

The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, VII pp. 135-75



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Notes by Boris de Zirkoff, Compiler

[There exists in the Archives of The Theosophical Society, at Adyar, India, a twenty-four page manuscript in H.P.B.'s handwriting, signed and dated by her at Ostende, October 3, 1886. It contains a most important pronouncement regarding the aims and objectives of The Theosophical Society, and the platform upon which it was founded. It also embodies an outspoken defence of Col. Henry S. Olcott, the President-Founder.

The first page of the MS., containing, however, but a few lines of text (up to the middle of the second numbered item, at the word "races"), is missing. The missing lines have been restored from a typed copy at Adyar of an incomplete rendering of this pronouncement. Owing to the loss of the first page of the MS., the original title of it, if any, remains unknown. The present title is strongly suggested by the last paragraph of the text, and was adopted by C. Jinarājadāsa, when he published this MS. for the second time in the pages of *The Theosophist* (Vol. LII, No. 11, August, 1931, pp. 561-89), where it had been originally published some years earlier (Vol. XLV, June, July, August and September, 1924).

H.P.B.'s MS. represents her Reply to a Statement issued jointly by Arthur Gebhard and Mohini Mohun Chatterji under the title of "A Few Words on The Theosophical Organization," and bearing the date of September 23, 1886. It embodied a rather harsh criticism of the Society and its President-Founder, Col. Henry S. Olcott. This joint Statement, in Mohini's handwriting, exists also in the Adyar Archives. On the back of it, Col. Olcott has written: "Manifesto of Mohini and Arthur Gebhard about my despotism. H.P.B.'s cutting reply. 1886."

The sad circumstances underlying what H.P.B. called the Gebhard-Mohini "Manifesto," and her own Reply, are perhaps nowhere expressed more graphically than in the two letters which follow: one to William Quan Judge, written on the very date when she signed her Reply, and the other to The Sinnetts, written but a few days later.

Letter from H.P.B. to William Quan Judge

The original of this letter was held in the official archives of the Theosophical Society with Headquarters at Point Loma, California. It was originally published in *The Theosophical Forum*, New Series, Vol. III, No. 12, August 15, 1932, pp. 251-53, certain capital letters being substituted, however, for some of the proper names occurring in the text. The following is a *verbatim et literatim* reproduction of the original, including peculiarities of H.P.B.'s punctuation and style.

Ostende Rue d'Ouest 17

October 3, 1886

My dear W.Q.J. — Yours received —

Bouton is an old Shylock — & would skin his own mother. I cannot lose over 500\$. I make him an offer of 400\$ in three months installments — 100\$ each — or 300\$ *down*. The secret is — does he care to have the *Secret Doctrine* or not — & whether he still wants to have *Isis illustrated* as he proposed to me in a letter. If he does — he will come down. If not, then there is little chance. But I feel sure you could manage it. You know that the copyright of *Isis* is mine — unless he has swindled me in this too. You ought to ascertain it. And if the copyright in Washington is in my *name* — then I suppose you could prevent him to sell even the remainder of the edition I do not know the laws & you do.

But do try to come to some arrangement with him. If he gives me the 400 by installment — then I want you to have a \$100 out of it — 25\$ each time; & if he gives only 350 down at once then let him send me a cheque for 275\$ — & give you another for \$75. I don't want you to take trouble & bother yourself for me for the Prussian King. But do try to settle something definite with the old devil, so as to close accounts for ever in the matter of *Isis* hitherto printed. And tell me whether you can copyright for me the S.D. and what I have to do for it. Take to him my letter & try to mesmerize him & wig on the *right side*. I tell you seriously the publisher who will have the S.D. will make lots even if I myself do lit-



tle. But I must fence and guarantee myself, securely in this matter of copyrighting.

And now to other things & far more serious. Arthur is with you now & you will find Arthur changed. One solitary month with Mohini has altered him so, that he is no more the same man. And the fruit of all this is — a *manifesto* written by Mohini & signed by both himself & Arthur. Anything more ungrateful, cold, unjust to poor Olcott and cruel *I have never read*. Nor did I ever expect such a thing from Mohini, who, if he is now regarded as a Jesus on wheels & a *Saint* owes to Olcott's advertisements of him & my enthusiastic claims for him. Now Mr. Mohini Babu (he passed 2 weeks with me) is cold, dignified & *reserved* with me, friendly and "patronizing" — but still never showing his little game right before my nose, but only behind my back. I will give you an example which will show his present drift. Poor old Dr Bergen who is as devoted as devotion itself to the Master's (*ideal* I call it with all those who do not know Them personally) — & who went on purpose to London to hear of, & about Them, and went to see the Arundales, heard to his amazement that the Masters were no longer regarded as the living *actual* Adepts, but either white Magicians with *grayish* tints, or "fictions" or something he could not make out. The Mahatmas he was told were *unreachable* Beings they could neither communicate, nor take concern in worldly or private affairs could *never write letters* or *send messages* — therefore our Masters could never be MAHATMAS. You see what the consequences of all this have to be don't you? Then when Bergen protested & said that he, at any rate, would never give up the living Masters; would always remain *devoted* to Them etc. Miss Arundale arose & looking him straight in the face, said: "*I thought once as you do; it took me six months to come to Mohini's views; BUT NOW I THINK AS HE DOES.*" Plain this: Mohini is then exercising for over six months his influence over Miss Arundale to make her lose faith & *belief* even in the Masters. To me Mohini never said it so openly; but so many points more for him in wiliness & cunning. To me he said *he was not of Bowaji's way of thinking*; that he blamed him etc. and his policy seems to be identical. Both are determined, I see, to gradually destroy the Society. They are undermining it slowly but surely; hence the "Manifesto," the sense of which is "Society useless; Brotherhood a flapdoodle; President — a vain, worldly, conceited, *untheosophical* & *unbrotherly* & pernicious fool. Down then, with President, Head-Quarters, Society & all." You will see it, because I answered it, & Sinnett will answer it too and we are going to print it to distribute among Fellows. Such was Mohini's influence on Arthur that he who was all devotion when he arrived, now said to Sinnett in going away, "What matters is, so long you do good that you work *within* or *outside* the T.S." Why should there be any connection with it for us *theosophists*. Now keep this letter *private and confidential* don't say anything to him but watch & see. But then I should not wonder in these days of *Libra*, *Dugpas* & universal reckoning if even you found yourself influenced by Arthur, Mohini and Co — Well, when I lose YOU — then will I say — Goodbye Society — "Gone to join her grandmother" Your friend of the "Libra" is right in many ways; but of this later on. Ah, my poor dear Judge, do not be *wiled* away, for pity sa-



ke. Things will change & then everyone will be rewarded or — DAMNED. See if it don't.

Olcott is a conceited ass, but there is no one more faithful & true than he is to the Masters & the original *ideal* & no one is more devoted to the Society planned & established under Their Orders — than he is. I must, & *will* defend him publicly, & admit his shortcomings as sincerely in print I tell you we are on the eve of a crisis brought by Mohini and Bowaji and he who will remain true will be saved while all others will go to the Devil. The trouble with you is *that you do not know the great change* that came to pass in you a few years ago. Others have occasionally their *astrals* changed and replaced by those of Adepts (as of Elementaries) & they influence the *outer*, & the *higher* man. With you, it is the NIRMANAKAYA not the “astral” that blended with your astral. Hence the dual nature & fighting. Fakir? Fakir be damned. The man knows not the difference between a *Nirmanakaya* of an Adept & his *astral*.

Do write to me, for mercy sake, I am sending you on the *Reincarnation* as you asked, extracts from the S.D. & a full answer, I believe.

Your ever truly & faithfully (who?!) well, your *friend* anyhow.

H.P.B.

I am *not coming* just now to the U.S. who is the humbug who invented it?

Letter from H.P.B. to Mr. and Mrs. A.P. Sinnett

First published in *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, New York, 1924, pp. 223-24.

Oct. 6, 1886

My Dear Mr. and Mrs. Sinnett,

I forward Mohini's *Manifesto* which you please read carefully, if you have not before. I trust it to your care for a few days begging you to send it back to me *intact*, as I have to send it to Olcott and Council. It *cannot* and will not remain unnoticed. He addresses it “to all theosophists interested in the progress of *true* theosophy” and it will be circulated all over America whether printed or not. It *cannot* be left unanswered. If you have changed your mind and will not answer it — as you wanted to — then I must send it to Adyar where it will be made use of, and my *Reply* the same. So as your idea of recasting it is good and you may read it in a new form to your Society or do with it whatever you like — I must beg you to send it me (my MSS) intact also, and as it is; for I have neither time nor desire to copy it and am *ordered* to forward both the *Manifesto* and my *Reply* to Adyar and thence to America.

Of course you can do as you like. Only there are two ways left open before us, now, that Mohini has pronounced himself: either an amicable separation into groups, each according to its harmonious spirit, or — a thundering separation and a collapse of the “L.L. of T.S.” The first may be effected by you, and quietly



after you have talked it over with Mohini and Miss A.; the other will burst upon you as a thunder-clap, for they are preparing for it. The minds of our best members are poisoned by insinuations and metaphysical and cosmistical assumptions. Even Bm. Keightley has sailed off on the Yogi line. Neither Astrology nor Mesmerism will save it. What those fanatics want is the dark spirit of fanaticism, engrossed in which, they have lost sight of the fact that Mohini has quietly withdrawn from under their noses their *living* Teachers and ideals and substituted for them himself — *instead*.

