

# [The Original Programme of The Theosophical Society]

Editorial by H. P. Blavatsky, The Theosophist, June-September, 1924; 2nd printing, August, 1931 [Posthumously Published] [Published from a MS. in Blavatsky's handwriting, written at Ostende, Belgium, October 3, 1886.]

[Note: for historical context, see the introduction by C. Jinarajadasa and the appendices in the [1931 printing](#), as well as in the Blavatsky Collected Writings series, Vol. 7, pp. 135-145]

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

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

surrounding us and manifesting their presence in various ways—demonstrated to the best of our ability.

Such was the programme in its broad features. The two chief Founders were not told what they had to do, how they had to bring about and quicken the growth of the Society and results desired; nor had they any definite ideas given them concerning the outward organization—all this being left entirely with themselves. Thus, as the under-signed had no capacity for such work as the mechanical formation and administration of a Society, the management of the latter was left in the hands of Col. H. S. Olcott, then and there elected by the primitive founders and members—*President for life*. But if the two Founders were not told *what they had to do*, they were distinctly instructed about *what they should never do*, what they had to avoid, and what the Society should never become. Church organizations, Christian and Spiritual sects were shown as the future contrasts to our Society.<sup>1</sup> To make it clearer:—

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

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

Thus, for the first year the Members of the T. Body who, representing every class in Society as every creed and belief—Christian clergymen, Spiritualists, Freethinkers, Mystics, Masons and Materialists—lived and met under these rules in peace and friendship. There were two or three expulsions for *slander* and *backbiting*. The rules,

however imperfect in their tentative character, were strictly enforced and respected by the members. The original \$5, initiation fee, was soon abolished as *inconsistent with the spirit of the Association*; members had enthusiastically promised to support the Parent Society and defray the expenses of *machines for experiments, books, the fees of the Recording Secretary,*<sup>2</sup> etc., etc. This was *Reform No. I*. Three months after, Mr. H. [J.] Newton, the Treasurer, a rich gentleman of New York, showed that no one had paid anything or helped him to defray the current expenses for the Hall of meetings, stationery, printing, etc., and that he had to carry the burden of those expenses *alone*. He went on for a short time longer, then—*he resigned as Treasurer*. It was the President-Founder, Col. H. S. Olcott, who had to pay henceforth for all. He did so for over 18 months. The “fee” was re-established, before the Founders left for India with the two English delegates—now their mortal enemies; but the money collected was for the Arya Samaj of Aryavarta with which Society the Theosophical became affiliated. It is the President-Founder, who paid the enormous travelling expenses from America to India, and those of installation in Bombay, and who supported the two delegates out of his own pocket for nearly 18 months. When he had no more money left, nor the Corr. Secretary either—a resolution was passed that the “initiation fee” sums should go towards supporting the Headquarters.

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

It was never denied that the Organization of the T. S. was *very* imperfect. *Errare humanum est*. But, if it can be shown that the President has done what he could under the circumstances and in the best *way* he knew how—no one, least of all a theosophist, can charge him with the sins of the whole community, as now done. From the founders down to the humblest member, the Society is composed of imperfect mortal men—not gods. This was always claimed by its leaders. “He who feels *without sin*, let him cast the first stone.” It is the duty of every Member of the Council to offer advice and to bring for the consideration of the whole body any incorrect proceedings. One of the *plaintifs* is a Councillor. Having never used his privileges as one, in the matter of the complaints now

proffered—and thus, having no excuse to give that his just representations were not listened to, he by bringing out publicly what he had to state first privately—sins against Rule XII. The whole paper now reads like a defamatory aspersion, being full of untheosophical and unbrotherly insinuations—which the writers thereof could never have had in view.

This Rule XIIth was one of the first and the wisest. It is by neglecting to have it enforced when most needed, that the President-Founder has brought upon himself the present penalty.<sup>3</sup> It is his too great indulgence and unwise carelessness that have led to all such charges of abuse of power, love of authority, show of vanity, etc., etc. Let us see how far it may have been deserved.

