

## Theosophy and Orthodoxy - Part 2

by William Kingsland, F.T.S.

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No greater contrast can be found to the orthodoxy" we have noticed than the "orthodoxy" of "Natural Law in the Spiritual World." Here we have a recognition of what may really be called "cosmic or universal law", and a full and frank declaration of our obligation to science for teaching us those laws. The fundamental principles which the author lays down, are for the most part identical with those upon which Theosophy is based, the principal difference being that Theosophy includes in those universal laws a much-wider range of phenomena than have yet been recognised by either religion or science. There is, moreover, a fallacy in the application of these principles in the book before us, which we shall presently point out, and which will not be found in the conclusions which Theosophy draws from the very same premises.

In the preface to the book the author says :—

"The real problem I have set myself may be stated in a sentence. Is there not reason to believe that many of the Laws of the Spiritual World, hitherto regarded as occupying an entirely separate province, are simply the Laws of the Natural World ? Can we identify the Natural Laws or anyone of them, in the spiritual-sphere ? That vague lines everywhere run through the Spiritual World is already beginning to be recognised. Is it possible to link them with those great lines running through the visible universe which we call the Natural Laws, or are they fundamentally distinct ? In a word, is the Supernatural Natural or Unnatural ? "

We need scarcely remark that Theosophy hardly considers this question worth stating, for it shows it to have been settled ages ago. The unity of all things, the correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the subjective and the objective, the natural and the spiritual, has been a fundamental axiom with occult science from the earliest ages. But when we come to the applications which the author makes of this principle we come upon a fallacy which runs through the whole argument, for when the author speaks of the "Laws of the Spiritual world", we find that he means simply those dogmas [Page 4] which have accumulated round the teachings of Christ; in other words — orthodoxy. Now, it is doubtless a great step for orthodoxy to set itself this problem as to whether the supernatural is natural or unnatural, and thus we hail the book as a step in advance, albeit a tardy one.

Here is a quotation which illustrates the fallacy we have pointed out, and which runs all through the book:

—  
"Natural Law, could it be traced in the spiritual world, would have an important scientific value — it would offer religion a new credential. The effect of the introduction of law among the scattered phenomena of nature has simply been to make science, to transform knowledge into eternal truth. The same

crystallizing touch is needed for religion. Can it be said that the phenomena of the spiritual world are other than scattered ? Can we shut our eyes to the fact that the religious opinions of mankind are in a state of flux? ..... Is it not plain that the one thing thinking men are waiting for is the introduction of Law among the phenomena of the spiritual world ? When that comes we shall offer to such men a truly scientific theology. And the reign of Law will transform the whole spiritual world as it has already transformed the natural world."

The fallacy here is very apparent. The "phenomena of the spiritual world", of which he speaks are the "religious opinions of mankind", viz., "orthodoxy"; while, in respect to the last statement of the paragraph, we should like to ask, how has the reign of Law "already transformed the natural world" ? It has certainly transformed men's ideas of the natural world, but these *ideas* are not the *phenomena* of the natural world; and the author can hardly have intended to claim that nature as something different in itself and in its phenomena, since men discovered the universality of Natural Law. Have not the Laws of Nature always been the same, whatever men's *ideas* (orthodox science) conceived of them ? It is certainly not merely possible, but highly probable that the discovery of the Reign of Law — the extension of Natural Law, observe — in the Spiritual World will transform the whole of men's ideas with regard to that world. But this is only saying in other words, that just as orthodox science has been transformed by the discovery of the universality of Law, so will be orthodox religion. For the "religious opinions of mankind" are no more connected, as cause and effect, with the *phenomena* of the Spiritual World, than the scientific opinions in any age are connected with the *phenomena* of the Natural World. Surely the "Spiritual World" is something which exists altogether sui generis as regards men's ideas and doctrines concerning it, just as the "Natural World" exists, and always has and will exist, altogether apart from any scientific knowledge or theories in reference to it. To say, therefore, that "the reign of Law will transform the whole Spiritual World as it has already transformed the "Natural World," is to make the "Natural World" consist of current scientific doctrines, and the "Spiritual World" of orthodox dogmas.

