

WORK FOR THEOSOPHY

Articles by William Q. Judge

THEOSOPHICAL STUDY AND WORK

THE PATH

WHAT OUR SOCIETY NEEDS MOST

WHAT THE MASTERS HAVE SAID

DOGMATISM IN THEOSOPHY

CLOSED OR OPEN LODGES

EACH MEMBER A CENTRE

METHODS OF THEOSOPHICAL WORK

HYPOCRISY OR IGNORANCE

CAUTIONS IN PARAGRAPHS

THEOSOPHICAL DON'TS

THE PATH OF ACTION

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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THEOSOPHICAL STUDY AND WORK

THE birth and life of a Branch of the Theosophical Society are very like to those of an individual. As with persons so with a body of theosophists engaged in theosophical endeavor and study, the parentage and the subsequent environment have much to do with the continuance of life and with the power of the influence exerted over the units which compose the association, as well as that which radiates from the Branch to others outside. And in a Theosophical Society its authorship is divided among all those who come together in order to start and carry it on. If the authors of its being are unintelligent, or confused, or uncertain, or self-seeking in the formation of the Society, its life and work will be the same. Growth will be stopped, influence hindered, and results—nothing. The work and influence of a Branch hinge upon the knowledge of theosophical doctrine, upon the motives, ideas, and ideals of the members, and so we have to consider what is the knowledge required and what should be the aims, ideas, and ideals of those who form and are to work in a Branch T.S. An inquiry should also be made into the methods which ought to be adopted as well as those that are to be avoided.

The work of a Branch has two objective points where it is intended, in the theosophical order of things, that its help and influence are to be felt. The first is in and among its members, and the other upon that portion of the world which lies within its purview. If, as I firmly believe, the theory of universal brotherhood is based upon a law—a fact—in nature that all men are spiritual beings who are indissolubly linked and united together in one vast whole, then no Branch, no individual theosophist, can be regarded as without significance and influence, nor is any member justified in supposing that he or she is too obscure, too unprogressed, to be of any benefit to the movement and thus to mankind at large.

The fact that a branch T.S. is a body of individuals makes stronger the certainty that by means of the subtle link which, under the law of unity, connects together all the men who are on this planet, a wider and more potent influence for good or evil may be exerted through a Branch than through any single individual. For just as man is composed of atoms descended to him in various lines from many forefathers, all of which have a part in the influence he exerts, so a Branch is a being composed of the atoms—its members—included within its borders. And it is no fancy, no fantastic dream, to say that this being may be intelligent, or forceful, or weak, or wicked as a whole, just as it is made the one or the other by its component parts. And the declarations made by the adepts respecting individual theosophists should have weight with such a body. Those Beings have said that each member can aid the movement by explaining its fundamental doctrines or at least by doing away with misconceptions, and that no single unit in the whole should be so ignorant as to suppose that he or she has a special karma of his own unconnected with the rest. Not a single good example in theosophic life is lost. They say, but every one of us affects not only the immediate associates but also projects into the great universal current an influence that has its weight in the destiny of the race. Some of these golden words are as follows:

“Let not the fruit of good karma be your motive; for your karma, good or bad, being one and the common property of all mankind, nothing good or bad can happen to you that is not shared by many others.” Hence, if the motive be for yourself it is selfish and can only generate a double effect—good and bad—each will either nullify your good actions or turn them to some other man’s profit. “There is no happiness for one who is ever thinking of self and forgetting other selves.”

This is all applicable to a Branch in its totality, for it is an intelligent being quite as much under the government of karma as any individual. It will feel the karma of its actions, and the responsibility will rest upon the members who have neglected or obeyed the dictates of theosophic duty. And the karma of the entire international body will

react upon it for benefit or the reverse, according to the good, bad, or indifferent karma which the Branch may have acquired by its course of action. It is a part of the whole, and no portion can be exempt from the influences belonging to the total mass of workers. Thus a Branch which has been indifferent, or selfish, or full of doubt or disloyalty regarding the ideals it promised to follow, will attract out of the international theosophic karma just enough to accentuate its weakness and doubt, and on the other hand a Branch which has worked hard, unselfishly, and earnestly will attract the good from the whole sum of karma, and that, added to its own, will enable it to resist bad effects and will further strengthen the vital elements in its own corporate body.

The good or bad karma of the whole Theosophic Society may be figured as surrounding it from one end of the world to the other in the shape of layers or spheres of light or darkness. The light is good karma and the darkness is bad. Those units—Branches—which contain the elements of light within them will attract from the sphere of light as much of that as they are capable of holding, and the darkness will be drawn in by those which have darkness already. Thus we are all, theosophically speaking, keepers and helpers of each other, not only in the United States but in England, in Bombay, in Calcutta, in Madras. If we do not do our duty it may happen that some struggling Branch in some far off place will by reason of its newness or weakness be the recipient, not of help but of damage from us. Each Branch is separately responsible for its own actions, and yet every one is helped or injured by every other. These reciprocating influences work on the real though unseen plane where every man is dynamically united to every fellow man. And I am not uncharitable in saying that if the Indian Branches had worked more for the far-distant United States when it was unable to stand alone, we should now be the possessors of more in the way of elucidation and statistics and other aids from that far-distant land than we can show. But even if the early-formed United States’ Branches had worked with more zeal and energy toward the real ends of the Society, we should have been able earlier to materially aid and comfort our sincere brother and sacrificing worker,

Col. H. S. Olcott. And now the newer Branches of the Society in this country have a better opportunity than others in the past, for all the fighting has been done and much work is ready to their hand.

So the most obscure has a place in the scheme as important as the one that is large and well known, while those that are lazy or doubting or selfish must compensate some time or another for their acts of commission, as well as for any failure to add to the general sum of good.

With this in view we may conclude that a single Branch has the power to efficiently aid and benefit not only its members but also the whole theosophic body corporate. This may be made clearer by remembering how often in the history of the world a family or even a man has sometimes been for the nation or race a power for the greatest good or evil.

Under this doctrine of unity and selflessness the work of a Branch ought to be entered into by all the members with an unselfish spirit which will lead them to have patience with the weaker brethren, for a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and therefore endeavor should be made to bring to the minds of the weakest the truths that the others see with less difficulty. And next, every individual, by eliminating the desire to get knowledge for himself, will thereby make the Branch as a whole open and porous to the unseen but real and powerful influences managed from behind the scenes by the great personages who have as a part of their work in the world the theosophic movement, and who are constantly at work among us for the purpose of aiding those who are sincere and unselfish. If the testimony of those who have been long in the Society is to be believed, then, as they assert, there are among us every day many disciples (who are known in our literature by the name of "Chelas") who are engaged in fanning the flame of spiritual illumination wherever they find it among the members. Their influence is not exerted because of wealth or personal prominence, but upon any one of any class who has tried to understand theosophy for the sake of others and in order that he may communicate to others in his turn. Not only has this been asserted by the leaders in the movement, but in the experience of many of us we

have seen help extended to those who are in earnest for their fellow-man.

And this is peculiarly and more strongly applicable to those members who have as one of their aims the acquisition of psychic and abnormal powers. These powers cannot be safely found and used by the man who desires them for himself, and his mere statement in his heart or in words that he desires them for others goes for naught unless the deeper and inner motive and object coincide with the high one which is expressed. Our members, new and old, might as well become acquainted with the bald and naked truth on this subject now, as to wait for years of bitter experience to burn it into them. There are such powers and man may acquire them, but each age and each race has its limitations that it is not possible for the average man to overcome. Hardly any member who has desires for these would admit that he would be willing to become a black magician in order to acquire them, that is, would sacrifice his chances for emancipation for their sake. Yet without altruism one cannot get them except as a black magician. One has to deliberately make up his mind that he will sacrifice everything and everybody else to his design if it is his intention to obtain them without following the rules laid down by the White Adepts inculcating truth, purity, charity, and all the virtues—in fact, altruism. There is no secret about the fact that two ways and no more lie open to the one who wishes for the powers of an adept, and those are on the right hand, that of virtue and altruism, and on the left—the black side—that of intense and unrelenting selfishness. No compromise, no mere dabbling, is allowed or possible, and more so in the selfish path, for there every one's hand is against every other one; none will help at any crisis, and, when the hour arrives that the student in that school is in peril from the unseen and terrible forces of nature, his companions on the road will but sneer at his weakness and rejoice at his downfall. And indeed, the line of demarcation between these two ways, for students of the grade of most of the members of our Society, is very thin. It is like the hair line which the Mohammedan mystic says divides the false from the true. One has to be very careful so as to know if his motive is really so unselfish as he pretends it to himself

to be. But it can always be tested by the reality of the feeling of brotherhood that he has in him. A mere intellectual longing to know and to discover further in this field is selfish and of the black variety, for unless every desire to know the truth is in order that one may give it to others, it is full of taint. Moreover, it will lead to no powers and to no real knowledge, for success on either side depends upon the burning of desire in the heart. With the white school this is for the sake of fellow-man, and on the dark hand the same fierce desire is for self alone.