I do not care for it personally. The days of heart-aching, and struggle and fight are over for me personally. I have done *my duty*, as ordered, and prefer remaining with Mohini on diplomatic friendly terms (an armed peace like the rest of Europe), than in open war. Much of what he says is true, that [but?] unless people are MADE to see the *revers de la médaille* of his “Saintship” — and his black ingratitude and cold-heartedness to Olcott and all — the L.L. will be lost in a fog of Maya created by the young gentleman. He has psychologised them all and all see as he wants them to. You remain indifferent? Very well; so am I. Mrs. K. and Maitland both tell me that the only means of saving the L.L. is to break it into groups or — *best of all* for me to come to London and *proclaim myself President of a group of Occultists!!* They take me for a Battenberg, or a Stambuloff of Bulgaria — verily. Well, it remains for me to wash my hands of the whole matter and ask you again to send me back both MSS — whether you recast mine or not. *L'un n'empêche pas l'autre*. Do so, and send it me to read and see. My love to Mrs. S.

Yours theosophically,

H.P.B.

It would seem that A.P. Sinnett may have kept both Documents for several weeks, before returning them to H.P.B. at Ostende. This is evidenced by an undated letter which H.P.B. wrote Col. H.S. Olcott sometime in the latter part of December, 1886 (published in *The Theosophist*, August, 1931, pp. 684-85), just prior to a business trip which Countess Constance Wachtmeister was going to make to London. This trip took place just prior to the New Year of 1887, and into the first days of January. Up to that time, both Documents were still in H.P.B.'s hands. In the letter above referred to, she says:

“Send with this mail, Mohini's ‘Few Words’ and my answer. I had asked him to write down his grievance *for me to send to you privately* — never to address it to ‘sincere theosophists’ and make public. — Well there is of the Loyola and Peck-sniff in him combined. I wish it could be published, *but not by you but by Tookaram* — for they would laugh at you if *you do yourself*, and I do not want to take out what I wrote of you for it is the truth, though you are a d—d hum-bug with me often enough. But I love sincerely, still. Well good bye.

H.P.B.”

There is no record or evidence that either the joint Statement or H.P.B.'s Reply thereto was ever published, or circulated in any other manner, at the time they were penned.

Both of these Documents are reproduced below in their proper sequence. — Boris de Zirkoff.]



A few words on the Theosophical Organization

By Mohini Mohun Chatterji and Arthur Gebhard

[Published for the first time by C. Jinarājadāsa in a booklet-form reprint of “The Original Programme” and the “Preliminary Memorandum of the Esoteric Section,” pp. 51-59 (Adyar: Theos. Publ. House, 1931). Reprinted by permission of the Publishers.]

As an act of Theosophical duty the following observations on some features of the present organization of the Theosophical Society are submitted to those interested in the progress of true Theosophy. In the “Rules of the Theosophical Society together with an explanation of its objects and principles” for 1885 (the last published) it appears that “The whole Society is under the special care of one General Council, and of the President, its Founder. The members of the General Council shall annually be elected by the Convention and their duties shall consist in advising the President-Founder in regard to all matters referred to them by him.” On pp. 2 *et seq.* is to be found the list of additional members of the Council, which with some variations has continued for years. This list gives the names of those about whom alone there can be any elective rights exercised by the Convention, the rest being members *ex officio*. If the election is at all like what is known in the world outside the Theosophical Society the gentlemen appearing in the list ought at all events to be known to the Convention for some acts in pursuance of the “special care” of the Society vested in them by the Rules. But notoriously that is not the case. Practically they are all appointed by the President-Founder. The power of the General Council extends to “advising the President-Founder in regard to all matters referred to them by him.” But in the meantime the President-Founder is empowered to issue special orders and provisional rules “in the name and behalf of the General Council” (Rule iv, p. 20). Thus the President-Founder is empowered to pledge the name and credit of the General Council, which enjoys the right “of advising the President-Founder” in the terms of the Rule quoted above. It only remains to add that five, and in emergent cases three, members constitute a quorum of the General Council meetings and that there are over a hundred and fifty members on the Council.

There is no such institution in existence as the Parent Society which by the Rules is competent to issue and nullify charters without which “no Branch can be formed or continued.” If however the Parent Society has any existence its constitution is as mysterious as that of the Venetian Council of Three. The centre of power in the Society is thus vested in [a] President who is further armed with the authority of this mysterious body.¹

The Convention mentioned before and described in Rule IX (p. 20) is in no sense a representative or legal body, being nothing more than the gathering of those among the members who pay a visit to Adyar during the Christmas holidays. These gatherings have a value of their own in contributing to mutual instruction of members. But this value is certainly not increased by grossly

¹ Without a word of explanation the Parent Society has disappeared from the “Rules” dated 1886.



misconceiving its character. There is no possibility of any gathering of members of the Theosophical Society binding the whole Society by its resolutions. For a member does not give any undertaking beyond what is implied in his application.² From the standpoint of Universal Brotherhood, however, such action would never be contemplated by any meeting calling itself Theosophical. In illustration it may be mentioned that the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society has completely ignored the rules published by the Head-Quarters at Adyar.

Thus it is plain that the Theosophical Society has laws without sanction, a legislative body without legality, a Parent Society without existence and a President-Founder above all rules. How far this is consistent with Theosophy and Brotherhood requires serious consideration. It is also noteworthy that the system of centralization of power discussed above is in contravention of rule II (p. 19) which expects members “to govern themselves in their mutual relations according to that principle” (*i.e.*, of Universal Brotherhood).³ The matter is placed in a more striking light by the declaration in rule XIV (p. 24)⁴ that the Society has “to deal only with scientific and philosophical subjects.” Hence it is quite evident that the power and position claimed in the “Rules” for the President-Founder, the General Council, and the Convention are opposed to the spirit of the declared objects of the Society. There is no *raison d’être* for any controlling authority. The different Theosophic groups can but (a) preach and practise Universal Brotherhood, (b) study ancient religion and philosophy, or (c) investigate psychical phenomena. Now, with regard to these matters Theosophy teaches self-culture and not control. The Society rests upon the declaration of sympathy with its objects, which every member makes before admission. As a Brotherhood it must aspire to bring about the state in which the sense of duty is the only incentive to action. Those amongst us who realize it most can and will but recommend greater simplicity of organization and not the reverse.

The Parent Society⁵ being what is described above, no charter to Branches can be issued. Nor is it necessary to do so. The same holds good of diplomas to members on admission without any test of merit.

The admission fee paid by members to the office at Adyar is of the nature of taxation and therefore inconsistent with the principle of Brotherhood. Nor does it appear that the Theosophical Society ought to be in need of money. The expenses for the maintenance of a central office at Adyar for keeping records and concentrating information cannot be more than would be met by voluntary contributions. Those for the annual gathering would always be paid by such members as perceive its benefit. A forced gift is unbrotherly; and moreover if the

² The form of application given in the “Rules” (1885) requires only *acquaintance* with the rules, while that dated 1886 declares willingness to conform thereto. But neither would validate Rules passed *ultra vires* as by the Convention. The change in the latest Rules is perhaps intended to remedy this illegal proceeding on the part of the Convention.

³ This rule is not specifically mentioned in the “Rules” (1886) but is clearly implied.

⁴ Rule 25, p. 19 (1886).

⁵ The argument is not affected by the substitution of the Parent Society by a Council of Seven.



Society and its work are so little appreciated that a closer acquaintance with them will dissuade members from helping them with money to the amount now paid, then it can only be that those who join the Society do so only through misconceptions, and in that case it is better that the Society should cease to exist than that it should be the recipient of gifts which might produce subsequent regret in the donors. For the Theosophical Society to insist upon the fee of £1 before accepting as a brother one who asks for that recognition is the sale of Brotherhood. It is worse than useless to keep up a Society, call it Theosophical, and yet show no faith in Theosophy and the principle of Brotherhood.

The above was written under the misapprehension that the “Rules” bearing date 1885 were the latest. It has since been found that there is a later version of the rules dated 1886, which have modified the older rules on a great many points. But it is necessary to examine the earlier rules to ascertain the underlying principle which runs through the present ones as well. The chief point is that the Convention has no power to make any rules, as such a power is opposed to the spirit of Theosophy and also because the Convention itself is devoid of legal existence. Is there anything in the declared objects of the Society which allows of the existence of the Convention? Further, the Executive Council constituted or supposed to be so, by the Convention can have no power exceeding that of the Convention. But this it has by rule 14, clause (c), *p.* 17 of the “Rules” (1886), which limits the power of the Convention to the disposal of “all questions of importance *laid before it by the President and Executive Council.*” It has no power of effectually checking either. The whole question turns upon this — Is the Theosophical Society a Brotherhood or not? If the former, is it possible to have any centre of arbitrary power? To hold that there is a necessity for such a centre is only a roundabout way of saying that no Brotherhood is possible, but in point of fact that necessity itself is by no means proved. There have been no doubt Brotherhoods under single Masters, but in such cases the Masters were never elected for geographical or other considerations. The natural leader of men was always recognized by his embodying the spirit of Humanity. To institute comparisons would be little short of blasphemy. The greatest amongst men is always the readiest to serve and yet is unconscious of the Service.

Let us pause before finally tying the millstone of worldliness round the neck of Theosophy. Let us not forget that Theosophy does not grow in our midst by force and control, but by the sunshine of brotherliness and the dew of self-oblivion. If we do not believe in Brotherhood and Truth, let us put ashes on our head and weep in sackcloth and not rejoice in the purple of authority and in the festive garments of pride and worldliness. Better it is by far that the name of Theosophy should never be heard than that it should be used as the motto of a papal institution. The fact must be recognized that the highest authority in the Society is to be found exactly where there is the untheosophic demand for authority. By rule 12, *p.* 17 (1886) “no Bye-laws and Rules of Branches shall be valid unless ratified by the President in Council.” What is the meaning of this power? Is it to be understood that the Executive Council sitting at Adyar knows better than the local members what is needed by a distant Branch, never perhaps visited by a single member of the Council?



