

The Theosophical Society and H.P.B.
by Annie Besant and H.T. Patterson
(with notes by H.P.B.)

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

On the 17th day of last month, the Theosophical Society completed the first fifteen years of its existence, and can look back over a youth tempestuous indeed, but marked by continuous growth. When first, in New York, the two "Founders" of the infant Society enrolled their earliest members, a profound sadness must have lain at the heart of the one who realised all that was meant by that primary step. "The last quarter of the century!" Not for the first time had that cry been sounded in the "Western World, but all the previous attempts had but stirred the waters and had — failed. Was this nineteenth century effort to pass into Hades with its predecessors, bearing only the wreckage of shattered hopes, of broken forces? Was this dawn to darken into night instead of morning, and leave [Page 2] the twentieth century to grope in darkness with none to guide? Or were there, scattered through the West, enough of the students of the past to awake at the summons from the Orient, students in whose hearts the occult fire was smouldering, waiting but the "breath" to make it burst forth in flame? Only when the knell of the century has sounded will the answer to such questionings be fully heard: still is the lot hidden, save from the eyes that pierce beyond the veil. It "lies on the knees of Osiris", and it will fall thence into the lap of failure or of triumph, as *they* keep faith or break it, who form the working brotherhood of the Theosophical Society.

The seed planted in America has grown there to a tree with widely spreading branches. [An early draft of the constitution of the T. S. lies before me, and shows that, in its inception, membership of the T. S. involved much heavier obligations than are now required from accepted candidates. The fellowship had three sections and each section had three degrees. For the highest, the conditions were severe, and could only be taken by those ready to devote their whole lives to Occultism] In India, the Society quickly made its way, and thanks to the energy, the eloquence, and the devotion of Colonel H. S. Olcott, the co-founder and President, branches sprang up in every direction, the ancient literature was enthusiastically studied, schools were founded where knowledge untainted by Christianity could be gathered by the young, and India, waking from the sleep of centuries, felt herself to be once more a nation, a nation with a mighty past, and with [Page 3] the possibility of a glorious future. While all this rush of new life thrilled along the veins of Hindustan, the heart of that life throbbed steadily on, the fount of the circulating energy, though the limbs and the organising brain were more prominent in the eyes of the world. That heart was H.P.B. Indifferent to the exercise of authority, careless of external show — even to the shocking of those tight-fettered by social conventions — willing to efface herself if thereby her mission might the better prosper, there she was, the source of the occult forces which alone could sustain the

Theosophical Society. Ready to prove the reality of those as yet little known powers of Nature, the effects of which are as marvellous to the cultured European as are electrical phenomena to the Central African, she performed experiment after experiment for the instruction of those who personally sought her. But she steadily refused to vulgarise her mission by any kind of general "performance of phenomena", which could only gratify curiosity and serve no useful purpose. When urged to "show her powers" merely to convince the general crowd, who cared nothing for Theosophical teaching but only desired to gratify their idle love of the marvellous: when told that thus she might win credence and establish her authority, she merely shrugged her shoulders and with the indifference of the trained occultist, answered that they might believe or not as they [Page 4] chose; let them say she was "a fraud"; what did it matter? For the real student she had an inexhaustible patience, willingness to prove, readiness to explain: for the idle curiosity-hunter a careless "Oh, it's nothing ! psychological tricks, Maya, what you please".

With many of the Brahmins she came into direct collision. Sent to teach to the world at large many of the doctrines which had been jealously preserved as the treasure of a privileged minority, she struck them on their tenderest point, their pride in the possession of knowledge hidden from the vulgar crowd, their sensitive jealous lest their holiest should be profaned. Knowing that she was speaking truth, they often contradicted her in public, while in private they hotly protested against the desecration of their sanctuaries. Physically a subject race, conquered by the material force of the aggressive West, they retired the more into the strongholds of their intellectual pride, looking with unutterable contempt on the foreigner who could subdue their bodies, but who, in his ignorance of the secrets of Nature, was but a barbarian in their haughty eyes. That he should rule in India was well, since India had forsaken her ancestral wisdom and was unworthy to be free: but that he should catch a glimpse of that mental and spiritual realm of which they were citizens — nay, such intrusion should be resisted to the last, and the very existence of such a realm should be kept secret, lest he should [Page 5] find a gate that might let him in. That this Russian teacher had her knowledge from the Sages they revered, they were unable to deny: but they resisted her publication of the teachings as their ancestors had resisted the teachings of Gautama, the Buddha. Not for the "common people" were even the crumbs of the "Divine Wisdom".