Many persons, however, think that they can belong to the Society, and while negatively selfish, that is, ready and willing to sit down and hear others expound theosophical doctrine and never work for the body themselves, they may receive benefit in the way of comprehension of the doctrines of man and nature which are promulgated among us. But they forget a law in these matters of great importance, one, indeed, that they may not be willing to admit, and which is much opposed to our modern ideas of the powers and functions of the human mind. It is that such an attitude by reason of its selfishness builds up a hard wall between their minds and the very truths they wish to know. I speak of an actual dynamic effect which is as plain to the eye of the trained seer as is any object to the healthy eye.

We have been so accustomed for many years to vague ideas about the human mind, what it is, and what its powers really are, that people in general have no definite notion whether there be or not any material effect in the human economy from thoughts, or whether they are like what is usually called "imagination," a something very unreal and wholly without objectivity. But it is a fact that the mind of the selfish person is always making about itself a hard reflecting surface which throws off and away from its grasp the very knowledge the man himself would take if he but knew the reason why he fails.

This brings us naturally to the proposition that the aims of the members in a Branch should be to eradicate selfishness and to promulgate and illustrate the doctrine of universal brotherhood, basing the explanation upon the actual unity of all beings. This of itself will

lead to the explanation of many other doctrines, as it underlies them all, great and small. And in order to do this the members ought to study the system as a whole, so that its parts may be comprehended. It is for the want of such study that we so often hear members, when asked to explain their theosophy, saying, "Well, to tell the truth, I know how it all is, but am not able to make it clear to you." They are not clear because they have not taken the time and trouble to learn the few fundamental propositions and how to apply them to any and every question.

A very common error is the supposition that new men, new enquirers, can be converted to theosophy and brought into its ranks by taking up and enforcing phenomena. In the term "phenomena" I include all such as spiritualism, clairvoyance, clairaudience, psychometry, hypnotism, mesmerism, thought-reading, and the like. These convert but few if any, because there is not much known about them and so many proofs are required before belief is induced. And even a belief in these things gives no sound basis of a theosophical character. A perfect illustration of this is seen in the history of H. P. Blavatsky, who for many years has permitted phenomena to occur with herself for the benefit of certain specific persons. These have been talked about by the whole world, and the Psychical Society saw fit to send a man to look into them after they had taken place, but although the very persons who saw them happen testified to their genuineness, they were denied by him and all laid to fraud and confederation. Everyone who was inclined from the first to believe in them continued to so believe, and those who never believed remained in the same state as before.

The best attested phenomena are ever subject to doubt so long as the philosophy on which they depend is not understood.

Furthermore, the mass of men and women in the world are not troubled about phenomena. These they think can be left alone for the present because more pressing things engage their attention and call for solution. The great problems of life: why we are here, why we suffer, and where may justice be found that will show the reason for the sufferings of the good man, or, indeed, for the sufferings

of any one, press upon us. For each man thinks he is unjustly borne hard upon by fate when his cherished plans go for nothing, or his family is carried off by death, or his name is disgraced by a wayward child, or when, as is very often the case, he is unjustly accused and injured by his fellow-men. There are many who find themselves born poor when others less worthy are rich, and they ask why it is all thus and get no reply from the common religious systems of the day. It is life and its sorrows that destroy our peace, and every human heart wants to know the reason for it.

We must therefore offer theories that will give the answer, and these theories are the great doctrines of karma and reincarnation. These show justice triumphant in the world, meting out reward or punishment as it is deserved in any state of life. After an experience of fifteen years in the Society's work I have seen that more good and useful men and women have been attracted to our movement by these doctrines than have ever come to it by reason of phenomena, and that a great many have left our ranks who began on the phenomenal side. The members in general may not be aware of the fact that when the Society was formed the greater number of its New York members were spiritualists and that they nearly all left us long ago.

There is a mysterious power in these doctrines of karma and reincarnation which at last forces them upon the belief of those who take them up for study. It is due to the fact that the ego is itself the experiencer of rebirth and karma and has within a clear recollection of both, and rejoices, as it were, when it finds the lower mind taking them up for study. Each person is the concentration and result of karma, and is compelled from within to believe. The ethics of theosophy as enforced and illuminated by these twin doctrines should therefore be the object of our search and promulgation.

Furthermore, this course is authorized, for those who believe in the Adepts, by their words written about us. I quote :

“It is the insatiable craving for phenomena made so often degrading that has caused you so much trouble. Let the Society henceforth flourish upon its moral worth and the study of philosophy and ethics put into practice.”

The next question is how to carry all this out in practice.

First, by having the Branch open to the public and never private.

Second, by regular attendance and meetings.

Third, by establishing a library, at first with the few important books, which few can be added to by the members from time to time through donations of books which they have read.

Fourth, by always having an article, original or otherwise, for reading and discussion. If literary talent is not available, its want can be supplied from the great quantity of articles which have come out in the Society's magazines during the last fifteen years. In those nearly every subject of theosophical interest has been written upon and explained. They can be looked up with very little labor, and used at each meeting. And they can be carried on upon settled lines so as to go over each subject fully. It will be found that nearly all the questions that now puzzle new members have been at one time or another illustrated and explained in these articles.

Fifth, by a careful elementary study of our doctrines from one or two books until the main outline of all is grasped. Take, for instance, *Esoteric Buddhism*. This gives the system in the main, and many persons have read it, but a great many of these have done this but once. For them there often arise questions they might easily solve if they had made the system as a whole a part of their mental furniture. This book can be corrected by the *Secret Doctrine*, in which Mine. Blavatsky has said that *Esoteric buddhism* is in the main correct, and she gives the means for supplying its deficiencies. Then there is that most useful book, *Five Years of Theosophy*, containing some of the most valuable articles that appeared in the *Theo-sophist*.

Sixth, by a method of discussion which does not permit any one person in the Branch to assert that his or her views are the correct ones. We cannot get at truth by assertion, but only by calm consideration of views advanced, and the self-asserting person is very nearly always close to error. I know this view is contrary to that of American independence, which leads us on forever to assert ourselves. The true philosophy annuls this and teaches that it is only from the

concurrence of investigation that the truth can be arrived at. And the deeper occultism says that the self-asserter debars himself from truth forever. No one mind has all the knowledge possible, and each one is naturally capable of seeing but the one side that is easy for him by reason of his race inheritance and the engrafted tendencies of his education.

Seventh, by remembering that we cannot at once alter the constitutional tendencies of the atoms of our brains, nor in a flash change ourselves. We are insensibly affected by our education, by the ideas of our youth, by the thought, whatever it was, that preceded our entrance upon theosophy. We require to have patience, not with the system of theosophy, but with ourselves, and be willing to wait for the gradual effect of the new ideas upon us. The taking up of these ideas is, in effect, a new mental incarnation, and we, just as is the case of a new manvantara, have to evolve from the old estate and with care gradually eradicate the former bias. It is taught in the *Secret Doctrine* that the moon is the parent of the earth and has given to us all that we are now working over in our world. It is the same in the case under consideration. Our former mental state is our mental moon, and has given us certain material which we must work over, for otherwise we attempt to go contrary to a law of nature and will be defeated.

