

*Religious conversion  
means absolute perversion*



## *Abstract and train of thoughts*

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If it could, it would be spread at the sword's point and by the persuasiveness of tyranny and torture as in the good old days.	3
It is not that Christian dogmatism is more hateful to us than any other form of obstructiveness, but because it is enjoying a wider power to prevent man's moral development and crush truth.	3
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First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, No. 11 (47), *Supplement* to August 1883, pp. 1-2. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (A FINAL ANSWER) V pp. 118-21.

It is impossible for an Editor to please everybody, and whoever has tried it has been set down as a fool. The attempt has invariably failed, and the discomfiture of the unhappy pacificator has been generally voted to be the righteous punishment of audacity or ignorance. A journal to command the least influence must represent some distinct idea, be the expression of some defined policy. And since no two human beings think exactly alike, it follows that only the wildest dreamer could expect to avoid reproaches and maledictions from dissentient critics if, in a journal devoted to questions of philosophy, science and religion, he should boldly probe to the bottom those puzzling subjects. The theory of our Society is that there is some truth in every religion, but that in some it is so covered up by externals as to be very hard to dissect out. Among those "some" is Christianity which, with a gentle soul, has a body grotesque, hard, cruel — appalling, often. As our lance is couched against all shams in religion, we have pricked the shields of all the dark champions of popular creeds. If the *Front-de-Boeuf*<sup>1</sup> of vulgar Christianity has come in for more than a fair average of our thrusts, it is because in that case error is backed by Power and first needs over-setting. It is not that Christian dogmatism is more hateful to us than any other form of obstructiveness, but because it is enjoying a wider power to prevent man's moral development and crush truth. To really appreciate the inner merits of Christian Ethics one must first beat down Christian theological exotericism. The ancient faiths have had their day of power and are now slumbering upon the ashes of their fanes:<sup>2</sup> Christianity is the official creed of the masculine social energy of the generation. If it could, it would be spread at the sword's point and by the persuasiveness of tyranny and torture as in the good old days. But Progress [119] has brought it to book, and now if it would keep a hold upon the world's thought, it must open its most secret core to the world's inspection. The probe employed for this purpose is sceptical criticism, and that it is being used unsparingly is proven by the wonderful increase of the party of Free-thought, the rapid growth of Infidel Societies and Infidel Literature. The

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<sup>1</sup> [French for Ox Forehead. Front-de-Boeuf uses his physical bulk to intimidate people.]

<sup>2</sup> [temples]

mind of Christendom is deeply imbued with this tendency, which reflects itself equally in the tone of Christian and non-Christian writings. To ignore this, is to thrust out the eyes of one's understanding. But nevertheless there are many professed Theosophists who would have us act upon that principle. We may berate exotericism in any other faith as we choose, but we must not lay our unholy hand upon that gilded altar. We have severally declaimed against exoteric Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism — our Christian friends cared not:

The galled jade might wince, their withers were unwrung.<sup>1</sup>

**Has Christianity so clear and innocent a record, and freedom from dogma, as to command the immediate reverence of the Heathen?**