This would be a fallacy even if the "Natural" and the "Spiritual" were [Page 5] two separate regions, so to speak, marked off from each other by no connecting links, but it applies with double force when, according to the whole contention of the author, we find that there is really no separation between the natural and the spiritual, but that the Laws of the one are the Laws of the other. He says :— "The position we have been led to take up is not that the Spiritual "Laws are analogous to the Natural Laws, *but that they are the same Laws.*" The italics are his own.

Thus we see that, however accurate may be his premises, his conclusions have no connection with them in any sense, a fallacy which is still further disclosed when he comes to deal with the subject in detail.

The following is eminently satisfactory as a statement of principle:—

"The only legitimate questions one dare put to nature are those which concern universal human good and the Divine interpretation of things. These, I conceive, may be there actually studied at first hand, and before their purity is soiled by human touch. We have truth in Nature as it came from God, and it has to be read with the same unbiassed mind, the same open eye, the same faith, and the same reverence as all other Revelation. All that is found there, whatever its place in Theology, whatever its orthodoxy or heterodoxy, whatever its narrowness or its breadths, we are bound to accept as Doctrine from which on the lines of Science there is

no escape."

But how does he apply this ? He goes on to say:—

"When this presented itself to me as a method, I felt it to be due to it ..... to begin again at the beginning, and reconstruct my Spiritual World step by step."

Here we see plainly the use of the term "Spiritual World" as synonymous with his own ideas respecting it, and it is just as absurd to a speak of "reconstructing" one's Spiritual World as it would be to speak of "reconstructing" our Natural World. We may reconstruct our ideas of these any number of times over — and this is the history of all religion and all science — but these ideas will not alter or modify or "transform" one single Law or phenomenon in either the "Natural" or the "Spiritual" World.

It is, of course, quite a common and conventional way of using the term "Spiritual World", to denote the region of religious emotion. We hear people remark that the Spiritual World is far more real to them than the Material World, by which they simply mean that they live in their religious ideals much more intensely than in those matters which concern their life on earth. If, therefore, the term had been used consistently in this sense throughout the whole of the book, it might have been valuable as pointing out a certain *analogy* between Natural Law and Christian orthodoxy.

But the author is anxious to point out that it is not a question of *analogy* but of identity, and therefore we say that there is no connection whatever, as cause and effect, between religious opinions of any kind, and the Laws or phenomena of either the Natural or the Spiritual Worlds as these are defined by [Page 6] him in laying down his premises. The Spiritual World per se, or as a natural sequence, or extension, or unity with the Natural World, must be some thing which is, always has been, and always will be, the same, whatever may be the religions, philosophies, or sciences at any period of the world's history.

It is curious to note that the author says:—

"The extension of the analogy to Laws, or rather the extension of the Laws themselves so far as is known to me, is new."

Probably this is so with most orthodox people, who refuse to believe that there is any light or safety outside of the Bible, but it is just this principle of "the extension of the Laws themselves", which it is the province of Theosophy to teach, and which is shown to have been familiar from the remotest periods to the custodians of occult science.

Those who belong to the "orthodoxy" of the which the author of "Earth's Earliest Ages" belongs, would to ponder these words:—

"Children do not need Laws, except Laws in the sense of commandments. They repose with simplicity on authority, and ask no questions. But there comes a time, as the world reaches its manhood, when they will ask questions, and stake, moreover," everything on the answers.

That time is now. Hence, we must exhibit our doctrines, not lying athwart the lines of the world's thinking, in a place reserved, and therefore shunned, for the Great Exception; but in their kinship to all truth, and in their Law-relation to the whole of Nature."

Again, what better statement could we have of the Theosophical doctrine than the following:—

"The law of continuity furnishes an à priori argument for the position we are attempting to establish of the most convincing kind — of such a kind, indeed, as to seem to our mind final. Briefly indicated, the ground taken up is this, that if Nature be a harmony, man in all his relations — physical, mental, moral, and spiritual — fails to be included within its circle. It is altogether unlikely that man spiritual should be violently separated in all conditions of growth, development and life, from man physical. It is, indeed, difficult to conceive that one set of principles should guide the natural life, and these at a certain period — the very point where they are needed — suddenly give place to another set of principles altogether new and unrelated. Nature has never taught us to expect such a catastrophe. She has nowhere prepared us for it. And man cannot in the nature of things, in the nature of thought, in the nature of language, be separated into two such incoherent halves."

