

*Pledged students' prescribed
guide for conduct*



Preliminary Memorandum

The Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society

Strictly Private, Confidential, Personal, for Members only

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. RULES) XII pp. 494-98. Frontispiece by Gail Bartel.

THE OBJECT OF THE PRESENT MEMORANDUM is to give an opportunity to anyone who has signed the pledge to withdraw it, should such person feel unable or unwilling to accept fully and without reserve the instructions which may be given, or the consequences that may result, and to do the duties whose performance shall be asked. It is but fair to state at once that such duties will never interfere with, nor encroach upon, the probationer's family duties; on the other hand, it is certain that every member of the Esoteric Section will have to give up more than one personal habit, such as practised in social life, and to adopt some few ascetic rules.

Therefore, anyone who wishes to retire after reading what follows, can have his name removed from the list, and the pledge returned, by applying in writing to that effect with postage enclosed. Such applications to be made within three weeks from the receipt of this; by members in Europe directly to H.P. Blavatsky, 17, Lansdowne Road, Holland Park, London, and by members in America to William Q. Judge, General Secretary American Section, T.S.; Box 2659, New York.



This degree of the Esoteric Section is probationary, and its general purpose is to prepare and fit the student for the study of practical occultism or Raj yoga. Therefore, in this degree, the student — save in exceptional cases — will not be taught how to produce physical phenomena, nor will any magical powers be allowed to develop in him; nor, if possessing such powers naturally, will he be permitted to exercise them before he has thoroughly mastered the knowledge of SELF, of the psycho-physiological processes (taking place on the occult plane) in the human body generally, and until he has in abeyance all his lower passions and his PERSONAL SELF.

The real Head of the Esoteric Section is a Master, of whom H.P. Blavatsky is the mouthpiece for this Section. He is one of those Adepts referred to in theosophical literature, and concerned in the formation of the Theosophical Society. It is through H.P. Blavatsky that each member of this Section will be brought more closely than hitherto under His influence and care if found worthy of it. No student, however, need inquire *which* of the Masters it is. For it does not matter in reality; nor is there any necessity for creating one more chance for indiscretion. Suffice to say, such is the law in the East.

Each person will receive in the way of enlightenment and assistance, just as much as he or she deserves and no more; and it is to be distinctly understood that in this Body and these relations no such thing is known as favour — all depends upon the

person's merits — and no member has the power or knowledge to decide what either he or another is entitled to. This must be left to *those who know* — alone. The apparent favour shown to some, and their consequent apparent advancement, will be due to the work they do, to the best of their power, in the cause of Universal Brotherhood and the elevation of the Race.

No man or woman is asked or supposed to do any more than his or her best; but each is expected to work to the extent of their ability and powers.

The value of the work of this Section to the individual member will depend entirely upon:

- 1 The person's power to assimilate the teachings and make them a part of his being; and
- 2 Upon the unselfishness of the motives with which he seeks for this knowledge; that is to say, upon whether he has entered this Section determined to work for humanity, or with only the desire to benefit or gain something for himself alone.

Let all members, therefore, take warning in time, and seriously examine into their motives, for to all those who join this Section certain consequences will ensue.

And at this stage it is perhaps better that the applicants should learn the reason for the formation of this Section, and what it is expected to achieve:

The Theosophical Society has just entered upon the fourteenth year of its existence; and if it has accomplished great, one may almost say stupendous, results on the exoteric and utilitarian plane, it has proved a dead failure on all those points which rank foremost among the objects of its original establishment. Thus, as a "Universal Brotherhood," or even as a fraternity, one among many, it has descended to the level of all those Societies whose pretensions are great, but whose names are simply masks — nay, even SHAMS. Nor can the excuse be pleaded that it was led into such an undignified course owing to its having been impeded in its natural development, and almost extinguished, by reason of the conspiracies of its enemies *openly* begun in 1884. Because even before that date there never was that solidarity in the ranks of our Society which would not only enable it to resist all external attacks, but also make it possible for greater, wider, and more tangible help to be given to all its members by those who are always ready to give help when we are fit to receive it. When trouble arose, too many were quick to doubt and despair, and few indeed were they who had worked for the Cause and not for themselves. The attacks of the enemy have given the Society some discretion in the conduct of its external progress, but its real internal condition has not improved, and the members, in their efforts towards spiritual culture, still require that help which solidarity in the ranks can alone give them the right to ask. The Masters can give but little assistance to a Body not thoroughly united in purpose and feeling, and which breaks its first fundamental rule — universal brotherly love, without distinction of race, creed or colour; nor to a Society, many members of which pass their lives in judging, condemning, and often reviling other members in a most untheosophical, not to say disgraceful, manner.