More words are useless. Enough has been said to show that the organization called Theosophical presents many features seriously obstructive to the progress of Theosophy, and that unless the danger is perceived in time we shall not know what answer to make when the day of reckoning comes.

It would be out of place to suggest any specific measures. For no one who has any faith in Brotherhood and in the power of Truth will fail to perceive what is necessary. While on the other hand if the foregoing words are but a cry in the wilderness, not evoking any definite perception of duty in members of the Theosophical Society, no Theosophic measures can be suggested for the reform of that which is not Theosophical. There is another reason which determines the present course. The tyranny of majorities over minorities is opposed to the principle of Brotherhood. Truth does not depend on show of hands.

It only remains to express fraternal wishes that every one of our brothers may feel the full sense of the responsibility which he has undertaken in the name of Truth and Brotherhood. It behooves us to bear in mind — Theosophy first and organization after.

Mohini M. Chatterji, F.T.S.,
for self and
A. Gebhard, F.T.S.

The absence of one of the signatories to the foregoing necessitates the ensuing note to rest on the responsibility of the undersigned alone. That the Convention has practically no authority is evident from the following considerations. By rule 21, clause (d), p. 19 (1886)⁶ it is laid down that “an annual subscription of two shillings shall always be paid in advance by all the active Fellows of the Society.” It is well known that not only individuals but even Branches have refused to pay this subscription. The refusals have been acquiesced in, to all appearances, without any reference to the Convention. Comments are not necessary to show what bearing this has upon Theosophy and the Organization. Is it better to make demands which are abandoned on resistance being offered, or to leave such contributions to the Theosophical feelings of the members?

The question for consideration is not whether the Theosophical Society is doing good, but whether it is doing that kind of good which is entitled to the name of Theosophy. And also whether it is not doing spiritual wrong by calling a particular and limited line of good work Divine Wisdom thus excluding other similar work which is being done by other organizations upon which a slur is cast by the limitation put upon the term Theosophy by the Society.

Sep. 23, 1886

Mohini M. Chatterji, F.T.S.,
77, *Elgin Crescent*,
Notting Hill,
London, W.

⁶ This rule was first adopted at the Convention of 1883-4. In the edition of 1885 it is Rule II (p. 22).



[“Original Programme” Manuscript]

[Words within square brackets, as well as the italicizing of certain words and sentences, in passages quoted from the Chatterji-Gebhard Statement, are H.P.B.’s own, as careful comparison with the text of the Statement will show. Throughout H.P.B.’s Pronouncement, both in the main text of it, and in some of the footnotes, the occurrence of several dots indicates no elision of words, and is apparently meant to point to the beginning of a new thought which is particularly emphasized.

— Boris de Zirkoff.]

In order to leave no room for equivocation, the members of the T.S. have to be reminded of the origin of the Society in 1875. Sent to the U.S. of America in 1873 for the purpose of organizing a group of workers on a psychic plane, two years later the writer received orders from her Master and Teacher to form the nucleus of a regular Society whose objects were broadly stated as follows:

- 1 Universal Brotherhood;
- 2 No distinction to be made by the member between races, creeds, or social positions, but every member had to be judged and dealt by on his personal merits;
- 3 To study the philosophies of the East — those of India chiefly, presenting them gradually to the public in various works that would interpret exoteric religions in the light of esoteric teachings;
- 4 To oppose materialism and theological dogmatism in every possible way, by demonstrating the existence of occult forces unknown to science, in nature, and the presence of psychic and spiritual powers in man; trying, at the same time to enlarge the views of the Spiritualists by showing them that there are other, many other agencies at work in the production of phenomena besides the “Spirits” of the dead. Superstition had to be exposed and avoided; and occult forces, *beneficent and maleficent* — ever surrounding us and manifesting their presence in various ways — demonstrated to the best of our ability.

Such was the programme in its broad features. The two chief Founders were not told what they had to do, how they had to bring about and quicken the growth of the Society and results desired; nor had they any definite ideas given them concerning its outward organization — all this being left entirely with themselves. Thus, as the undersigned had no capacity for such work as the mechanical formation and administration of a Society, the management of the latter was left in the hands of Col. H.S. Olcott, then and there elected by the primitive founders and members — *President for life*. But if the two Founders were not told *what they had to do*, they were distinctly instructed about *what they should never do*, what they had to avoid, and what the Society should never become. Church organizations, Christian and Spiritual sects were shown as the future contrasts to our Society.⁷

⁷ A liberal Christian member of the T.S. having objected to the study of Oriental religions and doubted whether there was room left for any new Society — a letter answering his objections and preference to Christianity was received and the contents copied for him; after which he denied no longer the advisability of such a Society as the proposed Theosophical Association. A few extracts from this early letter will show plainly the nature of the Society as then contemplated, and that we have tried only to follow, and carry out in the best way we could the intentions of the *true* originators of the Society in those days. The pious gentleman having claimed that he was a *theosophist* and had a right of judgment over other people was told . . . “You have no right to such a title. You are only a *philo*-theosophist; as one who has reached to the full comprehension of *the name and nature* of a theosophist will sit in judgment on no man or action. . . . You claim that your religion is the highest and final



To make it clearer:

(1) The Founders had to exercise all their influence *to oppose selfishness of any kind*, by insisting upon sincere, fraternal feelings among the Members — at least outwardly; working for it to bring about a spirit of unity and harmony, the great diversity of creeds notwithstanding; expecting and demanding from the Fellows, a great mutual toleration and charity for each other's shortcomings; mutual help in the research of truths in every domain — moral or physical — and even, in daily life.

(2) They had to oppose in the strongest manner possible anything approaching *dogmatic faith and fanaticism* — belief in the *infallibility* of the Masters, or even in the very existence of our invisible Teachers, having to be checked from the first. On the other hand, as a great respect for the private views and creeds of every member was demanded, any Fellow criticising the faith or belief of another Fellow, hurting his feelings, or showing a reprehensible self-assertion, unasked (mutual friendly advices were a duty unless declined) — such a member incurred expulsion. The greatest spirit of free research untrammelled by anyone or anything, had to be encouraged.

Thus, for the first year the Members of the T. Body who representing every class in Society as every creed and belief — Christian clergymen, Spiritualists, Freethinkers, Mystics, Masons and Materialists — lived and met under these rules in peace and friendship. There were two or three expulsions for *slander* and *backbiting*. The rules, however imperfect in their tentative character, were strictly enforced and respected by the members. The original \$5, initiation fee, was soon abolished as *inconsistent with the spirit of the Association*: members had enthusiastically promised to support

step toward divine Wisdom on this earth, and that it has introduced into the arteries of the old decaying world new blood and life and verities that had remained unknown to the heathen? If it were so indeed, then your religion would have introduced the highest truths into all the social, civil and international relations of Christendom. Instead of that as anyone can perceive, your social as your private life is not based upon a common moral solidarity but only on constant mutual counteraction and purely mechanical equilibrium of individual powers and interests . . . If you would be a theosophist you must not do as those around you do who call on a God of Truth and Love and serve the dark Powers of Might, Greed and Luck. We look in the midst of your Christian civilization and see the same sad signs of old: the realities of your daily lives are diametrically opposed to your religious ideal, but you feel it not; the thought that the very laws that govern your being whether in the domain of politics or social economy clash painfully with the origins of your religion — do not seem to trouble you in the least. But if the nations of the West are so fully convinced that the ideal can never become practical and the practical will never reach the ideal — then, you have to make your choice: either it is your religion that is impracticable, and in that case it is no better than a vain-glorious delusion, or it might find a practical application, but it is you yourselves, who do not care to apply its ethics to your daily walk in life . . . Hence, before you invite other nations 'to the King's festival table' from which your guests arise more starved than before, you should, ere you try to bring them to your own way of thinking, look into the repasts they offer to you . . . Under the dominion and sway of exoteric creeds, the grotesque and tortured shadows of theosophical realities, there must ever be the same oppression of the weak and the poor and the same typhonic struggle of the wealthy and the mighty among themselves . . . It is *esoteric philosophy alone*, the spiritual and psychic blending of man with Nature that, by revealing fundamental truths, can bring that much desired mediate state between the two extremes of human Egotism and divine Altruism and finally lead to the alleviation of human suffering . . ."

[So in manuscript. The continuation of this letter from one of the Teachers — we do not know which one — is on page 169 of the present volume, beginning with the words: "Theosophy must not represent . . .," etc.

Certain portions of this letter were used by H.P.B. in her magazine *Lucifer*, Vol. I, January, 1888, pp. 344-46, under the title of "Some Words on Daily Life," and credited therein to "A Master of Wisdom." *Lucifer's* version begins with the sentence: "It is divine philosophy alone . . .," and continues with: "Theosophy should not represent . . ." There are changes and considerable amplifications of the main ideas, which are not in the Adyar manuscript.

Nothing further seems to be known about this letter from one of the Teachers, and the whereabouts of the original are unknown. — Boris de Zirkoff.]



the Parent Society and defray the expenses of *machines for experiments, books*, the fees of the *Recording Secretary*,⁸ etc., etc. This was *Reform No. I*. Three months after, Mr. H.J. Newton, the Treasurer, a rich gentleman of New York,⁹ showed that no one had paid anything or helped him to defray the current expenses for the Hall of meetings, stationery, printing, etc., and that he had to carry the burden of those expenses *alone*. He went on for a short time longer, then — *he resigned as Treasurer*. It was the President-Founder, Col. H.S. Olcott, who had to pay henceforth for all. He did so for over 18 months. The “fee” was re-established, before the Founders left for India with the two English delegates — now their mortal enemies; but the money collected was for the Arya Samaj of Aryavarta with which Society the Theosophical became affiliated. It is the Prest.-Founder, who paid the enormous travelling expenses from America to India, and those of installation in Bombay, and who supported the two delegates out of his own pocket for nearly 18 months. When he had no more money left, nor the Corresponding Secretary either — a resolution was passed that the “initiation fee” sums should go towards supporting the Head-Quarters.

