

# REDUCING SUFFERING AND POVERTY

## **Give Light and Comfort**

Be, O Lanoo, like them. Give light and comfort to the toiling pilgrim, and seek out him who knows still less than thou; who in his wretched desolation sits starving for the bread of Wisdom and the bread which feeds the shadow, without a Teacher, hope or consolation, and—let him hear the Law.

*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 40

H.P. Blavatsky

## **Altruism**

HE WHO DOES NOT PRACTISE ALTRUISM; HE WHO IS NOT PREPARED TO SHARE HIS LAST MORSEL WITH A WEAKER OR POORER THAN HIMSELF; HE WHO NEGLECTS TO HELP HIS BROTHER MAN, OF WHATEVER RACE, NATION, OR CREED, WHENEVER AND WHEREVER HE MEETS SUFFERING, AND WHO TURNS A DEAF EAR TO THE CRY OF HUMAN MISERY; HE WHO HEARS AN INNOCENT PERSON SLANDERED, WHETHER A BROTHER THEOSOPHIST OR NOT, AND DOES NOT UNDERTAKE HIS DEFENCE AS HE WOULD UNDERTAKE HIS OWN—IS NO THEOSOPHIST

From “Let Every Man Prove His Own Work”  
*Lucifer*, November, 1887

H.P. Blavatsky

## **All That Lives and Breathes**

Hast thou attuned thy heart and mind to the great mind and heart of all mankind? For as the sacred River's roaring voice whereby all Nature-sounds are echoed back, so must the heart of him 'who in the stream would enter,' thrill in response to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes.

*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 55

H.P. Blavatsky

## **The Quintessence of Duty**

Duty is that which is due to Humanity, to our fellow-men, neighbours, family, and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves. This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and moral bankrupts in our next incarnation. Theosophy is the quintessence of duty.

*The Key To Theosophy*, p. 229

H.P. Blavatsky

## **Good Seeds**

For every flower of love and charity he plants in his neighbour's garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from his own, and so this garden of the gods—Humanity—shall blossom as a rose.

*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 53

H.P. Blavatsky

## **On Charity**

ENQUIRER. How do you Theosophists regard the Christian duty of charity?

THEOSOPHIST. What charity do you mean? Charity of mind, or practical charity in the physical plane?

ENQUIRER. I mean practical charity, as your idea of Universal brotherhood would include, of course, charity of mind.

THEOSOPHIST. Then you have in your mind the practical carrying out of the commandments given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount?

ENQUIRER. Precisely so.

THEOSOPHIST. Then why call them "Christian"? Because, although your Saviour preached and practised them, the last thing the Christians of to-day think of is to carry them out in their lives.

ENQUIRER. And yet many are those who pass their lives in dispensing charity?

THEOSOPHIST. Yes, out of the surplus of their great fortunes. But point out to me that Christian, among the most philanthropic, who would give to the shivering and starving thief, who would steal his coat, his cloak also; or offer his right cheek to him who smote him on the left, and never think of resenting it?

ENQUIRER. Ah, but you must remember that these precepts have not to be taken

literally. Times and circumstances have changed since Christ's day. Moreover, He spoke in Parables.

THEOSOPHIST. Then why don't your Churches teach that the doctrine of damnation and hell-fire is to be understood as a parable too? Why do some of your most popular preachers, while virtually allowing these "parables" to be understood as you take them, insist on the literal meaning of the fires of Hell and the physical tortures of an "Asbestos-like" soul? If one is a "parable," then the other is. If Hell-fire is a literal truth, then Christ's commandments in the Sermon on the Mount have to be obeyed to the very letter. And I tell you that many who do not believe in the Divinity of Christ—like Count Leo Tolstoi and more than one Theosophist—do carry out these noble, because universal, precepts literally; and many more good men and women would do so, were they not more than certain that such a walk in life would very probably land them in a lunatic asylum—so Christian are your laws!

ENQUIRER. But surely every one knows that millions and millions are spent annually on private and public charities?

THEOSOPHIST. Oh, yes; half of which sticks to the hands it passes through before getting to the needy; while a good portion or remainder gets into the hands of professional beggars, those who are too lazy to work, thus doing no good whatever to those who are really in misery and suffering. Haven't you heard that the first result of the great outflow of charity towards the East-end of London was to raise the rents in Whitechapel by some 20 per cent.?

ENQUIRER. What would you do, then?

THEOSOPHIST. Act individually and not collectively; follow the Northern Buddhist precepts: "Never put food into the mouth of the hungry by the hand of another"; "Never let the shadow of thy neighbour (a third person) come between thyself and the object of thy bounty"; "Never give to the Sun time to dry a tear before thou hast wiped it." Again "Never give money to the needy, or food to the priest, who begs at thy door, through thy servants, lest thy money should diminish gratitude, and thy food turn to gall."

ENQUIRER. But how can this be applied practically?

THEOSOPHIST. The Theosophical ideas of charity mean personal exertion for others; personal mercy and kindness; personal interest in the welfare of those who suffer; personal sympathy, forethought and assistance in their troubles or needs. We Theosophists do not believe in giving money (N. B., if we had it) through other people's hands or organizations. We believe in giving to the money a thousandfold greater power and effectiveness by our personal contact and sympathy with those who need it. We believe in relieving the starvation of the soul, as much if not more than the emptiness of the stomach; for gratitude does more good to the man who feels it, than to him for whom it is felt. Where's the gratitude which your "millions of pounds" should have called forth, or the good feelings provoked by them? Is it shown in the hatred of the East-End poor for

the rich? in the growth of the party of anarchy and disorder? or by those thousands of unfortunate working girls, victims to the "sweating" system, driven daily to eke out a living by going on the streets? Do your helpless old men and women thank you for the workhouses; or your poor for the poisonously unhealthy dwellings in which they are allowed to breed new generations of diseased, scrofulous and rickety children, only to put money into the pockets of the insatiable Shylocks who own houses? Therefore it is that every sovereign of all those "millions," contributed by good and would-be charitable people, falls like a burning curse instead of a blessing on the poor whom it should relieve. We call this generating national Karma, and terrible will be its results on the day of reckoning.

