

*A Master of Wisdom
defends Madame Blavatsky*



Introductory Notes by Boris de Zirkoff.

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (AN EXPLANATION IMPORTANT TO ALL THEOSOPHISTS) X pp. 134-42.

The following important statement was issued by H.P. Blavatsky as a small 12-page pamphlet bearing on its title-page the imprint: London, Allen Scott & Co., 30, Bouverie Street, E.C., 1888. The month of its publication is most likely October, as we find the same material published in *Lucifer*, Vol. III, No. 14, October 1888, pp. 145-48. There are slight alterations in the *Lucifer* text, as compared with the pamphlet, and the text of the latter is somewhat more complete. We have adhered to the text of the pamphlet.

For the benefit of the serious student, it should be stated that the situation in the Theosophical Movement around that time was very precarious. Many mistakes had been committed, and the Adept-Brothers had retired somewhat into the background, as far as the Society's outer affairs were concerned, while remaining in close touch with a few individuals. The best and most authentic source of information regarding certain factors in the overall situation at the time, is a document in the handwriting of H.P. Blavatsky, written in pencil on thin notepaper, which appears to be a memorandum of the remarks of Master K.H. regarding the situation in the T.S.¹ in 1888. The original is in the Adyar Archives. It has been published as Letter 47 in *Letters From the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series,² and deserves most careful study by all those interested in the inner workings of our spiritual Movement, and the many pitfalls encountered by students.

In November 1888, Madame Blavatsky, acting on a previous direct suggestion of William Quan Judge,³ organized on the outer plane the Esoteric Section or the Eastern School of Theosophy, to strengthen the link between the outer society and the Brothers who were its real Founders and Inspirers. The T.S. was becoming gradually devitalized, and the idea of Brotherhood had been relegated into the background, as compared with the pursuits of the Second Object of the Society. The pages of *The Theosophist* reflect very definitely the situation at the time. From careful observation it would appear that Col. Olcott during this period feared for the welfare of the Society if it were publicly [135] linked to the idea of the Masters, and avoided any references to them and their connection with the Society in the magazine. Undoubtedly this was partially due to the shock from the Coulomb-Missionary attack of 1884–1885, and the final adverse Report of the Society for Psychological Research.

¹ [Theosophical Society]

² Transcribed and compiled by C. Jinarājadāsa.

³ A suggestion embodied by him in a letter addressed to Madame Blavatsky and dated May 18th, 1887. It was originally published in Mr. Judge's E.S.T. Circular, "By Master's Direction," dated November 1894; it was also printed in *Practical Occultism* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1951), pp. 85-86.

In London, from about 1886, a band of younger workers had gathered together; among them were Bertram Keightley and Dr. Archibald Keightley, Claude Falls Wright, G.R.S. Mead, Laura Cooper, E.T. Sturdy, W.G. Old, and others. They definitely desired to tread the path leading to the Masters, and constituted themselves as H.P. Blavatsky's personal disciples.

The situation, however, was somewhat complicated by fear on the part of Col. Olcott that Madame Blavatsky was organizing a counterpoise to his influence in the Society as President, and was perhaps attempting to create an *imperium in imperio*¹ in Europe. Whether this was Col. Olcott's own fear, or whether it was a thought sown in his mind by other individuals under whose influence he was at the time, is somewhat obscure. It may have been both.

The new workers gathered around Madame Blavatsky, when she had been prevailed upon to move to London permanently, had very little knowledge of Col. Olcott's magnificent record of sacrifices for the Theosophical Society; they sometimes thought of him as "the old man" at Adyar who was trying to obstruct Madame Blavatsky's plans for the Cause. This resulted in the rather angry feeling Col. Olcott had, when he left India on his trip to Europe, with the aim of clearing up existing misunderstandings and restoring a better feeling among all concerned.

It was then that Master K.H. definitely entered into the picture with a letter addressed to Col. Olcott, which was precipitated in his cabin on board the SS. *Shannon*, August 22nd, 1888, the day before reaching Brindisi.²

Oddly enough, in his *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. III, p. 91, Col. Olcott speaks of this letter as if it had been received in 1884. He quotes from it, and connects it with the difficulties of 1884 in the London Lodge, concerning which other instructions had been given him.³ The Colonel was definitely mistaken in this, as he himself mentions the receipt of this letter on board the SS. *Shannon*, a steamer of the P&O Mail Line on which he sailed from Bombay, August 7th, 1888, as reported in his *Diary* on that date (and in *The Theosophist*, Supplement, September, 1888, p. ciii). Besides, in the body of that [136] letter the Master himself speaks of 1885, and mentions C.W. Leadbeater, who did not come out to India till December, 1884.