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

The above advice is offered to the two Theosophists who have just framed their “Few Words on the Theosophical Organization.” That they are not alone in their complaints (which, translated from their diplomatic into plain language look a good deal in the present case like a mere “*querelle d’allemand*”) and that the said complaints are in a great measure just,—is frankly admitted. Hence, the writer must be permitted to speak in this, her answer, of theosophy and theosophists in general, instead of limiting the *Reply* strictly

to the complaints uttered. There is not the slightest desire to be personal; yet, there has accumulated of late such a mass of incandescent material in the Society, by that eternal friction of precisely such “selfish personalities,” that it is certainly wise to try to smother the sparks in time, by pointing out to their true nature.

Demands, and a feeling of necessity for reforms have not originated with the two complainants. They date from several years, and there has never been a question of *avoiding* reforms, but rather a failure of finding such means as would satisfy *all* the theosophists. To the present day, we have yet to find that “wise man” from the East or from the West who could not only *diagnosicate* the disease in the Theosophical Society, but offer advice and a remedy likewise to cure it. It is easy to write: “It would be out of place to suggest any *specific measures*” (for such reforms, which do seem more difficult to *suggest* than to be vaguely hinted at)—“for no one who has any faith in Brotherhood and in the power of Truth will fail to perceive what is necessary,”—concludes the critic. One may, perhaps, have such faith and yet fail to perceive what is *most* necessary. Two heads are better than one; and if any practical reforms have suggested themselves to our severe judges their refusal to give us the benefit of their discovery would be most *unbrotherly*. So far, however, we have received only most impracticable suggestions for reforms whenever these came to be specified. The Founders, and the whole Central Society at the Headquarters, for instance, are invited to demonstrate their theosophical natures by living like “fowls in the air and lilies of the field,” which neither sow nor reap, toil not, nor spin and “take no thought for the morrow”. This being found hardly practicable, even in India, where a man may go about in the garment of an Angel, but has, nevertheless, to pay rent and taxes, another proposition, then a third one and a fourth—each less practicable than the preceding—were offered . . . the unavoidable rejection of which led finally to the criticism now under review.

After carefully reading “A Few Words, etc.,” no very acute intellect is needed to perceive that, although no “specific measures” are offered in them, the drift of the whole argument tends but to one conclusion, a kind of syllogism more Hindu than metaphysical. Epitomised, the remarks therein plainly say: “Destroy the bad *results* pointed out by destroying the *causes* that generate them.” Such is the apocalyptic meaning of the paper, although both causes and results are made painfully and flagrantly objective and that they may be rendered in this wise: Being shown that the Society is the result and fruition of a bad President; and the latter being the outcome of such an “untheosophically” organized

Society—and, its *worse than useless* General Council—“make away with all these *Causes* and the results will disappear”; *i.e.*, the Society will have ceased to exist. Is this the heart-desire of the two *true and sincere Theosophists*?

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

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

(II). It is shown that many members *ex-officio* whose names are found on the list of the General Council *are not known* to the Convention; that they are, very likely, not even interested in the Society “under their special care”; a body they had joined at one time, then probably *forgotten* its existence in the meanwhile, to withdraw themselves from the Association. The argument implied is very valid. Why not point it out *officially* to the Members residing at, or visiting the Head Quarters, the impropriety of such a parading of names? Yet, in what respect can this administrative blunder, or carelessness, interfere with, or *impede* “the progress of *true theosophy*”?<sup>4</sup>

(III). “The members are appointed by the President-Founder . . . it is complained; the General Council only *advises* on what is submitted to it” . . . and “in the meantime that P. F. is empowered *to issue special orders* and provisional rules,” on behalf of that (‘dummy’) Council. (Rule IV, p. 20.) Moreover, it is urged that out of a number of 150 members of the General Council, a quorum of 5 and even 3 members present, may, should it be found necessary *by the President*, decide upon any question of vital importance, etc., etc., etc.

