

Theosophy: A Historical Analysis and Refutation

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The term theosophy means divine wisdom. It has been used of various systems of belief throughout history that have stressed occult knowledge. "It was used to refer to a certain strain of occult, mystical speculation associated with the Kabala (Jewish occult writings) and the writings of such occultists as Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Fludd" in the seventeenth century.[1] And it has been used by several Bible commentators to describe the system of belief Paul was refuting in the biblical book of Colossians. Curtis Vaughan comments on Colossians 2:8: "It professed to be a 'philosophy.' But perhaps the word 'theosophy' more aptly describes the Colossian error. Moulton characterizes it as a 'dabbling in the occult'." [2] Moffatt, recognizing that "in the ancient world the word 'philosophy' was applied to anything that had to do with theories about God, the world, and the meaning of life," [3] avoids the use of the word philosophy in his work on Colossians and instead renders a phrase in Colossians 2:8, "philosophy and vain deceit," as "a theosophy which is specious make-believe." [4] So, in a sense, theosophy is a very general word that has been used to describe various systems of esoteric belief.

However, because of the formation of the Theosophical Society in 1875, [5] the term theosophy has come to be associated with a certain type of teaching known as "Theosophy."

The Theosophical Society began within a very turbulent time in church history. Religious liberalism and secular science were attempting to overthrow traditional Christianity through the spread of evolutionary thought. Until 1859 and the publishing of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, evolution was only philosophical. The ancient Greeks and Hindus believed in evolution. "In Hindu cosmogony, the beginning of the major evolutionary cycle for this earth, known as Kalpa, is given as 1960 million years ago. In theosophical terminology, this would identify the arrival of the life wave on this earth." [6] But with the publishing of Darwin's book came a "turning point in Western thought." [7]

Darwin's theory of the biological history of humans was later applied by Herbert Spencer [8] to all areas of life. It became the foundation in which scientists and sociologists built their concepts. [9] The drive that helped to shape the forming of the Theosophical Society was the drive to integrate ancient religion and evolutionary science. [10]

Closely related to this drive of integration was the opposition the founders of the Theosophical Society had toward traditional orthodox Christianity. They had an aversion to the ideas of "human depravity, predestination, vicarious atonement, and a final judgment." [11] They also came from spiritualistic, occult backgrounds, but were disillusioned by the deception, imposture, and revolting social theories they found within those movements. [12]

The first regular meeting of the Society was on November 17, 1875.[13] The first president, Henry Olcott, delivered the inaugural address where he defined the purpose of the new group. He spoke of freeing the public mind of theological superstition and a tame subservience to the arrogance of science, of distinguishing Theosophy from spiritualism filled with imposture, tricky mediums, and lying spirits, of its ultimate concern of providing the primeval source of all religions, and of the pagan origins of many of the most sacred Christian idols and dogmas.[14] The group was principally one of investigation.[15]

Henry Olcott's life before becoming the first president of the Theosophical Society was one of worldly achievement and gradual involvement with occultism, spiritualism, mesmerism, and masonry.[16] He described himself as a "man of clubs, drinking parties, mistresses, a man absorbed in all sorts of worldly public and private undertakings." [17]

The first meeting recorded 16 total members to the new Society. And one of these members was to become the prime force behind the development of the Theosophical doctrine. This person along with Henry Olcott formed the initial impetus and backbone for the new movement. Her name was Helena Blavatsky. She has been characterized as a genius,[18] a wonder worker,[19] and as "the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting impostor in history." [20]

Helena was born in Russia, in 1831, and married Nikifor Blavatsky three weeks after her seventeenth birthday. After only a brief time she abandoned her husband and later was to express her negative view of marriage: "I wouldn't be a slave to God Himself, let alone man." [21] During the next 25 years, previous to the start of the Society, she traveled widely and was involved in spiritualism, psychic phenomena, and the occult.[22] She was reported to have had sexual affairs with several men and to have given birth to illegitimate children.[23] She smoked heavily, often cursed loudly, and was prone to violent outbursts; [24] not the characteristics one would expect of a great religious leader. Nevertheless, she formulated in her writings the most powerful and influential expression of occult thought in the last century.[25] Her writings are still looked upon by some as "the theosophical teachings" to be followed today.[26] As Joy Mills has said: "Wherever serious students of the mysteries of life gather to discuss ideas and concepts that give meaning and significance to existence, the work of Helena Petrova Blavatsky is inevitably quoted." [27]