We reply that she never has been so separated in the one "Secret Doctrine" or "Wisdom Religion", but only in the *exoteric* dogmas and formulas of that which now passes as Religion.

The following is also the teaching of occult science:—

"The first in the field was the Spiritual World ..... the visible universe has been [Page 7] developed from the unseen ..... There is a point in time when the energy of the universe must come to an end; and that which has its end in time cannot be infinite, it must have also had a beginning in time. Hence the unseen existed before the seen."

Precisely so; but what is this but a statement of the doctrine of emanation and reabsorption ? For, if the visible universe has made its appearance out of the invisible or "Spiritual World," and will again disappear into that region, it will do so by virtue of that which is now "matter", rebecoming "spirit". If the law of continuity holds good, as the author desires to prove, from the natural into the spiritual, it is at least strong evidence of the doctrine of the identity of matter and spirit in the "Absolute"; that is to say, that spirit and matter are the two opposite poles, or manifestations, of one and the same thing.

In confirmation of this, we may quote what he says later on:—

"The lines of the spiritual existed first, and it was natural to expect that when the 'intelligence resident in the unseen' proceeded to frame the material universe, He should go upon the lines already laid down. He would, in short, simply project the higher Laws downward, so that the Natural World would become an incarnation, a visible representation, a working model of the spiritual. The whole function of the material world lies here. The world is not a thing that *is*; it *is* not. It is a thing that teaches, yet not even a thing — a show that shows, a teaching shadow. However useless the demonstration otherwise, philosophy does well in proving that matter is a nonentity. We Work with it as a mathematician with an *x*. The reality is alone Spiritual .....

When shall we learn the true mysticism of one who was yet far from being a mystic — 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal', (2 Cor. iv., 18)? The visible is the ladder up to the invisible; the temporal is but the scaffolding of the eternal. And when the last immaterial souls have climbed through this material to God, the scaffolding shall be taken down, and the earth dissolved with fervent heat — not because it was base, but because its work is done."

One recognises Theosophy in almost every line of this, and were it not that the author indulges in the fallacy we have already pointed out, he would be obliged to state his conclusions in terms of Theosophy and occult science instead of in terms of orthodox Christianity.

Perhaps the most important part of the work is that in which the author deals with the law of Biogenesis. This law states that *life* — that is to say, that which we know as *life* in the physical world — can only come from life. "*Omne vivum ex vivo*".

It is opposed to the theory which has sometimes been advanced of "Spontaneous Generation". Let us now see how he applies this law. He says:—

"Translating from the language of Science into that of Religion, the [Page 8] theory of Spontaneous Generation is simply that a man may become gradually better and better until, in course of the process, he reaches that quality of religious nature known as Spiritual Life. This life is not something added *ab extra* to the natural man; it is the normal and appropriate development of the natural man. Biogenesis opposes to this the whole doctrine of Regeneration; The Spiritual Life is the gift of the Living Spirit. The spiritual man is no mere development of the natural man. He is a New Creation born from above."

The "Spiritual Life" is the gift (or rather manifestation) of the Living Spirit undoubtedly, but what are we to understand by its being a "quality of religious nature" ? As we have pointed out before, the Spiritual as an extension of the Natural must exist independently of the quality of any religious life whatsoever.

It is just this constant interchange of the terms "Religion" and "Spiritual Life" which destroys the whole force of his argument. Here is another instance of the way in which this is done:—

"Life cannot develop out of anything that is not Life. There is no Spontaneous Generation in Religion any more than in Nature. Christ is the source of Life in the Spiritual World; and he that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son, "whatever else he may have, hath not Life".

Here the word "Religion" is deliberately substituted for "Spiritual Life".