Owing to the rapid increase in the Society in India, the present *Rules and Statutes* grew out. They are not the outcome of the deliberate thought and whim of the Prest.-Founder, but the result of the yearly meetings of the General Council at the Anniversaries. If the members of that G.C. have framed them so as to give a wider authority to the President-Founder, it was the result of their absolute confidence in him, in his devotion and love for the Society, and not at all — as implied in “A Few Words” — a proof of *his love for power and authority*. Of this, however, later on.

It was never denied that the Organization of the Theosophical Society was *very* imperfect. *Errare humanum est*. But, if it can be shown that the President has done what he could under the circumstances and in the best way he knew how — no one, least of all a theosophist, can charge him with the sins of the whole community as now done. From the founders down to the humblest member the Society is composed of imperfect mortal men — not gods. This was always claimed by its leaders. “He who feels *without sin*, let him cast the first stone.” It is the duty of every Member of the Council to offer advice and to bring for the consideration of the whole body any incorrect proceedings. One of the *plaintiffs* is a Councillor. Having never used his privileges as one, in the matter of the complaints now proffered — and thus, having no excuse to give that his just representations were not listened to, he by bringing out publicly what he had to state first privately — sins against Rule XII. The whole paper now reads like a defamatory aspersion, being full of untheosophical and unbrotherly insinuations — which the writers thereof could never have had in view.

This Rule XIIth was one of the first and the wisest. It is by neglecting to have it enforced when most needed, that the President-Founder has brought upon himself the present penalty.¹⁰ It is his too great indulgence and unwise carelessness that have

⁸ Mr. J.S. Cobb. [*Vide* Bio-Bibliogr. Index under COBB.]

⁹ [*Vide* Bio-Bibliogr. Index under NEWTON for further data.]

¹⁰ For years the wise rule by which any member accused of backbiting or slander was expelled from the Society after sufficient evidence — has become obsolete. There have been two or three solitary cases of expulsion for the same in cases of members of *no* importance. Europeans of position and name were allowed to cover the Society literally with mud and slander their Brothers with perfect impunity. This is the President’s *Karma* — and it is just.



led to all such charges of abuse of power, love of authority, show, of vanity, etc., etc. Let us see how far it may have been deserved.

As shown for 12 years the Founder has toiled *almost alone* in the interests of the Society and the general good — hence, not his own, and, the only complaint he was heard to utter was, that *he was left no time for self-development and study*. The results of this too just complaint are, that those for whom he toiled, are the first to fling at him the reproach of being ignorant of certain Hindu terms, of using one term for another, for instance of having applied the word “Jivanmukta” to a Hindu chela, on one occasion! The crime is a terrible one, indeed . . . We know of “*chelas*,” who being Hindus, are sure never to confuse such well known terms in *their* religion; but who, on the other hand, pursue Jivanmuktship and the highest theosophical Ethics through the royal road of selfish ambition, lies, slander, ingratitude and backbiting. Every road leads to Rome; this is evident; and there is such a thing in Nature as “*Mahatma*”-*Duggas* . . . It would be desirable for the cause of theosophy and truth, however, were all the critics of our President in general, less learned, yet found reaching more to the level of his all-forgiving good nature, his thorough sincerity and unselfishness; as the rest of the members less inclined to lend a willing ear to those, who, like the said “Vicars of Bray” have developed a hatred for the Founders — for reasons unknown.

The above advice is offered to the two Theosophists who have just framed their “Few Words on the Theosophical Organization.” That they are not alone in their complaints (which, translated from their diplomatic into plain language look a good deal in the present case like a mere “*querelle d’allemand*”) and that the said complaints are in a great measure just, — is frankly admitted. Hence, the writer must be permitted to speak in this, her answer, of theosophy and theosophists in general, instead of limiting the *Reply* strictly to the complaints uttered. There is not the slightest desire to be personal; yet, there has accumulated of late such a mass of incandescent material in the Society, by that eternal friction of precisely such “selfish personalities,” that it is certainly wise to try to smother the sparks in time, by pointing out to their true nature.

Demands, and a feeling of necessity for reforms have not originated with the two complainants. They date from several years, and there has never been a question of *avoiding* reforms, but rather a failure of finding such means as would satisfy *all* the theosophists. To the present day, we have yet to find that “wise man” from the East or from the West, who could not only *diagnosicate* the disease in the Theosophical Society, but offer advice and a remedy likewise to cure it. It is easy to write: “It would be out of place to suggest any *specific measures* [for such reforms, which do seem more difficult to *suggest* than to be vaguely hinted at]. For no one who has any faith in Brotherhood and in the power of Truth will fail to perceive what is necessary,” — concludes the critic. One may, perhaps, have such faith and yet fail to perceive what is *most* necessary. Two heads are better than one; and if any practical reforms have suggested themselves to our severe judges their refusal to give us the benefit of their discovery would be most unbrotherly. So far, however, we have received only most impracticable suggestions for reforms whenever these came to be specified. The Founders, and the whole Central Society at the Headquarters, for instance, are invit-



ed to demonstrate their theosophical natures by living like “fowls in the air and lilies of the field,” which neither sow nor reap, toil not, nor spin and “take no thought for the morrow.” This being found hardly practicable, even in India, where a man may go about in the garment of an Angel, but has, nevertheless, to pay rent and taxes, another proposition, then a third one and a fourth — each less practicable than the preceding — were offered . . . the unavoidable rejection of which led finally to the criticism now under review.

After carefully reading “A Few Words, etc.,” no very acute intellect is needed to perceive that, although no “specific measures” are offered in them, the drift of the whole argument tends but to one conclusion, a kind of syllogism more Hindu than metaphysical. Epitomised, the remarks therein plainly say: “Destroy the bad *results* pointed out by destroying the *causes* that generate them.” Such is the apocalyptic meaning of the paper, although both causes and results are made painfully and flagrantly objective and that they may be rendered in this wise: Being shown that the Society is the result and fruition of a bad President; and the latter being the outcome of such an “untheosophically” organized Society — and, its *worse than useless* General Council — “make away with all these *Causes* and the results will disappear”; *i.e.*, the Society will have ceased to exist. Is this the heart-desire of the two *true and sincere Theosophists*?

The complaints — “submitted to *those interested in the progress of true Theosophy*” — which seems to mean “theosophy *divorced from the Society*” — may now be noticed in order and answered. They specify the following objections:

1 To the language of the *Rules* with regard to the powers invested in the President-Founder by the General Council. This objection seems very right. The sentence . . . The duties of the Council “shall consist in *advising* the P.F. *in regard to all matters referred to them by him*” may be easily construed as implying that on all matters *not* referred to the Council by the Prest.-Founder . . . its members will hold their tongues. The Rules are changed, at any rate they are corrected and altered yearly. This sentence can be taken out. The harm, so far, is not so terrible.

2 It is shown that many members *ex-officio* whose names are found on the list of the General Council *are not known* to the Convention; that they are, very likely, not even interested in the Society “under their special care”; a body they had joined at one time, then probably *forgotten* its existence in the meanwhile, to withdraw themselves from the Association. The argument implied is very valid. Why not point it out *officially* to the Members residing at, or visiting the Head-Quarters, the impropriety of such a parading of names? Yet, in what respect can this administrative blunder, or carelessness, interfere with, or *impede* “the progress of *true theosophy*”?¹¹

3 “The members are appointed by the President-Founder . . . it is complained; the General Council only *advises* on what is submitted to it” . . . and “in the meantime that P.F. is empowered *to issue special orders* and provisional rules,” on behalf of that (“dummy”) Council. (Rule IV, p. 20.) Moreover, it is urged that out of a number of 150 members of the G. Council, a quorum of 5 and even 3 members present, may,

¹¹ Furthermore the writer of the complaints in “A Few Words, etc.” is himself a member of the General Council for over two years (see Rules 1885); why has he not spoken earlier?



should it be found necessary *by the President*, decide upon any question of vital importance, etc., etc., etc.

Such an “untheosophical” *display* of authority, is objected to by Messrs. M.M. Chatterji and A. Gebhard, on the grounds that it leads the Society to *Caesarism*, to “tyranny” and papal infallibility, etc., etc. However right the two complainants may be *in principle* it is impossible to fail seeing, the absurd exaggerations of the epithets used; for, having just been accused on one page of “tyrannical authority,” of “centralization of power” and a “papal institution” (p. 9) — on page 11, the President-Founder is shown “issuing *special orders*” from that “centre of Caesarism” — *which no one is bound to obey, unless he so wishes!* “It is well known” remarks the principal writer — “that not only individuals but even Branches have refused to pay this [annual] subscription . . . of . . . two shillings” (p. 11); without any bad effect for themselves, resulting out of it, as appears. Thus it would seem it is not to a *non-existent* authority that objections should be made, but simply to a vain and useless *display* of power that no one cares for. The policy of issuing “special orders” with such sorry results is indeed objectionable; only, *not on the ground of a tendency to Caesarism*, but simply because it becomes *highly ridiculous*. The undersigned for one, has many a time objected to it, moved however, more by a spirit of *worldly* pride and an *untheosophical* feeling of self-respect than anything like Yogi humility. It is admitted with regret that the world of scoffers and *non-theosophists* might, if they heard of it, find in it a capital matter for fun. But the real wonder is, how can certain *European* theosophists, who have bravely defied the world to make them wince under any amount of ridicule, once they acted in accordance with the dictates of their conscience and duty — make a crime of what is at the worst a *harmless*, even if ridiculous, bit of vanity; a desire of giving importance — not to the Founder, but to his Society *for which he is ready to die any day*. One kind of ridicule is worth another. The Western theosophist, who for certain magnetic reasons wears his hair long and shows otherwise eccentricity in his dress, will be spared no more than his President, with his “special orders.” Only the latter, remaining as kindly disposed and brotherly to the “individual theosophist and even a Branch” — that snub *him* and his “order,” by refusing to pay what others do — shows himself *ten-fold more theosophical and true to the principle of Brotherhood*, than the former, who traduces and denounces him in such uncharitable terms, instead of kindly warning him of the bad effect produced. Unfortunately, it is not those who speak the loudest of virtue and theosophy, who are the best exemplars of both. Few of them, if any, have tried to cast out the beam from their own eye, before they raised their voices against the mote in the eye of a brother. Furthermore, it seems to have become quite the theosophical rage in these days, to denounce vehemently, yet never to offer to help pulling out *any* such *motes*.