Before we look at some of her teachings, it behooves us to understand a basic premise that underlies all of Blavatsky's writings and is central to true theosophical belief. This premise is the supposed belief in the Masters of Wisdom. These are also called Adepts, Trans-Himalayan Brotherhood, Hierophants, Mahatmas, and Brotherhood of Spiritual Teachers depending on the context and the author. These beings are characterized as "men who were perfected in former periods of evolution through special training and education and thus serve as models of human development." [28] And they have developed many unseen, hidden powers and attained spiritual knowledge which ordinary

humanity will eventually acquire after passing through a series of reincarnations during the present process of evolution.[29] These beings are overseers and guides to human evolution, in Theosophical thought. Belief in these beings is so central to theosophy that Annie Besant, the eventual second president of the Society, once remarked "that Theosophy stands or falls on the existence of the Masters."[30]

These Adepts are said to communicate to certain people the wisdom of the ages. These people to whom they communicate are called Tulkus. This is a technical Tibetan term describing the condition when a living Master sends a part of his consciousness to take embodiment in a chela, a disciple, whom the Master sends into the world to perform a duty or to teach.[31] "The chela then acts as a transmitter of the spiritual powers of the Master."[32] Blavatsky was a Tulku.[33]

Tulkus maintain their consciousness, unlike mediums, and have complete awareness of what is taking place--the occultist maintains his self-consciousness when lending himself to the temporary usage of a higher consciousness. This is done with mutual consent of both the Master and the chela.[34]

Blavatsky claimed such influence in her writings.[35] And most Theosophists believe that the real founders of the Theosophical Society are the Masters.[36] "Many marvelous phenomena associated with the Masters have been cited as evidence for the importance of the Society."[37] And later in her life Blavatsky herself stated that a "display of wonders was necessary to attract attention," and that "if she had simply been a teacher of philosophy, no one would have paid attention to her."[38]

Her claims of supernatural influence, however, have not gone without challenge. William Coleman records 2000 plagiarized passages taken from 100 books, nearly all of contemporaneous 19th century occult works, for Blavatsky's first book called *Isis Unveiled*. [39] He also claimed plagiarism and false claims for her second and outstanding work entitled, *The Secret Doctrine*. [40]

Fraudulent claims to supernatural phenomena have also been documented. In 1884-85 the Society of Psychical Research examined claimed phenomena associated with Blavatsky. Things such as visits from the Masters, astral bell-sounds, receipt of letters from the Masters, phenomenal appearance of flowers, and other similar types of phenomena.[41] After extensive investigation which included three months in India, Blavatsky's homebase at the time, the Society of Psychical Research released the following statement concerning charges made against Blavatsky: "For our part, we regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventurer; we think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history." [42] Evidence to support this convicting statement concerning Blavatsky can be found in her tendency to fraudulent practices in her early spiritualist days, as this account records: "In one scene dissatisfied customers pulled down the red cloth lining the closet of a bedroom. They found pieces of string hanging down from a long glove stuffed with cotton, a dummy arm used to represent the materialized appendage of a spirit." [43]

It seems obvious to this writer that Blavatsky understood the convincing value of supernatural phenomena to some people. As the writer recorded earlier she saw "a display of wonders [as] necessary to attract attention," for as "a teacher of philosophy, no one would have paid attention to her." [44] Although she publicly claimed the genuineness of the phenomena, logic based on evidence must conclude that the phenomena was fraudulent. But demonic ideas in her writings are also clear. However she obtained the ideas, whether it was from other occult writings or from direct input as an Adept's chela, the teachings are of Satanic character. They follow the basic starting point Satan himself expounded at the beginning of occult ideas as recorded in Genesis 3:5, "you shall be as God knowing (esoteric occultism) good and evil." It is the "gospel of self" as Mauro characterizes evolutionary thought in general. [45]

With this introductory history behind us, let us move on to look at a few of the major teachings of Blavatsky's theosophy. The writer chooses to record her teachings of evolution, divinity within man, primeval source of all religions, karma and reincarnation, and the Christ principle.