Such an “untheosophical” *display* of authority, is objected to by Messrs. M. M. Chatterji and A. Gebhard, on the grounds that it leads the Society to *Caesarism*, to “tyranny” and papal infallibility, etc., etc. However right the two complainants may be *in principle* it is

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

The Society is bitterly criticized for asking every well-to-do theosophist (the poor are exempt from it, from the first) to pay annually two shillings to help defraying the expenses at Headquarters. It is denounced as “untheosophical,” “unbrotherly,” and the “admission fee” of £1, is declared no better than “a sale of Brotherhood.” In this our “Brotherhood” may be shown again on a far higher level than any other association past or present. The Theosophical Society has never shown the ambitious pretension to outshine in *theosophy* and *brotherliness*, the primitive Brotherhood of Jesus and his Apostles,<sup>5</sup> and that “Organization,” besides *asking* and being occasionally refused, helped itself *without asking*, and as a matter of fact in a *real* community of Brothers. Nevertheless, such action, that would seem highly untheosophical and prejudicial in our day of culture when nations alone are privileged to pocket each other’s property and expect to be honoured for it—does not seem to have been an obstacle in the way of deification and sanctification of the said early “Brotherly” group. Our Society had never certainly any idea of rising superior to the *brotherliness* and *ethics* preached by Christ, but only to those of the *sham* Christianity of the Churches—as originally ordered to, by our MASTERS. And if we do not worse than the Gospel Brotherhood did, and far better than any Church, which would expell any member refusing too long to pay his Church rates, it is really hard to see why our “Organization” should be ostracized by its own members. At any rate, the pens of the latter ought to show themselves less *acerb*, in these days of trouble when every one seems bent on finding fault with the Society, and few to help it, and that the President-Founder is alone to work and toil with a few devoted theosophists at Adyar to assist him.

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

orders of those, whom they recognize—and will, to their last breath—as the real originators of the Movement, their *living, Holy MASTERS AND TEACHERS*.<sup>6</sup>

(V). The complaints then, that the T.S. “has laws without sanction,” a “legislative body without legality,” a “Parent Society without existence,” and, worse than all—“a President *above all rules*”—are thus shown only *partially* correct. But even were they all absolutely true, it would be easy to abolish such rules with one stroke of the pen, or to modify them. But now comes the curious part of that severe *philippic* against the T.S. by our eloquent Demosthenes. After six pages (out of the twelve) had been filled with the said charges, the writer admits on the 7th,—that they have been so modified!—“The above” we learn (rather late) “was written under *misapprehension* that the ‘Rules’ bearing date 1885—were the latest. It has since been found that there is a later version of the Rules dated 1886 which *have modified the older rules on a great many points*.” So much the better.—Why recall, in such case, mistakes in the past if these exist no longer? But the accusers do not see it in this light. They are determined to act as a theosophical Nemesis; and in no way daunted by the discovery, they add that nevertheless “it is *necessary* to examine the earlier rules to ascertain *the underlying principle* which rules through the present ones as well.” This reminds one of the fable of “the Wolf and the Lamb.” But—you see—“the chief point is, that the Convention *has no power to make any rules*, as such a power *is opposed to the spirit of theosophy*,” . . . etc., etc.

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

After such virulent and severe denunciations one might expect some good, friendly and theosophically *practical* advice. Not at all, and none is offered, since we have been already told (p. 9) that it would be “out of place to suggest any specific measures, as no one who has any faith in Brotherhood—and in the power of Truth, *will fail* to perceive what is necessary.” The President-Founder, has *no faith* in either “Brotherhood,” or “the

power of Truth”—apparently. This is made evident by his having *failed* to perceive (a) that the Headquarters—opened to *all* Theosophists of any race or social position, board and lodging free of charge the whole year round—was an *unbrotherly* Organization; (b) that “the central office at Adyar for keeping records and concentrating information” with its European and Hindu inmates working *gratuitously* and some helping it with their own money whenever they have it—ought to be carried on, according to the method and principle of George Miller of Bristol, namely, the numerous household and staff of officers at Adyar headed by the President-Founder ought to kneel every morning in prayer for their bread and milk appealing for their meals to “miracle”; and that finally, and (c) all the good the Society is doing, is no good whatever but “a spiritual wrong,” because it presumes to call “a *limited* line of good work—(theosophy) Divine Wisdom”.

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

(a) The President-Founder having been shown throughout as a “tyrant,” a “*would be* Cesar,” “aiming at *papal* power” and a “Venitian Council of Three,” and other words to that effect implied in almost every sentence of the paper under review, it is confessed in the same breath that the “London Lodge of the Theosophical Society has *completely ignored* the *Rules* (of the Pope Caesar) published by the Headquarters at Adyar!” (p. 4). And yet, the “L.L. of the T.S.” still lives and breathes and one has heard of no *anathema* pronounced against it, so far . . .