Those mouldy superstitions were born of the fogs of antiquity, and fit only for wretched blackfellows. But “the line must be drawn somewhere,” and they want us to draw it at the outspoken fearless books of Paine, Voltaire, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh and Bennett. We may open our advertising pages to whatever we like, but not to tracts, treatises or books against “the noblest of faiths.” When Swami Dayanand was friendly with us we advertised Orthodox works protesting against him; though we were allied with the Orthodox Sanskrit Sabha of Benares, we helped the Swami to get subscribers for his heterodox attacks on it. Colonel Olcott told the Parsis to their faces that they had forgotten the grand spirit of their religion, and were now but carrying around its corpse; what he has said to the Buddhists in some two hundred addresses let them declare. And why, we ask, should we leave only Christianity undissected? Has it so clear and innocent a record as to command the immediate reverence of an outsider? Is there so perfect an agreement between its Catholic and Protestant twins as to convince the Heathen at a glance of its freedom from error and its infallibility? But we “hurt the feelings” of many friends by helping to [120] disseminate the writings of Paine and other Freethinkers. Well, we are sorry, but shall nevertheless do it. There are two sides to Christianity as to every other question, and so far as our voice and influence goes, these Heathen youths, whose unripe minds the Missionaries are doing their best to turn to their foreign creed while teaching them their alphabet and rule-of-three, shall be made to read the best that can be said on *both* sides before taking the most momentous step in life — that of changing their forefathers' religion. They should bear in mind that there is such a thing as fair play, and “*audi alteram partem*”<sup>2</sup> was a maxim even of the Pagans of old. As we would not have a Christian lad give up the faith of *his* people for Hinduism or Buddhism without thorough study of both, so do we deplore to see the Heathen boy or girl trampling upon his nation's sacred beliefs before having even read what Christian sceptics have said about Christian errors. We may have offended often through the intensity of this feeling; perhaps we have said many things too harshly or even cruelly; we have more than the average of human infirmities no doubt, and might have been wiser if we had not been so bitter. But this does not touch the main question; it is simply that of the measure of our personal sin or shortcoming. The issue is whether or not we shall help to circu-

<sup>1</sup> [Paraphrasing *Hamlet*, Act 3, scene 2, lines 242-43. A jade is a bad horse, one that is hard to control. A horse that is galled has a sore, caused by the chafing of its saddle. If the sore is on the withers (the ridge between a horse's shoulders), the withers are wrung, meaning, rubbed sore. In other words, let the old nag wince with pain, we are not hurt by any ill-fitting saddle — what does it matter to us?]

<sup>2</sup> [*Listen to the other side*, i.e., let the other side be heard as well.]



late Freethought literature, or stifle it altogether as some would have us do — out of deference to the nominal religion of the “cultured” nations, and at the same time to allow all other religions to be challenged and even railed at with impunity? Our Christian-born friends and members seem to totally ignore the fact that our Society consists of not only about a dozen of Branches in Europe and America, but of over *seventy* Branches in Asia; and that of the subscribers to our magazine the “heathen” Asiatics are ten times more numerous than those of Europe and America, and that their religious feelings may be also entitled to some consideration. And would it be then either fair or just to sacrifice the vital interests of the majority because they are *non-Christians* and supposed to belong to “the dusky and Heathen majority” — to the squeamish feelings of the [121] “white and Christian minority”? This *we shall never do*. We have come to India for the benefit of the Asiatics, believing that Europeans had already received sufficient share of Fortune’s gifts and did not require our assistance.

**The Theosophical Society is the platform of true Brotherhood, a bond of amicable tolerance, a fulcrum by which the lever of Progress may move the mass of Ignorance. It has no one religion to propagate, no one creed to endorse. It stands for truth alone, and nothing but Truth.**

Therefore our final answer to all such remonstrances in future is the following: To the best of our ability we shall always be ready to discover how much and how little truth there may be in every creed that professes to teach man to thread his way through the mysteries of life, and the more awful mystery of death. And to do this effectively we need and invoke the help of theologians and bigots, of critics and philosophers of every faith and every nation.

Christianity may be the official religion of the dominant races, its profession the easy road to respectability and fortune; but it has no rewards that we court, and the Theosophical Society is meant to be a platform of true Brotherhood, a bond of amicable tolerance, a fulcrum by which the lever of Progress may move the mass of Ignorance. It has no one religion to propagate, no one creed to endorse: it stands for truth alone, and nothing can make us deviate from this which we consider the path of our Duty and for which we have sacrificed *every thing*. Our motto will stand for ever:

**There is no Religion higher than Truth!**

[The above article was written by H.P. Blavatsky in answer to letters which she had received from some Manchester and Scotch Theosophists, criticising her for advertising “Freethought” literature in the pages of *The Theosophist*.