Blavatsky has an emanationist cosmogony. In secular science, Blavatsky's view has close relation with the expanding-contracting universe theory. Her theory sets forth involution, devolution, and evolution as the cosmic pattern of the life cycle. [46] There was first an involution which is the descent of the divine spark into matter. Then there was devolution as man devolved from higher and more spiritual natures into a nature that is as much physical as spiritual. And finally, man is presently climbing slowly back upward to his original source in evolution. [47]

In her book, *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky tells the story of man as consisting of seven "root races." Mankind is said to be destined to live through seven different root-race stages that when completed evolution for man will be completed. We were in Blavatsky's day in the fifth root-race with the sixth just beginning. [48] The process of evolution allows the divine spark within mankind to be more and more apparent, "so that the inner splendor of the Self (divinity) can be seen luminously through [out]." [49]

When a person passes through these human stages he/she becomes a being known as creator, a planetary god. "Those who are now human will in the future be Lords of planets." [50]

Her system is very platonic in that she also understands matter to be evil and spirit to be good. For she says that man brought evil into existence when he became physically conscious. Man contaminated the God within himself when he linked pure spirit with impure matter. The result of this union of the spiritual and physical was pride, lust, rebellion and hatred. [51]

Closely linked with the evolutionary views of Blavatsky are her thoughts on the divinity within humankind. So closely linked are these two concepts that one cannot discuss theosophic evolution without touching on the reason for the whole process--humankind's

inner divinity. A human is in essence a fragment of divine consciousness, pure spirit. The technical term used for this is Monad.[52] The Monad had its root in the Universal Spirit from which it first involved to start the evolutionary process. The goal of this process is the "unfolding [of humankind's] god-like powers." [53] Humans contain in themselves every element that is found in the universe. "There is nothing in the Macrocosm that is not in the Microcosm. From this point of view the dimensions of humankind's spiritual nature are limitless and beyond our possible imagining." [54] This is the reason that theosophists instruct others to look within to discover God, for he is near all for he is within all. [55] This inner divinity is referred to by various names: the Uncreate, the inner God, the higher Self, and the Master; union with this divine self brings wisdom. [56]

Intricately tied up to the original purpose for the Theosophical Society's formation was the belief in the primeval source of all religions. Blavatsky wrote in her first book, *Isis Unveiled*, that "we desire to prove, that underlying every ancient popular religion was the same ancient wisdom--doctrine, one and identical, professed and practiced by the initiates (esoteric occultists) of every country, who alone were aware of its existence and importance." [57]

Two key points are connected with this Blavatsky teaching. The first is that the people of ancient civilizations had knowledge and achievements far above the attainments of modern man. Chief among these was the unity of science and religion. Which, if the reader will recall, was one of the purposes behind the Society's beginning, to unite science and religion. Secondly, this knowledge of the ancients has been preserved by the Masters of Wisdom, a secret Brotherhood of Adepts. These Adepts "hold the key to understanding miracles, psychic phenomena, and life after death, and themselves possess remarkable occult powers." [58]

The objective of religion is to quicken human evolution. [59] And the old, pure religion of the ancients can more effectively encourage evolution than can the modern degenerated religions of the world. Although the new contain traces of the old, it is diluted. But as Annie Besant declares, traces of lofty ideas can be found in the religious ideas of even the most savage of men and is proof that their religion once contained within it the divine wisdom, or in other words, Theosophy. [60]

Another important topic of concern for the Christian is karma and reincarnation, because as we will see later these teachings impact a theosophist's idea of forgiveness. Karma is the "unseen and unknown law which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitable each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer." [61] Karma is a curse that has been visited upon mankind because of its abuse of the creative powers of divinity and its wasting the life essence for selfish gratification. [62] It is the effects of an individual's sin visited upon him or herself.

Blavatsky taught that there are three kinds of karma: presently operating, latent, and karma in the making. Presently operating karma are the effects of sin from past lives or possibly earlier years of one's present life, visited on a person in the form of suffering and

misfortune. Latent karma is karma that has not yet begun to produce effects because presently operating karma is already at work, but is "waiting in the wings" for its chance to produce its effects. Karma in the making is karma that is being produced by a person's thoughts and deeds at the present time, put in store until it too will become operative in the future.[63]

Karma, in a sense, is theosophic justice. It is the adjustment of the disturbance of nature's harmony. By this law of justice all is made right; the disturber is fated to adjust the wrong that has produced disharmony in the universe. This means that there is no such thing as chance or coincidence for "all is as it must be." [64] It must be pointed out, however, that not all unhappiness, unlike misfortune, is due to bad karma, for it may be discipline used by the Ego for the elimination of defects or for the building up of spiritual strength.[65]

Reincarnation is directly related to karma. For an individual's karma must be expended that the universe can attain harmony again. In order for this expending of karma to take place many lives are needed. As old karma is operating and new karma is less and less produced, eventually a person will attain the privilege of not needing to be reincarnated. That person will then exist in a perfect state of experience. This state is called resurrection in esoteric terms; "liberation from the cycle of rebirth." [66] It is a selfless state.