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

It might have been as well perhaps to quote the entire paragraph in which these words appear,<sup>7</sup> once that hairs are split about the possibly faulty reaction of the *Rules*. Is it not self-evident, that the words brought forward only with scientific and philosophical subjects “are inserted as a necessary caution to *true* theosophists, who by dealing with politics *within* any Branch Society might bring disgrace and ruin on the whole body,—in India to begin with? Has the Society or has it not over 140 Societies scattered through four parts of the World to take care of? As in the case of “Mahatmas” and “Mahatmaship”—active work of the Theosophical Society is confused—willingly or otherwise it is not for the writer to decide—with Theosophy. No need of entering here upon the difference between the jar that contains a liquid and the nature of, or that liquid itself. “Theosophy teaches *self-culture* . . . and not control,” we are told. Theosophy teaches *mutual-culture* before self-culture to *begin* with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many theosophists of the same way of thinking into one or more groups, and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the objects of *mutual* development and progress in Theosophical thought may be best achieved. “Self-culture” is for isolated *Hatha Yogis*, independent of any Society and having to avoid association with human beings; and this is a *triple distilled* SELFISHNESS. For real moral advancement “where two or three are gathered” in the name of the SPIRIT OF TRUTH there that Spirit of Theosophy *will be in the midst of them*. To say that theosophy has no need of a Society—a vehicle and centre thereof,—is like affirming that the Wisdom of the Ages collected in thousands of volumes at the British Museum has no need of either the edifice that contains it, nor the works in which it is found. Why not advise the British Govt. on its lack of discrimination and its *worldliness* in not destroying Museum and all its vehicles of Wisdom? Why spend such sums of money and pay so many officers to watch over its treasures, the more so, since many of its guardians may be quite out of keeping with, and opposed to the Spirit of that Wisdom. The Directors of such Museums may or may not be very perfect men, and some of their assistants may have never opened a philosophical work: yet, it is they who take care of the library and preserving it for future generations, are indirectly entitled to their thanks. How much more gratitude is due to those who like our self-sacrificing theosophists at Adyar, devote their lives to, and give their services gratuitously to the good of Humanity!

Diplomas, and Charters are objected to, and chiefly the “admission fee.” The latter is a “taxation,” and therefore “*inconsistent* with the principle of Brotherhood.” . . . A “forced

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

To continue: the charges wind up with the following remarks, so profound, that it requires a deeper head than ours to fathom all that underlies the words contained in them. “Is the T.S. a Brotherhood, or not?” queries the plaintiff—“if the former, is it possible *to have any centre of arbitrary power?*”<sup>8</sup> To hold that there is necessity for such a centre is only a round-about way of saying that no Brotherhood is possible,<sup>9</sup> but in point of fact *that necessity itself is by no means* proved (!?). There have been no doubt Brotherhoods under high Masters . . .” (there “have been” and *still are*.—H.P.B.) . . . “but in such cases the Masters were never elected *for geographical* or other considerations (?). The natural leader of men was always recognized by his embodying the spirit of Humanity. To

institute comparisons would be little short of blasphemy. The greatest among men is always the readiest to serve and yet is unconscious of the service. Let us pause before finally tying the millstone of worldliness around the neck of Theosophy. Let us not forget that Theosophy does not grow in our midst *by force and control* but by *sunshine of brotherliness* and the *dew of self-oblivion*. If we do not believe in Brotherhood and Truth let us put ashes on our head and *weep in sack-cloth* and not rejoice in the purple of authority and in the festive garments of pride and worldliness. It is by far better that the name of Theosophy should never be heard, than that it should be used as the Motto of a *papal institution*. . . .”

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

on *5d.* a day each, having reduced their meals to the *minimum.* And it is *this mite,* the proceeds of the “2 shill. contribution,” conscientiously paid by some, that is now called *extortion,* a desire to live “in the purple of authority and the festive garments of pride and worldliness”!

