peculiarly appropriate to this age. We are living in an age of science, when many scientists think no theory worthy their acceptance unless it has been made out on physical lines alone. We are living in an age of commerce, when men are extending business speculation to every part of the globe, and are seeking to enrich themselves by bringing out of the earth those natural resources which scientific research tends to reveal. Under these circumstances, men are becoming engrossed in the present world, in the things they see and touch, in the things of which they hear and speak in their ordinary daily life. Theosophy has brought out the fact that there is something besides the material, and something greater than the material; that the material is but transient, and that within it, and underlying it, is the spiritual, which is eternal.

For such testimony as this, I think, we cannot but be thankful. It is the contention of Christianity, and from whatever side support comes in that great argument, we must surely be grateful to those who render it.

Much of the opposition to Theosophy has been somewhat superficial, has been conducted on the wrong plane. A great deal has been said about the so-called “miracles” of Theosophy, and still more about the character of Madame Blavatsky, the promulgator of this strange faith. Many considered

that Theosophy was exploded when, a few years ago, the Coulomb charges were made, which represented Madame Blavatsky as fabricating her phenomena. Then, after the report of the Society for Psychological Research, many supposed that Theosophy would never again lift up its head. And now, within recent weeks, we have witnessed the Stuart-Cumberland challenge, and the "Col. Desmond" fiasco. These events, also, were expected to shatter the system. And yet Theosophy is still among us, and is to-day more active, more aggressive, and more popular than ever. The character of Madame Blavatsky, the nature of the phenomena, the wagers of Cumberland and Desmond, are but the fringes of the question. Theosophists claim, and I think they have a right to claim, that they should be judged mainly on the ethics and philosophy of their system. It is on these grounds that I desire to meet them this morning, and my case will be quite independent, on the one hand, of the veracity of the Coulombs, and, on the other, of the existence of Col. Desmond. The question for us, as Christians, is, *What relation has Theosophy to Christianity?* Upon our answer to this question, our attitude towards Theosophy will naturally turn. In discussing this question we have to remember that there are two schools of Theosophists. There are those who are utterly opposed to Christianity, having approached Theosophy from the side of Materialism, and who, like Mrs. Besant, are never weary of telling us that they were never farther from Christianity than they are at the present time. On the other hand, there are those who are inclined towards Christianity, and who seek to reconcile the two systems, or even to blend them into one. They tell us that the doctrines underlying Christianity are those of Theosophy, that Jesus himself was a Theosophist, and that probably the years of his youth (from 12 to 30), of which we have no record in the Gospels, were spent in the society of adepts and initiates of Theosophy. They state that Jesus himself was an adept, and that when he said "Ye must be born again," he did not refer to that spiritual birth from heaven, which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, makes a man new in heart and soul; but that he meant to show how, by successive incarnations, the nobler life of humanity might be developed.

Some Christians also are claiming Theosophy as being practically one with their own system. I shall try to show, this morning, that, in spite of occasional agreement, there is a radical and irreconcilable difference between the two systems; that, in truth, Theosophy and Christianity stand far apart.

*Now, what is Theosophy?* As many of you know, the word itself comes from the Greek word "Theosophia," meaning "Divine wisdom," or the "wisdom of God," or "of the gods." The word was first coined by Alexandrian philosophers, called Eclectics, in the third century of this era. It was adopted by Madame Blavatsky in 1875, at the formation of the present Theosophical Society. Theosophy professes to be, not a religion, but the philosophy which underlies all religions; to give us, as wisdom from the East, the root-principles from which every true religion must be evolved. As I think, Theosophy is, in reality, modernized Buddhism. Its terms are Buddhist, its main ideas are Buddhist, its spirit and methods are Buddhist.