The fifth doctrine we are going to look at is Blavatsky's Christ-principle. The term Christ means the personal divinity indwelling each individual human.[67] In Christian beliefs, according to Alfred Taylor, the Christ principle became identified with a particular individual because of the human tendency toward a materialistic view of nature.[68] In other words, man has perverted spiritual truth because of his sense contact with the outside world. Again we see Theosophy' dualistic view of matter--spirit is good and matter is evil.

How might a Theosophist interpret the Bible? If all religions hold within them a remnant of the divine wisdom, then how does Theosophy explain Christianity? On the surface, Christianity seems diametrically opposed to Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, but according to Theosophy this difference is culturally accounted for and in actuality they are the same at their very cores. The writer now wishes to investigate how a Theosophist deals with the Christian Scriptures. The Theosophist who will be gleaned for this purpose is Annie Besant, the second president of the Theosophical Society.

As a child Annie Wood was deeply religious and eventually married an Anglican clergyman. Mrs. Besant found her life as a clergyman's wife too constricting and began to doubt the divinity of Jesus Christ. Frustrated with her life and faith she eventually moved from doubt to outright atheism. She left the Church of England and her husband. She then sought forms of self-expression and accomplishment by becoming a prolific writer and orator concerning various social causes. One source called her "the leading woman orator of her era." [69]

Upon reading Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine she discovered the "truth" she was seeking. Besant was converted to Theosophy in 1889. She requested and became Blavatsky's personal pupil. Through her influence in the Society, the Society gained worldwide attention and membership expanded greatly.[70]

Blavatsky died in 1891. Her absence created a charismatic vacuum that stunted Society expansion and interest to the public. Henry Olcott was an able organizational leader but Blavatsky's absence hurt the movement. Into this vacuum stepped Annie Besant. Her popularity and charismatic power grew, and after the death of Olcott in 1907 she was elected president of the Society.[71]

Her interest in social issues carried over into the promotion of the same Indian independence movement Gandhi fought for.[72] But her greatest notoriety came through her proclamation of a coming of a New World Teacher. In 1927, she released a statement to the press that read as follows: "The Divine Spirit has descended once more on a man, Krishnamurti, who in his life is literally perfect, as those who know him can testify... The World Teacher is here." [73]

Besant taught that Krishnamurti was the vehicle of the Christ, much the same way Jesus was the vehicle of the Christ in his day.[74] However, in 1929, Krishnamurti dissolved the group that was promoting his Christship, called Order of the Star, opposing the idea of the need for others to look to someone else for truth. He began to teach that "truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect." [75] He was interested in "setting people free" and "establishing [their] uniqueness." [76] Needless to say, this caused Annie Besant and the Society much embarrassment. Four years later Mrs. Besant died (1933).[77]

We will look at Annie Besant's Theosophic interpretation of Christianity. The first edition of her book, *Esoteric Christianity or the Lesser Mysteries*, was printed in 1901. The book was reprinted for the ninth time in 1975. The writer has chosen to record Besant's teachings on the esoteric element within Christianity, the meaning of the Christ, the relationship between karma and forgiveness, the meaning of faith, and her "magnetic" interpretation of John 5:4.

"Religion must be graduated as evolution." [78] The object of religion is to promote evolution. Since all men are not on the same level on the evolutionary gradient, religious teachings should also vary according to a man's particular position on this gradient. According to Besant, a healthy religion must contain a secret element attainable only by the spiritual elite. Without it, the weak and the strong both suffer spiritual damage.[79]

All religions have the same common origin, that of the Divine Wisdom. It has been called the Wisdom, the Gnosis or the Theosophia, but to those who teach the unity of all religions prefer Theosophy. The way of Divine Wisdom is esoteric religion. "It is not, as some think, a diluted version of Hinduism, or Buddhism, or Taoism, or any special religion, [but] it is Esoteric Christianity as truly as it is Esoteric Buddhism, and belongs to all religions, exclusively to none." [80] There is therefore an occult, or secret, teaching

in connection with Christianity. To prove that Christianity is not different from any other religion in the sense of this secret element, Besant records a number of biblical terms used by Jesus to label entry into the secret circle of the secrets: The Mysteries, The Kingdom, The Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven, The Narrow Path, The Strait Gate, The Perfect, The Saved, Life Eternal, Life, Second Birth, A Little One, and a Little Child (who has just taken his second birth).[81]