Nevertheless, despite all, her influence steadily grew, and the Theosophical Society struck its roots far and wide. Then came the bitter and unscrupulous attack of the Christian missionaries in the famous Coulomb forgeries, forgeries some of them so transparent that they could not have deceived an intelligent child, others ingeniously concocted of the half-truths that "are ever the blackest of lies".

And here, I venture to say, a mistake was made, a mistake in tactics as well as a failure in loyalty. An examination held promptly and on the spot proved the falsehood of the calumnious accusations, and exposed the nefarious artifices by which evidence had been fabricated. So far, so good. But then, instead of closing up round the assailed Teacher and defending to the utmost her position and her honour, the fatal policy was adopted of attempting to minimise her position in the Society, of arguing that the teaching remained impregnable whether the teacher was or was not trustworthy. It was a policy of expediency, not of principle, it being thought wise to ignore attacks rather than to [Page 6] refute them, and to lay stress on the inherent strength of the philosophy rather than to continually vindicate its exponent. Suffering from acute disease, and always too doubtful of her own judgment in mere exoteric matters, in questions of policy and expediency, to trust to it against the advice of men of the world, H. P. B. allowed herself to be put aside, while the Society was exalted at the expense of its Founder, and left it to go its own way in Hindustan. When sufficiently recovered from almost fatal illness, she recommenced her work, but in Europe not in India, confining her activity to the Western World.

The effects of her presence quickly became manifest. Where was the occult heart, there was centred the life of the Society, and in the West, on every side, appeared signs of new vitality. How the Theosophical movement was spread through Western lands it needs not here to relate. The "Theosophical Activities" in every number of *Lucifer* tell the tale so that he who runs may read.

This rapid growth has been due primarily to H.P.B.'s personal presence, secondarily to the formation of the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society. Into this, those only are admitted who accept H.P.B. as their teacher in Occultism, recognising her as the messenger of that Brotherhood who are the real Founders of the Theosophical Society. This Section embraces most of the most active workers in the Society, and as they base [Page 7] their activity on their philosophy little of it is wasted in running after false scents. There is a certain fringe of people who come and go, who enter from curiosity and are disgusted when they find only hard work; who seek for "powers" and are angry when they find only self-denial; who enter thinking Occultism an easy and exciting study, and break under the tension to which they find themselves subjected. But the centre of the Section is steadily solidifying, and it encircles H. P. B. with ever growing trust — founded on lengthening experience — with ever-increasing love, gratitude and loyalty.

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

1. Either she is a messenger from the Master, or else she is a fraud.

From this dilemma there is no escape. If she does not come from Them, bringing Their message, doing Their work, executing Their commission, her whole life is a lie. From beginning to end, she has claimed nothing as her own, everything as from Them. Those who are in daily contact with her, know how she continually refers to Their decision, speaks in Their name. No third course is open to us: there are only these alternatives, the mission is either real or fraudulent.

2. In either case the Theosophical Society would have had no existence without her. [Page 8]

The folly of trying to separate the Theosophical Society and H. P. B. lies in this fact. Without H. P. B. no Theosophical Society. All the Westerns who know anything of Theosophy have learned from her or from her pupils. Colonel Olcott, as he always recognises, obtained through her his introduction to the work. Save for her, he would be a well-known American Spiritualist, not the President of the Theosophical Society. So with Mr. Sinnett, so with Mr. Judge, so with each and all. Many have obtained independent evidence afterwards, but for all she has been the portal through which they have passed into the occult world. Nor is the fact that the existence of the Theosophical Society is due to her the only proof of the hopelessness of the attempt to rend the twain apart. For just as it owed to her its inception, so now it owes to her its vitality. Where she is, there, evident to all eyes, is the centre of energy: and where she is not physically, there the progress is in proportion to the loyalty shown towards her. Unfair criticism of her, ungenerous carping at her, slackness in defending her against attack from outside, wherever these are found there also quickly follow stagnation, decay, death.

