

*Eastern Theosophy is neither
a creed, nor a religious body*



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[Article by Alexander Fullerton annotated by H.P. Blavatsky]

These are days when a far-reaching discontent with barbarous or stupid theologies is impelling many to the search for a better faith, and when souls of fine fibre and high aspiration are finding in Theosophy a copious provision for all their needs. The Theosophical Society is growing, and daily come testimonies that in its teachings has been met a peace absent from all prior experiences. All around it are scattered true men, very lightly held to the faiths in which they were born, and ready to gravitate to it if only sure that they lose none of the essentials of human devotion, while gaining truth and motive unknown elsewhere. At such a time could there be a greater error than to insist on the conception of a class as a doctrine of the system, a greater evil than to repel all other classes who do not hold to that conception and who will reject the system if believing such to be its doctrine?

Now for some time past, warm Theosophists within the Society, as well as warming enquirers without, have been disturbed by the confident intimations of Theosophical writers that Theosophy discountenances a God. The term "God" is here used as expressing a Supreme Being, a term abundantly clear for the purpose in view, and as to which scholastic or metaphysical quibbles may be waived. Sometimes these intimations are given in contemptuous references to believers in a "personal God," sometimes in pantheistic phrases partially veiled, sometimes in bold assertion of "our Pantheism (for real Theosophy is *that*)."

Sometimes belief in God is treated with charitable good-nature as an orthodox inheritance which has not yet been discarded, and sometimes as an amazing and odious abomination, setting aghast all rational and Theosophic thought.¹

¹ [Consult "A Master of Wisdom on God," in our Masters Speak Series. — ED. PHIL.]

Eastern Theosophy is neither a creed, nor a religious body.

Theosophy is not a creed, nor does it enforce one. No man at the entrance door of the Society is asked to be or not to be a Theist, an Atheist, a Pantheist, or any other “ist.” His unqualified right to his religious opinions is not only conceded, it is proclaimed. Hence not a word can be said against any member’s privilege to believe in one God, many, or none. And what is true of the whole Society must be true of any Section of it, for a part cannot be greater in authority, any more than it can in size, than the whole. [414]

Theosophy is pure Pantheism,¹ philosophical and logical, but neither Theism nor Monotheism.

But if the Society disclaims dogma, and if the Pantheist has as much right within it as the Theist, why has not the Theist as much as the Pantheist? Whence does anyone obtain authority to say that “real Theosophy” is what he himself believes, and hence that contrary believers are not “real Theosophists”?² And if such assertion contravenes the very platform of the Society, is not a loyal member of the Society bound to vindicate his rights and that platform? To insist that Theists shall be tolerated is not enough; he is to insist that they are as truly Theosophic as are Pantheists.

It is by no means to be supposed that the Theistic Theosophist adores an anthropomorphic God. His conception of a Supreme Spirit, infinite in Wisdom, Goodness and Power, free of every human infirmity, of Whose ideation cosmic evolution as expounded by Theosophy is the expression, immanent in every atom of the universe, ever present, percipient, sentient, will never shrink to the dimensions of a Jewish Jehovah. But neither will it, on the other hand, be content with the corpse of an Unconscious It,³ or abandon intelligent worship of an [415] intelligent Deity for the mere contemplation of the Īśvara within, the “Male aspect of illusion,” whatever that may mean.⁴ His sense of logic and his sense of humour form abiding restraints.

Our Pantheistic Brethren — for, as has been said, the fraternal embrace of the T.S. excludes no seeker after Truth, however vague or misty his yet attainment of it — may do well to ponder upon the three great facts subjoined.

¹ [The materialists or sectarian bigots dread the word “Pantheism” more than the devil of their unwholesome dreams. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (MISCONCEPTIONS) VIII p. 79]

² No one having real authority has ever said so. Nor is that which one believes in necessarily a truth but to himself. But *real* Theosophy — *i.e.*, the Theosophy that comes to us *from the East* — is assuredly Pantheism and by no means Theism. Theosophy is a word of the widest possible meaning which differs greatly in Eastern and Western literature. Moreover, the Theosophical Society being of Eastern origin, therefore goes beyond the narrow limits of the mediæval Theosophy of the West, Members of the T.S. can, therefore, subscribe to this Western idea of Theosophy. But as the vast majority of these members accept the Eastern ideas, this majority has given us the right of applying the term *Theosophist* only to those members who do not believe in a “personal” God. Therefore, again, it would be better, in order to avoid confusion, that a member believing in such a God should qualify the term “Theosophist” by the adjective “Western.” — [ED.] H.P. Blavatsky

³ In such a case our esteemed Brother would have to invent a new philosophical conception. Neither Eastern nor Western philosophy has yet postulated an intermediary between the *Finite* and the *INFINITE*. Parabrahm means “*beyond* Brahmā,” and no better term can be invented. — [ED.] H.P. Blavatsky

⁴ *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, page 332

① The utter inability of the finite mind to apprehend or to expound the Infinite. Mansel has shown, in his *The Limits of Religious Thought*,¹ that this inability inheres in the very constitution of man's intellect; and of course it cannot be transcended by living in Madras instead of London, and by calling The Absolute "Parabrahman."