For this reason it is now contemplated to gather the “elect” of the T.S. and to call them to action. It is only by a select group of brave souls, a handful of determined men and women hungry for genuine spiritual development and the acquirement of soul-wisdom, that the Theosophical Society at large can be brought back to its original lines. It is through an Esoteric Section alone — *i.e.*, a group in which all the members, even if unacquainted with one another, work for each other, and by working for all work for themselves — that the great Exoteric Society may be redeemed and made to realize that in union and harmony alone lie its strength and power. The object of this Section, then, is to help the future growth of the Theosophical Society as a whole in the true direction, by promoting brotherly union at least among the few.

All know that this end was in view when the Society was established, and even in its mere unpledged ranks there was a possibility for development and knowledge, until it began to show want of real union; and now it must be saved from future dangers by the united aim, brotherly feeling, and constant exertions of the members of this Esoteric Section. Therefore, anyone who has signed the pledge without realizing this is earnestly recommended to reconsider his position, and to withdraw unless he is prepared to devote himself to the carrying out of this purpose. Once offered the grand example of practical altruism, of the noble lives of those who learn to master the great knowledge but to help others, and who strive to acquire powers but to place them at the service of their fellow-men, the whole theosophical community may yet be steered into action, and led to follow the example set before them.

The Esoteric Section is thus “set apart” for the salvation of the whole Society, and its course from its first steps will be an arduous and uphill work for its members, though a great reward lies behind the many obstacles once they are overcome. He who wants to follow the working of his inner self and nature for the purpose of self-mastery, has to understand them by comparison; he has to strive to fathom the mysteries of the human heart in general, before he can hope to learn the whole truth about the mysteries of his own soul. The power of Occult self-introspection is too limited in its area if it does not go beyond the Self, and the investigation of isolated instances will remain forever fruitless if we fail to work it out on firmly established principles. We cannot do good to ourselves — on a higher plane — without doing good to others, because each nature reacts upon other natures; nor can we help others without this help benefiting ourselves.

Disappointment is sure to come to those who have joined this Section for the purpose of learning “magic arts” or acquiring “occult training” for themselves, quite regardless of the good of other people less determined. Abnormal, artificially-developed powers — except those which crown the efforts of a Black Magician — are only the culmination of, and reward for, labours bestowed unselfishly upon humanity, upon all men, whether good or bad. Forgetfulness of the *personal* Self and sincere altruism are the first and indispensable requisites in the training of those who are to become “White Adepts” either in this or a future incarnation.

If any member of this Section agrees to all this, and yet says to himself that, notwithstanding what is said, he will seek for the knowledge for himself, caring little — provided he acquires the powers — as to whether he shall end as a Black or White

Adept, let him know that disaster awaits him much sooner than he thinks, and that, although he tries to conceal his motive, it will be known and shall cause a reaction upon him which no one will be able to avert.

No blame will be attached to anyone for a constitutional lack of capacity for assimilating the teachings given, if he works earnestly and continually, if his aspirations do not relax or weaken; his efforts will be known in the right quarter, and it is in strict accordance with his deserts that help will be given him when he expects it the least.