*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 242–245

H.P. Blavatsky

### **Wisdom in Action**

The Theosophist who desires to enter upon occultism takes some of Nature's privileges into his own hands, by that very wish, and soon discovers that experiences come to him with double-quick rapidity. His business is then to recognise that he is under a—to him—new and swifter law of development, and to snatch at the lessons that come to him.

But, in recognising this, he also makes another discovery. He sees that it takes a very wise man to do good works without danger of doing incalculable harm. A highly developed adept in life may grasp the nettle, and by his great intuitive powers, know whom to relieve from pain and whom to leave in the mire that is their best teacher. The poor and wretched themselves will tell anyone who is able to win their confidence what disastrous mistakes are made by those who come from a different class and endeavor to help them. Kindness and gentle treatment will sometimes bring out the worst qualities of a man or woman who has led a fairly presentable life when kept down by pain and despair. May the Master of Mercy forgive us for saying such words of any human creatures, all of whom are a part of ourselves, according to the law of human brotherhood which no disowning of it can destroy. But the words are true. None of us know the darkness which lurks in the depths of our own natures until some strange and unfamiliar experience rouses the whole being into action. So with these others who seem more miserable than ourselves.

As soon as he begins to understand what a friend and teacher pain can be, the Theosophist stands appalled before the mysterious problem of human life, and though he may long to do good works, equally dreads to do them wrongly until he has himself acquired greater power and knowledge. The ignorant doing of good works may be vitally injurious, as all but those who are blind in their love of benevolence are compelled to acknowledge. In this sense the answer made as to lack of Christ-like lives among Theosophists, that there are probably none strong enough to live such, is perfectly correct and covers the whole question. For it is not the spirit of self-sacrifice, or of devotion, or of desire to help that is lacking, but the strength to acquire knowledge and power and intuition, so that the deeds done shall really be worthy of the "Buddha-Christ" spirit. Therefore it is that Theosophists cannot pose as a body of philanthropists, though secretly

they may adventure on the path of good works. They profess to be a body of learners merely, pledged to help each other and all the rest of humanity, so far as in them lies, to a better understanding of the mystery of life, and to a better knowledge of the peace which lies beyond it.

But as it is an inexorable law, that the ground must be tilled if the harvest is to be reaped, so Theosophists are obliged to work in the world unceasingly, and very often in doing this to make serious mistakes, as do all workers who are not embodied Redeemers. Their efforts may not come under the title of good works, and they may be condemned as a school of idle talkers, yet they are an outcome and fruition of this particular moment of time, when the ideas which they hold are greeted by the crowd with interest; and therefore their work is good, as the lotus-flower is good when it opens in the midday sun.

None know more keenly and definitely than they that good works are necessary; only these cannot be rightly accomplished without knowledge. Schemes for Universal Brotherhood, and the redemption of mankind, might be given out plentifully by the great adepts of life, and would be mere dead-letter utterances while individuals remain ignorant, and unable to grasp the great meaning of their teachers. To Theosophists we say, let us carry out the rules given us for our society before we ask for any further schemes or laws. To the public and our critics we say, try to understand the value of good works before you demand them of others, or enter upon them rashly yourselves. Yet it is an absolute fact that without good works the spirit of brotherhood would die in the world; and this can never be. Therefore is the double activity of learning and doing most necessary; we have to do good, and we have to do it *rightly*, with knowledge.

Passage from "Let Every Man Prove His Own Work"  
*Lucifer*, November, 1887

H.P. Blavatsky

### **The Hosts of Souls**

Watch how they hover o'er the stormy sea of human life, and how exhausted, bleeding, broken-winged, they drop one after other on the swelling waves. Tossed by the fierce winds, chased by the gale, they drift into the eddies and disappear within the first great vortex.

*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 9

H.P. Blavatsky

### **The Hot Tears of Pain**

When to the World's turmoil thy budding soul lends ear; when to the roaring voice of the great illusion thy Soul responds, when frightened at the sight of the hot tears of pain, when deafened by the cries of distress, thy soul withdraws like the shy turtle within the carapace of SELFHOOD, learn, O Disciple, of her Silent "God," thy Soul is an unworthy shrine.

*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 4

H.P. Blavatsky

### **Each Burning Human Tear Drop**

Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye.

But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.

These tears, O thou of heart most merciful, these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal. 'Tis on such soil that grows the midnight blossom of Buddha more difficult to find, more rare to view than is the flower of the Vogay tree. It is the seed of freedom from rebirth. It isolates the Arhat both from strife and lust, it leads him through the fields of Being unto the peace and bliss known only in the land of Silence and Non-Being.

*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 14–15

H.P. Blavatsky

### **Each One, His Brother's Keeper**

Each one is his brother's keeper, being as we are inseparably bound together by unbreakable bonds of origin and of destiny. Fundamentally we are all one. Every son of man is the keeper of his brothers, in the sense that he acts upon them, and their minds and hearts react against what he says to them. And his responsibility becomes consciously, self-consciously, the heavier just in proportion as his own evolution is the more advanced.

From Chapter Four, *The Great Heresy of Separateness*

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