Now, the first great test of a religion is that which is involved in the question that rises in the heart of every man—What can you tell us about God? We know the Christian answer. It is that there is one God, who, in the past, created the Universe; who, in the present, sustains and governs it; who is not only Creator and Ruler, but also Father, tender, kindly and loving to all those who put their trust in Him. Now, what is the answer of Theosophy? I will let Theosophy speak for itself. Madame Blavatsky, in her "Key to Theosophy," has given us the response. She says, "We believe in a Universal Divine Principle, the root of All, from which all

proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of Being." Mrs. Besant, in a little book, "Why I became a Theosophist," quotes a larger work of Madame Blavatsky, "The Secret Doctrine," in the following words:—"IT" (note, the God of the Theosophists is "It") "It is that which is dissolved, or the illusionary dual aspect of that, the essence of which is eternally One, that we call Eternal, matter or substance, formless, sexless, inconceivable, even to our sixth sense, or mind, in which, therefore, we refuse to see that which Monotheists call a personal anthropomorphic God." That is the answer of Theosophy. In a word, it denies a personal God. It affirms that there is, instead, a mysterious, omnipotent, powerful essence, otherwise called an influence or a potentiality. Now, does this explain anything at all? Mrs. Besant tells us, in her pamphlet, that she left Materialism because she found it did not solve for her the problems of the Universe. I ask, what problems does *this* solve? What difficulties does it remove? Does not Theosophy rather create new problems when it declares to us, *a principle made the heavens and the earth.*

If I may use an illustration, I would ask you to accompany me, in thought, upon a visit to the great paper-mills in South Street. In one room we notice large heaps of Esparto grass; in another, the grass is being torn in pieces; in yet another, it is being bleached; and so it passes from machine to machine, until from the tangled grass of the first room, we find at last the smooth, white paper, which is ready to be used in the production of our great London journals. Now, when you have witnessed these consecutive processes, when you have remarked the way in which each machine co-operates with every other in producing the desired result, when you have observed the evidence of design afforded by the harmonious adaptation of many means to the attainment of one end, what will be your natural conclusion? Will you say that underlying the machinery there must be an impersonal principle, an essence, a potentiality, which explains all? Would that explain it? No. I think you would conclude, there must be some thinker who has *personally* planned, and who *personally* superintends the whole. And if you feel it to be the case, that the existence of contrivance and design in an earthly factory points to some personal mind as having formed the plan, with how much greater cogency do you draw a similar conclusion, when you gaze around upon this vast universe! When you look at the world with its wonderful arrangements, with its rivers and its oceans, with its tides and with its winds; when you find the kingdoms of the animal and of the vegetable each supplying the other's wants, and so mutually sustained; when you think of the unerring order by which spring and summer, autumn and winter, ever succeed each other, seed-time and harvest never failing; when, above all, you lift your eyes to heaven, and see how in their orbits planets move by rule, and how starry systems form one stupendous whole; when in all Creation you remark intricacy of movement, and yet unity of plan: can you imagine that all results from the operation of a mere omnipresent essence, of a blind potentiality, or of an impersonal principle? Do you not recognize perforce that, behind the heavens and the earth, behind the seasons, and behind the stars, there is a great mind, there is One who thinks and contrives, there is that august Person of whom we speak, when we say, "There is one God." Pantheism may make poetry, but it does not satisfy the reason.

If we ask, How did the Creation take place? we know the answer of Revelation. It tells us: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The answer of Theosophy is something like this: "As in the morning the sun rises upon the earth, pursues its daily course, and in the evening sinks to rest behind the western hills; so, in the dawn of existence, the Universe rises into being, continues for a while, and then sinks back again into the nothingness from which it sprang. After a while it re-emerges, is once more apparent for a time, and then again passes away. These are

called the cycles of existence ; and there is thus a constant alternation, between being and non-being, between existence and non-existence. The spiritual essence is eternal, and it alone is real ; the material universe is but temporary, and is only an illusion ; or, in the Hindoo word, is *Maya*.”

When we ask, “What, then, is man?” we are told that man is a being of seven fold nature. The divisions of this complex nature are as follows :—(1) The physical body, which is the “vehicle of all the other principles” during life ; (2) The life, or vital principle ; (3) The astral body, which is the phantom : the exact double of the physical body, except that it is not subject to the same material laws ; (4) The animal soul, which is the seat of animal desires and passions ; (5) The mind, or intelligence ; (6) The spiritual soul, which is the “vehicle of pure universal spirit” ; (7) The spirit, which is a “radiation” from the Absolute or universal Divine essence. I think there is no need to dwell upon this septenary division of the human constitution, because, although it has a philosophic interest, it does not greatly affect the religious question, which is the subject of our discussion this morning.