The Society is bitterly criticized for asking every well-to-do theosophist (the poor are exempt from it, from the first) to pay annually two shillings to help defraying the expenses at Head-Quarters. It is denounced as “untheosophical,” “unbrotherly,” and the “admission fee” of £1, is declared no better than a “sale of Brotherhood.” In this our “Brotherhood” may be shown again on a far higher level than any other association past or present. The Theosophical Society has never shown the ambitious pretension to outshine in *theosophy* and *brotherliness*, the primitive Brotherhood of



Jesus and his Apostles,¹² and that “Organization,” besides asking and being occasionally refused, helped itself *without asking*, and as a matter of fact in a *real* community of Brothers. Nevertheless, such action, that would seem highly untheosophical and prejudicial in our day of culture when nations alone are privileged to pocket each other’s property and expect to be honoured for it — does not seem to have been an obstacle in the way of deification and sanctification of the said early “Brotherly” group. Our Society had never certainly any idea of rising superior to the *brotherliness* and *ethics* preached by Christ, but only to those of the *sham* Christianity of the Churches — as originally ordered to, by our MASTERS. And if we do not worse than the Gospel Brotherhood did, and far better than any Church, which would expel any member refusing too long to pay his Church rates, it is really hard to see why our “Organization” should be ostracized by its own members. At any rate, the pens of the latter ought to show themselves less *acerb*, in these days of trouble when every one seems bent on finding fault with the Society, and few to help it, and that the President-Founder is alone to work and toil with a few devoted theosophists at Adyar to assist him.

4 “There is no such institution in existence as the Parent Society” — we are told (*pp.* 2 and 3). “It has disappeared from the Rules and . . . has no *legal* existence” . . . The Society being unchartered, *it has not* — legally; but no more has any theosophist a legal existence, for the matter of that. Is there one single member throughout the whole globe who would be recognised *by law* or before a Magistrate — *as a theosophist?* Why then do the gentlemen “complainants” call themselves “theosophists” if the latter qualification has no better legal standing than the said “Parent Society” or the Head-Quarters itself? But the Parent-body *does* exist, and will, so long as the last man or woman of the primitive group of Theosophists-*Founders* is alive. This — as a body; as for its moral characteristics, the Parent-Society means that small nucleus of theosophists who hold sacredly through storm and blows to the *original programme* of the T.S. as established under the direction and orders of those, whom they recognize — and will, to their last breath — as the real originators of the Movement, their *living*, Holy MASTERS AND TEACHERS.¹³

5 The complaints then, that the T.S. “has laws without sanction, a legislative body without legality, a Parent Society without existence,” and, worse than all — “a President-Founder *above all rules*” — are thus shown only *partially* correct. But even were they all absolutely true, it would be easy to abolish such rules with one stroke of the pen, or to modify them. But now comes the curious part of that severe *philippic* against the T.S. by our eloquent Demosthenes. After six pages (out of the twelve) had been filled with the said charges, the writer admits on the 7th, — that they have been so modified! — “The above” we learn (rather late) “was written under the *misappre-*

¹² Yet, the Theosophical Brotherhood does seem doomed to outrival the group of Apostles in the number of its *denying* Peters, its unbelieving Thomases, and even Iscariots occasionally, ready to sell their Brotherhood for less than thirty *sheckles* of silver!

¹³ The members of the T.S. know, and those who do not should be told, that the term “Mahatma,” now so subtly analysed and controverted, for some mysterious reasons had never been applied to our Masters before our arrival in India. For years they were known as the “Adept-Brothers,” the “Masters,” etc. It is the Hindus themselves who began applying the term to the two Teachers. This is no place for an etymological disquisition and the fitness or unfitness of the qualification, in the case in hand. As a *state*, *Mahatmaship* is one thing, as a double noun, *Maha-atma* (Great Soul), quite another one. Hindus ought to know the value of metaphysical Sanskrit names used; and it is they the first, who have used it to designate the MASTERS.



hension that the Rules bearing date 1885 were the latest. It has since been found that there is a later version of the Rules dated 1886, which *have modified the older rules on a great many points.*” So much the better. — Why recall in such case mistakes in the past if these exist no longer? But the accusers do not see it in this light. They are determined to act as a theosophical Nemesis; and in no way daunted by the discovery, they add that nevertheless “it is *necessary* to examine the earlier rules to ascertain *the underlying principle* which runs through the present ones as well.” This reminds of the fable of “the Wolf and the Lamb.” But — you see — “the chief point is that the Convention *has no power to make any rules*, as such a power is *opposed to the spirit of Theosophy.* . . . ,” etc., etc.

Now this is the most extraordinary argument that could be made. At this rate no Brotherhood, no Association, no Society is possible. More than this: no theosophist, however holy his present life may be, would have the right to call himself one; for were it always found *necessary* to examine *his earlier life*, “to ascertain the *underlying principle*” which rules through the nature of the present man — ten to one, he would be found unfit to be called a theosophist! The experiment would hardly be found pleasant to the majority of those whom association with the T.S. has reformed, and of such there are a good many.

After such virulent and severe denunciations one might expect some good, friendly and theosophically *practical* advice. Not at all, and none is offered, since we have been already told (*p.* 9) that it would be “out of place to suggest any specific measures. For no one who has any faith in Brotherhood and in the power of Truth *will fail* to perceive what is necessary.” The President-Founder, has *no faith* in either “Brotherhood,” or “the power of Truth” — apparently. This is made evident by his having *failed* to perceive (a) that the Head-Quarters — opened to *all* Theosophists of any race or social position, board and lodging free of charge the whole year round — was an *unbrotherly* Organization; (b) that the “central office at Adyar for keeping records and concentrating information” with its European and Hindu inmates working *gratuitously* and some helping it with their own money whenever they have it — ought to be carried on, according to the method and principle of George Muller of Bristol, namely, the numerous household and staff of officers at Adyar headed by the Prest.-Founder ought to kneel every morning in prayer for their bread and milk appealing for their meals to “miracle”; and that finally, and (c) all the good the Society is doing, is no good whatever but “a spiritual wrong,” because it presumes to call a “*limited* line of good work [theosophy] Divine Wisdom.”

The undersigned is an ever patient theosophist, who has hitherto laboured under the impression that no amount of subtle scholasticism and tortured casuistry but could find like the Rosetta stone its Champollion — some day. The most acute among theosophists are now invited to make out in “A Few Words” — what the writers or writer is driving at — unless in plain and unvarnished language, it be — “Down with the Theosophical Society, Prest.-Founder and its Head-Quarters!” This is the only possible explanation of the twelve pages of denunciations to which a reply is now attempted. What can indeed be made out of the following jumble of contradictory statements:

- (a) The Prest.-Founder having been shown throughout as a “tyrant,” a “*would be* Caesar,” “aiming at *papal* power” and a “Venetian Council of Three,” and



other words to that effect implied in almost every sentence of the paper under review, it is confessed in the same breath “that the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society has *completely ignored* the *Rules* [of the Pope Caesar] published by the Headquarters at Adyar”! (p. 4) And yet, the “L.L. of the T.S.” still lives and breathes and one has heard of no *anathema* pronounced against it, so far . . .

(b) Rule XIV stating that the Society has “to deal *only* with scientific and philosophical subjects,” hence, “it is quite *evident* [?] that the power and position claimed in the *Rules* for the Prest.-Founder, the General Council and the Convention are opposed to the spirit of the declared objects. . . .”

It might have been as well perhaps to quote the entire paragraph in which these words appear,¹⁴ once that hairs are split about the possibly faulty reaction of the *Rules*? Is it not self-evident, that the words brought forward “only with scientific and philosophical subjects” are inserted as a necessary caution to *true* theosophists, who by dealing with politics *within* any Branch Society might bring disgrace and ruin on the whole body, — in India to begin with? Has the Society or has it not over 140 Societies scattered through four parts of the World to take care of? As in the case of “Mahatmas” and the “Mahatmaship” — active work of the Theosophical Society is confused — willingly or otherwise it is not for the writer to decide — with Theosophy. No need of entering here upon the difference between the jar that contains a liquid and the nature of, or that liquid itself. “Theosophy teaches *self-culture* and not control,” we are told. Theosophy teaches *mutual-culture* before *self-culture* to *begin* with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many theosophists of the same way of thinking into one or more groups, and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the objects of *mutual* development and progress in Theosophical thought may be best achieved. “Self-culture” is for isolated *Hatha Yogis*, independent of any Society and having to avoid association with human beings; and this is a *triple distilled* SELFISHNESS. For real moral advancement — there “where two or three are gathered” in the name of the SPIRIT OF TRUTH — there that Spirit of Theosophy *will be in the midst of them*. To say that theosophy has no need of a Society — a vehicle and centre thereof, — is like affirming that the Wisdom of the Ages collected in thousands of volumes at the British Museum has no need of either the edifice that contains it, nor the works in which it is found. Why not advise the British Govt. on its lack of discrimination and its *worldliness* in not destroying Museum and all its vehicles of Wisdom? Why spend such sums of money and pay so many officers to watch over its treasures, the more so, since many of its guardians may be quite out of keeping with, and opposed to the Spirit of that Wisdom? The Directors of such Museums may or may not be very perfect men, and some of their assistants may have never opened a philosophical work: yet, it is they who take care of the library and preserving it for future generations are indirectly entitled to their

¹⁴ “XIV. The Society having to deal only with scientific and philosophical subjects, and having Branches in different parts of the world under various forms of Government, does not permit its members, as such, to interfere with politics, and repudiates any attempt on the part of anyone to commit it in favour or against any political party or measure. Violation of this rule will meet with expulsion.”

