

IF THE FOLLOWING SHORT EXTRACTS INTEREST YOU, YOU ARE INVITED TO READ THE LONGER READINGS FROM WHICH THEY ARE TAKEN.

INDEPENDENT THOUGHT—GODWARD

H.P. Blavatsky “What Are The Theosophists?”

All original thinkers and investigators of the hidden side of nature whether materialists—those who find in matter “the promise and potency of all terrestrial life,” or spiritualists—that is, those who discover in spirit the source of all energy and of matter as well, were and are, properly Theosophists.

For to be one, one need not necessarily recognize the existence of any special God or a deity. One need but worship the spirit of living nature and try to identify oneself with it. To revere that Presence, the invisible Cause, which is yet ever manifesting itself in its incessant results; the intangible, omnipotent, and omnipresent Proteus: indivisible in its Essence, and eluding form, yet appearing under all and every form; who is here and there and everywhere and nowhere; is All, and NOTHING: ubiquitous yet one; the Essence filling, binding, bounding, containing everything, contained on all.

It will, we think, be seen now, that whether classed as Theist, Pantheists or Atheists, such men are all near kinsmen to the rest. Be what he may, once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of routine, and enters upon a solitary path of independent thought—Godward—he is a Theosophist, an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth, with “an inspiration of his own” to solve the universal problems.

H.P. Blavatsky “Is Theosophy a religion?”

No genuine, no sincere searcher after truth can ever be found among the blind believers in the "Divine Word," let the latter be claimed to come from Allah, Brahma or Jehovah, or their respective Kuran, Purana and Bible. For: 'Faith is not reason's labour, but repose.'

He who believes his own religion on faith, will regard that of every other man as a lie, and hate it on that same faith. Moreover, unless it fetters reason and entirely blinds our perceptions of anything outside our own particular faith, the latter is no faith at all, but a temporary belief, the delusion we labour under, at some particular time of life. Moreover, "faith without principles is but a flattering phrase for willful positiveness or fanatical bodily sensations," in Coleridge's clever definition.

What, then, is Theosophy, and how may it be defined in its latest presentation in this closing portion of the XIXth century?

Theosophy, we say, is not a Religion.

Yet there are, as everyone knows, certain beliefs, philosophical, religious and scientific, which have become so closely associated in recent years with the word "Theosophy" that they have come to be taken by the general public for theosophy itself. Moreover, we shall be told these beliefs have been put forward, explained and defended by those very Founders who have declared that Theosophy is not a Religion. What is then the explanation of this apparent contradiction? How can a certain body of beliefs and teachings, an elaborate doctrine, in fact, be labelled "Theosophy" and be tacitly accepted as "Theosophical" by nine-tenths of the members of the T.S., if Theosophy is not a Religion?—we are asked.

To explain this is the purpose of the present protest.

It is perhaps necessary, first of all, to say, that the assertion that "Theosophy is not a Religion," by no means excludes the fact that "Theosophy *is* Religion" itself. A Religion in the true and only correct sense, is a bond uniting men together—not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs. Now Religion, *per se*, in its widest meaning is that which binds not only all MEN, but also all BEINGS and all things in the entire Universe into one grand whole. This is our theosophical definition of religion; but the same definition changes again with every creed and country, and no two Christians even regard it alike.

(...) But to Theosophists (the genuine Theosophists are here meant) who accept no mediation by proxy, no salvation through innocent bloodshed, nor would they think of "working for wages" in the One Universal religion, the only definition they could subscribe to and accept in full is one given by Miller. How truly and theosophically he describes it, by showing that

. . . true Religion
 Is always mild, propitious and humble;
 Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood,
 Nor bears destruction on her chariot wheels;
 But stoops to polish, succour and redress,
 And builds her grandeur on the public good.

The above is a correct definition of what true theosophy is, or ought to be.

(...) Thus Theosophy is not a Religion, we say, but RELIGION itself, the one bond of unity, which is so universal and all-embracing that no man, as no speck – from gods and mortals down to animals, the blade of grass and atom – can be outside of its light. Therefore, any organization or body of that name must necessarily be a UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN THE SOCIETY

H.P. Blavatsky *The Key To Theosophy* pp. 19-20

THEOSOPHIST. 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. [An "attached member" means one who has joined some particular branch of the T.S. An "unattached," one who belongs to the Society at large, has his diploma, from the Headquarters (Adyar, Madras), but is connected with no branch or lodge.] 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."

UMBJARV,K “Religious Intolerance and Sectarian Violence”

Being different or seeing life from another angle is not a problem. The problem is identification. If we observe life closely, we can see that although the self has the capacity to identify itself with everything, there are nevertheless some aspects with which we are more identified. Interestingly, the most evident ones on the physical level are the distinctions mentioned in the first Object of the Theosophical Society (TS). Or maybe that is the reason why these distinctions are mentioned in the first Object.