Soon after, another letter treating of the same subject was received, this time from the Council of the London Lodge, of The Theosophical Society. The article in *The Theosophist* being already in print, and Col. Olcott being away on his lecture tour in Southern India, Blavatsky answered the letter from the London Lodge herself. This letter contains some important points of policy. It has been thought advisable to insert it here, as an illustration of her uncompromising attitude in circumstances where principles were involved.

The letter, text of which follows, is reprinted from *The Theosophist*, August, 1931, where it was published under the title of “H.P.B. and Freethought,” from the original held in the Archives of The Theosophical Society, Adyar. No alterations have been made in Blavatsky’s punctuation which is at times somewhat ambiguous. — *Boris de Zirkoff*. <Minor such alterations were brought about by ED. PHIL.>]

## Religious conversion means absolute perversion.

Continued from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (H.P.B. AND FREETHOUGHT) V pp. 122-25.

EDITOR'S OFFICE OF *The Theosophist*,  
*Private* but NOT Confidential.

(Madras)

Ootacamund, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1883.

To the Secretary of the "London Lodge Theos. Society."

My Dear Sir,

When your letter reached me with the official (?) resolution of the local Council, concerning the inadvisability of advertising T. Paine's<sup>1</sup> and Bradlaugh's<sup>2</sup> Free-thinking literature, the article in the August *Supplement* "A Final Answer" was already in print, in answer to certain letters received from a Manchester and a Scotch Theosophist. Therefore, I must beg of you to impress upon the minds of the esteemed Theosophists of the "London Lodge" that the said answer is not meant as a Reply to your letter. The latter was sent to the President, Col. Olcott, who being on his Southern tour had no time to answer it or give me any instructions to that effect. However he has called a Meeting of the Council to discuss this business. Only I fear that the objection, that such advertisements ought to receive the consent of the majority of the General Council before being published (or words to this effect), is groundless. The majority of our Council is composed of *heathens* of the first water.<sup>3</sup> Most of them are furious to feel unable to send their children either to Missionary or secular schools without having their young minds *poisoned* (their expression *not mine*) by their hereditary enemy, the *padri*, against their respective non-Christian religions. It is they (*i.e.*, the *majority of the Council*) who have repeatedly insisted on having such books distributed. Our Ceylon Buddhist members with 300 priests leading them, have

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<sup>1</sup> [Thomas Paine (born Thomas Pain, 1737– 1809, English-born American political activist, philosopher, political theorist, and revolutionary. He authored *Common Sense* (1776) and *The American Crisis* (1776–1783), the two most influential pamphlets at the start of the American Revolution, and helped inspire the patriots in 1776 to declare independence from Great Britain. His ideas reflected Enlightenment-era ideals of transnational human rights. Historian Saul K. Padover described him as "a corset maker by trade, a journalist by profession, and a propagandist by inclination."]

<sup>2</sup> [Charles Bradlaugh, 1833–1891, English political activist and atheist. He founded the National Secular Society in 1866.]

<sup>3</sup> [Of the finest quality. This idiom refers to a grading system for diamonds for their colour or lustre, when compared to the shininess of water.]

spent a large sum to secure such anti-Christian tracts, as [123] the only antidote against the abuse lavished upon their forefathers' faith. For, whoever lives in this country (as Mr. Sinnett will tell you) becomes very soon impressed with the sad fact that *conversion* in India means absolute *perversion*. Instead of bettering morality Christianity but adds to the natural human vices, owing to the doctrine of atonement and salvation by prayer, instead of that of self-reliance and *Karma*.