Some may ask if there is not any sort of study that will enable us to shave off these old erroneous modes of thought. To them I can only give the experience of many of my friends in the same direction. They say, and they are supported by the very highest authority, that the one process is to enquire into and attempt to understand the law of spiritual unity and the fact that no one is separate but that all are one in the plane of spirit, and that no single person has a particular spirit of his own, but that *atman*, called the “seventh principle,” is, in fact, the synthesis of the whole and is the common property of every being high and low, human, animal, animate, inanimate, or divine. This is the teaching of the *Mundaka Upanishad* of the Hindus, and the meaning of the title “Mundaka” is “Shaving,” because it shaves off the errors which stand in the way of truth, permitting then the brilliant lamp of spiritual knowledge to illuminate our inner nature.

And for those who desire to find the highest ethics and philosophy condensed in one book, I would recommend the *Bhagavad Gita*, studied with the aid of such lectures as those of our Hindu brother—now deceased—Subba Row of Madras.¹ They have been reprinted from the *Theosophist* and can be procured by any one. In the *Secret Doctrine* Mme. Blavatsky says: “The best metaphysical definition of primeval theogony in the spirit of the Vedantins may be found” in these lectures.

In the conclusion of *The Key to Theosophy* H. P. Blavatsky, speaking of the future of the Theosophical Society, writes:

Its future will depend almost entirely upon the degree of selflessness, earnestness, devotion, and last but not least, upon the amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by those members on whom it will fall to carry on the work and to direct the Society after the death of the Founders. If they cannot be free from the bias of theological education, the result can only be that the Society will drift off on to some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die. But if that danger be averted the Society will live on into and through the twentieth century. It will burst asunder the iron fetters of creed and caste. The West will learn to understand and appreciate the East at its full value. The development of psychic powers will proceed healthily and normally, and mankind will be saved from terrible bodily and mental dangers which are inevitable where those powers develop in a hotbed of selfishness and passion as they now threaten to do.

At the last quarter of every century one or more persons appear in the world as the agents of the Masters, and a greater or less amount of occult knowledge is given out. She concludes by stating that the present T. S. is one of those attempts to help the world, and the duty of every member is made plain that they should preserve this body with its literature and original plans so as to hand it on to our successors who shall have it ready at the last quarter of the next century for the messenger of the Masters who will then, as now, reappear. Failure or success in this duty presents no obscure outcome. If we succeed, then in the twentieth century that messenger will find the materials in books, in thought and in popular terms, to permit him or her to carry forward the great work to another stage without the fierce opposition and the tremendous obstacles which have frowned upon us during

¹*Theosophist* for Feb., Mar., and June 1887

the last fifteen years just closed. If we fail, then the messenger will waste again many precious years in reparing the ground, and ours will be the responsibility.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

Aryan Branch Paper, November, 1890

THE PATH

THIS Magazine is not intended either to replace or to rival in America *The Theosophist*, nor any other journal now published in the interest of Theosophy.

Whether we are right in starting it the future alone will determine. To us it appears that there is a field and a need for it in this country. No cultivating of this field is necessary, for it is already ripe.

The Theosophist is the organ of the Theosophical Society, now spread all over the civilized world, its readers and subscribers are everywhere, and yet there are many persons who will not subscribe for it although they are aware of its existence; and furthermore, being an Indian publication, it necessarily follows, because of certain peculiar circumstances, that it cannot be brought to the attention of a large class of persons whom this journal will endeavor to reach.

But while the founders of THE PATH are Theosophists, they do not speak authoritatively for the Theosophical Society. It is true that had they never heard of Theosophy, or were they not members of the Society, they would not have thought of bringing out this magazine, the impulse for which arose directly from Theosophical teachings and literature.

It is because they are men, and therefore interested in anything concerning the human race, that they have resolved to try on the one hand to point out to their fellows a Path in which they have found hope for man, and on the other to investigate all systems of ethics and philosophy claiming to lead directly to such a path, regardless of the possibility that the highway may, after all, be in another direction from the one in which they are looking. From their present standpoint it appears to them that the true path lies in the way pointed out by our Aryan forefathers, philosophers, and sages, whose light is still shining

brightly, albeit that this is now Kali Yuga, or the age of darkness.

The solution of the problem, “What and Where is the Path to Happiness,” has been discovered by those of old time. They thought it was in the pursuit of Raja Yoga, which is the highest science and the highest religion—a union of both. In elaborating this, they wrote much more than we can hope to master in the lifetime of this journal, and they have had many kinds of followers, many devotees, who, while earnestly desiring to arrive at truth, have erred in favor of the letter of the teachings. Such are some of the mendicants of Hindoostan who insist upon the verbal repetition of OM for thousands of times, or upon the practice of postures and breathing alone, forgetting that over all stands the real man, at once the spectator of and sufferer, by these mistakes. *This is not the path.*

At the same time we do not intend to slight the results arrived at by others who lived within our own era. They shall receive attention, for it may be that the mind of the race has changed so as to make it necessary now to present truths in a garb which in former times was of no utility. Whatever the outer veil, the truth remains ever the same.

The study of what is now called “practical occultism” has some interest for us, and will receive the attention it may merit, but it is not *the* object of this journal. We regard it as incidental to the journey along the path. The traveller, in going from one city to another, has, perhaps, to cross several rivers; may be his conveyance fails him and he is obliged to swim, or he must, in order to pass a great mountain, know engineering in order to tunnel through it, or is compelled to exercise the art of locating his exact position by observation of the sun; but all that is only incidental to his main object of reaching his destination. We admit the existence of hidden, powerful forces in nature, and believe that every day greater progress is made toward an understanding of them. Astral body formation, clairvoyance, looking into the astral light, and controlling elementals, are all possible, but not all profitable. The electrical current, which, when resisted in the carbon, produces intense light, may be brought into existence by any ignoramus who has the key to the engine room and can turn the crank that starts the dynamo, but is unable to prevent his fellow man

or himself from being instantly killed, should that current accidentally be diverted through his body. The control of these hidden forces is not easily obtained, nor can phenomena be produced without danger, and in our view the attainment of true wisdom is not by means of phenomena, but through the development which begins within. Besides that, mankind in the mass are not able to reach to phenomena, while every one can understand right thought, right speech, and right action.

True occultism is clearly set forth in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Light on the Path*, where sufficient stress is laid upon practical occultism, but after all, Krishna says, the kingly science and the kingly mystery is devotion to and study of the light which comes from within. The very first step in true mysticism and true occultism is to try to apprehend the meaning of Universal Brotherhood, without which the very highest progress in the practice of magic turns to ashes in the mouth.

We appeal, therefore, to all who wish to raise themselves and their fellow creatures—man and beast—out of the thoughtless jog trot of selfish everyday life. It is not thought that Utopia can be established in a day; but through the spreading of the idea of Universal Brotherhood, the truth in all things may be discovered. Certainly, if we all say that it is useless, that such highly-strung, sentimental notions cannot obtain currency, nothing will ever be done. A beginning must be made, and it has been by the Theosophical Society. Although philanthropic institutions and schemes are constantly being brought forward by good and noble men and women, vice, selfishness, brutality, and the resulting misery, seem to grow no less. Riches are accumulating in the hands of the few, while the poor are ground harder every day as they increase in number. Prisons, asylums for the outcast and the magdalen, can be filled much faster than it is possible to erect them. All this points unerringly to the existence of a vital error somewhere. It shows that merely healing the outside by hanging a murderer or providing asylums and prisons will never reduce the number of criminals nor the hordes of children born and growing up in hot-beds of vice. What is wanted is true knowledge of the spiritual condition of man, his aim and destiny. This is offered to a reasonable certainty in the Aryan literature, and those who must begin the reform

are those who are so fortunate as to be placed in the world where they can see and think out the problems all are endeavoring to solve, even if they know that the great day may not come until after their death. Such a study leads us to accept the utterance of Prajapati to his sons: "Be restrained, be liberal, be merciful"; it is the death of selfishness.