We come now to notice a doctrine which has proved one of the most striking and fascinating of those preached by Theosophists at the present time—I mean the theory of *Reincarnation*. We are told that the soul of man is an emanation from the omnipresent “deity,” of which I have already spoken. At the beginning of the cycle there is separated from the general essence, a spiritual entity, which enters a body, and so assumes relations with the physical world ; in other words, the man is born. He then passes through the various phases of life—childhood, youth, manhood, old age—and at length dies. At death there is partial dissolution : the body, abandoned by the soul, returns to the material elements out of which it was constituted. The soul passes into an intermediate state called *Kama-loka*, where a further division takes place between the lower and the higher elements of the psychical nature. When this has been accomplished, and when all that was sensual and animal in the soul has been left behind, the purified spirit enters what is called *Devachan*. This is a state of blissful consciousness, in which it remains, until, perhaps, some centuries have passed away. After these have elapsed, there is a reincarnation, and again the man lives upon the earth. This goes on through countless ages, until the cycle of the existence of the universe is complete. It is stated that the object of these many incarnations is that the soul may pass through every kind of experience. If you are a rich man in this life, you will probably be poor in the next. If you are a man in this life, you will probably be a woman in the next. If you were born in England in this life, you will be born in Africa, or in India, or in Patagonia in the next ; so that in knowledge and in sympathy, in thought and in feeling, you may be made perfect ; that from the diverse conditions of recurring life, the numerous elements may be contributed which will render your manhood complete. It is held that character and ability, in any one life, are the resultant of former lives. If a man is born into the present life with a kind and good disposition, it is because in earlier lives he chose the nobler of the many possible lines of conduct which were open to him. If his disposition is bad, it is because he made a degraded use of his former opportunities. If a man is naturally clever, it is because in former lives he has cultivated his talents ; if he is stupid, it is because he has allowed them to fall into decay. Theosophy does not seem to be clear upon the question how the differences first arose ; why in those former lives the one man chose the good, and the other the evil ; why the one cultivated, and the other neglected, his talents. In seeking to explain the present differences of moral character and intellectual ability, it only transfers the difficulty to the past. It gives us no ultimate solution. It is doubtful whether the Theosophical theory of Reincarnation throws any clearer light upon this oft-debated question, than does the scientific doctrine of Heredity. However, there is the theory ; and according to it, each life on earth is to be

succeeded by another, which will be in reality a continuation and development of itself; truly amid changed circumstances, yet still upon the old familiar earth. How different is all this from the Christian hope of heaven! We believe, that when life on earth is ended, death is but the gate of glory. Out of this present life we pass into immortal existence in heaven, where we are with Christ, and are like Him, seeing Him as He is. But Theosophy can only offer us a dreary series of reincarnations; a repetition of the old sins, of the old difficulties, of the old temptations, of the old sorrows. Madame Blavatsky herself, in an eloquent passage, admits the sadness of life. She says, "Life is at best a heartless play, a stormy sea to cross, and a heavy burden, often too difficult to bear. The greatest philosophers have tried in vain to fathom and find out its *raison d'être*, and have all failed, except those who had the key to it, namely, the Eastern sages. Life is, as Shakespeare describes it:—

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

Nothing in its separate parts, yet of the greatest importance in its collectivity or series of lives. *At any rate, almost every individual life is, in its full development, a sorrow.*"

And if that is a true description of life, it is but a cold and gloomy creed that can only hold out to us a repetition of the sorrow through ages and ages, the length of which we cannot even conceive. Is the agony of life to return again and again? When the tired pilgrim, who has toiled painfully over the rough ways of life, at length sinks wearily to rest, does he die, only that he may wake again in the same hard world, that he may resume the old burden, that he may endure the old trials, that he may face the old foes? This is all Theosophy tells us to expect—the reincarnation of the soul—the resumption of contest—the repetition of pain. We believe that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord; and that seems better to us.