These "mysteries" were designed to further evolution and culminated when "the Initiate (a member of the secret circle) became a God, whether by union with a divine Being outside himself, or by the realization of the divine self within him." [82] This is called ecstasy--where the soul is freed unto union with the Great One.[83]

To prove that this secret element passed from Jesus to the Apostles, she cites Second Timothy 2:2.[84] The verse reads: "And the things that you have heard from me (teacher to pupil) among many witnesses, commit these (in a secret manner) to faithful men who will be able to teach (also in a secret teacher to pupil manner) others also." Besant calls this occult knowledge the Greater Mysteries. Written teaching is the Lesser Mysteries meant to partially unveil deep truths that must first be mastered before entry into the Greater Mysteries is possible. And Greater Mysteries can only be passed on from mouth to ear as a pupil becomes qualified.[85]

To further prove her point, Besant cites the existence of the Gnostic Christian Mystery Religions of the second and third centuries as evidence for Esoteric Christianity.[86] She also calls Origen "the sanest of men [and] versed in occult knowledge"[87] and cites him as one Early Church Father sympathetic to the need for esoteric knowledge. Origen's method of biblical interpretation gives her the freedom to claim this secret element in Scripture. He taught that Scripture had three levels of interpretation: a body, a soul, and a spirit.[88] Literal, historical meaning corresponded to the body of Scripture. Moral meaning corresponded to the soul of Scripture. And the deep spiritual meaning meant for only advanced Christians, corresponds to the spirit of Scripture.[89] Besant saw Origen as one who understood the importance of occult knowledge. And as it turns out Origen was versed in Neoplatonic philosophy. His attempt to wed this philosophy with Christianity has, according to Cairns, plagued the Church ever since.[90] Besant however understood it differently, to her Origen was "the sanest of men."

The effect of the early Mysteries of the Church continued in Christendom in the form of mystic learning and mystic contemplation--mystic learning through spiritualized knowledge of Scripture and mystic contemplation leading to ecstasy or spiritual vision.[91] Besant calls for a return to the occult Christianity of the early church as the only way to save Christianity's importance.[92]

To Christians Christianity is Christ. What does Besant say about Christ? The Christ is more than the man Jesus. Besant has three views of "Christ." The historical Christ, the mythic Christ, and the mystic Christ.[93] The historical Christ is Jesus the Healer and Teacher.[94] Jesus was a disciple who allowed his body to be used as the vehicle of "a glorious Being belonging to the great spiritual hierarchy that guides the spiritual

evolution of humanity."[95] This Being is the One who has guardian care over the spiritual evolution of the fifth race of humanity.[96] Jesus, then, was a performer of occult works. Who was put to death for teaching the inherent divinity of himself and of all humans. His mission was to give "a new impulse of spiritual life to the world;" to again teach the ancient wisdom."[97]

"Round this glorious Figure (Being) gathered the myths which united Him to the long array of His predecessors, the myths telling in allegory the story of all such lives, as they symbolize the work of the Logos in the kosmos and the higher evolution of the individual human soul."[98] Sounds like a Liberal or Neo-Orthodox view of the life of Jesus, doesn't it? Myth teaches certain higher spiritual truths but the events behind them never really happened. The legends and myths have mingled with the true history of Jesus and symbolize the Universal Christ who is in a special relationship with humanity continuing from one generation to the next, as one race (seven root races) gives way to the next.[99]

The mystic Christ is Jesus the Hierophant, Divine Master.[100] Jesus was a man who knew the Divine Wisdom and his own inherent divinity. He was one of the Sons of the Wisdom,[101] a Great Teacher of mankind.

The Theosophic doctrine of karma results in Besant's distorted view of forgiveness. Suffering is called the "karmic result of the wrong." [102] We don't need to relearn what karma is and how it works because what Besant says about it is essentially the same as what Blavatsky taught. But in attempting to deal with the Christian Scriptures, Besant must explain the concept of forgiveness--a central theme in Jesus Christ's life, death, and mission.

"If at such a moment the sinner, having exhausted the karma of his sin, comes into contact with a Sage who can see the past and the present, the invisible and the visible, such a Sage may discern the ending of the particular karma, and the sentence being completed, may declare the captive free. . . All such forgiveness of sins may be termed declaratory; the karma is exhausted, and a 'knower of karma' declares the fact." [103] This knowledge is what brings the peace of mind [104] many report at being 'forgiven.'