This rather alters the complexion put on the charge, which seems conveniently to forget that “scientific and philosophical subjects” are not the *only* declared objects of the Society. Let us not leave room for a doubt that there is more *animus* underlying the charges than would be strictly *theosophical*.



thanks. How much more gratitude is due to those who like our self-sacrificing theosophists at Adyar, devote their lives to, and give their services gratuitously to the good of Humanity!

Diplomas and Charters are objected to, and chiefly the “admission fee.” The latter is a “taxation,” and therefore “*inconsistent* with the principle of Brotherhood” . . . A “forced gift is *unbrotherly*,” etc., etc. It would be curious to see where the T.S. would be led to, were the Pt.-F. to religiously follow the proffered advices. “Initiation” on admission, has been made away with already in Europe, and has *led to that* which will very soon become known: no use mentioning it at present. Now the “Charters” and diplomas would follow. Hence no document to show for any group, and no diploma to prove that one is affiliated to the Society. Hence also perfect liberty to any one to either call himself a theosophist, or deny he is one. The “admission fee”? Indeed, it has to be regarded as a terrible and *unbrotherly* “extortion,” and a “forced gift,” in the face of those thousands of Masonic Lodges, of Clubs, Associations, Societies, Leagues, and even the “Salvation Army.” The former, extort yearly *fortunes* from their Members; the latter — throttle in the name of Jesus the masses and appealing to *voluntary* contributions make the converts pay, and pay in their turn every one of their “officers,” none of whom will serve the “Army” for nothing. Yet it would be well, perchance, were our members to follow the example of the Masons in their solidarity of thought and action and at least *outward* Union, notwithstanding that receiving a thousand times more from their members they give them in return still less than we do, whether spiritually or morally. This solitary single guinea expected from every new member is spent in less than one week, as was calculated, on postage and correspondence with theosophists. Or are we to understand that all correspondence with members — now left to “*self-culture*” — is also to cease and has to follow diplomas, Charters and the rest? Then truly, the Head-Quarters and Office have better be closed. A simple *Query* — however: Have the £1. — the yearly contribution to the L.L. of the T.S., and the further sum of 2/6d. to the Oriental Group been abolished as “acts of unbrotherly extortion,” and how long, if so, have they begun to be regarded as “a *sale* of Brotherhood”?

To continue: the charges wind up with the following remarks, so profound, that it requires a deeper head than ours to fathom all that underlies the words contained in them. “Is the Theosophical Society a Brotherhood, or not?” queries the plaintiff — “if the former, is it possible *to have any centre of arbitrary power?*”¹⁵ To hold that there is a necessity for such a centre is only a round-about way of saying that no Brotherhood is possible,¹⁶ but in point of fact *that necessity itself is by no means* proved [!?!]. There have been no doubt Brotherhoods under single Masters [there “have been” and *still are*. H.P.B.], but in such cases the Masters were never elected *for geographical* or other considerations [?]. The natural leader of men was always recognized by his embodying the spirit of Humanity. To institute comparisons would be little short of

¹⁵ It is the *first time* since the T.S. exists that such an accusation of *arbitrary* power, is brought forward. Not many will be found of this way of thinking.

¹⁶ No need taking a *roundabout* way, to say that no Brotherhood would ever be possible if many theosophists shared the very original views of the writer.



blasphemy. The greatest among men is always the readiest to serve and yet is unconscious of the Service.

“Let us pause before finally tying the millstone of worldliness round the neck of Theosophy. Let us not forget that Theosophy does not grow in our midst *by force and control*, but by the *sunshine of brotherliness* and the *dew of self-oblivion*. If we do not believe in Brotherhood and Truth, let us put ashes on our head and *weep in sackcloth* and not rejoice in the purple of authority and in the festive garments of pride and worldliness. Better it is by far that the name of Theosophy should never be heard than that it should be used as the motto of a *papal institution*.”

Who, upon reading this, and being ignorant that the above piece of rhetorical flowers of speech is directed against the luckless Prest.-Founder — would not have in his “mind’s eye” — an Alexander Borgia, a Caligula, or to say the least — General Booth in his latest metamorphosis! When, how, or by doing what, has our good natured, unselfish, ever kind President merited such a Ciceronian tirade? The state of things denounced exists now for almost twelve years, and our accuser knew of it and even took an active part in its organization, Conventions, Councils, Rules, etc., etc., at Bombay, and at Adyar. This virulent *sortie* is no doubt due to “SELF-CULTURE”? The critic has outgrown the movement and turned his face from the original programme; hence his severity. But where is the *true theosophical charity*, the tolerance and the “*sunshine of brotherliness*” just spoken of, and so insisted upon? Verily — it is easy to preach the “dew of self-oblivion” when one has nothing to think about except to evolve such finely rounded phrases; were every theosophist at Adyar to have his daily wants and even comforts, his board, lodging and all, attended to by a wealthier theosophist; and were the same “sunshine of brotherliness” to be poured upon him, as it is upon the critic who found for himself an endless brotherly care, a fraternal and self-sacrificing devotion in two other noble minded members, then — would there be little need for the President-Founder to call upon and humble himself before our theosophists. For, if he has to *beg* for 2 annual shillings — it is, in order that those — Europeans and Hindus — who work night and day at Adyar, giving their services free and receiving little thanks or honour for it should have at least *one meal a day*. The fresh “dew of self-oblivion” must not be permitted to chill one’s heart, and turn into the lethal *mold of forgetfulness* to such an extent as that. The severe critic seems to have lost sight of the fact that for months, during the last crisis, the whole staff of our devoted Adyar officers, from the President down to the youngest brother in the office, have lived on 5d. a day each, having reduced their meals to the *minimum*. And it is *this mite*, the proceeds of the “2 skill. contribution,” conscientiously paid by some that is now called *extortion*, a desire to live “in the purple of authority and in the festive garments of pride and worldliness”!

Our “Brother” is right. Let us “weep in sackcloth and ashes on our head” if the T.S. has many more such *unbrotherly* criticisms to bear. Truly it would be far better “that the name of Theosophy should never be heard than that it should be used as the motto” — not of *papal authority* which exists nowhere at Adyar outside the critic’s imagination — but as a motto of a “self-developed fanaticism.” All the great services otherwise rendered to the Society, all the noble work done by the complainant will



pale and vanish before such an appearance of cold-heartedness. Surely he cannot desire the *annihilation* of the Society? And if he did it would be useless: the T.S. *cannot be destroyed as a body*. It is not in the power of either Founders or their critics; and neither friend nor enemy can ruin that which is *doomed to exist*, all the blunders of its leaders notwithstanding. That which was generated through and founded by the “High Masters” and under their authority if not their instruction — MUST AND WILL LIVE. Each of us and all will receive his or her *Karma* in it, but the *vehicle* of Theosophy will stand indestructible and undestroyed by the hand of whether man or fiend. No; “truth does not depend on show of hands”; but in the case of the much-abused President-Founder it must depend on the show of *facts*. Thorny and full of pitfalls was the steep path he had to climb up alone and unaided for the first years. Terrible was the opposition outside the Society he had to build — sickening and disheartening the treachery he often encountered within the Head-Quarters. Enemies gnashing their teeth in his face around, those whom he regarded as his staunchest friends and co-workers betraying him and the Cause on the slightest provocation. Still, where hundreds in his place would have collapsed and given up the whole undertaking in despair, he, unmoved and unmovable, went on climbing up and toiling as before, unrelenting and undismayed, supported by that one thought and conviction that he was doing his duty. What other inducement has the Founder ever had, but his theosophical pledge and the sense of his duty toward THOSE he had promised to serve to the end of his life? There was but one beacon for him — the hand that had first pointed to him his way up: the hand of the MASTER he loves and reveres so well, and serves so devotedly though occasionally perhaps, unwisely. President elected for life, he has nevertheless offered more than once to resign in favour of any one found worthier than him, but was never permitted to do so by the majority — not of “show of hands” but *show of hearts*, literally, — as few are more beloved than he is even by most of those, who may criticise occasionally his actions. And this is only natural: for cleverer in administrative capacities, more learned in philosophy, subtler in casuistry, in metaphysics or daily life policy, there may be many around him; but the whole globe may be searched through and through and no one found stauncher to his friends, truer to his word, or more devoted to real, practical theosophy — than the President-Founder; and these are the chief requisites in a leader of such a movement — one that aims to become a Brotherhood of men. The Society needs no Loyolas; it has to shun anything approaching casuistry; nor ought we to tolerate too subtle casuists. There, where every individual has to work out his own Karma, the judgment of a casuist who takes upon himself the duty of pronouncing upon the state of a brother’s soul, or guide his conscience is of no use, and may become positively injurious. The Founder claims no more rights than everyone else in the Society: the *right of private judgment*, which, whenever it is found to disagree with Branches or individuals are quietly set aside and *ignored* — *as shown by the complainants themselves*. This then, is the sole crime of the would-be culprit, and no worse than this can be laid at his door. And yet what is the reward of that kind man? He, who has never refused a service, outside what he considers his official duties — to any living being; he who has redeemed dozens of men, young and old from dissipated, often immoral lives and saved others from terrible scrapes by giving them a safe refuge in the Society; he, who has placed others again, on the pinnacle of Saintship