But what proof can there be given of the Theosophical position? If reincarnation can be established, we must accept it. In that case we must give up our dream of heaven, however golden and glad it is. We want the truth and not a dream. Can Theosophy, then, prove its reincarnation? No, it can only give us conjectures. Mrs. Besant confesses this when she says: "The only proof of this doctrine, apart from the explanation it gives of the inexplicable cases of genius, &c., and its inherent probability (given any intelligent purpose in human existence), must, in the nature of things, lie for us in the future if it exist at all; the masters allege it on their personal knowledge, having reached the stage at which memory of past incarnations revives; the doctrine comes to us on their authority, and must be accepted or rejected by each as it approves itself to his reason."

I think we shall most of us feel that before we accept so great a doctrine as that of reincarnation, we should like to have some present and actual evidence in its favour, rather than that which comes to us merely on "Mahatmic" testimony.

On the other hand, there are many objections to the theory. An obvious one lies in the fact that we do not remember any such past lives? If we were living in the time of the Pharaohs, why cannot we remember the scenes that accompanied the emancipation of Israel? If we were alive in the great days of Greece, why have we no memory of the long struggle between Athens and Sparta? If we lived in the times of Elizabeth, why do we not recollect the stirring events of the Armada period? How is it that we read

the story of the past as a new thing, that we are not conscious that we ourselves took part in it? Theosophists answer that the memory of the past has gone with the brain, which the mind used as its organ in each bodily state. The man has now a new body, and with it memory begins again *de novo*. But I think we shall be slow to admit that the merely physical theory of memory will explain the phenomena connected with it. The mere molecular changes of the brain will not account for that marvellous faculty, by which there lie stored in the minds of men great fields of information and facts innumerable. Surely the power of memory is something which pertains to the man himself, to the soul which governs, and not to the brain, which is only its organ. And if memory belongs to the abiding soul, how can successive reincarnations destroy it?

But, they say, perhaps after all we do remember the past, and they mention those shadowy feelings of recollection which most of us experience at times. When, in visiting a new place, we feel for an instant as though the spot was familiar; when, in passing through some new experience, we have an indefinable feeling that we have undergone the same experience before; Theosophists tell us we have caught a glimpse of the past life; that we have found a vestige of that old memory which has not been entirely lost. Now we are not obliged to turn to Theosophy for an explanation of these strange flashes of consciousness. There are no fewer than three scientific theories, any one of which will explain them; but as we are treating our subject this morning from the religious standpoint, it will not be well to enter upon scientific discussion.

At best, I think we shall feel that these shadowy glimpses of apparent memory form but a poor and sandy foundation, upon which to rest so great a theory as that of Reincarnation. Indeed, Theosophists admit that the memory of the past is practically lost, and they urge, as we have seen, that it has been lost in the dissolution of the body, and in the passing of the soul through *Kama-loka* and *Devachan*. They quote to us the words of the *Æneid*, in which Virgil speaks of the souls in Hades, as drinking the water of the river *Lethe*, and under its influence forgetting all their past experiences before re-emerging upon the surface of the earth to enter upon new life. But rather than trust to the fancies of ancient poets or to the vague testimonies of modern Mahatmas, I think we shall prefer to retain our faith in the living God, and in the grand old Book, which tells us how, when this brief life is done, we shall enter by Jesus Christ into the glory-land.

Another great and cardinal doctrine of Theosophy is *Karma*. This is defined as the unerring law of the universe; the law of cause and effect. It is the doctrine of inflexible justice, that a man will reap just what he has sown. We are taught that, in the physical and moral worlds alike, cold, relentless laws are in operation. If a man's life be good, he will receive the exact meed of his well-doing. If he commit sin, penalty, precise and proportionate, will visit him. Though the evil may be long unrequited, yet at length retribution will follow. There is no escape. We are even told that the results of a man's sins dog him from life to life; that if in the present life he does not meet his deserts, yet in some future incarnation all will be made equal. While the spirit lies in *Devachan*, though centuries roll by, the "thought-forms," which were created in former lives still exist; they hover like ghosts about the earth, till the spirit is again embodied, when they fix themselves upon the man, who thus starts his new life, burdened and weighed down by the results of former existences. Nothing is forgiven and nothing is forgotten. Theosophists tell us that the law is stern and unbending; for every sin, the sinner must receive exact retribution. It is said of Buddha, that he was one day walking out with a favourite disciple, when suddenly robbers sprang out from a wood and smote and killed the disciple. Buddha did not even put out a hand to save him. Then those that stood by

said to Buddha :—" Why did you not save him ?" Buddha replied, " I could not save him ; it was Karma. In some former life, centuries ago, he was a robber, and killed a man ; and though in this life he has been good, and has proved a faithful disciple to myself, yet, at last, Karma has overtaken him. The death he once inflicted has to-day returned to himself."