The real agent in the ending of karma is the sinner. That is what faith is all about. "Faith is the upwelling in man of his own divine essence, and when this breaks through the lower nature that holds it in--as the water-spring breaks through the encumbering earth-clods--the power thus liberated works on the whole nature, bringing it into harmony within itself." [105] Restored harmony is the concept behind karma; faith brings harmony within an individual.

Lastly, we are going to look at Besant's rather novel interpretation of a passage that has even given some Christian commentators trouble--John 5:4. "For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had." Besant's interpretation of this passage will reveal Theosophic thinking. For it is the grid through which she looks to interpret Scripture.

People, objects, and places can be endowed with spiritual energy. Spiritual energy that can influence a devotee unto higher spiritual experience. Through a pure, spiritually mighty person, or sometimes even Spiritual Beings, spiritual energies can be poured forth on any object or place. Such an object or place becomes magnetized, and if tuned into results in great spiritual benefit for the devotee. Places that are magnetized attune the atmosphere to peace-giving vibrations that if allowed to work within the devotee will result in harmony among people. However, the presence of scoffers or antagonistic vibrations will weaken the power available in those places. Also, demagnetization can occur when a sacred place is no longer visited by devotees.[106] The man in John 5:4 was in such a sacred place. And he was healed.

The writer now takes up the task of refutation. Creation and growth will be contrasted to evolution, the very heart of Theosophy, the true natures of faith and forgiveness will be contrasted to karma, the true nature of the person of Jesus Christ will be contrasted to the Christ Principle, and the true nature of divine religion will be contrasted to Theosophy's historical counterfeit.

Genesis chapters 1-3 records the roots to the two great philosophical systems most affecting Christian thought. Chapters one and two record Creationism. Chapter three records the beginning of Evolutionism. These two systems have two distinct methods of working and proceed from different spiritual sources.[107]

The philosophy of evolution, or evolvment, promises progress or self-improvement through pursuit and acquisition of knowledge.[108] Secular evolution does not see any need to rely on any supernatural being but stresses man's own powers to shape his destiny.[109] Theosophy on the other hand does stress the spiritual need of humans for outside spiritual influence from those of higher power. Religion to the Theosophist is a vital ingredient to man's evolution. The knowledge necessary for the devotee to gain is called Divine Wisdom. Gain this knowledge and one becomes a god,[110] or as Genesis 3:5 records the Adversary's appeal, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The truly curious thing about evolution is that it only appears in the affairs of humans.[111] Each of God's other creatures has fulfilled His command to bring forth "after its kind." Physical evolution is nowhere to be found. Gaps appear in the fossil records and if evidence outside geology is allowed to speak the evidence points away from macro evolution.[112]

Humans were created in God's image. This means that they are personal, rational, volitional, emotional, and moral. Capable of fulfilling God's high calling of ruling the earth according to God's will and of entering into fellowship with Him and other persons. This is the way we were created by God. God's vision was for each person to mature by growth[113] into a fuller representation of what he or she already was in creation. They are to grow in loving relationships, their conception of God's truth, their actions in accordance with truth, their ability to appreciate and feel thankfulness, gratitude, and praise for their Maker, and their ability to value that which is good and right in God's

world. This was God's method.

The fact of creation is biblical. It is God's method. Salvation for the Christian is also said to be a creative act of God. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). And in accordance with the doctrine of creation, the Christian grows in the completeness he already has in Christ (Col. 2:10). This newness (Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10), however, must work itself out into our behavior. Thus, all believers can speak with Paul when he says that he has "not yet attained" the goal of absolute Christlikeness in his life. This absoluteness is yet future, to which the believer awaits another creative act of God, the redemption of the body. This is when we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is

(I John 3:2-3).

The Adversary's system is different. He promises humans godhood if they will only follow his method. The road of development, progress, and improvement.[114] But it is deception. The Adversary attempts to pervert human nature (I John 2:15-17) and promises him godhood through knowledge (Genesis 3:5). The lie that cannot be seen by unregenerate people is that advancement in human affairs is really as a result of humankind's God-given ability to acquire and pass on knowledge,[115] not due to the advancement of self.

Contrary to Theosophic teaching about karma and its relation to forgiveness and faith, the Bible reveals God's definitions of these two important concepts. The term forgiveness was used for the cancellation of a debt. Luke 7:41-43 finds Jesus teaching a spiritual lesson to Simon, a Pharisee. "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, 'I supposed the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.'" Notice what forgiveness is here. It is not as Besant said, merely a declaratory act of a Sage who knows that someone's karma has been exhausted, but the complete "wiping out"[116] of the debt that could not be paid. Forgiveness to the Christian is this: "[God] having forgiven them all trespasses, having wiped out (not merely declared) the handwriting of requirements that was against [them], which was contrary to [them]. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col. 2:13b-14).