As a result of this important letter from Master K.H., Colonel Olcott modified his attitude, and succeeded in smoothing out matters in the Society's administration, so that the Esoteric Section might do its work under the sole direction of H.P. Blavatsky, and without any interference from exoteric authority.

BORIS DE ZIRKOFF

Compiler of *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*

¹ [empire within an empire]

² According to the records kept at Lloyd's of London, the SS. *Shannon* arrived at Brindisi, August 23rd, at 7:30 am, and proceeded one hour later for London, where she arrived September 2nd. Col. Olcott, however, proceeded to London overland, arriving there August 26th.

³ Vide Letter 18 in *Letters, etc.*, First Series.

Master KH defends Madame Blavatsky

It having been affirmed by some French members of the Theosophical Society (in the *Bulletin d'Isis*), as well as some in England, that the undersigned had exceeded her constitutional powers as Corresponding Secretary and Co-Founder of the Theosophical Society, in issuing an emergent order dissolving the BUREAU of the "Isis" Branch of the Theosophical Society in Paris, and its Bylaws, and authorizing Mr. F.K. Gaboriau to reconstitute it *ad interim*, until the pleasure of the President in Council could be ascertained, the following extracts from the *official* "Decision" (officially published) of Colonel Olcott, sitting in arbitration at Paris, on the 17th of September last, will be read with interest and profit.

Mme. Blavatsky, having learned that Mr. Froment would not accept the Presidency (to which he was entitled as Vice-President to succeed upon the death of the President, Mr. Louis Dramard, under the bylaws of "Isis"), and seeing the branch upon the point of falling into anarchy, issued *ad interim* (and despite the protestations of Mr. Gaboriau, who preferred to remain Secretary), an order by which the Bureau (Council) of "Isis" was dissolved, its bylaws cancelled; at the same time she named as President of the Branch, Mr. Gaboriau, one of its Founders, who had given many proofs of his devotion to the theosophical cause. Moreover, Mr. Gaboriau was commissioned to compile new bylaws. The branch continued to exist, and the rights of its members were maintained pending the adoption of the new bylaws. It has been objected that Madame Blavatsky had not the right to act in this manner; that her interference was illegal according to the *Rules* of the Theosophical Society, because she is not a member of the *Isis* Branch, but [137] member of the "Blavatsky Lodge," of London, and that no branch has right of jurisdiction outside the limits prescribed in its charter. But, in point of fact, Madame Blavatsky *is member of no Branch*. She is with me co-Founder of the Society, and *ex officio* Corresponding Secretary and member of the General Council, of the Executive Council, and of the Annual Convention, a sort of Parliament held at Adyar by Delegates from all countries.¹

She was, then, perfectly entitled to issue the order in question as a temporary measure, an order which must be finally submitted for approbation to the President in Council. The Executive Council in its Session of 14th July, formerly ratified the measure taken by Mdme. Blavatsky, a measure which was urgent and which I declare to have been legal.

This settles the question of the right of the Corresponding Secretary — one of the Founders — to interfere in such *exceptional* cases, and when the welfare and the reputation of the Theosophical Society are at stake. In no other except such a case

¹ Vide Art. 17-b of the Rules of the Theosophical Society.

would the undersigned have consented to take upon herself the right of interfering. Moreover, the extent and limits of such interference are very succinctly and clearly defined in the letter from a MASTER quoted below.