Brethren, I think, here lies a radical distinction between Theosophy and Christianity. In Theosophy there is no room for forgiveness—no place for mercy. How great is the contrast presented by Christianity ! We believe indeed that God's laws are inflexible, that the Divine righteousness is eternal and unchanging ; but we also know that " God is love," and that His compassion has devised means, whereby the guilty may be pardoned. Truly man has sinned, and has incurred the wrath of God, but a great Substitute has been found to bear away our sins and suffer in our stead. Atonement has been made, justice has been satisfied, God and man are reconciled.

A Theosophist has urged upon me that Karma is taught even in our own Bible ; that Paul contradicts the possibility of a Vicarious Atonement when he says (Gal. vi. 7), " Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There is no contradiction. We know that sin and penalty are linked ; that if guilt be the seed, shame will be the harvest. But we affirm that *in Christ the believer has reaped the harvest* of his sin. We are identified with Christ. In another passage of this same epistle (ii. 20) Paul declares, " I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." While in a third place in the same letter he writes, if possible in still plainer terms (iii. 13) : " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Christianity does not make light of sin or of its fearful consequences ; but it teaches how, in the infinite mercy of God, One " has been wounded for our transgressions," and we are accepted for His sake.

Here, then, is the great cleavage between the two systems. Theosophy rejects the Atonement ; it ridicules Faith ; it demands Works. It declares that no man can be saved by believing, he can only be saved by doing. If he obeys the behests of moral law, if he is just and generous, if by his own efforts he climbs the steep cliff of righteousness, he will attain to a lofty state of bliss ; but there is nothing that can be done for him ; he must do all himself. Dear friends, that doctrine may suit the strong, the great, the distinguished ; but it has no message of mercy for the weak, the fallen and the lost. And most of us feel that we come under these categories. We want someone to save us, to lift us up. We cannot rise alone ; we want a stronger arm to raise us. We thought we had found it as we listened to the voice of Christ. But Theosophy tells us that the story of the Prodigal Son is only a delusive fable. There could be no forgiveness, no reception back into the Father's house, no melody of restoration. The prodigal must work his own way back again ; must with his own hand weave the " robe," with his own earnings buy the " ring," and by his own tears wash out the stain upon his life. According to Theosophy, the lamb truly goes astray upon the distant hills, but no kind shepherd comes to save it and to bear it back. Alone on the mountain-side it may die, unless of itself it can return to the fold.

Theosophy would give us a world without prayer. I turned to the " Key to Theosophy " to see what it could teach us about that which is the source of strength and comfort to Christians in all ages. " Do you believe in prayer ?" Madame Blavatsky is asked. She answers, " We do not. We act instead of talking." " You do not offer prayers even to the Absolute Principle ?" She replies, " Why should we ? Being well-occupied people, we can hardly afford to lose time in addressing verbal prayers to a pure abstraction." Later on she continues—" Prayer, as now understood, is doubly pernicious ; (a) It kills in man self-reliance ; (b) It develops in him a still more ferocious self-esteem and egotism than he is already endowed

with by nature." Thus Theosophy would take away the throne of grace. It would take from us all the joys and consolations that come in the hour of temptation and weakness, from waiting upon God in prayer. But we cannot yield the position—we are certain, both from our knowledge of God and from our own experience, that it is true that they who wait upon the Lord shall and do renew their strength.

But some will ask, "Who are the Mahatmas, of whom so much has been lately said?" They are a few lofty souls who have reached the highest distinction in the Theosophical Universe. Their name signifies "great soul." They have passed through numerous stages of incarnation, and so have gained wide experience of human life. They have become free from ordinary bodily restraints, and are able to use either "physical" or "astral" bodies, as they please. They have acquired by long study a deep knowledge of nature and a control of occult forces, by which they can produce phenomena which appear to us miraculous. They are possessed of great benevolence, and use their powers only for the good of mankind. They live in Thibet, a country in the recesses of Asia, and are actively engaged in aiding the evolution of the race. We will not now stay to remark upon these "Mahatmas," as we shall have occasion to refer to them a little later.