Our “Brother” is right. Let us “weep in sack-cloth and ashes on our head” if the T. S. has many more such *unbrotherly* criticisms to bear. Truly it would be far better that “the name of Theosophy should never be heard than that it should be used as a motto”—not of *Papal authority* which exists nowhere at Adyar outside the critic’s imagination—but as a motto of a “self-developed fanaticism.” All the great services otherwise rendered to the Society, all the noble work done by the complainant will pale and vanish before such an appearance of cold heartedness. Surely he cannot desire the *annihilation* of the Society? And if he did it would be useless: the T.S. *cannot be destroyed as a body.* It is not in the power of either Founders or their critics; and neither friend nor enemy can ruin that which is *doomed to exist,* all the blunders of its leaders notwithstanding. That which was generated through and founded by the “High Masters” and under their authority if not their instruction—MUST AND WILL LIVE. Each of us and all will receive his or her *Karma* in it, but the *vehicle* of Theosophy will stand indestructible and undestroyed by the hand of whether man or fiend. No; “truth does not depend on show of hands”; but in the case of the much abused President-Founder it must depend on the show of *facts.* Thorny and full of pitfalls was the steep path he had to climb up alone and unaided for the first years. Terrible was the opposition outside the Society he had to build—sickening and disheartening the treachery he often encountered within the Headquarters. Enemies gnashing their teeth in his face around, those whom he regarded as his staunchest friends and co-workers betraying him and the Cause on the slightest provocation. Still, where hundreds in his place would have collapsed and given up the whole undertaking in despair, he, unmoved and unmovable, went on climbing up and toiling as before, unrelenting and undismayed, supported by that one thought and conviction that he was doing his duty. What other inducement has the Founder ever had, but his theosophical pledge and the sense of his duty toward THOSE he had promised to serve to the end of his life? There was but one beacon for him—the hand that had first pointed to him his way up: the hand of the MASTER he loves and reveres so well, and serves so devotedly though occasionally perhaps, unwisely. President elected for life, he has nevertheless offered more than once to resign in favour of anyone found worthier than him, but was never

permitted to do so by the majority—not of “show of hands” but *show of hearts*; literally, as few are more beloved than he is even by most of those, who may criticize occasionally his actions. And this is only natural: for cleverer in administrative capacities, more learned in philosophy, subtler in casuistry, in metaphysics or daily life policy, there may be many around him; but the whole globe may be searched through and through and no one found stauncher to his friends, truer to his word, or more devoted to real, practical theosophy—than the President-Founder; and these are the chief requisites in a leader of such a movement—one that aims to become a Brotherhood of men. The Society needs no Loyolas; it has to shun anything approaching casuistry; nor ought we to tolerate too subtle casuists. There, where every individual has to work out his own Karma, the judgment of a casuist who takes upon himself the duty of pronouncing upon the state of a brother’s soul, or guide his conscience is of no use, and may become positively injurious. The Founder claims no more rights than every one else in the Society: the *right of private judgment*, which, whenever it is found to disagree with Branches or individuals are quietly set aside and *ignored—as shown by the complainants themselves*. This then, is the sole crime of the would-be culprit, and no worse than this can be laid at his door. And yet what is the reward of that kind man? He, who has never refused a service, outside what he considers his social duties—to any living being; he who has redeemed dozens of men, young and old from dissipated, often immoral lives, and saved others from terrible scrapes by giving them a safe refuge in the Society; he who has placed others again, on the pinnacle of Saintship *through their statues in that Society*; when otherwise they would have indeed found themselves now in the meshes of “worldliness” and perhaps worse;—he, that true friend of every theosophist, and verily “the readiest to serve and as unconscious of the service”—he is now taken to task for what?—for insignificant blunders, for useless “special orders,” a *childish*, rather than untheosophical love of display, out of pure devotion to his Society. Is then *human nature* to be viewed so uncharitably by us, as to call *untheosophical*, worldly and sinful the natural impulse of a mother to dress up her child and parade it to the best advantages? The comparison may be laughed at, but if it is, it will be only by him who would, like the fanatical Christian of old, or the naked, dishevelled Yogi of India—have no more charity for the smallest human weakness. Yet, the simile is quite correct, since the Society is the child, the beloved creation of the Founder; he may be well forgiven for this too exaggerated love for that for which he has suffered and toiled more than all other theosophists put together. He is called “worldly,” “ambitious of power” and *untheosophical* for it. Very well; let then any