Elsewhere he speaks of the "spiritually inorganic and the spiritually organic", and he also says:—

"The spiritual faculties are organized in the spiritual protoplasm of the soul, just as other faculties are organized in the protoplasm of the body. The plant is made of materials which have once been inorganic. An organizing principle not belonging to their kingdom lays hold of them and elaborates them until they have correspondences with the kingdom to which the organizing principle belonged ..... In the Spiritual World, similarly, we find an organizing principle at work among the materials of the organic kingdom, performing a further miracle, but not a different kind of miracle, producing organizations of a novel kind, but not by a novel method."

Thus he is continually playing fast and loose with the terms " Spiritual World" or "Spiritual Life," using the terms sometimes to express a set of *ideas* or *emotions* known as "Religion", and sometimes as an extension of the Natural or Material World.

If, now, we endeavour to elucidate the meaning which he attaches to the term *Life*, we find that he accepts the definition of Herbert Spencer, that Life is "The continuous adjustment of internal to external relations", or, in other words, "correspondence with environment". Eternal Life is further defined thus:— " Perfect correspondence would be perfect life. Were there no changes in the environment but such as the organism had adapted changes to [Page 9] meet, and were it never to fail in the efficiency with which it met them, there would be eternal existence and eternal knowledge".

We now take these definitions in connection with those theological doctrines which he puts forward as fundamental laws of the Spiritual Life. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life " (I John v., 12). "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent " (John xvii., 3). "Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John iii., 5). How does the author apply these statements, and harmonize them with the scientific definition of *Life* just given ?

He says:—

"There is no Spontaneous Generation in Religion any more than in Nature. Christ is the source of life in the Spiritual World; He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, whatever else he may have, hath not life". Here, as we have already pointed out, the word *religion* is used as a synonym for Spiritual Life. He also says:— "The attitude of the natural man, again, with reference to the spiritual, is a subject on which the New Testament is equally pronounced. Not only in relation to the Spiritual man, but to the whole Spiritual World, the natural man is regarded as *dead*. "The natural world is to the Spiritual as the inorganic to the organic."

And elsewhere:—

"The breath of God, blowing where it listeth, touches with its mystery of Life the dead souls of men, bears them across the bridgeless gulf between the natural and the spiritual, between the spiritually inorganic and the spiritually organic, endows them with its own high qualities, and develops within them these new secret faculties, by which those who are born again are said to *see the kingdom of God*."

In the above paragraph we have a new element, *viz.*: the *soul*, introduced which tends very much to increase the confusion in the use of the term *Spiritual Life*. It would appear now that the *natural man*, spoken of in this paragraph as being *dead*, is the *spiritually inorganic*, *viz.*, the *soul*. The next question which naturally suggests itself is, what is the nature of this third element, or *soul*, which is now introduced between the *natural* and the *spiritual*? Is it in any sense material, and does it survive the death of the body, whether it be touched with the "breath of God" or not?

The *mineral*, we are told by the author, is touched with the "mystery of life" and brought up, ennobled and transformed to the "living sphere". But the mineral, it may be argued, does not cease to be a mineral when it becomes part of the vegetable kingdom. The atom of oxygen or carbon belongs to the mineral kingdom just as much when it is imprisoned in the organism of a plant, as when it is in its free state, and it inevitably returns to that state sooner or later. There is no analogy, therefore, between that life which touches the mineral and brings it into the vegetable kingdom, and the life which touches the "dead soul", and gives it "life eternal". [Page 10]

Carrying out the author's idea, however, that the man who has this spiritual life in Christ has life eternal; that his *soul* is transformed by that life from the dead natural world to the living *spiritual* world, we have next to inquire what becomes of the *soul* of the man who has not been touched by this life, the soul of the man who does not "know Christ". His answer is that it first of all degenerates and then dies. But we must observe that he attaches a special meaning to the word *death*. He says:

"The question of life or death to a man" is simply the question of the amount of remaining environment he is able to compass."

After defining the spiritual as the *outer circle* of the natural, he says: —

"Now of the great mass of living organisms, of the great mass of men, is it not to be affirmed that they are out of correspondence with this outer circle? Suppose, to make the final issue more real, we give this outermost circle of environment a name. Suppose we call it God. Suppose, also, we substitute a word for 'correspondence' to express more intimately the personal relation. Let us call it communion. We can now determine accurately the spiritual relation of different sections of mankind. Those who are in communion with God live, those who are not are dead."