3. If she is a fraud, she is a woman of wonderful ability and learning, giving all the credit of these to some persons who do not exist.

As to the ability and learning, these are not challenged by her enemies. They sometimes say [Page 9] that her knowledge is ill-digested, that she arranges her materials badly, that she is misty, involved, self-contradictory. But that she possesses an extraordinary fund of varied information, bearing on out-of-the-way topics and obscure philosophies, is admitted on every hand. If she be a fraud, why is she such a fool as to invent imaginary Teachers, fathering on them her knowledge, and so gaining on every side abuse and slander, while she might have gained credit, to say nothing of money, by the simple and natural course of giving out her own as her own ? Can anything more insane be imagined than for a Russian woman of noble family, married to a high official, to go out into the world on a wild-goose chase after imaginary Teachers, and having acquired a mass of recondite knowledge at great cost and suffering, to throw away all the credit of acquiring it, to ascribe it to non-existent persons, to face slander, abuse, calumny, instead of utilising it in a more common way, to remain an exile from her own country, to be poor and despised where she might be wealthy and honoured ? If anyone can produce, outside Bedlam, a lunatic more mad than H.P.B., must be if she be a fraud, I should be grateful for the honour of an introduction.

4. If H.P.B. is a true messenger, opposition to her is opposition to the Masters, she being Their only channel to the Western World.

This proposition scarcely needs argument to sustain it; it is self-evident; she alone is in direct [Page 10] and constant communication with the trans-Himalayan Adepts. They chose her, and presumably They can manage Their own business. Once accept the philosophy, you must accept her; accept her and you cannot stop short of the full proposition as stated above. And here let me make a suggestion to those who rashly and superficially judge H.P.B., courtesy, she will be abrupt, sharp, repellent. The hostile feeling masked under smiles, finds itself pierced by keen sarcasm, or knocking itself against a wall of ice. But to the honest enquirer she is patient and gentle to a rare extent, and only her pupils know of a patience that has no limits, a strength that never falters, an insight that never errs. In fact, H. P. B. herself is the test of the members, and when they begin to grumble at her, they would do wisely to analyse themselves. I sometimes think of a test dropped into a solution, precipitating some substance therein contained. "What a horrid liquid it must be so to dirty that beautifully clear fluid", cry the ignorant. If the substance had not been present, it would not have been precipitated by the test, and if enquirers and members are honest, they will find themselves attracted, not repelled, by H.P.B. [Page 11]

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

This is the conclusion of the whole matter, the decision on which we must guide our policy. I see on some sides a disposition to temporise, to whittle away the Esoteric Teachings, to hastily twist them into accord with temporary hypotheses of Science, in order to gain a momentary advantage, perchance a fuller hearing. This is not wise. Already some such hypotheses, opposed to occult teachings, have been thrown aside by more advanced scientific thought, and have been replaced by other hypotheses, more nearly approaching the occult views. There is no need to hurry, nor to try to pour the archaic doctrines

into new bottles, ere those bottles have been tested. The Secret Teachings have stood many thousands of years, and have been the source from which the stream of progress has flowed. They can venture to stand on their own basis for a few years more, till Science crosses the dividing line it is tentatively approaching with each new discovery.

To the members of the Theosophical Society, I venture to say a word of pleading. But a few years stretch before us ere the century expires, a century whose close coincides well-nigh with the close of a [Page 12] cycle. As the sands of those years are running through the hour-glass of Time, our opportunities are running with them; it is "a race against time", in a very real sense. If the members care at all for the future of the Society, if they wish to know that the Twentieth Century will see it standing high above the strife of parties, a beacon-light in the darkness for the guiding of men, if they believe in the Teacher who founded it for human service, let them now arouse themselves from slothful indifference, sternly silence all dissensions over petty follies in their ranks, and march shoulder to shoulder for the achievement of the heavy task laid upon their strength and courage. If Theosophy is worth anything, it is worth living for and worth dying for. If it is worth nothing let it go at once and for all. It is not a thing to play with, it is not a thing to trifle with. Ere 1891 sees its earliest dawning, ere 1890 falls into the grave now a-digging for it, let each Theosophist, and above all let each Occultist, calmly review his position, carefully make his choice, and if that choice be for Theosophy, let him sternly determine that neither open foes nor treacherous friends shall shake his loyalty for all time to come to his great Cause and Leader, which twain are one.