impartial judge compare the life of the Founder with those of most of his critics, and see which was *the most theosophical*, ever since the Society sprung into existence. If no better results have been achieved, it is not the President who ought to be taken to task for it, but the Members themselves, as he has been ever trying to promote its growth, and the majority of “Fellows” have either done nothing, or created obstacles in the way of its progress through sins of omission as of commission. Better unwise *activity*, than an overdose of too wise *inactivity*, apathy or indifference which are always the death of an undertaking. Nevertheless, it is the members who now seek to sit in Solomon’s seat; and they tell us that the Society is useless, its President positively mischievous, and that the Headquarters ought to be done away with, as “the organization called Theosophical *presents many features seriously obstructive to the progress of Theosophy.*” Trees, however, have to be judged by their fruits. It was just shown that no “special orders” issuing from the “Centre of Power” called Adyar, could affect in any way whatever either Branch or individual; and therefore any theosophist bent on “self culture,” “self-involution” or any kind of *selfness*, is at liberty to do so; and if, instead of using his rights he will apply his brain-power to criticize other people’s actions then it is he who becomes the *obstructionist* and not at all the “Organization called Theosophical.” For, if theosophy is anywhere practised on this globe, it is at Adyar, at the Headquarters. Let “those interested in the progress of true theosophy” appealed to by the writers, look around them and judge. See the Branch Societies and compare them with the group that works in that “Centre of Power.” Admire the “progress of theosophy” at Paris, London and even America. Behold, in the great “Brotherhood, a true *Pandemonium* of which the Spirit of Strife and Hatred himself might be proud! everywhere—quarrelling, fighting for supremacy; back-biting, slandering, scandal-mongering for the last two years; a veritable battlefield, on which several members have so disgraced themselves and their Society by trying to disgrace others, that they have actually become more like hyenas than human beings by digging into the graves of the Past, in the hopes of bringing forward old forgotten slanders and scandals!

At Adyar alone, at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society, the Theosophists are that which they ought to be everywhere else: *true theosophists* and not merely *philosophers* and Sophists. In that *centre* alone are now grouped together the few solitary, practically working Members, who labour and toil, quietly and uninterruptedly, while those Brothers for whose sake they are working, sit in the *dolce far niente* of the

West and criticise them. Is this “true theosophical and brotherly work,” to advise to put down and disestablish the only “centre” where real brotherly, humanitarian work is being accomplished?

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

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

*“Theosophy must not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical Ethics epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy must be made practical, and has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless discussion . . . It has to find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life thoroughly impregnated with its spirit—the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity and love. Its followers have to set the example of a firmly outlined and as firmly applied morality before they get the right to point out, even in a spirit of kindness, the absence of a like ethical Unity and singleness of purpose in other associations and individuals. As said before—no Theosophist should blame a brother whether within or outside of the association, throw slur upon his actions or denounce him<sup>10</sup> lest he should himself lose the right of being considered a theosophist. Ever turn away your gaze from the imperfections of your neighbour and centre rather your attention upon your own shortcomings in order to correct them and become wiser. . . . Show not the disparity between claim and action in another man but—whether he be brother or neighbour—rather help him in his arduous walk in life . . . The problem of true theosophy and its great mission is the working out of clear, unequivocal conceptions of ethical ideas and duties which would satisfy most and best the altruistic and right feeling in us; and the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life where they may be applied with most equitableness . . . Such is the common work in view for all who are willing to act on these principles. It is a laborious task and will require strenuous and persevering exertion, but it must lead you insensibly to progress and leave no room for any selfish aspirations outside the limits traced . . . Do not indulge in unbrotherly comparisons between the task accomplished by yourself and the work left undone by your neighbour or brother, in the field of Theosophy, as none is held to weed out a larger plot of ground than his strength and capacity will permit him . . . Do not be too severe on the merits or demerits of one who seeks admission among your ranks, as the truth about the actual state of the inner man can only be known to, and dealt with justly by KARMA alone. Even the simple presence amidst you of a well-intentioned and sympathising individual may help you magnetically . . . You are the Free-workers on the Domain of Truth, and as such, must leave no obstructions on the paths leading to it. . . .”*