Path, April, 1886

WHAT OUR SOCIETY NEEDS MOST

THE first object of our Society is the formation of a nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood. This is a practical object and at the same time a fact in nature. It has been long regarded by the greater number of men as an Utopian ideal, one that might be held up, talked about, desired, but impossible of attainment. And it was no wonder that people so regarded it, because the ordinary religious view of God, nature, and man placed everything on a selfish basis, offered personal distinction in heaven to the saints who might die in the odor of sanctity, and thus made impossible the realization of this beautiful dream. But when the Theosophical philosophy shows that there is a unity among beings not only in their better natures but also on the physical plane, our first object becomes most practical. For if all men are brothers in fact, that is, joined one to another by a tie which no one can break, then the formation of the nucleus for the future brotherhood is something that has to do with all the affairs of man, affects civilizations, and leads to the physical as well as moral betterment of each member of the great family.

This first object means philanthropy. Each Theosophist should therefore not only continue his private or public acts of charity, but also strive to so understand Theosophical philosophy as to be able to expound it in a practical and easily understood manner, so that he may be a wider philanthropist by ministering to the needs of the inner man. This inner man is a thinking being who feeds upon a right or wrong philosophy. If he is given that one which is wrong, then, becoming warped and diseased, he leads his instrument, the outer man, into bewilderment and sorrow.

Now as Theosophical theories were and are still quite strange, fascinating, and peculiar when contrasted with the usual doctrines of

men and things, very many members have occupied themselves with much metaphysical speculation or with diving into the occult and the wonderful, forgetting that the higher philanthropy calls for a spreading among men of a right basis for ethics, for thought, for action. So we often find Theosophists among themselves debating complicated doctrines that have no present application to practical life, and at the same time other members and some enquirers breathing a sigh of relief when anyone directs the inquiries into such a channel as shall cause all the doctrines to be extended to daily life and there applied.

What we most need is such a Theosophical education as will give us the ability to expound Theosophy in a way to be understood by the ordinary person. This practical, clear exposition is entirely possible. That it is of the highest importance there can be no doubt whatever. It relates to and affects ethics, every day life, every thought, and consequently every act. The most learned, astute, and successful church, the Roman Catholic, proceeds on this basis. Should we refrain from a good practise because a bigot takes the same method? The priests of Rome do not explain, nor attempt to explain or expound, the highly metaphysical and obscure, though important, basis of their various doctrines. They touch the people in their daily life, a knowledge of their own system in all its details enabling them to put deep doctrine into every man's language, although the learning of the preacher may be temporarily concealed. With them the appeal is to fear; with us it is to reason and experience. So we have a natural advantage which ought not to be overlooked.

High scholarship and a knowledge of metaphysics are good things to have, but the mass of the people are neither scholars nor metaphysicians. If our doctrines are of any such use as to command the efforts of sages in helping on to their promulgation, then it must be that those sages—our Masters—desire the doctrines to be placed before as many of the mass as we can reach. This our Theosophical scholars and metaphysicians can do by a little effort. It is indeed a little difficult, because slightly disagreeable, for a member who is naturally metaphysical to come down to the ordinary level of human minds in general, but it can be done. And when one does do this, the

reward is great from the evident relief and satisfaction of the enquirer.

It is pre-eminently our duty to be thus practical in exposition as often as possible. Intellectual study only of our Theosophy will not speedily better the world. It must, of course, have effect through immortal ideas once more set in motion, but while we are waiting for those ideas to bear fruit among men a revolution may break out and sweep us away. We should do as Buddha taught his disciples, preach, practise, promulgate, and illustrate our doctrines. He spoke to the meanest of men with effect, although having a deeper doctrine for greater and more learned minds. Let us, then, acquire the art of practical exposition of ethics based on our theories and enforced by the fact of Universal Brotherhood.

Path, September, 1892

WHAT THE MASTERS HAVE SAID

IN 1888, speaking of Col. Olcott, an article in this magazine quoted from letters from the Adepts sent to Mr. Sinnett at a time some objections were made to the work of the Society on the ground that enough attention was not paid to men of science and to science itself.¹ Since the year in which those letters were written many persons have joined the Theo-sophical Society and its sphere of work has greatly extended. And now no less than then, the workers have begun to pay too much attention to the intellectual side of Theosophy and too little to that phase on which the Masters who are behind insist and which is called by H.P.B. in *The Voice of the Silence* the “heart doctrine.” Others also have said that they do not want any of the heart doctrine, but wish us to be highly respectable and scientific. Let us consult the Masters, those of us who believe in them.

When the letters to the Simla Lodge were written it was said by objecting Theosophists that it was time now to take a different tack and to work for men of science, and there was a slight suspicion of a repulsion between the Hindus, who are black, and the Europeans, as well as an openly expressed condemnation of the methods of Col. Olcott and H. P. Blavatsky. The reply from the Adepts, made after consultation with others very much higher still, runs in part:

No messenger of truth, no prophet, has ever achieved during his lifetime a complete triumph—not even Buddha. The Theosophical Society was chosen as the corner-stone, the foundation of the future religion of humanity. To achieve the proposed object a greater, wider, and especially a more benevolent intermingling of the high and the low, of the alpha and omega of society was determined on.

Who determined this? The Adepts and those who are yet still

behind them, that is to say, for the Theosophist, the Dhyān Chohans who have control of such matters. Why was it decided? Because the world is sunk in sorrow and in selfishness which keeps the one side of society from helping the other. The letter goes on:

The white race must be the first to stretch out the hand of fellowship to the dark nations. This prospect may not smile to all alike He is no Theosophist who objects to the principle. . . and it is we, the humble disciples of the perfect Lamas, who are expected to allow the Theosophical Society to drop its noblest title, *The Brotherhood of Humanity*, to become a simple school of philosophy. Let us understand each other. He who does not feel competent enough to grasp the noble idea sufficiently to work for it need not undertake a task too heavy for him.

The depth of the sarcasm here cannot be measured, and at the same time it is almost impossible to fully understand the opportunity pointed out in those words and the loss of progress one may suffer by not heeding them. They apply to all, and not merely to the persons they were written to, for the Masters always say what applies universally. The letter continues:

But there is hardly a Theosophist in the whole Society unable to effectually help it by correcting the erroneous impression of outsiders, if not by actually himself propagating this idea.

Later on, near the time when H.P.B. was in Germany, others came and asked what they might do, how they might work, and what “sphere of influence” they might find. The Master known as K. H. then wrote a letter to one, and at the same time sent copies with fuller notes on the communication to others. A part of that letter has lately been published in the German magazine, the *Sphinx*. In it the Master said among other things:

Spheres of influence can be found everywhere. The first object of the Theosophical Society is philanthropy. The true Theosophist is a philanthropist, who “Not for himself but for the world he lives.” This, and philosophy, the right comprehension of life and its mysteries, will give the “necessary basis” and show the right path to pursue. Yet the best “sphere of influence” for the applicant is now in [his own land].

The reference to *a basis* and *a sphere of influence* is to the idea of those who held that a scientific or at least a very long preparation to get a basis and a sphere for work was needed first. But the answer

¹PATH, III, 12

shows the Adept as not agreeing, and as pointing out the way to work along the line of the heart doctrine. And some of the fuller notes annexed to the copy of this letter sent at the same time to others read:

My reference to "philanthropy" was meant in its broadest sense, and to draw attention to the absolute need of the "doctrine of the heart" as opposed to that which is merely "of the eye." And before, I have written that our Society is not a mere intellectual school for occultism, and those greater than we have said that he who thinks the task of working for others too hard had better not undertake it. The moral and spiritual sufferings of the world are more important and need help and cure more than science needs aid from us in any field of discovery. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."—K.H.

After seventeen years of work it is now time that the whole Society should pay a little more attention to the words of those Masters of wisdom who have thus indicated the road, and these are the "original lines" traced out and meant to be followed. All those who do not follow them are those who feel dissatisfied with our work, and those who try to go upon these lines are those who feel and know that help is always given to the sincere Theosophist who ever tries not only to understand the philosophy but also to make it forceful for the proving and the exemplifying of the doctrine and object of Universal Brotherhood.

