

H.P. BLAVATSKY on Wisdom-Religion

Key to Theosophy pp.7-12

THE WISDOM-RELIGION ESOTERIC IN ALL AGES

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

THEOSOPHIST. 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.

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

THEOSOPHIST. 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.

ENQUIRER. Where and by whom was it so preserved?

THEOSOPHIST. 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.

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

THEOSOPHIST. 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 *hè gnoosis toon ontoon*, 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" (Ecl. Phil.). Examples might be brought from every country to this effect.

ENQUIRER. Can you attain the "Secret Wisdom" simply by study? Encyclopaedias 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?

THEOSOPHIST. 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."

ENQUIRER. What is your explanation of it?

THEOSOPHIST. 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." *

* This is what the scholarly author of "The Eclectic Philosophy," Prof. A. Wilder, F. T. S., describes as "*spiritual photography*": "The soul is the camera in which facts and events, future, past, and present, are alike fixed; and the mind becomes conscious of them. Beyond our every-day world of limits all is one day or state—the past and future comprised in the present." . . . Death is the last *ecstasis* on earth. Then the soul is freed from the

constraint of the body, and its nobler part is united to higher nature and becomes partaker in the wisdom and foreknowledge of the higher beings." Real Theosophy is, for the mystics, that state which Apollonius of Tyana was made to describe thus: "I can see the present and the future as in a clear mirror. The sage need not wait for the vapours of the earth and the corruption of the air to foresee events. . . . The *theoi*, or gods, see the future; common men the present; sages that which is about to take place." "The Theosophy of the Sages" he speaks of is well expressed in the assertion, "The Kingdom of God is within us."

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

THEOSOPHIST. 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.

ENQUIRER. 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?

THEOSOPHIST. 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 it lies in the fact that real Theosophy has ever been kept secret.

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

THEOSOPHIST. 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.

Key to Theosophy p.229

ENQUIRER. And how would you define these duties, or "duty," in general, as you understand the term?

THEOSOPHIST. 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*.

Key to Theosophy p.18

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.

Key to Theosophy p.58

ENQUIRER. But Theosophy, you say, is not a religion?

THEOSOPHIST. Most assuredly it is not, since it is the essence of all religion and of absolute truth, a drop of which only underlies every creed. To resort once more to metaphor. Theosophy, on earth, is like the white ray of the spectrum, and every religion only one of the seven prismatic colours. Ignoring all the others, and cursing them as false, every special coloured ray claims not only priority, but to be *that white ray* itself, and anathematizes even its own tints from light to dark, as heresies. Yet, as the sun of truth rises higher and higher on the horizon of man's perception, and each coloured ray gradually fades out until it is finally re-absorbed in its turn, humanity will at last be cursed no longer with artificial polarizations, but will find itself bathing in the pure colourless sunlight of eternal truth. And this will be *Theosophia*.