(...) When somebody or something – be it a person, an object, even an idea – harms the self’s notion of permanence, the negative qualities of the person or the object are exaggerated. For instance, when we do not like somebody we tend to see only the negative aspects of this person and discard the positive ones. The exaggeration applies also when we are attached to somebody, but in this case, we only see the positive qualities of the person and discard the negative ones. So when somebody harms the self’s notion of permanence, the first, usually unconscious and subtle reaction is fear; then aversion will follow, and after this, rejection. We can observe that when there is a strong grasping of the self, things around us are perceived as a personal threat. Somebody says something not so nice about our nationality, culture, religion, or maybe even the TS, and we are likely to react negatively, maybe not verbally, but psychologically, on a subtle level.

(...) Most of you know that in November, Paris, where I live, suffered several attacks. I remember watching the news with my friends when with every hour the scale of terror became more and more evident. What followed was a public debate where politics, religion, and so forth, were discussed in detail. Many experts delivered their opinion about the situation and described what should be done to avoid such atrocities from happening again. Among them was a lady who runs an association that deals with radicalized youngsters. She was asked: “What is the method used to bring those young people back to society?” The lady noted that her organization had tried various methods, but the only truly effective way to help these young people was to try to give them back the sense that other people are human beings. Apparently, all religious discussions or using reason had proved useless, because these young people thought that they knew better, had the purest understanding, and were superior to others. So it made no difference what they were told. She said that radicalization and violence take place because there is dehumanization of others, so that others become only senseless objects. Reversing the process means the opposite – evoking the good memories of childhood, bringing back the warm feeling of family ties, and showing that others have feelings, that they suffer; showing that they are basically the same despite distinctions of religion, culture, and so on.

TINGLEY,K “A Broader Conception of Deity”**(Inner exercise to overcome religious intolerance)**

Deity pervades the whole Universe: it is impersonal, unknowable, no matter how near we may draw to the light of it. It is the absolute, the Goal which we climb towards forever, forever learning and growing in the will and power to serve; forever acquiring new and grander ideals of That towards which we climb.

Think of the great Supreme Source of Life that holds the stars in their places, that orders nature and its wonderful mysteries, that gives to mother and father the sacred privilege of parenthood. Think of these and then tell me who can limit the Universal, Supreme Deity! Who can attempt to limit human life? At your best moments, at your silent moments, when either by despair or joy you have been moved to a state of contemplation, of analysis, of questioning, of yearning, think a moment,

have you not sometimes almost felt the touch of this divine power in your longings and in your aspirations? Think what it would be if the human mind could be ever conscious of the fact that man is part of the great, central, spiritual life, a ray of the Supreme!

He who understands this, knows what is the dignity of Man; and that the religion which alone will fitly correspond to our innate religious nature will be a universal system of human brotherhood based on the knowledge that we are essentially divine; a system that will warm our hearts with the knowledge that there is nothing outside ourselves that can save or damn us; that it is we ourselves who alone must and can work out our own salvation.

PARA-RELIGION

J. Tepfer “Gandhi on Theosophy, Modern Civilization and Social Reform”

This notion of a “para-religion” of sorts was compatible with, and supportive of, a diversity of religious teachings. Like the full moon simultaneously mirrored in many different lakes, each authentic religious teaching reflects some portion of Absolute Truth. This calls for not only tolerance of multiple religious traditions but a willingness to search for underlying truths beneath constricting dogmas and rituals. It is not surprising then, that Gandhi admired the universal and universalizing spirit of Theosophy. This appreciation was aptly and simply expressed in his Foreword to Sophia Wadia’s book, *The Brotherhood of Religions*: “And understanding of and respect for the great faiths of the world is the foundation of true Theosophy.” In this respect, Gandhi also noted that true religion, the *Sanatana Dharma*, not only transcends all formal religions, but also unifies them without destroying their fundamental, discrete integrity.

INDIA, MODEL OF PLURALISM AND TOLERATION

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths*

India truly remains a model of pluralism and toleration, especially on the religious level, and is a society where despite deep faith in their own religious traditions, individuals do not feel the need to bring the followers of other faith traditions into their religious fold. India, with its long history of tolerant coexistence, is a beacon for the rest of the world. In fact, when it comes to the wider world I see my own work as being a humble messenger of India’s ancient teachings on ahimsa (nonviolence) and tolerance of religious pluralism. I see my efforts in promoting peace, nonviolent approaches to resolving conflicts, and understanding across boundaries of race, religion, and nations, all having their roots in the ancient Indian teachings. So, in every sense of the word, I remain truly a *chela* (disciple) of India.