ONE OF THE RECIPIENTS

Path, February, 1893

DOGMATISM IN THEOSOPHY

THE Theosophical Society was founded to destroy dogmatism. This is one of the meanings of its first object—Universal Brotherhood. And Col. H. S. Olcott in his inaugural address in 1875, at Mott Memorial Hall, New York, said that such was the object in view, citing the bad effect that intolerance had had in the past. That address was read by Mme. H. P. Blavatsky before its delivery, or its contents were communicated to her, so that it had her assent, for she was present when it was delivered.

In the *Key to Theosophy*, in the "Conclusion," H.P.B. again refers to this subject and expresses the hope that the Society might not, after her death, become dogmatic or crystallize on some phase of thought or philosophy, but that it might remain free and open, with its members wise and unselfish. And in all her writings and remarks, privately or publicly, she constantly reiterated this idea. Of this the writer has direct evidence as to her statements in private.

If our effort is to succeed, we must avoid dogmatism in theosophy as much as in anything else, for the moment we dogmatise and insist on our construction of theosophy, that moment we lose sight of Universal Brotherhood and sow the seeds of future trouble.

There is a great likelihood that members of the Society will insist on a certain orthodoxy in our ranks. They are already doing it here and there, and this is a note of warning to draw their attention to the danger. There is no orthodoxy in our Society. Even though nine-tenths of the members believe in Reincarnation, Karma, the sevenfold constitution, and all the rest, and even though its prominent ones are engaged in promulgating these doctrines as well as others, the ranks of the Society must always be kept open, and no one should be told that he is not orthodox or not a good Theosophist because he does not

believe in these doctrines. All that anyone is asked to subscribe to is *Universal Brotherhood*, and its practice in the search for truth. For the efforts of those who are thus promulgating specific ideas are made under the sanction of the second object of the Society, which any one is free to follow or to refuse to follow as he sees fit. One may deny— undogmatically—reincarnation and other doctrines, or may assert belief in a personal or impersonal God, and still be a good member of the Society, provided Universal Brotherhood is subscribed to and put into practice.

If a member says he must formulate a God, or cannot believe in Reincarnation, none other should condemn or draw comparisons, or point to the writings of H.P.B. or any one else to show that such a member is untheosophical. The greatest minds on earth are puzzled by great ideas such as these, and yet, holding them, can still search for truth with others in a perfect spirit of toleration.

But at the same time it is obvious that to enter the Society and then, under our plea of tolerance, assert that theosophy shall not be studied, that the great body of thought and philosophy offered in our literature shall not be investigated, is untheosophical, unpractical, and absurd, for it were to nullify the very object of our organization; it is a dogmatism that flows from negation and indifference. We must study the philosophy and the doctrines offered to us before we are in a position to pass judgment and say that they are not true or that they shall be rejected. To judge or reject before examination is the province of little minds or prejudiced dogmatists.

And as the great body of philosophy, science, and ethics offered by H. P. Blavatsky and her teachers has upon it the seal of research, of reasonableness, of antiquity, and of wisdom, it demands our first and best consideration in order that we may with fitness conclude upon its acceptance or rejection.

So, then, a member of the Society, no matter how high or how low his or her position in its ranks, has the right to promulgate all the philosophical and ethical ideas found in our literature to the best ability possessed, and no one else has the right to object, provided such promulgation is accompanied by a clear statement that it is not

authorized or made orthodox by any declaration from the body corporate of the T.S. Our Society must be kept free and open, no matter if, because we refuse to formulate beliefs as a Society, we remain small in number, for we can always be strong in influence.

Path, January, 1892

CLOSED OR OPEN LODGES

THE Theosophical Society has never prohibited Private Branches. If five Members-at-large can exist separately, they can exist together; for they are no worse off when organized than when not. It is conceivable, moreover, that there may be special circumstances where publicity is undesirable—as where there is exceptional local bitterness against Theosophy, or where the Charter-members are as yet too few or too ill-instructed to furnish papers and discussions of value to outsiders, or where want of intellectual capacity might excite derision in the community instead of respect. Another case is possible—where the Charter-members organize for the express purpose of providing open meetings, but temporarily hold only closed ones while studying and otherwise preparing themselves for fitness to edify visitors. In any one of these cases a provisional privacy is altogether legitimate.

But there is another case less commendable. It is where a group of Theosophists choose exclusiveness because they desire only those of their own set, or because they fear ridicule if known as F.T.S., or because they intend organization merely as a furtherance to their own intellectual culture or to the attainment of psychic power. The foundation of such a Lodge is timidity or selfishness, and on neither can a sound Theosophical superstructure be erected.

And what, in fact, has been the fate of Private Branches in the American Section? Five Charters to such have thus far been issued. Of these five Branches, two died quietly and soon, one surrendered

its Charter, one is virtually extinct, and one is of too recent formation to have a history. No one has contributed to the strength of the Society, to the extension of its teachings, or to the multiplication of its members.

There must be a reason for this. Nor is it hard of detection. The reason is simply that the essential idea of a permanently-closed Lodge and the essential idea of a Theosophical Branch are directly opposed. There is, indeed, a contradiction in the very words “Private Branch.” A “Branch” is an offshoot of a parent tree, not underground but above ground. If you take away exposure to the sunlight and the air and the hardening forces of Nature, confining the young shoot to darkness and mystery and isolation, you not only deprive it of the very nourishment essential to its growth, but you perpetuate the interior forces which will ensure its decay. Nor only so. A “Private Branch” lacks the very marrow of Theosophical life—altruism. Theosophy is not a bank-deposit which one hoards in secret for contemplation and delectation; it is a purse of Fortunatus, which fills up as fast as one empties it for the benefit of others. The true Theosophic spirit fixes its eye on the needs of a vast humanity in ignorance, knows that there is no other way to overcome ignorance and its consequences than by imparting truth, and queries how most efficaciously this may be done. The Theosophist thus animated joins the Society to help it, feels the want of sympathetic intercourse and of organized strength, exerts himself to form a Branch of the like-minded, projects work for it, values it because it makes possible a systematic outflow of knowledge and influence on the vicinage. He knows very well that, as the measure of his own Theosophic vitality is the degree in which he works and not merely meditates, so also it is with a Branch. In truth, a vigorous Theosophic spirit, filled with philanthropic earnestness to propagate truth, must feel somewhat repressed when discussing Cosmogony and the Seven Principles in a closely-styled Lodge, and have a suspicion of incongruity and discomfort. The spectacle of a snug and smug group gravely examining eternal verities which nobody else is allowed to hear of, verges somewhat on the ludicrous. This is one of the cases where a sense of humor keeps people out of absurdities as well as out of errors.

It can never be too often repeated that *real* Theosophy is not contemplation or introspection or philosophizing or talk, but work, work for others, work for the world. We are told that the one fatal bar to progress is selfishness in some one of its Protean forms. It will never be overcome by thinking about oneself, but by *not* thinking about oneself. And as we have to think about something, the alternative is thought for others and how to help them. As the mind fills with such schemes and the hands take hold of them, self-interest is displaced and egoism fades out. Selfishness dies of inanition, and altruism grows because constantly fed. And all this time true progress goes insensibly on. The mind clears of prejudices and fogs, the spirit grows more sunny and cheerful, peacefulness settles over the whole interior being, and truth is seen with greater distinctness. For the great hindrance to evolution is decaying away.