No Theosophist will object to this, only he prefers to call this "outermost circle of environment *Atma* — the seventh principle — instead of God, for the latter term has accumulated round it a thousand theological and dogmatic conceptions which he can by no means accept. But by whatever name it may be called, it is *spiritually* the one universal Divine principle, the *inner* life, and sustainer, as well as the *outer* environment of all things. This is supported by what the author says in another place: —

"God is not confined to the outermost circle of environment. He lives and moves and has His being in the whole. Those who seek Him in the further zone can only find a part."

We can only remark that this *intra* cosmic God must be very different from the *extra* cosmic God of the

orthodox theology. Yet this is pure Theosophical teaching all the same, for it is the "God within him", the "Higher Self" whom the Theosophist seeks. And, recognising also the true Divinity of the "Son", who is "one with the Father", he understands and realises to the fullest extent that "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John xiv., 6). Read the Gospel of John, where this mystical union of the "Father" and the "Son" is the constant theme, as also in the two Epistles (and observe that it is only in these that the subject is thus set forth in various aspects), and then transfer the idea in a *spiritual* sense, and apart from its counterpart, reflection, or analogy on the material and physical plane, and you have the key to the mystery of the Incarnation and Divinity of Christ. If God be *intra*-cosmic in His highest spiritual manifestation, so must Christ, for He is "one with the Father." But from the highest spiritual plane down to the lowest material (our present objective world) the same mystery is reflected and repeated. The microcosm is the counterpart of the macrocosm; the universe is not a diversity, but a *Unity*. "As above, so below", is the old Kabalistic axiom. And [Page 11] this is exactly what the author states, when he says that the Laws of the Natural "*are the same Laws*" as those of the Spiritual, and that "God is not confined to the outermost circle of environment, He lives and moves and has His Being in the Whole".

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God", said Paul — another Initiate or "Master Builder". This is the great central truth of the "Secret Doctrine" under whatever *form* it may have been taught in all ages. Those who will read the Bible in the light of one or more of the "seven keys", will find it throughout the whole of the Old Testament under every variety of allegory; in the story of the "fall", in Noah's ark, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, and Solomon's Temple, where "there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building"m But "Moses put a veil upon his face", and "until this very day at the reading of the old covenant ( or Testament) the same veil remaineth unlifted " (2 Cor. iii., 14) and Paul goes on to say: — "Whensoever a man shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now, the Lord is the Spirit". The veil remains, therefore, with those who look upon these things with the eye of the flesh, and not with the eye of the *spirit*, with those who turn not to the Lord, that is to say, with those who understand these mysteries in their lowest material and physical aspect only, mistaking the *form* for the spirit, the "quality of religious nature known as Spiritual Life", for that Spiritual Life which is free from all forms or qualities of religion whatsoever; or, as St. Paul says: — "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". Theosophy endeavours to teach this, but those who look upon Theosophy as a *creed*, at variance with their own "orthodox" creed, will never be able to understand it.

We must, however, now endeavour to elucidate what it is that the author understands by the death of the soul. The question of questions is, whether the "spiritually inorganic", viz., the "soul", survives the death of the body if it does riot happen to have been touched with this mystery of spiritual life.

He says:—

"There is no analogy between the Christian religion and, say, Buddhism or the Mohammedan religion. There is no true sense in which a man can say, He that hath Buddha hath life. Buddha has nothing to do with "life". This may be perfectly true of Buddha, the historical and physical man, and is just as true of Christ, the historical and physical man; but Buddhi, the sixth principle, the Divine vehicle of *Atma*, the *Father*, has everything to do with this *Life* in its mystical and spiritual aspect, and in just the same way as *Christ* Christos.