Faith is believing God, not believing in oneself. It is trust in, reliance upon Christ (Col. 2:6-7).[117] Romans 4:8-25 records the Bible's view of faith. We will take note especially of verses 20 and 21. Faith is believing the promise of God so thoroughly that one lives in such a way as if the promise was already fulfilled. It is complete trust or reliance upon the object of one's faith, to bring to pass what has been promised. It is a valuing of the end of the promise as the Old Testament saints valued the "better country" and "better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:16 and 35). It is not the self-knowledge that brings individual harmony as Annie Besant stated.

Who is the real Jesus Christ? Is He two distinct personages as Theosophy declares? Or, is He two distinct natures united in One person, Jesus Christ, as traditional Christianity believes? Theosophy sees Jesus Christ in a docetic way. The Christ Spirit used the body of a holy man named Jesus to heal, work occult wonders, and teach the inherent divinity of all men, within the overall plan of evolution. Christianity sees Jesus Christ as the God-man--The Son of God and the Son of Man. It is called the hypostatic union of Deity and humanness.

A look at several passages should convince one that the Bible does not teach a docetic view of Jesus Christ. The passages we will look at will prove the single identity of the God-man, who has both divine and human characteristics. We will look at John 1:1-3, 14; Revelation 1:17-18; Acts 20:28; and John 5:18-23.

John 1:1-3, 14 describe a situation, or should I say an event, in which the Word who was God in essence becomes human. The Word-God took on humanness and lived as a man. This man was the one John the Baptist bore witness to, Jesus (John 1:29). John sees Jesus (John 1:29), the man according to Theosophy, and identifies Him as the Son of God, which makes Him equal with God (John 10:33). More is seen here than Jesus being divine within as all men are. He is the Only-Begotten One (John 1:14)! Unique! The Man who is equal with God (Zechariah 13:7 with Isaiah 40:25).

Revelation 1:17-18 speaks of the First and the Last One's dying and rising. Isaiah 41:4 identifies the First and the Last One as Jehovah God. The difference in identity of the two personages identified as Jesus and the Christ Spirit is nowhere to be seen in this Revelation passage. It is interesting that Jehovah is said to have died and rose again. And we know that it was Jesus Christ who died and arose the third day (I Cor. 15:1-3), "not just Jesus." And Acts 20:28 does not say that Jesus shed his blood, it says that God shed his blood.

John 5:18-23 records Jesus saying that God (the Father) honors the Son even as He honors himself. "All should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (v. 23). And verse 18-19a identifies this One who is equated with God as "Jesus [who] answered and [spoke] to them." The awesomeness of this passage is seen as it is related to Isaiah 42:8 and Isaiah 48:11. Both Isaiah passages find Jehovah God stating emphatically that He will not share His glory with another. But John 5:23 records the glory of God being given to Jesus, the Son of God. What does this say about Jesus? It says that Jesus is the Christ, the Glorious One, not Jesus inhabited by the Christ, as Theosophists contend.

One of the foundational precepts of Theosophy is the teaching that all religions have their source in a common Divine Wisdom. It cannot be refuted that much of what the Theosophists claim to be religious teaching from antiquity is in fact from ancient civilizations. Although some of the evidence claimed by them as evidence for their historical roots is fraudulent,[118] we need not be threatened by their antiquitous religious claims. We should expect it.

When Abraham entered the Valley of Shaveh (Gen. 14:14-24) he met two significant persons. One was Melchizedek, king of Salem. The second was Bera, king of Sodom. The first one Abraham met with reverence as priest of the God Most High. The second one he shunned as evilly in opposition to the Lord, Possessor of heaven and earth. Notice, both were present in the land before Abraham arrived. If Abraham represents God's special revelation in promise and covenant, then it could be said that both true and false religion existed prior to the "age of Abrahamic-Messianic progressive revelation." We know little of what each believed about God, man, and the world. But we do know that Abraham received one and rejected the other. He saw one as consistent with the truth he already knew and the other as opposed to that same truth.

Don Richardson labels these two systems as the "Melchizedek factor" and the "Sodom factor." [119] The "Melchizedek factor" represents the monotheistic presupposition underlying most of the world's folk religions [120] that is receivable by "Abrahamites." The "Sodom factor" represents the distorted spiritual counterfeits in the world. [121] Which are "[perverted] attempts to remold the original true religion after [humankind's] (and the Adversary's) misguided preference." [122] When Theosophy claims, therefore, that the "Divine Wisdom" can be traced back thousands of years, I respond: "So what! So can mine."