This is equally true of a Branch. So long as it exists only for the improvement or entertainment of its members, the selfish principle is dominant, for selfishness is not the less genuine because applied to purposes in themselves high. Such a Branch does not expect to grow, it probably does not desire to grow, and it surely will not grow. What is there to make it grow? It lacks that essence of all life and growth which pervades everything vital. The opposite conception of a Branch, that of an organized force for the better propagation of truth, supplies just such a lack. Preparation of papers or discussion does not mean the mere exhibition of personal ideas, still less speculation on curious and recondite problems, but the arrangement in lucid language of those apprehensions of truth which the thinker believes to have intellectual or practical value. It is a gift to others, not a display of self. The life-principle of all Nature flows through the being, clarifying thought, vivifying motive, energizing speech. Then it flows without, warming dull or listless ears, arousing attention, exciting interest, stimulating inquiry. So the influence spreads, attendance increases, the Branch grows.

The history of open Branches demonstrates what might otherwise seem theory. As they have kept in view a missionary purpose and

exerted themselves to make meetings interesting and instructive to outsiders, they have thriven. One Branch through years rarely adding a member to its small list, made its meetings open. In two years it enlarged between three and fourfold. Very naturally so. The fact of publicity becoming known, visitors drop in. Some suggestive topic pleases them, they attend again, feel an interest, then a charm, then a devotion. Then they join the Branch and invite others. Progress and prosperity follow.

While it would not be right for the T.S. to prohibit Private Branches, it would be wrong for it to look upon them as other than temporary and provisional, the missionary function being in abeyance only. Those who prepare the way for and those who organize Branch Societies would do well to lay stress upon the true conception of a Branch as a living, active, aggressive agency, not a proselyting scheme, but a means for circulating truth. Its outside effects are the main ones. If the members strive to benefit non-members, they will surely edify themselves. And between the energy of a Branch and its growth, there will always be a relation. Stationary membership almost certainly implies apathy, as an increasing one implies the reverse.

And, on the other hand, Branch members need to feel that public notice and Branch growth are only possible as meetings are made interesting. It is exactly so with the Churches. If the service is tame and the preaching imbecile, people will not go. Nor, perhaps, should they. Life is too short to be bored. The Oxford Don who passed his Sundays in the fields rather than in Church said that he “preferred sermons from stones to sermons from sticks”; and Theosophists, much more non-Theosophists, will choose an evening with books if the alternative is a Branch meeting which is lifeless, or where everything is left to chance, or where the intelligent are outraged with drivel. But where the leading speeches are duly and truly prepared, and the essayists worthy and well qualified, a state of things is brought about when attendants will seek to gain admission to further rights and benefits. Thoughtful contribution to open Branch discussions is as truly an aid to Theo-sophy as is sustentation of its periodicals or its

work, and immediately tends to bring about that enlargement of the Society which we hope for as impressive to the public, conducive to our strength, and expressive of our advance.

HARRIS P.

Path, May, 1890

EACH MEMBER A CENTRE

SOME years ago one of those Masters in whom so many of our members believe directed H.P.B. to write a letter for him to a certain body of Theosophists. In this he said that each member could become, in his own town or city, if earnest, sincere and unselfish, an active centre from which would radiate unseen powerful forces able to influence men and women in the vicinity for good; and that soon enquirers would appear, a Branch in time be organized, and thus the whole neighborhood would receive benefit. This seems just and reasonable in addition to its being stated by such high authority. Members ought to consider and think over it so that action may follow.

Too many who think themselves theosophically alone in their own town, have folded their hands and shut up their minds, saying to themselves that they could do nothing, that no one was near who could possibly care for Theosophy, and that that particular town was the “most difficult for the work.”

The great mistake in these cases is forgetting the law indicated in what H.P.B. wrote. It is one that every member ought to know—that the mind of man is capable of bringing about results through means of other minds about him. If we sit and think that nothing can be done, then our subtle mind meets other minds within the radius of our sphere—not small—and shouts into them: “Nothing can be done.” Of course then nothing is done. But if unselfishly and earnestly we think *Theosophy*, and desire that others should, like us, be benefited by it, then to the minds we meet in stray moments of the day and in many hours of the night we cry “Theosophy,” and “Help and hope for thee.” The result must be an awakening of interest upon the slightest provocative occasion.

Such an inner attitude, added to every sort of attempt at promulgation, will disclose many unsuspected persons who are thinking along this very line. Thus will the opportunity of the hour be taken advantage of.

Our last Convention marked an era: the dying away of strife and opening of greater chances, the enlargement and extension of inquiry and interest on the part of the great public. This is a very great opportunity. Branches and members alike ought to rise to meet and use all that this will afford. Remember that we are not fighting for any form of organization, nor for badges, nor for petty personal ends, but for Theosophy; for the benefit, the advantage and the good of our fellow-men. As was said not long ago, those of us who follow after and worship a mere organization are making fetishes and worshipping a shell. Unselfishness is the real keynote.

Those of us who still, after years and after much instruction, are seeking and wishing for personal progress or preferment in the occult side of life, are destroying that quality first referred to—of being a living, breathing centre of light and hope for others. And the self-seekers thus also lessen their possible chances in the next life here.

Close up the ranks! Each member a centre; each Branch a centre; the whole a vast, whirling centre of light and force and energy for the benefit of the nation and of the race.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

Path, October, 1895

METHODS OF THEOSOPHICAL WORK

IN my experience with the Theosophical Society I have noticed a disposition on the part of some members to often object to the methods of others or to their plans on the ground that they are unwise, or not suitable, or what not. These objections are not put in a spirit of discord, but more often arise merely from a want of knowledge of the working of the laws which govern our efforts.

H.P.B. always said—following the rules laid down by high teachers—that no proposal for theosophical work should be rejected or opposed provided the proposer has the sincere motive of doing good to the movement and to his fellows. Of course that does not mean that distinctly bad or pernicious purposes are to be forwarded. Seldom, however, does a sincere theosophist propose such bad acts. But they often desire to begin some small work for the Society, and are frequently opposed by those who think the juncture unfavorable or the thing itself unwise. These objections always have at bottom the assumption that there is only one certain method to be followed. One man objects to the fact that a Branch holds open public meetings, another that it does not. Others think the Branch should be distinctly metaphysical, still more that it should be entirely ethical. Sometimes when a member who has not much capacity proposes an insignificant work in his own way, his fellows think it ought not to be done. But the true way is to bid good-speed to every sincere attempt to spread theosophy, even if you cannot agree with the method. As it is not your proposal, you are not concerned at all in the matter. You praise the desire to benefit; nature takes care of results.

A few examples may illustrate. Once in New York a most untrue newspaper article about theosophy appeared. It was a lying interview. All that it had in it true was the address of an official of the T.S. It was sent by an enemy of the Society to a gentleman who had long

desired to find us. He read it, took down the address, and became one of our most valued members. In England a lady of influence had desired to find out the Society's place but could not. By accident a placard that some members thought unwise fell into her hands noticing an address on theosophy in an obscure place. She attended, and there met those who directed her to the Society. In the same town a member who is not in the upper classes throws cards about at meetings directing those who want to know theosophical doctrines where to go. In several cases these chance cards, undignifiedly scattered, have brought into the ranks excellent members who had no other means of finding out about the Society. Certainly the most of us would think that scattering cards in this manner is too undignified to be our work.

But no one method is to be insisted on. Each man is a potency in himself, and only by working on the lines which suggest themselves to him can he bring to bear the forces that are his. We should deny no man and interfere with none; for our duty is to discover what we ourselves can do without criticizing the actions of another. The laws of karmic action have much to do with this. We interfere for a time with good results to come when we attempt to judge according to our own standards the methods of work which a fellow member proposes for himself. Ramifying in every direction are the levers that move and bring about results, some of those levers—absolutely necessary for the greatest of results—being very small and obscure. They are all of them human beings, and hence we must carefully watch that by no word of ours the levers are obstructed. If we attend strictly to our own duty all will act in harmony, for the duty of another is dangerous for us. Therefore if any member proposes to spread the doctrines of theosophy in a way that seems wise to him, wish him success even if his method be one that would not commend itself to you for your own guidance.

WILLIAM BREHON, F.T.S.

Path, August, 1891

HYPOCRISY OR IGNORANCE

THERE are some members of the Theosophical Society who expose themselves to the charge of indulging in hypocrisy or being ignorant about their own failings and shortcomings. They are those who, having studied the literature of the movement and accepted most of its doctrines, then talk either to fellow-members or to outsiders as if the goal of renunciation and universal knowledge had been reached in their case, when a very slight observation reveals them as quite ordinary human beings.

