

THEOSOPHY

AND
PSEUDO-THEOSOPHY

By
H. N. STOKES, Editor of

—*THE CRITIC*—
(Washington D. C.)



Published by
—THE DIVINE LIFE PRESS—
614 OAKWOOD BOULEVARD, CHICAGO, ILL. U.S.A.

1917

Reprint from DIVINE LIFE:—

THEOSOPHY AND PSEUDO-THEOSOPHY

BY H. N. STOKES, EDITOR OF

—The Critic—

TO THE EDITOR OF DIVINE LIFE:—

I have not been in sympathy in the past with your criticisms of certain leaders of the Theosophical Society, but I am beginning to have my eyes opened and I must express my views to you, as my own organ, the CRITIC, is published with other objects and one could hardly hope for a hearing in one of the Theosophical organs during the present epidemic.

The present rapidly moving degeneration of the T. S. into an organization for promoting ritualism and magic involuntarily reminds me of the story of the devils which entered into a herd of swine, which thereupon ran violently down a steep place into the sea—pardon the comparison, they might have been sheep. As I see it the T. S. is rushing to perdition just as fast as it can race; it is throwing away all of its old traditions and giving itself up to dogmas and practices which are subversive of all it has stood for in the past.

I have had the opportunity of reading certain articles by Bishop Wedgwood, and I have heard him speak, and what I heard from his own lips has more than confirmed my opinions and my fears. His method is a most subtle one. Claiming to be a Theosophist, he gains access to Theosophical lodges, and after he has presented certain well known and generally accepted truths, and so led his hearers to believe that he is a good Theosophist, he proceeds to tack on doctrines which are not only subversive of Theosophy, but of Christianity also, as one reads it in the Bible. The result is that those who are not on their guard are induced by the Theosophical bait to swallow his teachings entire.

I myself heard him describe the process of spiritual rainmaking, by which a properly “ordained” priest, who has been spiritually vaccinated by some other priest—he assured us that this was necessary, but that the private character of the man was a minor consideration—can, by clothing himself in certain vestments adorned with brass fringes and ornaments for “conducting the current” and by repeating certain prescribed formulas, produce a rain of spiritual power which would “affect people for miles around” including those engaged in secular pursuits at the time. I have always heard that God sends his rain on the just and the unjust, but this is the first time I have heard it

seriously claimed by one pretending to be a Theosophist that he does so at the instigation of a man in livery.

In short, entering into one's closet and praying to the Father which is in secret, is an obsolete process; it is to be replaced by ritualism. The commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" are quite old-fogish in the view of this new prophet. He said—I heard him say it— "The wave of devotion is receding, the wave of ceremonial is advancing." And at the same time he asserted that those who were devotional were of a rather weak sort.

It need hardly be pointed out that this method of having an "ordained" person dress up in colors and repeat rituals in order to get the Divine Cow to let down its milk for your benefit, while you go about your ordinary vocations and amusements is glaringly in conflict with the law of Karma, which teaches that "Every man is his own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory and gloom to himself, the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment." I take it that while the term Theosophist is a pretty broad one, one can hardly be a Theosophist who either denies Karma or teaches some mechanical way of getting around it. That is what this whole ritualistic tomfoolery is for; to provide a cheap and easy way of dodging the results of one's own actions, of indulging in spiritual sensualism by bathing in a shower of spiritual power produced by magical processes, the only evidence for the existence of which is the *ipse dixit* of certain Clairvoyants. I say tomfoolery, for here is the process actually described by the Bishop. The influence of the ritual pronounced by the ordained priest is gathered by an attendant on the astral or some other plane and carried up to the reservoir of "power." The power is then sent down through the priest, flows along the brass fringe on his left sleeve and pours out of the brass ornament on the back of his gown! The Divine Love is clearly a sort of electricity which flows along wires. This, according to these Neo-Voodooists, is Theosophy; this is the divinely appointed way by which the Lord blesses those who happen to be somewhere "miles around," instead of the old way of entering into one's closet and seeking Him. The thing is impossible from the standpoint of a believer in Karma, and he who preaches it is simply fooling you if you take him to be a Theosophist.

There can be but one result to the Theosophical movement if this craze is allowed to get hold of it, and that is that it will be Theosophical in name only;

that it will die the spiritual death which all religions have died which have accepted ritualism in the place of the water of life, and that some other organization will have to take up the work which it has dropped.