Let every member know, moreover, that the time for such priceless acquisition is limited. The writer of the present is old; her life is well-nigh worn out, and she may be summoned “home” any day and almost any hour. And if her place is even filled up, perchance by another worthier and more learned than herself, still *there remain but twelve years* to the last hour of the term — namely, till December the 31st, 1899. Those who will not have profited by the opportunity (given to the world in every last quarter of a century), those who will not have reached a certain point of psychic and spiritual development, or that point from which begins the cycle of adeptship, by that day — those will advance no further than the knowledge already acquired. No Master of Wisdom from the East will himself appear or send any one to Europe or America after that period, and the sluggards will have to renounce every chance of advancement in their present incarnation — until the year 1975. Such is the LAW, for we are in *Kali Yuga* — the Black Age — and the restrictions in this cycle, the first 5,000 years of which will expire in 1897, are great and almost insuperable.

As to the relations of the Masters to this Section, it may be further said, paradoxically, that with Them everything is possible and everything impossible. They may or may not communicate personally on the outer plane with a member, and those who are continually wishing to receive “orders” or communications directly from Them on this plane, either phenomenally or otherwise, will in all probability be disappointed. The Masters have no desire to prove Their power or give “tests” to anyone whatever. And the fact that a member has concluded that a crisis of some kind or other is at hand, when, according to his wise opinion, the Master or Masters ought to speak and interfere personally, is no sound reason for such an outward interference.

It is, however, right that each member, once he believes in the existence of such Masters, should try to understand what their nature and powers are, to reverence Them in his heart, to draw near to Them, as much as in him lies, and to open up for himself conscious communication with the guru to whose bidding he has devoted his life. THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE BY RISING TO THE SPIRITUAL PLANE WHERE THE MASTERS ARE, AND NOT BY ATTEMPTING TO DRAW THEM DOWN TO OURS.

Inasmuch as growth in spiritual life comes from within, members [of the Esoteric Section] must not expect to receive any other communications than those through H.P. Blavatsky. The additional help, instruction, and enlightenment, will come from the inner planes of being, and will, as said, always be given when deserved.

To achieve this, the attitude of mind in which the teachings given are to be received is that which shall tend to develop the faculty of intuition. The duty of members in this respect is to refrain from arguing that the statements made are not in accordance with what other people have said or written, or with their own ideas upon the

subject, or that, again, they are apparently contrary to any accepted system of thought or philosophy. Practical esoteric science is altogether *sui generis*. It requires all the mental and psychic powers of the student to be used in examining what is given, to the end that the real meaning of the Teacher may be discovered, as far as the student can understand it. He must endeavour as much as possible to free his mind, while studying or trying to carry out that which is given him, from all the ideas which he may have derived by heredity, from education, from surroundings, or from other teachers. His mind should be made perfectly free from all other thoughts, so that the inner meaning of the instructions may be impressed upon him apart from the words in which they are clothed. Otherwise, there is constant risk of his ideas becoming as coloured with preconceived notions as those of the writers of certain otherwise excellent works upon esoteric subjects who have made the occult tenets more subservient to modern Science than to occult truth.

In order, also, that the student may receive as much benefit as possible, it is absolutely essential that the superficial and inattentive habits of thought, engendered by Western civilization, shall be given up, and the mind concentrated upon the instructions as a whole as well as upon every word in them. To this end students are required to practise the habit of careful and constant concentration of mind upon every duty and act in life they may have to do, and not to reserve their efforts in that direction for the consideration of these teachings only. The student must make all his desires lean to, and centre upon, the acquirement of spiritual knowledge, so that the natural tendency of his thought may be in that direction. He must, therefore, in every moment of leisure revert to these subjects, as well as have a special time set apart for their consideration.

Students must not look for tests and trials of a special nature; these will come in the affairs of life and in relations with fellow-men. Specific tests will not in general be given, but even the manner in which the student approaches these teachings will be in itself a test or trial. The Masters do not judge students simply by their ability to do this or that special or difficult thing, but by the actual self-development and progress accomplished.