If one accepts the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood, which is based on the essential unity of all human beings, there is a long distance yet intervening between that acceptance and its realization, even in those who have adopted the doctrine. It is just the difference between intellectual assent to a moral, philosophical, or occult law, and its perfect development in one's being so that it has become an actual part of ourselves. So when we hear a theosophist say that he could see his children, wife, or parents die and not feel anything whatever, we must infer that there is a hypocritical pretension or very great ignorance. There is one other conclusion left, which is that we have before us a monster who is incapable of any feeling whatever, selfishness being over-dominant.

The doctrines of Theosophy do not ask for nor lead to the cutting out of the human heart of every human feeling. Indeed, that is an impossibility, one would think, seeing that the feelings are an integral part of the constitution of man, for in the principle called *Kama*—the desires and feelings—we have the basis of all our emotions, and if it is prematurely cut out of any being death or worse must result. It is very true that theosophy as well as all ethical systems demands that the being who has conscience and will, such as are found in man, shall control this principle of *Kama* and not be carried away by it nor

be under its sway. This is self-control, mastery of the human body, steadiness in the face of affliction, but it is not extirpation of the feelings which one has to control. If any theosophical book deals with this subject it is the *Bhagavad Gita*, and in that Krishna is constantly engaged in enforcing the doctrine that all the emotions are to be controlled, that one is not to grieve over the inevitable—such as death, nor to be unduly elated at success, nor to be cast down by failure, but to maintain an equal mind in every event, whatever it may be, satisfied and assured that the qualities move in the body in their own sphere. In no place does he say that we are to attempt the impossible task of cutting out of the inner man an integral part of himself.

But, unlike most other systems of ethics, theosophy is scientific as well, and this science is not attained just when one approaching it for the first time in this incarnation hears of and intellectually agrees to these high doctrines. For one cannot pretend to have reached the perfection and detachment from human affairs involved in the pretentious statement referred to, when even as the words are uttered the hearer perceives remaining in the speaker all the peculiarities of family, not to speak of those pertaining to nation, including education, and to the race in which he was born. And this scientific part of theosophy, beginning and ending with universal brotherhood, insists upon such an intense and ever-present thought upon the subject, coupled with a constant watch over all faults of mind and speech, that in time an actual change is produced in the material person, as well as in the immaterial one within who is the mediator or way between the purely corporeal lower man and his Higher divine self. This change, it is very obvious, cannot come about at once nor in the course of years of effort.

The charge of pretension and ignorance is more grave still in the case of those theosophists guilty of the fault, who happen to believe—as so many do—that even in those disciples whose duties in the world are *nil* from the very beginning, and who have devoted themselves to self-renunciation and self-study so long that they are immeasurably beyond the members of our Society, the defects due to family, tribal, and national inheritance are now and then observable.

It seems to be time, then, that no theosophist shall ever be guilty of making pretension to any one that he or she has attained to the high place which now and then some assume to have reached. Much better is it to be conscious of our defects and weaknesses, always ready to acknowledge the truth that, being human, we are not able to always or quickly reach the goal of effort.

EUSEBIO URBAN

Path, December, 1891

CAUTIONS IN PARAGRAPHS

DO not make statements that tend to mix up the Theosophical Society with any religious belief, political theory, or social observance or non-observance.

Beware of the proposition that the rich or those in social life needing theosophy as much as the humbler ranks should therefore have special efforts made for them while they fail or refuse to openly help the Society with their countenance and effort.

Do not be misled by the fancy that special effort to “convert” a scientific celebrity will lead to any great benefit to the theosophical movement, or sufficiently offset the time thereby lost from the general work among those who are ready to listen.

Never cry down the efforts of a sincere member to disseminate theosophy merely because it does not meet your standards of method or propriety.

Always discountenance any proposal to establish a censorship of either literature or effort in theosophical ranks, for such a censorship is against the broad and free platform on which the Society rests.

Suffer not yourself to be annoyed because scientific men claim as their new and original discoveries that which theosophical literature has always claimed; remember we are not in this movement for glory, but that men shall know the truth regardless of where the credit for discovery is given.

Never forget that a theosophical Branch is for the study of theosophy, and not for discussion upon outside topics.

Let not sentimentality make you fear to bring forward what you believe to be theosophy, even though some persons threaten to leave the ranks because their own fad seems endangered by the strength

of your theory; but beware you do not mistake self-assertion in yourself for the strength of your theories.

Be not deluded by the idea that you can do great good by entering a church society in which you do not believe. Theosophy is not benefitted by being thrown among those who declare they do not want it.

Beware of the person who offers to sell spiritual science in so many lessons for a sum of money. Expositions by lectures in public of general theosophical principles for an admission fee are proper, but courses of lessons on magic arts, spiritual science, secrets of nature, and the like are eternally improper, emanate from cupidity or undisciplined intellect, and lead to nothing.

Be charitable enough to remember that the theosophist is human, and perhaps has to struggle all the harder with our common failings just because he has entered on the battle with the lower nature.

Do not fancy that because ours is called a brotherhood any exclusion of woman is inferred. English is not the only language on earth, and in many others the same term describes both feminine and masculine. Theosophy does not concern sex distinctions, and talks more of souls, which are sexless, than it does of the bodies they inhabit.

Carefully avoid confounding Brahmanism with Buddhism, and the religions flourishing outside of India with those of that country. Buddhism not being the religion of India, confusion of uttered sounds and knowledge results from calling Hindus Buddhists.

Very carefully refrain from confusing Christianity with the religion of Jesus. The latter is not the former, inasmuch as Christianity is split up into over three hundred different sects, whereas Jesus had but one doctrine.

Pay the highest respect to the sermons of Jesus, from the remembrance of the fact that in his discourses he but gave forth once again the old doctrine taught to him by the ancient theosophists of whom he was a disciple.

Do not make the blunder of mistaking the glitter of our civilization for true progress. Weigh fine houses, good clothes, mechanical devices,

and universal male suffrage against the poverty, misery, vice, crime, and ignorance which go with the former, before you conclude what is the best civilization.

RODRIGUEZ UNDIANO

Path, July, 1893

THEOSOPHICAL DON'TS

THE following suggestions arise from experience and are due to facts in the Theosophical world. *Don't* speak or write as if morality and ethics were unknown before H.P.B. wrote the *Voice of the Silence*. Some of our devoted band have been heard to speak in such a way that hearers thought the speaker meant to convey the idea that only in the *Voice* or other similar books of ours could be found the high and correct ethics by which one ought to guide his life. Buddhism, Christianity, and all the other religions teach the same morals, and literature is full of it.

Don't say that all the Theosophical doctrines were first given out by the Mahatmas through their Theosophical chelas. Attributing everything solely to the Mahatmas is foolish, as it is easily controverted. And do not be forever saying, "We are taught this and are told that." The number of doctrines found mentioned for the first time by the Mahatmas through H.P.B. are few, extraordinary in conception and scope, and easily recognized.

Don't explain everything by one theory. To wit: do not be so inadequate as to brush off the whole of Spiritualism with one word, "all spooks and shells." You will be wrong if you do so, and the result will be antagonism.

Don't say that science is all wrong and that men of science are materialists. Huxley has done us good service; he has but lately admitted consciousness to be a third factor in the universe, not a part of force and matter; and Spencer has many a good thing in his works. Besides, if you want H.P.B. on the matter, you can read her words that the truth is to be found in a union of science with occultism.

Don't think or say that phenomena are good stepping-stones to Theosophy. They are not, for those who stand upon them will fall

from them to their hurt.

Don't run down the spirit of true Christianity, nor imagine that we can get ministers and congregations en *mosse* to change into Theosophists. The true spirit of Christianity, as meant to be taught in the beginning, is doubtless Theosophy, but truth is not aided by running amuck among the faith of a whole people.