And to remove further misconceptions, it is as well — of course, only for the information of members of the Society — to add that, while still at sea on board the *Shannon*, on his way from Bombay to Brindisi, and on the day before arriving at port, the President received in his cabin a long and important letter from the said Master, generally called “K.H.” Besides general instructions respecting the policy the President should pursue in the present crisis, there were the following special paragraphs relating to his colleague, the undersigned. Colonel Olcott’s sense of justice is so strong, that although some of the passages in the letter have a tone of reproach for his having permitted himself to think too harshly of his old and tried friend and co-worker, he has unreservedly given [138] permission to copy the passages *in extenso*,¹ in the hope that the warning conveyed may prove profitable to others who find themselves in a hostile mood toward the undersigned. These passages are as follows:²

Put all needed restraint upon your feelings, so that you may do the right thing in this Western imbroglio. Watch your first impressions. The mistakes you make spring from failure to do this. Let neither your personal predilections, affections, suspicions nor antipathies affect your action. Misunderstandings have grown up between Fellows, both in London and Paris, which imperil the interests of the movement. You will be told that the chief originator of most, if not of all these disturbances is H.P.B. This is not so; though her presence in England has, of course, a share in them. But the largest share rests with others, whose serene unconsciousness of their own defects is very marked, and much to be blamed. One of the most valuable effects of Upasika’s mission is that it drives men to self-study, and destroys in them blind servility for persons. Observe your own case for example. But your revolt, good friend, against her “infallibility” — as you once thought it — has gone too far, and you have been unjust to her, for which I am sorry to say you will have to suffer hereafter along with others. Just now, on deck, your thoughts about her were dark and sinful, and so I find the moment a fitting one to put you on your guard. . . .³

Try to remove such misconceptions *as you will find*, by kind persuasion and an appeal to the feelings of loyalty [139] to the cause of truth, if not to us. Make *all* these men feel that we have no favourites, nor affections for persons, but only for their good acts and humanity as a whole. But we employ agents — the best available. Of these, for the last thirty years, the chief has been the personality known as H.P.B. to the world (but otherwise to us). Imperfect and very “troublesome,” no doubt, she proves to some; nevertheless, there is no likelihood of

¹ [in full]

² [The beginning of this letter reads thus:

“Again, as you approach London I have a word or two to say to you. Your impressibility is so changeable that I must not wholly depend upon it at this critical time. Of course you know that things were so brought to a focus as to necessitate the present journey and that the inspiration to make it came to you and to permit it to the Councillors *from without*. Put all needed . . .”

From here on, as quoted above by H.P. Blavatsky — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

³ [These dots do not seem to indicate any deletion, as reference to the original text shows. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

our finding a better one for years to come, and your Theosophists should be made to understand it. . . .¹

. . . ² Since 1885 I have not written, nor caused to be written, save through her agency, direct or remote, a letter or a line to anybody in Europe or America, nor communicated orally *with* or through any third party. Theosophists should learn it. You will understand later the significance of this declaration, so keep it in mind. . . . ³ Her fidelity to our work being constant, and her sufferings having come upon her through it, neither I nor either of my Brother Associates will desert or supplant her. As I once before remarked, *ingratitude* is not among our vices. . . . ⁴ To help you in your present perplexity, H.P.B. has next to no concern with administrative details, and should be kept clear of them so far as her strong nature can be controlled. But this *you must tell to all; with occult matters she has everything to do.* . . . ⁵ We have *not* abandoned her; she is *not* “given over to chelas.” She is *our direct agent*. I warn you against permitting your suspicions and resentment against “her many follies” to bias your intuitive loyalty to her. In the [140] adjustment of this European business, you will have two things to consider — the external and administrative, and the internal and psychical. Keep the former under your control and that of your most prudent associates, jointly; *leave the latter to her.* You are left to devise the practical details with your usual ingenuity. Only be careful, I say, to discriminate when some emergent interference of hers in practical affairs is referred to you on appeal, between that which is merely exoteric in origin and effects, and that which, beginning on the practical, tends to beget consequences on the spiritual plane. As to the former, you are the best judge; as to the latter, she. . . .⁶

I have also noted your thoughts about the “Secret Doctrine.” Be assured that what she has not annotated from scientific and other works we have given or suggested to her. Every mistake or erroneous notion corrected and explained by her from the works of other Theosophists, *was corrected by me, or under my instruction.* It is a more valuable work than its predecessor — an epitome of occult truths that will make it a source of information and instruction for the earnest student for long years to come. . . .⁷ [141]

¹ [These dots do not seem to indicate any deletion, as reference to the original text shows. — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

² [*ibid.*]

³ [*ibid.*]

⁴ [The following complete paragraph occurs here in the original text:

“With yourself our relations are direct, and have been with the rare exceptions you know of, like the present, on the psychical plane, and so will continue through force of circumstances. That they are so rare — is your own fault as I told you in my last.”