In entering this Section, the student begins to look his own nature in the face, and in accordance with the intensity of his aspirations, will be his difficulties. These difficulties may exhibit themselves on the physiological, mental, moral, or psychic planes of his being, or in the circumstances of his life. Having signed the pledge, his first failure to keep any one of its clauses is the failure to stand the first trial. Such a failure, however, is not defeat, so long as a further sincere endeavour is made.¹



¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. PRELIMINARY MEMORANDUM) XII pp. 488-93

Twenty-one rules of conduct¹

Note about their authorship

In December 1888 William Quan Judge was in Dublin, Ireland, going from there to London to assist H.P. Blavatsky in the formation of the Esoteric Section.

He was the one who originally suggested the organization of a group for the deeper study of the Esoteric Philosophy, as some of his students and co-workers were thinking in the direction of chelaship and a greater dedication to the Cause of the Masters.

There is conclusive testimony to the effect that it was Mr. Judge who wrote *The Book of Rules* for the Esoteric Section. The E.S.T. Circular issued from 62, Queen Ann Street, Cavendish Square, London W., dated January 12th, 1895, and signed by Dr. Archibald Keightley, states as follows:

I have been asked as to the writing of *The Book of Rules*, and can only say that, to my knowledge, Mr. Judge wrote *The Book of Rules* under the guidance of Master M. and H.P.B. . . . E.T. Hargrove and myself have both seen the original manuscript in Mr. Judge's handwriting, with written additions in H.P.B.'s handwriting. This manuscript is in the possession of Mr. Judge. H.P.B. further told me that "all the Instructions should be studied in the light of *The Book of Rules*." I have seen letters from H.P.B. to Mr. Judge which show that he originated the idea of E.S.T. [Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, XII pp. 484, 494-8]

On December 14th, 1888, H.P. Blavatsky issued a special order appointing Judge as her "only representative for said Section in America" and as "the sole channel through whom will be sent and received all communications between the members of said Section and myself [H.P. Blavatsky]," and she did so "in virtue of his character as a chela of thirteen years standing."²

In the following the masculine includes the feminine; the singular, the plural; and *vice versa*.

- 1** Groundless condemnation on hearsay of others, theosophists or not, must be refrained from, and charity to each other's faults widely practiced within, as well as without, the theosophical area.
- 2** Repetition of statements or gossip derogatory of others must be avoided. But condemnation of crime, of social evils and systems of every description, *in the abstract*, is a duty of every member. Above all, the duty of every member is to fight against cant,³ hypocrisy, and injustice in every shape.
- 3** A derogatory or slanderous statement made against a fellow theosophist in the presence of a member, shall not be permitted by him to pass without protest, unless he knows it is true, in which case he should remain silent.
- 4** No member shall boast of being in this Section.
- 5** No member shall pry into the standing in this Section of a Brother, nor shall he uninvited seek to know if another theosophist is a member of it. Members may use the password of the Section for the purpose of recognition, but never from curiosity, nor a desire to discover if the person addressed is a member of the Section.
- 6** Any member may, if he chooses, remain unknown as such, and that desire, if suspected by others, must not be talked about nor referred to.

¹ [The conduct of unpledged students, who may be reading this, will be judged more leniently.]

² From Dara Eklund. (Comp.) *Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge*. 2nd ed. Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 2009-11 [4 Vols.]: Vol. I, 2009, (WILLIAM Q. JUDGE: HIS LIFE AND WORK), p. xxx.

³ [Singing in a whining way, from the Latin *cantare*, to sing. Cant was at first a beggar's whine, hence hypocritical and sanctimonious talk, typically of a moral, religious, or political nature. Cf. W.W. Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of English*, 1835-1912. — ED. PHIL.]

7 If a member, whether falsely or truly, asserts that he has received letters or communications from Masters, unless directed to divulge the same, he will *ipso facto* cease to derive any benefit from the teachings, whether the fact be known or unknown to himself or to others. A repetition of such offense gives the Head of the Section the right to expel the offender in discretion. In every case where a member shall receive a letter or communication purporting to come from Master or Masters, and which directs the divulgence of its contents or a part thereof, the same before being divulged shall be communicated to H.P. Blavatsky directly, if the recipient is in Europe, and to William Q. Judge, if in America, for transmission to said H.P. Blavatsky. For deception is easy, and, without great experience, members are not able to decide whether such a communication is genuine or not.

