

*Let the Theosophical Society
perish, than forsake the
Cause of Truth*



The Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society has no official or corporate connection with the Exoteric Society.

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I gladly give room to the protest which follows. It is wise and timely, and may, perhaps, ward off worse than “petty criticisms of H.P.B.” Needless to say that Mrs. Besant’s article would not have appeared had I seen it before publication. But I may point out to Mr. Patterson that much of his protest, however true, is not exactly aimed at what Mrs. Besant wrote. She did not say that the T.S.¹ taught any particular doctrines, but merely expressed her own view that the position of one who belonged to the T.S. and ungenerously carped at the pioneer who founded it was illogical. This is clearly a matter of opinion, and Mr. Patterson puts the opposing view. One has but to read the new “Constitution and Rules of the Theosophical Society” for 1891² to find in Article xiii, 2, that:

. . . no Fellow, Officer, or Council of the Theosophical Society, or of any Section or Branch thereof, shall promulgate or maintain *any doctrine* as being that advanced or advocated by the Society;

and whatever we do, we have to abide by the *Rules* of the T.S. Mrs. Besant would have done more wisely to have called her article “Comments on the E.S.³ of the Theosophical Society and H.P.B.,” she would then have been on the safe side; for a member of the E.S. who receives instructions emanating from the Masters of the Occult Philosophy, and doubts at the same time the genuineness of the source, or the honesty of the humble transmitter of the old esoteric doctrines — *lies to his own soul, and is untrue to his pledge*. He cannot be honest and remain in the E.S., in such a case. But then, the Esoteric Section, its qualification “of the T.S.” notwithstanding, does not represent the latter, and in future it will drop the additional words altogether.

¹ [Theosophical Society]

² In the Supplement of the January *Theosophist*.

³ [Esoteric Section]

From the very beginning its second rule stated, that the “Esoteric Section has *no official or corporate connection* with the [116] Exoteric Society.”¹ Henceforth it will be called “the Esoteric School of Theosophy,” simply. Meanwhile, I thank our brother, Mr. Patterson, for giving me this opportunity of expressing my feelings.

H.P. BLAVATSKY



Letter from H.T. Patterson to “Lucifer,” annotated by H.P. Blavatsky.

In the December number of *Lucifer* in an article entitled “The Theosophical Society and H.P.B.” there are the following statements:

The following article expresses the views of many members of the Theosophical Society who feel strongly that it is time that some protest should be made against the constant petty criticisms levelled at H.P.B. As co-editor I put in this article, which has not been submitted to H.P.B., nor will she see it until the magazine is issued; so she is in no sense responsible for its appearance. — *Annie Besant*. [117]

Now touching the position of H.P.B. to and in the Theosophical Society, the following is a brief exposition of it as it appears to many of us:

- 1 Either she is a messenger from the Masters, or else she is a fraud.
- 2 In either case the Theosophical Society would have no existence without her.
- 3 If she is a fraud she is a woman of wonderful ability and learning, giving all the credit of these to some persons who do not exist.
- 4 If H.P.B. is a true messenger, opposition to her is opposition to the Masters, she being their only channel to the Western World.

¹ See *Lucifer* of October 1888.

[Note by Boris de Zirkoff: This has reference to the following Statement which was published in *Lucifer*, Vol. III, October 1888, p. 176:

THE ESOTERIC SECTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Owing to the fact that a large number of Fellows of the Society have felt the necessity for the formation of a body of Esoteric students, to be organized on the ORIGINAL LINES devised by the *real* founders of the T.S., the following order has been issued by the President Founder:

I. To promote the esoteric interests of the Theosophical Society by the deeper study of esoteric philosophy, there is hereby organized a body, to be known as the “Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society.”

II. The constitution and sole direction of the same is vested in Madame H.P. Blavatsky, as its Head; she is solely responsible to the Members for results; and the section has no official or corporate connection with the Exoteric Society save in the person of the President-Founder.

III. Persons wishing to join the Section, and willing to abide by its rules, should communicate directly with: Mme. H.P. BLAVATSKY, 17 Lansdowne Road, Holland Park, London, W.

(Signed) H.S. OLCOTT,

President in Council.

Attest: — H.P. BLAVATSKY

- 5 If there are no Masters, the Theosophical Society is an absurdity, and there is no use in keeping it up. But if there are Masters, and H.P.B. is their messenger, and the Theosophical Society their foundation, the Theosophical Society and H.P.B. cannot be separated before the world.