As we have seen, Theosophy is quite extensive in its beliefs. It is a complex system of teaching. The Society's influence has been great. "In the west, [it has been] a major force for the introduction of Asian religious ideas and probably the most important nontraditional or occult group in the last century." [123] It can be tied in straight-line precision to several key figures involved in the New Age movement today. Theosophic thought is a major force in the world today and needs to be reckoned with by the Christian. This writer thinks it is one of the Adversary's developing masterpieces of deception. A masterpiece he has been attempting to paint since Genesis 3:5.

Endnotes

[1] Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 28.

[2] Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 11.

[3] Vaughan 70.

[4] Vaughan 70.

[5] Vaughan 70.

[6] Virginia Hanson, ed., *H.P. Blavatsky and the Secret Doctrine* (Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1971) 102.

[7] Paul A. Zimmerman, *Darwin, Evolution, and Creation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972) 169.

[8] Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1986) 150.

[9] Zimmerman 150.

[10] Campbell 16.

[11] Campbell 19.

[12] Campbell 29.

[13] Campbell 29.

[14] Campbell 29.

[15] Campbell 29.

[16] Campbell 7.

[17] Campbell 8.

[18] Hanson 80.

[19] Campbell 29.

[20] Campbell 93.

[21] Campbell 4.

[22] Campbell 4.

[23] Campbell 4.

[24] Campbell 5.

[25] Campbell 48.

[26] Campbell 118.

[27] Hanson xii.

[28] Campbell 54.

[29] Campbell 54.

[30] Campbell 199.

[31]Hanson 2.

[32] Hanson 3.

[33]Hanson 3.

[34] Hanson 3.

[35]Campbell 32.

[36] Campbell 53.

[37]Campbell 53.

[38] Campbell 95.

[39]Campbell 33.

[40] Campbell 41.

[41]Campbell 87.

[42] Campbell 93.

[43]Campbell 6.

[44] Campbell 95.

[45]Philip Mauro, *The World and Its God* (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1981)17.

[46] Campbell 37.

[47]Campbell 37.

[48] Campbell 48.

[49]Campbell 43.

[50] Campbell 43.

[51]Campbell 46.

[52] Hanson 38.

[53]Hanson 39.

[54] Hanson 38-39.

[55]Hanson 44.

[56] Campbell 49.

[57]Campbell 36.

[58] Campbell 38.

[59]Annie Besant, *Esoteric Christianity or the Lesser Mysteries* (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1975) 2.

[60] Besant 7.

[61]Campbell 69.

[62] Campbell 46.

[63]Campbell 69-70.

[64] Hanson 29-30.

[65]Campbell 70.

[66] Besant 43.

[67]Campbell 3.

[68] Hanson 186-87.

[69]Campbell 101-02.

[70] Campbell 101-02.

[71]Campbell 117-18.

[72] Campbell 113.

[73]Campbell 129.

[74] Campbell 120.

[75]Campbell 129.

[76] Campbell 130.

[77] Campbell 130.

[78] Besant 3.

[79] Besant 2.

[80] Besant ix.

[81] Besant 33.

[82] Besant 17-18.

[83] Besant 18.

[84] Besant 48.

[85] Besant viii and 28.

[86] Besant 14-17.

[87] Besant 257.

[88] Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 120.

[89] Cairns 120.

[90] Cairns 120.

[91] Besant 75.

[92] Besant 28.

[93] Besant 88.

[94] Besant 89.

[95] Besant 98.

[96] Besant 99.

[97] Besant 98.

[98] Besant 98.

- [99]Besant 117.
- [100] Besant 83.
- [101]Besant 8.
- [102] Besant 213.
- [103]Besant 214-15.
- [104] Besant 215.
- [105]Besant 215.
- [106] Besant 262-65.
- [107]Mauro 61.
- [108] Mauro 11.
- [109]Henry M. Morris, *Scientific Creationism* (El Cajon: Master Books, 1987) 196.
- [110] Besant 17.
- [111]Mauro 62.
- [112] Morris 131-70.
- [113]Mauro 69-70.
- [114] John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986) 441.
- [115]Morris 186.
- [116] Vaughan 78.
- [117]Vaughan 67.
- [118] Campbell 40-41.
- [119]Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1984) 32-33.
- [120] Richardson 51.
- [121]Richardson 52.

[122] Richardson 134.

[123]Campbell 1.

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