8 No member shall, under any circumstances, bring any charge of whatever nature against another member, whether to H.P. Blavatsky, William Q. Judge, or any other member of the Section. This rule does not imply that the Masters condone, excuse, or tolerate any fault or crime. But no member is the judge of the acts of another member or theosophist, in this Section less than in any other. For, while in every Exoteric Branch, its President and Council decide upon any charges against their Fellows, in this Section each member is to be judged by his Karma and the Masters alone.

9 No member shall pretend to the possession of psychic powers that he has not, nor boast of those which he may have developed. Envy, jealousy, and vanity are insidious and powerful foes to progress, and it is known from long experience that, among beginners especially, the boasting of, or calling attention to, their psychic powers almost invariably causes the development of these faults and increases them when present. Hence —

10 No member shall tell to another, especially to a fellow-member, how much he has progressed or what recognition he has received, nor shall he by hints cause such to be known. Where students of similar tastes and dispositions desire to form a group or groups for mutual help in training, application must be made to H.P. Blavatsky for permission and advice as to the same. But hasty judgment as to the advisability of forming such groups must be avoided. For it may so happen, that two or more members united by a real friendship, may yet be so contrary in their magnetic idiosyncrasies and conditions that their friendship may be changed into hatred on the occult plane, if they form groups without esoteric knowledge.

11 No member shall ask for any orders or instructions as to the conduct of his business affairs or the management of his social relations, or the ordinary affairs of life, nor as to the cure of diseases, whether in himself or in any other person. Questions relative to the instructions given will alone be accepted and attended to.

12 It is required of a member that when a question arises it shall be deeply thought over from all its aspects, to the end that he may find the answer himself; and in no case shall questions be asked out of curiosity, nor until the person has exhausted every ordinary means of solving the doubt or of acquiring himself the information sought. Otherwise his intuition will never be developed. He will not learn self-reliance; and two of the main objects of the Section will be defeated. For an adept be-

comes such by his own exertions, by the self-development of his own power; and no one but himself can effect this work. “An adept becomes, he is not made.” The office of Guru or Guide is to adjust the disciple in his progress, and not to drag or push him forward.

13 The use of wine, spirits, liquors of any kind, or any narcotic or intoxicating drug, is strictly prohibited. If indulged in, all progress is hindered, and the efforts of teacher and pupil alike are rendered useless. All such substances have a directly pernicious action upon the brain, and especially upon the “third eye,” or *pineal gland*.¹ They prevent absolutely the development of the *third eye*, called in the East “the Eye of Śiva.”

14 The moderate use of tobacco is not prohibited, for it is not an intoxicant; but its abuse, like that of everything else — even pure water or bread — is prejudicial.

15 As to diet: The eating of meat is not prohibited, but if the student can maintain health on vegetables or fish, such diet is recommended. The eating of meat strengthens the passional nature, and the desire to acquire possessions, and therefore increases the difficulty of the struggle with the lower nature.

16 Each member is expected to set apart a certain time of the day or night, of not less than half an hour’s duration, for meditation upon the instructions received, for self-examination and self-study. If possible, the place selected for this should be used by no other person, nor for any other purpose; but the providing of such a special place, if inconvenient, is not insisted upon.

17 Harboursing doubt as to the existence of Masters in general is no crime, since it is often but the effect of ignorance, and comes involuntarily. But *it will inevitably prevent the pupil from attracting the attention of the Master*; and he will fail to draw to himself His influence. Suspicions as to the character of the members of the Section are also prejudicial to advancement. In short, any malevolent feeling, especially malice, envy or revenge toward any person high or low, creates peculiarly obstructive conditions in the student’s path, and will absolutely prevent progress of every sort. The elimination of the desire for reward aids the student in his development.