If the members care at all for the future of the Society, if they wish to know that the twentieth century will see it standing high above the strife of parties, a beacon-light in the darkness for the guiding of men, if they believe in the Teacher who founded it for human service, let them now rouse themselves from slothful indifference, sternly silence all dissensions or petty follies in their ranks, and march shoulder to shoulder for the achievement of the heavy task laid upon their strength and courage. If Theosophy is worth anything it is worth living for and worth dying for. If it is worth nothing, let it go at once and for all.

On these last grounds let us stand. If it is worth anything it is worth living for and dying for; and worth working for and worth writing for, and worth taking some risks for; and at the risk of incurring misunderstanding, and at the risk of hurting the feelings of those whose feelings should [118] not be hurt, this article is written and some exception taken to that just quoted from. For it does seem as though its author, through her impetuous kindness and loyalty, had allowed her judgment to be partially influenced by her feelings. And although there are few Theosophists who will disagree with her in most of her issues, yet there seems to be a little grain of erroneous opinion in them from which a large and poisonous growth may spring. If this is so, it is only true brotherliness to point it out. It lies first in the statement that:

“If there are no Masters the Theosophical Society is an absurdity and there is no use of keeping it up.”

And again in another statement which says:

“Once accept the philosophy you must accept her (H.P.B.).”

- May not much harm be done by the holding of such views?
- May they not tend to keep many out who would be benefited by being in; and for whom the Society was largely founded?
- Are not the statements in their nature somewhat dogmatic?
- Have we not still in our natures some of that intolerance which, forcing rather than leading, persecuted in the name of righteousness?

For there are subtle transformations possible in our characters, which will bring the old faults out in new guises, and we are none, not one, quite free from intolerance. The churches have creeds; but applicants for admission are usually given to understand that they need not be fully accepted; and they seldom are. The Theosophical Society has no creeds, but its members seem scarcely able to avoid making them in spite of all efforts to the contrary. And watchfulness as to the Theosophical movement must lead those who believe in the Masters to see how strenuously they and their mouth-piece H.P.B. are working against the development of them. If this Theosophical movement is to be carried on successfully through the three or four genera-

tions of the first seventy-five years of the coming century, we must be very heedful. What do the Constitution and the by-laws of the Society, what does the application for admission into it tell us? Not one word as to belief. They simply contain provisions which tend to guarantee liberty and cultivate tolerance. Is it not contrary to their spirit to say: "Once accept the philosophy you must accept her"? Accept [119] what philosophy? The Society has none. Not long since an earnest student searching for Truth, but not one of our members, asked if we were not Jesuitical. Was her position not well taken? It was, if we as a Society have a philosophy. We constantly cry out we have no creeds, no dogmas, no beliefs, and we almost as constantly, or at any rate very frequently, unintentionally give the lie to this.

- And why speak of the Society as an absurdity without Masters?
- Are its objects, especially the first, nothing?

If those objects were even partially lived up to, and again let us say "especially the first," would no good come of it? Most certainly, and it is perhaps this good which the Masters are seeking, rather than the acceptance of any philosophy, or any recognition of themselves.¹

Even a recognized authoritative leader may be dangerous. H.P.B. herself is always inculcating self-reliance, and discouraging any dependence upon others, herself included.

She understands that the true alchemist seeks to have men throw their opinions into one common melting pot, knowing that they will take out all of the Truth which they put in, and some of their errors transmuted. It is the real change of base metals into gold.

If the Society has an authoritative leader, beliefs will be accepted simply on authority, and a belief thus accepted is almost of necessity perverted.² Look at the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation. Many regard it as quite heterodox not to accept them; and yet the first is often made a fetish of, and both are by many crudely understood; the one often being looked at in a way to make of it a positive fatalism, the other a kind of personal resurrection. This comes from reliance upon certain persons or books accepted as authority. Such reliance is against the presumable wish of the Masters. We must seize on our own truth and digest it ourselves: and if we do we cannot so pervert it.

¹ Our Brother, Mr. Patterson, is quite correct. — *H.P. Blavatsky*.

² [In replying to the question: Are there any dogmas in Buddhism which we are required to accept on faith?