② A brilliant Unitarian once remarked that "when men get their heads into the clouds, they are apt to get the clouds into their heads."² Every treatise applying Metaphysics to the Supreme seems to verify this. The confusion of terms, the chaos of thought, the juggling with words, the contradictions, disorders, unthinkables are not only appalling, they are maddening. The treatment of "Consciousness" is one of the best illustrations. Anyone who has followed an Oriental philosopher in his route to the conclusion that "Absolute Consciousness is Unconsciousness" is not more aghast at this goal of thought than at the steps to it, and perhaps wonders whether these steps can have been taken while in a state of "consciousness." Naturally enough, the philosophers agree least in the very region where Unity is most desirable. Mr. Subba Row³ speaks of "the power and wisdom of *Parabrahman*."⁴ But wisdom is impossible in a subject not conscious, and so Parabrahman must be conscious — a state of things regarded by opposing schools as most undignified and belittling.

③ Comparative Theology exhibits, not only the Theosophic dictum of the fundamental unity of religions, but the certainty of severances and sects as a consequence of speculation on the Ultimate. Christianity and [416] Brahmanism, West and East alike, differentiate off into opposing groups as soon as metaphysics are applied thereto. There are excellent reasons why this should be so. Of a region as to which we know nothing, it is as easy to deny as to assert; and that we do know nothing Madame Blavatsky makes clearer than ever in the words,

. . . that of which no human reason, even that of an adept, can conceive.⁵

As Mr. Subba Row states:

As regards this fourth principle [Parabrahman], differences of opinion have sprung up, and from these differences any amount of difficulty has arisen.⁶

Having digested these three great facts, our Pantheistic Brethren will then be in condition to ask themselves these three great questions:

¹ [*The limits of religious thought: examined in eight lectures delivered before the University of Oxford, in the year MDCCCLVIII, on the Bampton Foundation, by Henry Longueville Mansel. Oxford, Printed by J. Wright for J. Murray, London 1858*]

² It has yet to be proved that getting one's head into the clouds and the study of metaphysics is one and the same thing, save from a materialistic point of view. Therefore, we fail to see how the *dictum* of the "brilliant Unitarian" supports our captious Brother. — [ED.] H.P. Blavatsky

³ *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, page 13

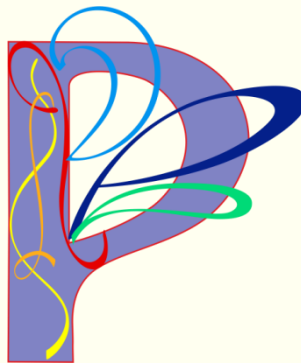
⁴ Mr. Subba Row, an *Advaiti* (please translate the term), delivered his lectures to an Eastern audience, which understood his real meaning without unnecessary disquisitions. Absolute consciousness is absolute UNCONSCIOUSNESS — to human conception, at any rate. — [ED.] H.P. Blavatsky

⁵ *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, page 56

⁶ *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, page 15

- 1 Whether the Theist, in declining to accept as a measure of the Infinite tools which are inadequate, inconclusive, and distracting, is not entitled to some degree of respect?
- 2 Whether the Theist, in demurring to the emergence of a conscious Logos from an unconscious It, does not share the same natural hesitation which the Pantheist feels to a “creation” out of nothing?
- 3 Whether it would not be well, logically no less than theosophically, to concede the Theosophist’s right to his God?¹

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- “Theosophia Inner Wisdom,” in our Major Works Series.
- “A Master of Wisdom on God,” in our Masters Speak Series.

¹ We answer the three questions:

1. Any respectable “theist” is entitled to respect, not because of his *theism* but of his intrinsic worth.
2. The “unconscious IT” is the ALL, including the totality of consciousness. If our esteemed Brother proves to us that anything can emerge and exist outside of absolute TOTALITY, we will be prepared to humbly sit at his feet. But a friend at our elbow suggests that this “anything” will be again simply the *extra-cosmic* and personal god of the theists!
3. *Theosophically*, therefore, all our theistic members have the right claimed since the Society exists; but to concede the *logic* of such a belief is not within our powers. — [ED.] H.P. Blavatsky