18 No member of this Section shall belong to any other body, association, or organization for the purpose of mystic study or occult training, except Masonry and the Odd Fellows, if they so desire. But they must be as careful to guard the secrecy of this Section from Masons as they are to preserve the secrets of Masonry from Theosophists. The reason for this rule is so self-evident as to need no explanation.

19 It is expected that all members of this Section shall have the following books and magazines where they can be referred to, as constant reference to them will be made in the course of the instruction, and no extended extracts will be furnished. Works on metaphysics and articles expounding the teachings of our Special School should be procured.

¹ *Vide Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 288 [d] *et seq.*

The following books and theosophical magazines should be especially attended to:

<i>The Secret Doctrine</i>	<i>Patañjali's Yoga Philosophy</i>
<i>The Bhagavad-Gita</i>	<i>The Theosophist</i>
<i>Light on the Path</i>	<i>Lucifer</i>
<i>The Path</i>	

This rule is not intended to force members into the purchase of these books and magazines, but the undersigned has no time to copy extracts, giving explanations that have already appeared in print. Much has been already published, and it will be necessary to refer very often to such matter, and if a member is actually unable to procure the publications referred to, it is expected that others who are able will, upon request, furnish the desired book or a copy of the matter referred to. And herein the plea of poverty — if a pretence — will be as prejudicial to the student as any other vice.

20 As “the first test of true apprenticeship is devotion to the interest of another,” it is expected that members will endeavour to fully comply with clauses 1 and 5 of the pledge. Theosophy must be made a living power in life, and, as a beginning, it must be applied in all relations, whether business, social, or personal. As a whole,

The doctrine promulgated by the Adepts being the only true one, must — supported by such evidence as they are preparing to give — become ultimately triumphant as every other truth. Yet it is absolutely necessary to inculcate it gradually, enforcing its theories, unimpeachable facts for those who know, with direct inferences deduced from and corroborated by the evidence furnished by modern exact science. For these doctrines to practically react on the life through the so-called moral code or the ideas of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc., we have to preach and popularise a knowledge of Theosophy. It is not the individual or determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvana, which is, after all, only an exalted and glorious *selfishness*, but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead our neighbour on the right path, and cause as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true Theosophist.¹

21 Members of the Section will therefore not neglect the exoteric branches of the Theosophical Society, but are expected to infuse into those as much energy in theosophical work as they can. Although all cannot be teachers, yet each one can familiarise himself with theosophical doctrines, and promulgate them to those who are

¹ [These excerpts are from a letter of the Mahā-Chohan, very likely the most important letter from the Teachers. Its original does not exist in any of the known Archives. Its approximate date is 1881. Copies which are available show it to have been intended for A.P. Sinnett. It is introduced by the following brief statement:

“An abridged version of the view of the Chohan on the T.S. from his own words as given last night. My own letter, the answer to yours, will shortly follow. K.H.”

<Full text in our Masters Speak Series — ED. PHIL.>

Other excerpts from this communication were published by H.P. Blavatsky in *Lucifer*, Vol. II, August 1888, pp. 431-32 (cf. *Collected Writings*, Vol. X; pp. 78-81 with historical footnotes), and by William Quan Judge in *The Path*, Vol. VII, February 1893, pp. 333-35 (cf. *Echoes of the Orient*, 1st ed. Vol. I, 1975, pp. 297-300; 2nd ed., Vol. I, 2009, pp. 317-320) — Boris de Zirkoff.]

inquiring. “There is hardly a theosophist in the whole Society unable to effectually help it by correcting erroneous impressions of outsiders, if not by actually propagating the ideas himself.”

The efforts of those members who benefit the Cause should never be impeded by criticism on the part of others who do nothing, but all should be encouraged and as much help given as is possible, even if that assistance be limited through circumstances to mere encouragement. Every sincerely based work for theosophy will bear good fruit, no matter how inappropriate it may appear in the eyes of those members who have set to themselves and everybody else only one definite plan of action.

Further rules will be made if exigency requires.¹



¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. RULES) XII pp. 494-98