

Introductory Study Paper 2: THEOSOPHY



"Theosophy is no new candidate for the world's attention, but only the restatement of principles which have been recognized from the very infancy of mankind."

The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett - Alfred Percy Sinnett (shown in picture).

The few words on Theosophy given at the end of Paper No.1, if studied closely, will be found to express its essential character. Derived from the two Greek words, theos (a god, the Deity) and sophia (wisdom), THEOSOPHY may be defined as "knowledge of divine things" or "Divine Wisdom such as that possessed by the gods."

The Theosophical Glossary adds the explanation that it is "the substratum and basis of all the world-religions and philosophies, taught and practised by a few elect ever since man became a thinking being."

In recent times many students have attempted to define THEOSOPHY in words intended to convey the vastness of the knowledge embraced by the word: for example, "the majestic Wisdom-Religion of the archaic ages", "Divine Knowledge or Science", "a scientific religion and a religious science", "religion of the highest order, but not expressed exclusively in the terms of anyone religion."

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Among the variety of terms by which the ancient and universal system is designated, we recognize Esoteric Philosophy, Secret Doctrine, Occult Science, the Wisdom-Religion, Gupta Vidya.

Each term gives prominence to one or other aspect of the theosophical system. These significant adjectives are found repeated throughout the literature: secret, esoteric, archaic, occult, universal.

Theosophy exists and has always existed. It did not have to be invented but discovered. The truths of life are inherent in Nature - they are Nature. The scheme presented under this name is vast and immeasurably complex.

By persevering study of the literature one may come to discern its basic principles, few indeed in number, yet constituting the foundation of the whole system.

- 1) All Existence is **ONE THING**. It is not an addition sum of separate parts but is a Whole, the ALL, the source of all manifested things.
- 2) The operation of the processes by which the ONE manifests as the Many is governed by Law, universal, unaltering and unalterable.
- 3) Man, under whatever aspect he is viewed, is inseparable from the Whole - an epitome of the universe.

ESOTERIC SCIENCE

A fine modern re-statement of the nature and scope of Theosophy is given in the opening paragraph of *Deity, Cosmos and Man*, by Geoffrey Farthing. His book is particularly valuable in that it introduces students to the encyclopaedic volumes with which Madame Blavatsky ushered in a new age of enlightenment.

Esoteric Science may be defined as the body of religious, philosophical and scientific teachings that form the core of a universal and timeless Wisdom tradition: religious, for it is concerned with the ultimate source of being and man's relation to it; philosophical, for it embraces the great questions of the origin and nature of man and the universe ...; scientific, for its methods are essentially empirical, its exponents having individually and independently tested and corroborated the teachings received from earlier generations of wise men.

THE SECRET DOCTRINE

Although the Wisdom is ancient, its teachings have remained largely inaccessible to the general public in the modern world until the publication first of *Isis Unveiled* in 1877 and then of *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888 -a work which has remained in print ever since.

Summarizing the contents of *The Secret Doctrine*, Madame Blavatsky explains:

These truths are in no sense put forward as a revelation, nor does the author claim the position of a revealer of mystic lore, now made public for the first time in the world's history. For what is contained in this book is to be found scattered throughout thousands of volumes embodying the scriptures of the great Asiatic and early European religions, hidden under glyph and symbol, and hitherto left unnoticed because of this veil. What is now attempted is to gather the oldest tenets together and to make them one harmonious and unbroken whole.

The five-fold aim of this tremendous work, the restoration in our time of the Wisdom tradition, is clearly set out in the Preface:

- to show that Nature is not "a fortuitous concurrence of atoms";
- to assign to man his rightful place in the scheme of the Universe;
- to rescue from degradation the archaic truths which are the basis of all religions;
- to uncover, to some extent, the fundamental unity from which they all spring;
- finally, to show that the occult side of Nature has never been approached by the Science of modern civilization.

FURTHER READING LIST FOR STUDENTS

- Isis Unveiled* (2 vols) - H. P. Blavatsky
- The Secret Doctrine* (2 vols) - H. P. Blavatsky
- Esoteric Buddhism* - A. P. Sinnett
- Deity, Cosmos and Man* - Geoffrey A. Farthing
- Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy* - ed. Ianthe H. Hoskins