I would feel very much obliged to some of the British Theosophists who have protested, were they to send us for publication *anti-buddhistic* tracts. I would publish them immediately and without fear of hurting the feelings of *my* co-religionists. They are too intelligent, on the one hand, to take to heart the autopsy of the *exoteric shell* of their religion; while, on the other, centuries of daily abuse directed against Buddhism have made them indifferent. The same may be said of Hindus. What they (at least our members) want is the free discussion of every religion in its outer as in its inward form. Why then should *ecclesiastical* Christianity be excepted? Though the Reply in the August *Supplement* was not meant for the British Theosophists, yet their "remonstrance" may find a fit answer in it. I, as an Editor, will never permit Christ to be attacked personally, no more than Buddha. But I must insist upon being allowed to remain entirely impartial in the *dissection* as in the praise of all and every religion the world over, without pandering to people's personal emotional prejudices. This will never do in a *Universal Brotherhood*. I am very much surprised that Mr. Sinnett should have *seconded* the resolution, knowing as he does, my feelings on the subject; and that he was the first to approve of my "not minding" Mr. Hume's objections in this direction. Nor is it quite clear to me, whether the "remonstrance" sent by the *Branch Society* is meant for the Editor of the *Theosophist* alone, or for the *Parent Society* in general, since the former humble individual acts under the authority of the Council, or at any rate in sympathy with the feelings often expressed by its majority. [124] Personally, I have no sympathy with Mr. Bradlaugh's views, though he is too much abused and ill-treated not to have won my regards as an individual. I do not know him nor do I desire to make his personal acquaintance; but I cannot help believing on general principles that a person so much insulted, hated, abused and persecuted by "*cultured Mrs. Grundy*"<sup>1</sup> *must be* an excellent man. As for Col. Bob Ingersoll, than whom no more moral, pure man, no more honest citizen, good husband, and good father ever trod this earth — I know him personally and he has my profoundest respect, though he laughs at Theosophy, Spiritualism, and every other belief.

I have written the above not as an answer to the contents of your official letter, but as a reply to what I found therein *between the lines*. No one has a greater respect and admiration than I have for Mrs. Kingsford (chiefly as a reflection of the feelings of our *Mahatmas*, who must know her better than anyone on earth); nevertheless, unless I am directly ordered by my Guru M . . . to drop the advertisement objected to, I cannot go against my principles of fair dealing with every religion, even for the sake

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<sup>1</sup> [A figurative name for an extremely conventional or priggish person, a personification of the tyranny of conventional propriety. A tendency to be overly fearful of what the respectable might think is also referred to as Grundyism. Although she began life as a minor character in Thomas Morton's play *Speed the Plough* (1798), Mrs. Grundy was eventually so well established in the public imagination that Samuel Butler, in his novel *Erewhon*, could refer to her in the form of an anagram (as the goddess Ydgrun). As a figure of speech she can be found throughout European literature.]

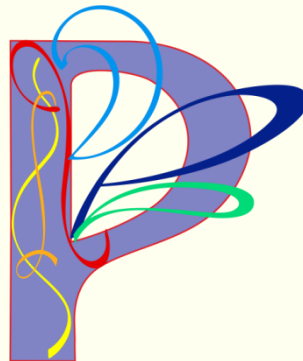
of doing that, which Mrs. Kingsford believes *is due* to the “London Lodge.” For indeed, were I to concede so much to your Society, the next thing I would have to do would be to drop every adverse criticism and discussion upon the Vishishtadwaita. There’s the “South Indian Visishta Theos. Soc.” composed of about 150 members *objecting* to my publishing the criticism upon *their* Catechism by the “Vedanta-Adwaitee” Theos. Society;<sup>1</sup> and the Almora Swami *insisting* upon my ceasing to lay sacrilegious hands upon his *Īśvara*; and the “Brahmo Theos. Society” wanting me to fill the magazine with sermons upon Monotheism, *etc.* About 14 Vishishtadwaites have resigned in consequence of the discussion. Very sorry, but I cannot help it. Thus, as you see, my position is that of an elephant [125] trying to perform his *Grand Trapèze* on a cobweb thread. Nevertheless, I must try to maintain my perilous position and not to lose footing by the blessing and help of *Yog*-power. Meanwhile, believe me, dear Sir,

Yours most fraternally,

H.P. BLAVATSKY,

(Editor of *The Theosophist*)

P.S. The decision of the Council such as it will be, will be sent to you *officially*. H.P.B.



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<sup>1</sup> See art. of that name in June *Theosophist*. [“The Vishishtadwaita Catechism Dissected,” by an Adwaitee F.T.S., pp. 229-31.]