Another term frequently employed is Nirvana. Nirvana is the goal of all. It is the ultimate state into which the soul of the man passes, who has reached the highest degree of perfection and holiness during life. It is absorption into deity, the sinking back of the spirit into that general essence from which it first arose. Theosophists are not willing to admit that personality and individuality are lost in the Nirvanic state; but how can it be otherwise, when, like a bubble that has broken on the surface of a boundless sea, the soul has subsided into that universal principle from which it sprang? How can individuality be retained when the millions of humanity have been merged into the One? No, as Oriental scholars, who have given their lives to the study of these questions, tell us, Nirvana really involves the loss of personality; for the individual soul it practically means "nothingness." That is the Theosophic Heaven. Now, with all this, let us contrast the Christian conception of the life to come. Instead of Nirvana, vague and impersonal, we believe in the Father's house in Heaven, where there are many mansions. We believe in the throne of God, round which the ransomed gather and sing their songs of praise. We believe that, in that glorious land, we shall meet the friends who have gone before us; that there will be the perfect joy of service, joined with the happiness of fellowship, human, angelic, and Divine. And so the contrast stands, in things past, things present, and in things to come.

I think I have shown you now how great is the gulf between Theosophy and Christianity. The two systems are diametrically opposed. Theosophy would revive old theories that have been refuted long ago—old systems like Alchemy and Astrology, which have been cast into the limbo of the absurd by the researches of modern science—and old religions, like Buddhism, that were more suited to the superstitions of ancient ages than to the enlightenment of to-day. Theosophists plainly declare that they find more "truth" in Buddhism than in any other religion of the world. Now, Buddhism has proved itself lacking in the elements of a Divine religion. It was established in India six hundred years before Christ, as a protest against the extreme ceremonialism of the Hindoo faith. It soon spread itself over India, but in twelve centuries it had spent itself in that land, and to-day it is practically defunct in India. Hindooism, which was there before it, is still there. Mohammedanism is still there, but Buddhism has passed to other lands. Where you find a Buddhist temple still remaining, you will find pictures and carvings of gross immorality. This statement was challenged by a member of the Theosophical Society. I have accordingly communicated with the gentleman, who is my authority, the Rev. J. Ewen of Benares. He writes,

giving full confirmation, and offers, if I will call a meeting of "men only," to come here in person and prove, from his own knowledge, the degrading tendency of the Buddhist faith in its influence on character and life. This is the religion which is being practically revived among us to-day. And though it comes to us with winning words, though its contact with Christianity has imparted to it a certain glow of beauty, though it is dressed in many a garment of Christian precept, yet it is Buddhism at heart. And as such we cannot receive it, as did the Hindoos in ancient days. To the Hindoo it meant progress. To the Christian it would mean retrogression. Christianity has been in existence eighteen centuries, and to-day it is stronger than ever. Its influence is felt in commerce, in society, in politics, and everywhere it acts as a purifying, vitalizing, and redeeming force. As a missionary religion, Christianity is always spreading. New conquests are being made by the Cross in every land. The nations of the world are receiving the light of Christ. And yet now, after the grand developments of Christianity during the past hundred years, Christianity is to be rivalled by this competitor, this worn-out religion in modern dress. We have no need to fear. Christianity can bear the comparison, either with regard to its past history or to its present influence. Theosophists charge us with basing our religion on credulity, and not upon knowledge. I fling back the charge. Our religion is based upon fact, and we believe that Theosophy depends on credulity. Christianity is founded upon historic events. The birth, life, work, suffering, and death of Christ, are established upon evidence such as no other events of antiquity possess. On the facts of the life of Christ, on the effects of the preaching of the cross in the early centuries of this era, on the history of Christianity from that day to this, on its grand results in the purifying of society, in the establishment of benevolent agencies, in the redemption of men, and in the regeneration of character, we base our belief. We KNOW whom we have believed. It is not with us a mere question of credulity, or of blind faith. In our hearts we have felt the touch of God; in our lives we have seen the working of the Most High. We know that Christ lives and reigns, and that he pours out his Holy Spirit upon men, for we have seen their lives transformed by the operation of His power. We have a host of witnesses on the side of Christianity. We do not fear investigation. We rejoice when men will study the evidences of our faith.