ANNIE BESANT, F.T.S.

COMMENTS ON THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND H.P. B.

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

(I gladly give room to the protest which follows. It is wise and timely, and may perhaps, ward off worse than "petty criticisms of H. P. B." Needless to say that Mrs. Besant's article would not have appeared had I seen it before publication. But I may point out to Mr. Patterson that much of his protest, however true, is not exactly aimed at what Mrs. Besant wrote. She did not say that the T. S. taught any particular doctrines, but merely expressed her own view that the position of one who belonged to the T. S. and ungenerously carped at the pioneer who founded it was illogical. This is clearly a matter of opinion, and Mr. Patterson puts the opposing view. One has but to read the new " Constitution and Rules of the Theosophical Society" for 1891 (in the Supplement of the January *Theosophist*), to find in Article xiii, 2, that "no Fellow, Officer, or Council of the Theosophical Society, or of any Section or Branch thereof, shall promulgate or maintain *any doctrine* as being that advanced or advocated by the Society"; and, whatever we do, we have to abide by the Rules of the T. S.. Mrs. Besant would have done more wisely to have called her article " Comments on the E. S. of the Theosophical Society and H. P. B.," she would then have been on the safe side; for a member of the E. S. who receives instructions emanating from the Masters of the Occult Philosophy, and doubts at the same time the genuineness of the source, or the honesty of the humble transmitter of the old esoteric doctrines — *lies to his own soul, and is untrue to his pledge*. He cannot be honest

and remain in [Page 14] the E. S., in such a case. But then, the Esoteric Section, its qualification "of the T. S." notwithstanding, does not represent the latter, and in future it will drop the additional words altogether. From the very beginning its second rule stated, that the "Esoteric Section has *no official or corporate connection with the Esoteric Society*" (see *Lucifer* of October, 1888). Henceforth it will be called "the Eastern School of Theosophy", simply. Meanwhile, I thank our brother, Mr. Patterson, for giving me this opportunity of expressing my feelings. — H. P. B.)

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

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" 3. If she is a fraud she is a woman of wonderful ability and learning, giving all the credit of these to some persons who do not exist.[Page 15]

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

On these last grounds let us stand. If it is worth anything it is worth living for and dying for; and worth working for and worth writing for, and worth taking some risks for; and at the risk of incurring misunderstanding, and at the risk of hurting the feelings of those whose feelings should [Page 16] not be hurt, this article is written and some exception taken to that just quoted from. For it does seem as though its author, through her impetuous kindness and loyalty, had allowed her judgment to be partially influenced by her feelings. And although there are few Theosophists who will disagree with her in most of her issues, yet there seems to be a little grain of erroneous opinion in them from which a large and poisonous growth may spring. If this is so, it is only true brotherliness to point it out. It lies first in the statement that " If there are no Masters the Theosophical Society is an absurdity and there is no use of keeping it up". And again in another statement which says: " Once accept the philosophy you must accept her (H.P.B.)." May not much harm be done by the holding up of such views ? May they not tend to keep many out who would be benefited by being in; and for whom the Society was largely founded ? Are not the statements in their nature somewhat dogmatic ? Have we not still in our natures some of that intolerance which, forcing rather than leading, persecuted in the name of righteousness ? For there are subtle transformations possible in our characters, which will bring the old faults out in new guises, and we are none, not one, quite free from intolerance. The churches have creeds; but applicants for admission are usually given to understand that they need not be fully accepted; and they [Page 17] seldom are. The Theosophical Society has no creeds, but its members seem scarcely able to avoid making them in spite of all efforts to the contrary. And watchfulness as to the Theosophical movement must lead those who believe in the Masters to see how strenuously they and their mouthpiece H.P.B. are working against the development of them. If this Theosophical movement is to be carried on successfully through the three or four generations of the first seventy-five years of the coming century, we must be very heedful. What do the Constitution and the by-laws of the Society, what does the application for admission into it tell us ? Not one word as to belief. They simply contain provisions which tend to guarantee liberty and cultivate tolerance. Is it not contrary to their spirit to say: "Once accept the philosophy you must accept her"? Accept what philosophy ? The Society has none. Not long since an earnest student searching for Truth, but not one of our members, asked if we were not Jesuitical. Was her position not well taken? It was, if we as a Society have a philosophy. We constantly cry out we have no creeds, no dogmas, no beliefs, and we almost as constantly, or at any rate very frequently, unintentionally give the lie to this.