All of this comes from the influence of C. W. Leadbeater and other clairvoyants who have succeeded in deluding themselves and in persuading others to accept as gospel truth whatever they put forward. It comes from the tendency to take up psychism and to preach it on every possible occasion, and to neglect the teachings and warnings of the Founder of the Society and of books like *Light on the Path*, and I may add, of the New Testament likewise. I have attended Theosophical lectures and meetings for some years and have heard absolutely not one thing worth listening to when it comes to following the teachings of Christ or other Great Masters, of *Light on the Path*, or *Voice on the Silence*. I entered the E.S. and found more of the same thing— psychic development. It has been nothing but a hodgepodge of spiritualism with philosophical speculations which may be interesting enough, but which have not the slightest relation to living the life, to following the teachings of the Masters. I heard Mr. Rogers lecture publicly on “Theosophy in the Bible.” Was there any Theosophy in it? No, nothing but a narration of psychic phenomena such as Saul’s adventure with the Witch of Endor. I heard Mrs. Russak lecture on Theosophy. After the lecture a stranger remarked to me: “Why, theosophy is nothing but spiritualism is it?”

I have quite a little to do with the circulation of Theosophical literature and I know just what sort of stuff Theosophists read and are advising others to read, prominent among which is that Divine Comedy, *Man, Whence, How and Whither*. You simply can’t get them to read anything worth while. They are after three things: knowledge (supposed), of the invisible world; learning how to become invisible helpers, which means doing while you are asleep what you are too lazy or selfish to do while you are awake; and finding some new and easy way of feeling good and happy.

According to recent announcements, Bishop Leadbeater—for he is now a Bishop of the Old Catholic Church as well as a leader of the T. S.—is prepared to furnish the various centers of the Star in the East with a very effective ritual. It appears that even this in most respects admirable organization is to be corrupted, and from present indications, they will all follow this Good Shepherd like a flock of sheep, whithersoever he would lead them.

You have seen in the August *Messenger* the announcement of the establishment of the Order of the Brotherhood of Service, of which Mrs. Besant is the “Brother Server.” The idea is an excellent one, but one reads that members must pledge themselves to carry out the commands of the Brother Server without equivocation, and turn over all their property to the Order, to be disposed of as the Brother Server may direct. To take such a pledge means simply to recognize the Brother Server as an infallible autocrat, in other words,— a pope. One might make such a pledge to a Master, but to any human being in trousers or petticoats, no, unless they have resolved to sacrifice all individuality.

If a few admirers desire to regard Mrs. Besant or her delegate as infallible, it might not matter so much. The trouble is that enthusiastic Theosophists will take up and propagate the scheme and these will be just the ones who have the most need of exercising their own brains and wills. What next will come one can hardly imagine; it would seem that the climax of absurdity must have been reached.

This is what Theosophy stands for today at Adyar—baptism, holy water, the presence of Christ in the eucharist, apostolic succession, the absolution and remission of sin, the mass, the practice of magic, the infallibility of a woman.

It is distinctly slated that no member of the T. S. is urged to join the Old Catholic Church. The phrase means nothing whatever. When a Bishop of the Old Catholic Church is invited to lecture on his Theosophical heresies before Theosophical lodges, when he goes over the country under the patronage of the American Section, and in company with its President, when Mr. Leadbeater, the leader next to Mrs. Besant, is a Bishop in that Church, when Mrs. Besant recommends it, when the *Star in the East*, which is an annex of the T. S. hears Mass every Monday in London, when Mass is performed at Krotona and at the Convention in New York, it is nonsense to say that no influence is being brought to make the T. S. members join it. They are not “urged”; they simply have it rammed down their throats, crammed into their ears, and forced into their eyes. They have to brave the opposition of their friends if they protest against this prostitution of Theosophy.

It is high time that Theosophists, even at the cost of sacrifice of devotion to their leaders, should wake to the fact that the devil, when he cannot make use of the snares of the world and the flesh, cannot tempt with personal

ambition, still has many a tool for turning the disciple from the Path, and I am convinced, this whole movement, backed though it is by Adyar, is one of them. It is one of the most subtle devices of "Satan the Counsellor."