through their status in that Society, when otherwise they would have indeed found themselves now in the meshes of “worldliness” and perhaps worse; — he, that true friend of every theosophist, and verily “the readiest to serve and as unconscious of the service” — he is now taken to task for what? — for insignificant blunders, for useless “special orders,” a *childish*, rather than untheosophical love of display, out of pure devotion to his Society. Is then *human nature* to be viewed so uncharitably by us, as to call *untheosophical*, worldly and sinful the natural impulse of a mother to dress up her child and parade it to the best advantages? The comparison may be laughed at, but if it is, it will be only by him who would, like the fanatical Christian of old, or the naked, dishevelled Yogi of India — have no more charity for the smallest human weakness. Yet, the simile is quite correct, since the Society is the child, the beloved creation of the Founder; he may be well forgiven for this too exaggerated love for that for which he has suffered and toiled more than all other theosophists put together. He is called “worldly,” “ambitious of power” and *untheosophical* for it. Very well; let then any impartial judge compare the life of the Founder with those of most of his critics, and see which was *the most theosophical* ever since the Society sprang into existence. If no better results have been achieved, it is not the President who ought to be taken to task for it, but the Members themselves, as he has been ever trying to promote its growth, and the majority of “Fellows” have either done nothing, or created obstacles in the way of its progress through sins of omission as of commission. Better unwise *activity*, than an overdose of too wise *inactivity*, apathy or indifference which are always the death of an undertaking.

Nevertheless, it is the members who now seek to sit in Solomon’s seat; and they tell us that the Society is useless, its President positively mischievous, and that the Head-Quarters ought to be done away with, as “the organization called Theosophical presents many features seriously obstructive to the progress of Theosophy.” Trees, however, have to be judged by their fruits. It was just shown that no “special orders” issuing from the “Centre of Power” called Adyar, could affect in any way whatever either Branch or individual; and therefore any theosophist bent on “self-culture,” “self-involution” or any kind of *selfness*, is at liberty to do so; and if, instead of using his rights he will apply his brain-power to criticize other people’s actions then it is he who becomes the *obstructionist* and not at all the “Organization called Theosophical.” For, if theosophy is anywhere practised on this globe, it is at Adyar, at the Head-Quarters. Let “those interested in the progress of true theosophy” appealed to by the writers look around them and judge. See the Branch Societies and compare them with the group that works in that “Centre of Power.” Admire the “progress of theosophy” at Paris, London and even America. Behold, in the great “Brotherhood,” a true *Pandemonium* of which the Spirit of Strife and Hatred himself might be proud! Everywhere — quarrelling, fighting for supremacy; backbiting, slandering, scandal-mongering for the last two years; a veritable battlefield, on which several members have so disgraced themselves and their Society by trying to disgrace others, that they have actually become more like hyenas than human beings by digging into the graves of the Past, in the hopes of bringing forward old forgotten slanders and scandals!

At Adyar alone, at the Head-Quarters of the Theosophical Society, the Theosophists are that which they ought to be everywhere else: *true theosophists* and not merely



philosophers and Sophists. In that centre alone are now grouped together the few solitary, practically working Members, who labor and toil, quietly and uninterruptedly, while those Brothers for whose sake they are working, sit in the *dolce far niente*¹⁷ of the West and criticise them. Is this “true theosophical and brotherly work,” to advise to put down and disestablish the only “centre” where real brotherly, humanitarian work is being accomplished?

“Theosophy first and organization after.” Golden words, these. But where would Theosophy be heard of now, had not its Society been organized before its Spirit and a desire for it had permeated the whole world? And would Vedanta and other Hindu philosophies have been ever taught and studied in England outside the walls of Oxford and Cambridge, had it not been for that organization that fished them like forgotten pearls out of the Ocean of Oblivion and Ignorance and brought them forward before the profane world? Nay, kind Brothers and critics, would the Hindu exponents of that sublime philosophy themselves have ever been known outside the walls of Calcutta, had not the Founders, obedient to the ORDERS received, forced the remarkable learning and philosophy of those exponents upon the recognition of the two most civilized and cultured centres of Europe London and Paris? Verily it is easier to *destroy* than to build. The words “untheosophical” and “unbrotherly” are ever ringing in our ears; yet, truly theosophical acts and words are not to be found in too unreasonable a superabundance among those who use the reproof the oftener. However insignificant, and however *limited the line* of good deeds, the latter will have always more weight than empty and vainglorious talk, and will be *theosophy* whereas theories without any practical realisation are at best philosophy. Theosophy is an all-embracing Science; many are the ways leading to it, as numerous in fact as its definitions, which began by the sublime, during the day of Ammonius Saccas, and ended by the ridiculous — in Webster’s *Dictionary*. There is no reason why our critics should claim the right for themselves alone to *know* what is theosophy and to define it. There were theosophists and Theosophical Schools for the last 2,000 years, from Plato down to the mediaeval Alchemists, who knew the value of the term, it may be supposed. Therefore, when we are told that “the question for consideration is not whether the Theosophical Society *is doing good*, but whether it is doing *that kind of good which is entitled to the name of Theosophy*” — we turn round and ask: “And who is to be the judge in this mooted question?” We have heard of one of the greatest Theosophists who ever lived, who assured his audience that whosoever *gave a cup of cold water to a little one* in his (Theosophy’s) name, would have a greater reward than all the learned Scribes and Pharisees. “Woe to the world because of offences!”

Belief in the Masters was never made an article of faith in the T.S. But for its Founders, the commands received from Them when it was established have ever been sacred. And this is what one of them wrote in a letter preserved to this day:

“Theosophy must not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical Ethics epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy must be made practical, and has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless discussion . . . It has to find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life thorough-

¹⁷ [Italian for sweet to do nothing, *i.e.*, pleasing inactivity.]



ly impregnated with its spirit — the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity and love. Its followers have to set the example of a firmly outlined and as firmly applied morality before they get the right to point out, even in a spirit of kindness, the absence of a like ethic Unity and singleness of purpose in other associations and individuals. As said before — no Theosophist should blame a brother whether within or outside of the association, throw slur upon his actions or denounce him¹⁸ lest he should himself lose the right of being considered a theosophist. Ever turn away your gaze from the imperfections of your neighbour and centre rather your attention upon your own shortcomings in order to correct them and become wiser . . . Show not the disparity between claim and action in another man but — whether he be brother or neighbour — rather help him in his arduous walk in life . . . The problem of true theosophy and its great mission is the working out of clear, unequivocal conceptions of ethic ideas and duties which would satisfy most and best the altruistic and right feeling in us; and the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life where they may be applied with most equitableness . . . Such is the common work in view for all who are willing to act on these principles. It is a laborious task and will require strenuous and persevering exertion, but it must lead you insensibly to progress and leave no room for any selfish aspirations outside the limits traced . . . Do not indulge in unbrotherly comparisons between the task accomplished by yourself and the work left undone by your neighbour or brother, in the field of Theosophy, *as none is held to weed out a larger plot of ground than his strength and capacity will permit him* . . . Do not be too severe on the merits or demerits of one who seeks admission among your ranks, as the truth about the actual state of the inner man can only be known to, and dealt with justly by KARMA alone. Even the simple presence amidst you of a well-intentioned and sympathising individual may help you magnetically. . . . You are the Free-workers on the Domain of Truth, and as such, must leave no obstructions on the paths leading to it.” . . . [The letter closes with the following lines which have now become quite plain, as they give the key to the whole situation] . . . *“The degrees of success or failure are the landmark we shall have to follow, as they will constitute the barriers placed with your own hands between yourselves and those whom you have asked to be your teachers. The nearer your approach to the goal contemplated — the shorter the distance between the student and the Master. . . .”*

A complete answer is thus found in the above lines to the paper framed by the two Theosophists. Those who are now inclined to repudiate the Hand that traced it and feel ready to turn their backs upon the whole Past and the original programme of the T.S. are at liberty to do so. The Theosophical body is neither a Church nor a Sect and every individual opinion is entitled to a hearing. A Theosophist may progress and develop, and his views may outgrow those of the Founders, grow larger and broader in every direction, without for all that abandoning the fundamental soil upon which they were born and nurtured. It is only he who changes diametrically his opinions

¹⁸ It is in consequence of this letter that Art. XII was adopted in *Rules* and a fear of lacking the charity prescribed, that led so often to neglect its enforcement.