— *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

⁵ [These dots do not seem to indicate any deletion, as reference to the original text shows. — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

⁶ [*ibid.*]

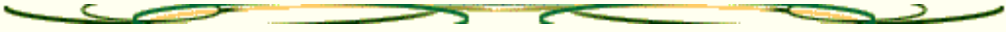
⁷ [At this point, the following two complete paragraphs occur in the original:

“P. Sreenivasrow is in great mental distress once more because of my long silence, not having a clear intuition developed (as how should he after the life he has led?). He fears he is abandoned, whereas he has not been lost sight of for one moment. From day to day he is making his own record at the ‘Ashrum,’ from night to night receiving instructions fitted to his spiritual capabilities. He has made occasional mistakes, *e.g.*, once recently, in helping thrust out of the Headquarters house, one who deserved a more

. . . [This letter] . . . is merely given you as a warning and a guide; to others, as a warning only; for you may use it discreetly, if needs be. . . . Prepare, however, to have the authenticity of the present denied in certain quarters.¹

[Signed] K.H.

[Extracts correctly copied. — H.S. OLCOTT]



No use repeating over and over again, that neither this “Master” nor any other, Colonel Olcott and I know of, are “Spirits.” They are living and mortal men, whose great wisdom and occult knowledge have won the profound reverence of all those who know them. Those who do not, are welcome to spin out any theory they like about the “Adepts” — even to denying point blank their existence. Meanwhile the incessant charges and denunciations, the idle gossip and the uncharitable constructions to which the President-Founder and myself have been subjected for the last three years, force us now to make the declaration which follows.

H.P. BLAVATSKY



charitable treatment, whose fault was the result of ignorance and psychical feebleness rather than of sin, and who was a strong man’s victim. Report to him, when you return, the lesson taught you by . . . at Bombay, and tell my devoted though mistaken ‘son’ that it was most theosophical to give her protection, most untheosophical and selfish to drive her away.

“I wish you to assure others T.T., R.A.M., N.N.S., N.D.C., G.N.C., U.U.B., T.V.C., P.V.S., N.B.C., C.S., C.W.L., D.N.G., D.H., S.N.C., *etc.*, among the rest, not forgetting the other true workers in Asia, that the stream of Karma is ever flowing on and we as well as they must win our way toward Liberation. There have been sore trials in the past, others await you in the future. May the faith and courage which have supported you hitherto endure to the end.”

The triangle with dot in the middle refers to Master M. The lesson hinted at has to do with Mr. D.M. Bennett, one of the foremost leaders of Freethought at the time, and a declared opponent of the bigotry of so-called Christianity in the U.S.A. He was the Editor of *The Truthseeker*. Col. Olcott narrates the story of his activities and of the persecutions he had to endure (*Old Diary Leaves*, II, ch. xxii). He details the situation that arose when Mr. Bennett applied to join the T.S. See also in this connection: *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter XXXVII, received at Allāhābād, January 1882, and Letter XLIII, received in the same city, February 1882.

Some of the initials in the letter are those of Tookaram Tatya, Norendro Nath Sen, Gyanendra Nath Chakravarti, T. Vijayaraghava Charlu, P. Venkata Subbiah, (Pandit) Chandra Sekhara, C.W. Leadbeater, Dina Nath Ganguli, and S. Nilakantkumar Chatterjee. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

¹ [This last paragraph runs as follows in its entirety:

“You had better not mention for the present this letter to anyone — not even to H.P.B. unless she speaks to you of it herself. Time enough when you see occasion arise. It is merely given you, as a warning and a guide; to others, as a warning only, for you may use it discreetly if needs be.

K.H.

“Prepare, however, to have the authenticity of the present denied in certain quarters.”

— *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

Joint Note by Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky.

To dispel a misconception that has been engendered by mischief-makers, we, the undersigned, Founders of the Theosophical Society, declare that there is no enmity, rivalry, strife, or even coldness, between us, nor ever was; nor any weakening of our joint devotion to the Masters or to our work, with the execution of which they have honoured us. Widely dissimilar in temperament and mental characteristics, and differing sometimes in views as to methods of propagandism, we are yet of absolutely one mind as to that work. As we have been from the first, so we are now, united in purpose and zeal, and ready to sacrifice all, even life, for the promotion of Theosophical knowledge, for the succour of mankind from the miseries which spring from ignorance.

H.S. OLCOTT

H.P. BLAVATSKY