*A Buddhist Catechism** explains:

No. We are earnestly enjoined to accept nothing whatever on faith; whether it be written in books, handed down from our ancestors, or taught by the sages. Our Lord Buddha has said that we must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumours, as such; nor writings by sages, because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a deva (that is, in presumed spiritual inspiration); nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems an analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our teachers or masters. But we are to believe when the writing, doctrine, or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness.

For this I taught you not to believe merely because you have heard, but when you believed of your consciousness, then to act accordingly and abundantly.**

* *Kalama Sutta* of the *Anguttaranikāya*; [quoting H.S. Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism*, pp. 55, 56, 1881 ed.]

** Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (The Doctrine of Avatāras) XIV p. 417 — ED. PHIL.]

A true servant should try not simply to obey, but, if possible, to intuitively grasp the wishes of the one served. In the article referred to in this paper it is said that H.P.B., is: [120]

“ . . . willing to efface herself if thereby her mission might the better prosper.”

And would she not say:

“First Humanity and then the Theosophical Society, and last myself.”¹

Referring to the Coulomb scandal it is said:

“But then, instead of closing up around the assailed Teacher, and defending to the utmost her position and her honour, the fatal policy was adopted of attempting to minimise her position in the Society.”

True, perhaps; but how best could she have been defended? An ill-planned *sortie* is, of course, unwise. There may be a hidden enemy in wait, and we are told that the powers of darkness are very active, vigilant, and cunning. We may, in ill-advised movements, be simply following out their hypnotic suggestions; and any statement which does not tally with the exact truth is an ill-advised *sortie*. And when it is said that:

“If there are no Masters, the Theosophical Society is an absurdity, and there is no use in keeping it up . . . ”

a mis-statement is made. Let us by all means close round our teacher, but as she would have us; not as we ourselves might like. And to do this:

- We must remember that we must lead, not force, people to the truth.
- We must do it with all tenderness, all gentleness, all patience, all sweetness.
- We must present our views for the weak ones, not the strong ones. Not in the way of temporising, but by giving out those truths which are most needed.
- We must try to understand that we are now to learn to be true shepherds when our time comes, and while being schooled must bear in mind that it is the lost sheep we are to save.

The honest materialist, the honest agnostic, the honest spiritualist, the honest christian-scientist, the honest dogmatic Christian, may be an honest disbeliever in H.P.B. and the Masters, and an honest member of the Theosophical Society too, provided he is enlisted in the cause of humanity.²

- Let us hold the [121] doors wide open;
- Let us set up no unnecessary barriers, and
- Let us wait outside until the last one has entered.

¹ Most decidedly so; such has been always my principle, and I hope it is that of my friend and colleague, Col. H.S. Olcott, our President. — *H.P. Blavatsky*.

² I have repeated these words for years: it is *my stereotyped answer* to enquirers who ask me whether belief in the MASTERS is obligatory in joining the T.S. — *H.P. Blavatsky*.]

We can thus best serve, thus best defend. This is not a policy of silence; it does not prevent our using pen and voice in defence of our beloved leader; but it should prevent making belief in her a qualification, even if an unwritten one, for membership in good standing in the Theosophical Society. There are now many good members who are doubters on this point. Don't let us drive them away by intolerance. Perhaps they are under a dark illusion cast by the Brothers of the Shadow. But to force them will not help them, and do no good to any one. If, metaphorically speaking, we slap the face of any one who may speak disrespectfully of H.P.B., we will not help her reputation but rather strengthen the calumniator in his attitude. Our line of defence cannot be well chosen if it does harm. And it will do harm if made in such a way as to make a belief in any person or philosophy a criterion of good standing.

- Let us stand shoulder to shoulder;
- Let us strengthen those ties which we are forming for this and the coming incarnations;
- Let us by all means be grateful to her from whom so much has come to us, and the rest of humanity, but let us for the sake of others be judicious.
- Let us make disbelievers in H.P.B., disbelievers in Karma, disbelievers in Reincarnation, disbelievers in the Masters as welcome, or more welcome, into the Society than others, provided always they wish to form the nucleus of a universal brotherhood.

All this is said earnestly and sincerely, but with some trepidation, the higher plane of carelessness not having been attained, and indifference to others' opinions not having been acquired. But when so prominent a member of our Society as the author of "The Theosophical Society and H.P.B." propounds what appears to some of us dangerous doctrine, we have no right to be silent.

H.T. PATTERSON, F.T.S.