Don't say that H. P. B. has been reincarnated unless you know it and are able to prove it. To say you think so is not proof. She may or may not be, and either way the work must go on.

Don't talk as if messages from the Masters are all precipitated on rice paper, the writing incorporated in the paper, and such child's talk, indulged in only by those who do not know. And forget not that precipitation proves only that something was precipitated. It can be done by mediums and by various sorts of occultists.

Don't think or say that the only true occultism is found in the East, or that we must go to the East for it, or that the West has none of it. Remember that the greatest known Adept was a Western woman, a Russian, and that the energy of the lodge of Masters was first expended here in the West in this age. If so, is it not reasonable to suppose that the West has its occultists even though hidden? Recollect also that H.P.B. received in her house in New York before witnesses Western men of occult science who worked wonders there at times. Perhaps it is as has been hinted many a time, that the true thing is to be found in a union of the East and the West. The terms Guru and Chela have been misused so that all too many are looking to India for help, from which they will get but little until the West is itself full of wise students of occultism who know the meaning of being placed by karma in the West. The fact is, again, that in the East the men are looking to the great Russian woman for the very spiritual help that first shed its rays upon the West unmistakably. Again, there is extant a letter from the Mahatma K.H. to a Western man wherein it said that he should work in his own land and forget not that Karma so demanded.

Don't teach that vegetarianism is the road to heaven and spiritual growth. Was not the great Nazarene right when he intimated that, the

kingdom of heaven being within, it did not come from eating or drinking? And has not our old friend H.P.B. written suggestively that cows and elephants are pure vegetarians? Reflect on the fact that some of the very best people on earth were meat-eaters, and that wicked or gross thoughts are more hurtful than the eating of a ton of flesh. In fact, . . .

Don't fail to exercise your common sense on all and every occasion.

W. Q. J.

Path, December, 1894

THE PATH OF ACTION

THE Mohammedan teacher directs his disciples to tread carefully the razor's edge between the good and the bad; only a hair line divides the false from the true. In this the Asiatic took an excellent illustration, for the "hair line" is the same stroke *alf*, which, placed in a word, may alter the sense from the true to the false.

In chapter four of the Bhagavad-Gita, entitled, "Jnana-Yog," or the book of the Religion of Knowledge, the blessed Krishna instructs Arjuna upon the nature of action, saying: "Renunciation of and devotion through works, are both means of final emancipation; but of these two, devotion through works is more highly esteemed (by Him) than the renunciation of them," and, "the nature of action, of forbidden action, and of inaction must be well learned. The Path of Action is obscure and difficult to discern."

In ordinary humdrum life these words of Krishna are true enough, but their force is strangely felt in the mind of the devoted student of Theosophy, and especially if he happens to be a member of the Theosophical Society.

That body of investigators has now passed its probationary period, so that, as a whole, it is an accepted chela of the Blessed Masters who gave the impulse that brought it into being. Every member of it, therefore, stands to the whole Society as every fibre in the body of any single chela does to the whole man. Thus now, more than ever before, does each member of the Society feel disturbing influences; and the Path of Action becomes more and more likely to be obscured.

Always existing or coming into existence in our ranks, have been centres of emotional disturbance. Those who expect that these perturbations ought now to cease and grow less likely to recur, will

find themselves mistaken. The increase of interest that is being taken in the Society's work, and the larger number of earnest students who are with us than at any previous period, constitute elements of agitation. Each new member is another nature added, and every one acts after his own nature. Thus the chances for being discomposed are sure to increase; and it is better thus, for peace with stagnation partakes of the nature of what is called in the Bhagavad-Gita, *Tamagunam*, or, of the quality of darkness. This quality of darkness, than which there is nothing worse, is the chief component of indifference, and indifference leads only to extinction.

Still another element in this equation that every earnest Theosophist has to solve, and which in itself contains the potency of manifold commotions, is a law, hard to define, yet inexorable in its action. For its clearer comprehension we may say that it is shown in nature by the rising of the sun. In the night when the moon's rays flooded the scene, every object was covered with a romantic light, and when that luminary went down, it left everything in a partial obscurity wherein many doubtful characters could conceal their identity or even masquerade for that which they were not. But on the sun's arising all objects stand out in their true colors; the rugged bark of the oak has lost the softening cover of partial day; the rank weeds can no longer be imagined as the malwa flowers. The powerful hand of the God of day has unveiled the character of all.

It must not be supposed that a record has been kept by any officials, from which are to be taken and published the characters of our members. There is no need of that; circumstances taking place in natural order, or apparently from eccentric motion, will cause us all, whether we will or not, to stand forth for what we are.

Every one of us will have to stop and learn in the cave outside of the Hall of Learning, before we can enter there. Very true that cave, with all its dark shadows and agitating influences, is an illusion, but it is one that very few will fail to create, for hard indeed to be overcome are the illusions of matter. In that shall we discover the nature of action and inaction; there we will come to admit that although the quality of action partakes of the nature of badness, yet it is nearer

to the quality of truth than is that which we have called darkness, quietude, indifference. Out of the turmoil and the strife of an apparently untamed life may arise one who is a warrior for Truth. A thousand errors of judgment made by an earnest student, who with a pure and high motive strives to push on the Cause, are better than the outward goodness of those who are judges of their fellows. All these errors made in a good cause, while sowing good seed, will be atoned by the motive.

We must not then be judges of any man. We cannot assume to say who shall or shall not be allowed to enter and to work in the Theosophical Society. The Masters who founded it, wish us to offer its influence and its light to all regardless of what we may ourselves think; we are to sow the seed, and when it falls on stony ground no blame attaches to the sower.

Nor is our Society for good and respectable people only. Now, as much as when Jesus of Nazareth spoke, is it true that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repenteth, than over ninety-nine just men who need no repentance.

Remembering then, that the Path of Action is obscure and difficult to be discerned, let us beware of the illusions of matter.

HADJI ERINN

Path, November, 1887

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THE death of H. P. Blavatsky should have the effect on the Society of making the work go on with increased vigor free from all personalities. The movement was not started for the glory of any person, but for the elavation of Mankind. The organization is not effected as such by her death for her official positions were those of Corresponding Secretary and President of the European Section. The Constitution has long provided that after her death the office of Corresponding Secretary should not be filled. The vacancy in the European Section will be filled by election in that Section, as that is matter with which only the European Branches have to deal. She held no position in the exoteric American Section, and had no jurisdiction over it in any way. Hence there is no vacancy to fill and no disturbance to be felt in the purely corporate part of the American work. The work here is going on as it always has done, under the efforts of its members who now will draw their inspiration from the books and works of H.P.B. and from the purity of their own motive.

All that the Society needs now to make it the great power it was intended to be is first, *solidarity*, and second, *Theosophical education*. These are wholly in the hands of its members. The first gives that resistless strength which is found only in Union, the second gives that judgment and wisdom needed to properly direct energy and zeal.

Read these words from H. P. Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy*:

“If the present attempt in the form of our Society succeeds better than its predecessors have done, then it will be in existence as an organized, living, and healthy body when the time comes for the effort of the XXth century. The general condition of men's minds

and hearts will have been improved and purified by the spread of its teachings, and, as I have said, their prejudices and dogmatic illusions will have been, to some extent, at least, removed. Not only so, but besides a large and accessible literature ready to men's hands, the next impulse will find a numerous and *united* body of people ready to welcome the new torch-bearer of Truth. He will find the minds of men prepared for his message, a language ready for him in which to clothe the new truths he brings, an organization awaiting his arrival which will remove the merely mechanical, material obstacles and difficulties from his path. Think how much one to whom such an opportunity is given could accomplish. Measure it by comparison with what the Theosophical Society actually *has* achieved in the last fourteen years without *any* of these advantages and surrounded by hosts of hindrances which would not hamper the new leader. Consider all this and then tell me whether I am too sanguine when I say that, if the Theosophical Society survives and lives true to its mission, to its original impulses, through the next hundred years—tell me, I say, if I go too far in asserting that this earth will be a heaven in the twenty-first century in comparison with what it is now!”

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Path, June, 1891