On the other hand, where are the proofs of Theosophy? We are told that the doctrine has been taught by the Mahatmas. But who are the Mahatmas? Where are they? and who has seen them? If they exist, why do they stay in Thibet, the most inaccessible region in Asia? It almost seems as though they had chosen a region where we could not go to test their existence. But we are told, they have been seen by those who believe in Theosophy, walking at eventide on the dim and shadowy margin of Indian waters. Then why do they not come amongst us? Christ lived among men: his work was done amid the crowd. Why cannot the Mahatmas appear where men are wont to congregate? What have they done to benefit the human race? We are told that the French Revolution was brought about through their influence; if so, I cannot congratulate them on their methods: cruelty, bloodshed, prison and guillotine are, at least, somewhat rough forms of benevolence. Again we are told that they helped in quelling the Indian mutiny; if so, how did they help? History gives no sign of such strange allies. We have always thought that the war was won by clever generalship and by British pluck. Where is there room for Mahatmas? Until there is some real evidence of their *existence*, we shall hardly accept their "evidence" as establishing the truth of Theosophy.

But we are told, there are the *phenomena*. Wonderful things are done by Theosophists through their control of occult forces. Well, what are these

remarkable phenomena? Bells are set ringing where there were no bells to ring. Roses are precipitated from the ceilings of ordinary drawing-rooms. Letters are materialized in the air, and are read as messages from the unseen world. Who have seen these things? Theosophists only. Why are they not wrought in our midst? Christ did not conceal his miracles. The proofs of His power and mission were given in open daylight, in the presence of His enemies. Even His bitterest foes could not, and did not, suggest that his miracles were not actually accomplished. Let Theosophy imitate Christ. Instead of ringing bells and precipitating roses, let them work in public some great phenomena which shall help men. Let them heal the sick, as Christ did. Let them give sight to the blind, as Christ did. Let them raise the dead, as Christ did. And then we shall be more willing to listen to their theories. If their system is true, and if they really have control of Nature's hidden forces, Theosophists need not court secrecy; let them come into the light.

And now, let us, as Christians, be up and doing. It is time for action. Men are enquiring; that is a hopeful sign. Men are awake; let us proclaim Christ to them. Mrs. Besant tells us, that when she left Christianity, it was by a stony and painful road that she journeyed, until with bleeding feet and weary heart she arrived at her goal, to find at length peace, rest, and satisfaction in Atheism. But she has discovered that her Paradise of Atheism was only a passing and unsatisfactory delusion. Now she has set out on a second pilgrimage, from Atheism to Pantheism; from "No God," to "everything god." Her motto through life has been, "Light, more light!" And seeking light, she again incurs the pain of saying farewell to friends beloved, and journeys from Materialism to Theosophy. God grant that Mrs. Besant may not stay there! There is another pilgrimage for her to make—out of Pantheism into Monotheism—out of Theosophy into Christianity. And there are many of us who believe—nay, who know—that she would find in it no passing Paradise, no sickening delusion, but the abiding rest that is in God, to the satisfaction alike of the problems of the intellect, and of the yearnings of the heart. Noble and true as she seems to be in the pursuit of truth, we should gladly welcome her back into the Christian fold! Mrs. Besant says she should like to have as her epitaph, the words: "She tried to follow truth." But there is a still nobler epitaph we should like to see inscribed upon her tomb. There is One, who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The better epitaph would be, "*She tried to follow Christ.*" That would include the truth and eternally more beside.

Theosophists say that the world is weary, and the hearts of men are sad, and that they have consolation to impart; but we think their remedy is worse than the disease. Through the din of the nineteenth century there sounds a voice that says, "Come unto ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, weary, sinful, sorrowful heart; listen, trust, accept Christ, and he will make you whole! Theosophy tells us of a light that shines from the East, the "light of Asia"; but we are glad to tell you that we have light from a nobler source, from Heaven! And it shines in the face of Christ. God help us all to walk in it! Amen.