The letter closes with the following lines which have now become quite plain, as they give the key to the whole situation

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

A complete answer is thus found in the above lines to the paper framed by the two Theosophists. Those who are now inclined to repudiate the Hand that traced it and feel ready to turn their backs upon the whole Past and the original programme of the T.S. are at liberty to do so. The Theosophical body is neither a Church or a Sect and every individual opinion is entitled to a hearing. A Theosophist may progress and develop, and his views may outgrow those of the Founders, grow larger and broader in every direction, without for all that abandoning the fundamental soil upon which they were born and nurtured. It is only he who changes diametrically his opinions from one day to another and shifts his devotional views from white to black—who can be hardly trusted in his remarks and actions. But surely, this can never be the case of the two Theosophists who have now been answered . . .

Meanwhile, peace and fraternal goodwill to all.

H.	P.	Blavatsky,
Corresponding	Secretary	T.S.
<i>Ostende</i> , Oct. 3rd., 1886		

---

1. A liberal Christian member of the T. S. having objected to the study of Oriental religions and doubted whether there was room left for any new Society—a letter answering his objections and preference to Christianity was received, and the contents copied for him; after which he denied no longer the advisability of such a Society as the proposed Theosophical Association. A few extracts from this early letter will show plainly the nature of the Society as then contemplated, and that we have tried only to follow, and carry out in the best way we could, the intentions of the *true* originators of the Society in those days. The pious gentleman having claimed that he *was a theosophist* and had a right of judgment over other people was told . . . [1] “You have no right to such a title. You are only a *philo*-theosophist; as one who has reached to the full comprehension of *the name and nature* of a theosophist will sit in judgment on no man or action . . . You claim that your religion is the highest and final step toward divine Wisdom on this earth, and that it has introduced into the arteries of the old decaying world new blood and life and verities that had remained unknown to the heathen. If it were so indeed, then your religion would have introduced the highest truths into all the

social, civil and international relations of Christendom. Instead of that as any one can perceive, your social as your private life is not based upon a common moral solidarity but only on constant mutual counteraction and purely mechanical equilibrium of individual powers and interests . . . If you would be a theosophist you must not do as those around you do who call on a God of Truth and Love and serve the dark Powers of Might, Greed and Luck. We look in the midst of your Christian civilization and see the same sad signs of old: the realities of your daily lives are diametrically opposed to your religious ideal, but you feel it not; the thought that the very laws that govern your being whether in the domain of politics or social economy clash painfully with the origins of your religion—do not seem to trouble you in the least. But if the nations of the West are so fully convinced that the ideal can never become practical and the practical will never reach the ideal—then, you have to make your choice: either it is your religion that is impracticable, and in that case it is no better than a vainglorious delusion, or it might find a practical application, but it is you, yourselves, who do not care to apply its ethics to your daily walk in life. . . Hence, before you invite other nations ‘to the King’s festival table’ from which your guests arise more starved than before, you should, ere you try to bring them to your own way of thinking, look into the repasts they offer to you . . . Under the dominion and offer of exoteric creeds, the grotesque and tortured shadows of theosophical realities, there must ever be the same oppression of the weak and the poor and the same typhonic struggle of the wealthy and the mighty among themselves . . . It is *esoteric philosophy alone*, the spiritual and psychic blending of man with Nature that, by revealing fundamental truths, can bring that much desired mediate state between the two extremes of human Egotism ,and divine Altruism and finally lead to the alleviation of human suffering . . .” (See last page for contin.) [2]

[1] Throughout the body of the article, as in the footnotes, the occurrence of several full stops . . . indicate no elision of words, but only the beginning of a new sentence or thought which is particularly emphasised.—C. J.

[2] The continuation of this letter closes the present article, beginning with the words: “Theosophy must not represent . . .” Portions of this letter were included in an article by Blavatsky titled “Some Words on Daily Life,” *Lucifer*, January, 1888. The letter is given as [Letter No. 82](#) in *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, Second Series*.—Ed. UT

2. Mr. [J.S.] Cobb.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the Author: [H. P. Blavatsky](#)



Occultist, Author, Chela, Co-founder of the Theosophical Society. Bio: [H. P. Blavatsky](#).