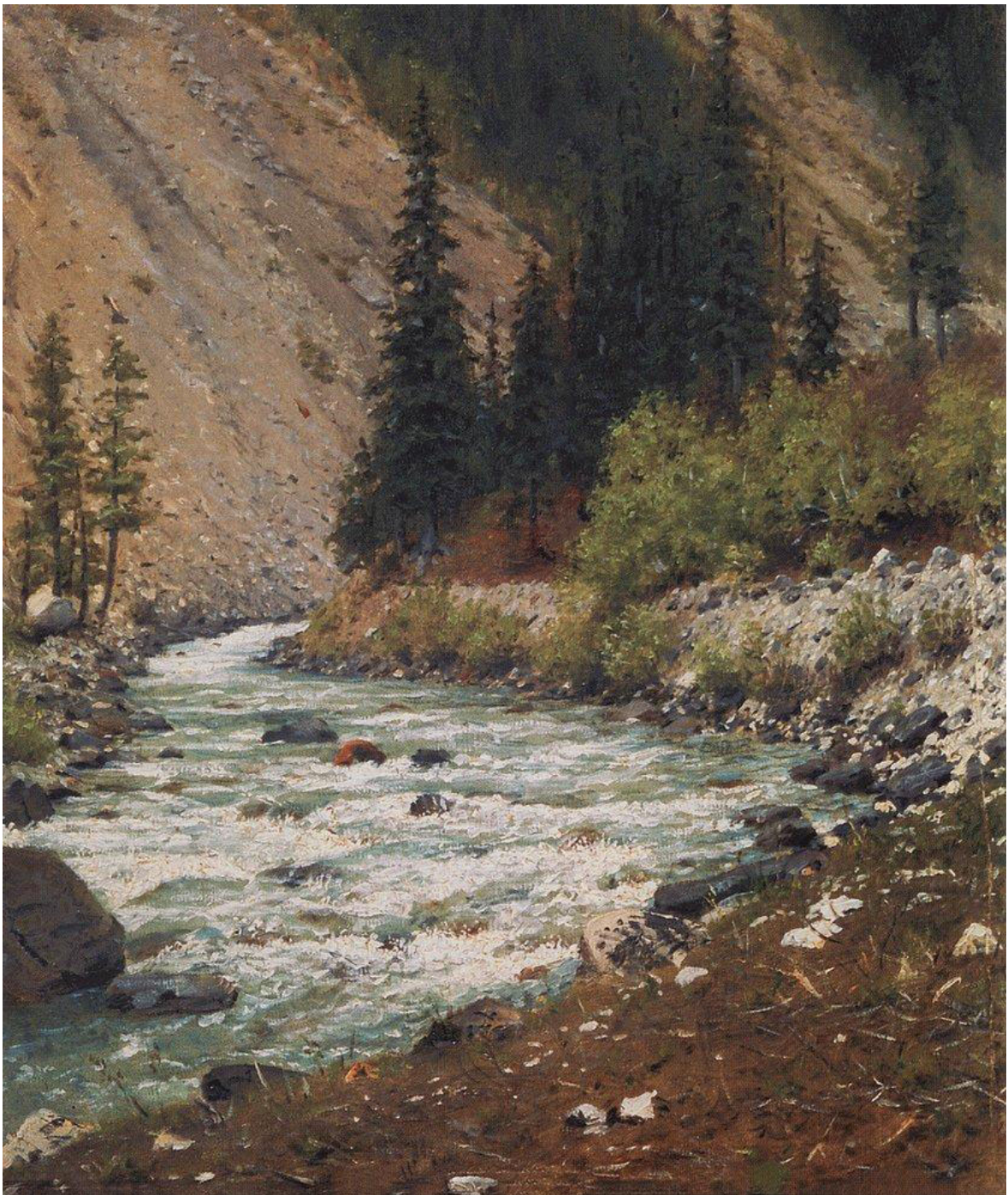


from one day to another and shifts his devotional views from white to black — who can be hardly trusted in his remarks and actions. But surely, this can never be the case of the two Theosophists who have now been answered . . .

Meanwhile, peace and fraternal good-will to all.

H.P. BLAVATSKY,
Corres. Secty T.S.

Ostende, Oct. 3rd, 1886



Mountain stream in Kashmir (1875) Vasily Vereshchagin, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



[For the benefit of the serious student, interested in the historical development of the Theosophical Movement, we append herewith the version of the Teacher's letter, as published in *Lucifer* (Vol. I, January, 1888, pp. 344-46).]

Some words on daily life

(Written by a Master of Wisdom)

It is divine philosophy alone, the spiritual and psychic blending of man with nature, which, by revealing the fundamental truths that lie hidden under the objects of sense and perception, can promote a spirit of unity and harmony in spite of the great diversities of conflicting creeds. Theosophy, therefore, expects and demands from the Fellows of the Society a great mutual toleration and charity for each other's shortcomings, ungrudging mutual help in the search for truths in every department of nature — moral and physical. And this ethical standard must be unflinchingly applied to daily life.

Theosophy should not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical ethics, epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy *must be made practical*; and it has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless digressions, in the sense of desultory orations and fine talk. Let every Theosophist only do his duty, that which he can and ought to do, and very soon the sum of human misery, within and around the areas of every Branch of your Society, will be found visibly diminished. Forget SELF in working for others — and the task will become an easy and a light one for you . . .

Do not set your pride in the appreciation and acknowledgment of that work by others. Why should any member of the Theosophical Society, striving to become a Theosophist, put any value upon his neighbours' good or bad opinion of himself and his work, so long as he himself knows it to be useful and beneficent to other people? Human praise and enthusiasm are short-lived at best; the laugh of the scoffer and the condemnation of the indifferent looker-on are sure to follow, and generally to out-weigh the admiring praise of the friendly. Do not despise the opinion of the world, nor provoke it uselessly to unjust criticism. Remain rather as indifferent to the abuse as to the praise of those who can never know you as you really are, and who ought, therefore, to find you unmoved by either, and ever placing the approval or condemnation of your own *Inner Self* higher than that of the multitudes.

Those of you who would know yourselves in the spirit of truth, learn to live alone even amidst the great crowds which may sometimes surround you. Seek communion and intercourse only with the God within your own soul; heed only the praise or blame of that deity which can never be separated from your *true self, as it is verily that God itself*: called the HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS. Put without delay your good intentions into practice, never leaving a single one to remain only an intention — expecting, meanwhile, neither reward nor even acknowledgment for the good you may have done. Reward and acknowledgment are in yourself and inseparable from you, as it is your Inner Self alone which can appreciate them at their true degree and value. For each one of you contains within the precincts of his inner tabernacle the Supreme Court — prose-



cutor, defence, jury and judge — whose sentence is the only one without appeal; since none can know you better than you do yourself, when once you have learned to judge that Self by the never wavering light of the inner divinity — your higher Consciousness. Let, therefore, the masses, which can never know your true selves, condemn your outer selves according to their own false lights

The majority of the public Areopagus is generally composed of self-appointed judges, who have never made a permanent deity of any idol save their own personalities — their lower selves; for those who try in their walk in life, to follow their *inner light* will never be found judging, far less condemning, those weaker than themselves. What does it matter then, whether the former condemn or praise, whether they humble you or exalt you on a pinnacle? They will never comprehend you one way or the other. They may make an idol of you, so long as they imagine you a faithful mirror of themselves on the pedestal or altar which they have reared for you, and while you amuse or benefit them. You cannot expect to be anything for them but a temporary *fetish*, succeeding another fetish just overthrown, and followed in your turn by another idol. Let, therefore, those who have created that idol destroy it whenever they like, casting it down with as little cause as they had for setting it up. Your Western Society can no more live without its Khalif of an hour than it can worship one for any longer period; and whenever it breaks an idol and then besmears it with mud, it is not the model, but the disfigured image created by its own foul fancy and which it has endowed with its own vices, that Society dethrones and breaks.

Theosophy can only find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life, thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity, and brotherly love. Its Society, as a body, has a task before it which, unless performed with the utmost discretion, will cause the world of the indifferent and the selfish to rise up in arms against it. Theosophy has to fight intolerance, prejudice, ignorance and selfishness, hidden under the mantle of hypocrisy. It has to throw all the light it can from the torch of Truth, with which its servants are entrusted. It must do this without fear or hesitation, dreading neither reproof nor condemnation. Theosophy, through its mouthpiece, the Society, has to tell the TRUTH to the very face of LIE; to beard the tiger in its den, without thought or fear of evil consequences, and to set at defiance calumny and threats. As *an Association*, it has not only the right, but the duty to uncloak vice and do its best to redress wrongs, whether through the voice of its chosen lecturers or the printed word of its journals and publications — making its accusations, however, as impersonal as possible. But its Fellows, or Members, have *individually* no such right. Its followers have, first of all, to set the example of a firmly outlined and as firmly applied morality, before they obtain the right to point out, even in a spirit of kindness, the absence of a like ethic unity and singleness of purpose in other associations or individuals. No Theosophist should blame a brother, whether within or outside of the association; neither may he throw a slur upon another's actions or denounce him, lest he himself lose the right to be considered as a Theosophist. For, as such, he has to turn away his gaze from the im-



perfections of his neighbour, and centre rather his attention upon his own shortcomings, in order to correct them and become wiser. Let him not show the disparity between claim and action in another, but, whether in the case of a brother, a neighbour, or simply a fellow man, let him rather ever help one weaker than himself on the arduous walk of life.

The problem of true Theosophy and its great mission are, first, the working out of clear unequivocal conceptions of ethic ideas and duties, such as shall best and most fully satisfy the right and altruistic feelings in men; and second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life, as shall offer a field where they may be applied with most equitableness.

Such is the common work placed before all who are willing to act on these principles. It is a laborious task, and will require strenuous and persevering exertion; but it must lead you insensibly to progress, and leave you no room for any selfish aspirations outside the limits traced . . . Do not indulge personally in unbrotherly comparison between the task accomplished by yourself and the work left undone by your neighbours or brothers. In the fields of Theosophy *none is held to weed out a larger plot of ground than his strength and capacity will permit him*. Do not be too severe on the merits or demerits of one who seeks admission among your ranks, as the truth about the actual state of the inner man can only be known to Karma, and can be dealt with justly by that all-seeing LAW alone. Even the simple presence amidst you of a well-intentioned and sympathising individual may help you magnetically. . . . You are the free volunteer workers on the fields of Truth, and as such must leave no obstruction on the paths leading to that field.

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*The degree of success or failure are the landmarks the masters have to follow, as they will constitute the barriers placed with your own hands between yourselves and those whom you have asked to be your teachers. The nearer your approach to the goal contemplated — the shorter the distance between the student and the Master.*¹⁹



¹⁹ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, VII pp. 135-75