But, taking the author at his word, we are naturally led to ask; What, then, becomes of the millions of

souls who profess "Buddhism instead of Christianity ? The following statement would seem to indicate that, in the author's view, there is for them no future life: —

“The broad impression gathered from the utterances of the Founder of the spiritual kingdom is that [Page 12] the number of organisms to be included in it is to be comparatively small'. 'Many are called, but few are chosen'. It is an open secret, to be read in a hundred analogies from the world around, that of the millions of possible entrants for advancement in any department of Nature the number ultimately selected for preferment is small. Some mineral, but not all, becomes vegetable; some vegetable, but not all, becomes animal; some animal, but not all, becomes human; some human, but not all, becomes divine.”

We have already pointed out a fallacy in this statement, with regard to the transference from one kingdom to another. We must, however, take the statement as it stands as an indication of the author's view.

Elsewhere, however, he comes very near to the Theosophical doctrine, that the soul — using this term now to express the real ego, the individuality — reincarnates, over and over again, until, finally, as the result of evolution — for if evolution be a *natural law*, it must also be a *spiritual law* — it does become “touched with this mystery of Life”, and having passed through all the lower forms, mineral, vegetable, animal, human, it reaches, at length, at the end of its long pilgrimage, that life of “perfect correspondence with environment”, which constitutes “eternal life” ; the At-one-ment with God through Christ, the merging of the *finite* consciousness into the *infinite*.

Needless to add that this is but in other words the Buddhist doctrine of Nirvana :—

“Seeking nothing, he gains all;  
Foregoing self, the universe grows ‘I’  
If any teach Nirvana is to cease,  
Say unto such they lie.  
If any teach Nirvana is to live  
Say unto such they err; not knowing this,  
Or what light shines beyond their broken lamps,  
Nor lifeless timeless bliss.”

What shall we say then ? Is it Christianity alone which can give this divine life to the soul. The answer must be both Yes and No. If by Christianity is meant the theological, dogmatic, materialised, orthodox system called by that name, then the answer must be emphatically No.

Religious life of any kind or quality has no necessary connection with that which exists independently of all religion — the Soul of Man, and the Divine Spark within him.

If by Christianity, however, is meant those truths which are the same — under whatever *form* may have been taught — in all ages; the inner mystery of Divine Sonship, then the reply must be Yes. “This is life eternal, to know thee and the son whom thou hast sent”, was taught ages before Christ came to teach it in a new form. *Orthodoxy*, however, ever ties men to a certain fixed *environment* of creeds and dogmas,

claiming authority and infallibility. But the Theosophist has entered into a Spiritual Life which [Page 13] is free from such restrictions. St. Paul understood what this freedom was. "All things are lawful unto me; but all things are not expedient", he says.

What does it matter whether this principle of eternal life be called "Christos" or "Krishna" ? It is ever that divine life towards which all things are tending. What does it matter whether we call the "outermost circle of environment" *God*, or *Parabrahm* ? The *spiritual* truth is ever the same, whatever orthodoxy may teach.

In conclusion, we may recommend every Theosophist to read "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," for not merely will it tend to enlarge his ideas as to the domain of natural law, but will enable him to understand more clearly the real esoteric meaning of Christianity, and its connection with the one universal Wisdom Religion, or Theo-sophia. But it is only those who can understand the "Secret Doctrine" *spiritually* who will be able to do this; for Theosophy as a *creed* is of little more value than Christianity as a creed. Both are a LIFE, not a creed, and he who realizes this Life will understand both, while he to whom the Spiritual Life is only a "quality of religious nature", will be as unable to understand the spiritual teachings of Theosophy as he is to understand the spiritual mystery of Christ. Truly, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life".

Finally, we would say in the words of Krishna-Christos :—

"But — higher, deeper, innermost — abides  
Another Life, not like the life of sense,  
Escaping sight, unchanging. This endures  
When all created things have passed away.  
This is that Life named the Unmanifest,  
The Infinite! the All the Uttermost.  
Thither arriving none return. That Life  
Is mine, and I am there! and, Prince! by faith  
Which wanders not, there is a way to come  
Thither. I, the PURUSHA. I, who spread  
The Universe around me — in whom dwell  
All living Things — may so be reached and seen !  
Richer than holy fruit on Vedas growing.  
Greater than gifts, better than prayer or fast  
Such wisdom is! The Yôgi, this way knowing,  
Comes to the Utmost Perfect Peace at last."

Bhagavad-Gitâ, VIII.