And why speak of the Society as an absurdity without Masters ? Are its objects, especially the first, nothing? If those objects were even partially lived up to, and again let us say "especially the [Page 18] first", would no good come of it? Most certainly, and it is perhaps this good which the Masters are seeking, rather than the acceptance of any philosophy, or any recognition of themselves. [Our Brother, Mr. Patterson, is quite correct. — [H.P.B.]]

Even a recognised authoritative leader may be dangerous. H.P. B. herself is always inculcating self-reliance, and discouraging any dependence upon others, herself included. She understands that the true alchemist seeks to have men throw their opinions into one common melting-pot, knowing that they will take out all of the Truth which they put in, and some of their errors transmuted. It is the real change of base metals into gold.

If the Society has an authoritative leader, beliefs will be accepted simply on authority, and a belief thus accepted is almost of necessity perverted. Look at the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation. Many regard it as quite heterodox not to accept them; and yet the first is often made a fetish of, and both are by many crudely understood; the one often being looked at in a way to make of it a positive fatalism, the

other a kind of personal resurrection. This comes from reliance upon certain persons or books accepted as authority. Such reliance is against the presumable wish of the Masters. We must seize on our own truth and digest it ourselves; and if we do we cannot so pervert it. [Page 19]

A true servant should try not simply to obey, but, if possible, to intuitively grasp the wishes of the one served. In the article referred to in this paper it is said that H. P. B., is "willing to efface herself if thereby her mission might the better prosper". And would she not say: "First Humanity and then the Theosophical Society, and last myself". [Most decidedly so; such has been always my principle, and I hope it is that of my friend and colleague, Col. H. S. Olcott. our President — H. P. B.] Referring to the Coulomb scandal it is said: "But then, instead of closing up around the assailed Teacher, and defending to the utmost her position and her honour, the fatal policy was adopted of attempting to minimise her position in the Society". True, perhaps; but how best could she have been defended ? An ill-planned *sortie* is, of course, unwise. There may be a hidden enemy in wait, and we are told that the powers of darkness are very active, vigilant and cunning. We may in ill-advised movements be simply following out their hypnotic suggestions and any statement which does not tally with the exact truth is an ill-advised *sortie*. And when it is said that " If there are no Masters, the Theosophical Society is an absurdity, and there is no use in keeping it up", a mis-statement is made. Let us by all means close round our Teacher, but as she would have us; not as we ourselves might like. And to do this we must remember [Page 20] that we must lead, not force, people to the truth. We must do it with all tenderness, all gentleness, all patience, all sweetness. We must present our views for the weak ones, not the strong ones. Not in the way of temporising, but by giving out those truths which are most needed. We must try to understand that we are now to learn to be true shepherds when our time comes, and while being schooled must bear in mind that it is the lost sheep we are to save, The honest materialist, the honest agnostic, the honest spiritualist, the honest Christian scientist, the honest dogmatic Christian, maybe an honest disbeliever in H.P.B. and the Masters, and an honest member of the Theosophical Society too, provided he is enlisted in the cause of humanity.[I have repeated these words for years: it is *my stereotyped answer* to enquirers who ask me whether belief in the Masters is obligatory in joining the T.S. — [H.P.B.]] Let us hold the doors wide open; let us set up no unnecessary barriers, and let us wait outside until the last one has entered. We can thus best serve, thus best defend. This is not a policy of silence; it does not prevent our using pen and voice in defence of our beloved leader; but it should prevent our making belief in her a qualification, even if an unwritten one, for membership in good standing in the Theosophical Society. There are now many good members who are doubters on this point. Don't let us drive them away by intolerance. Perhaps they are under a [Page 21] dark illusion cast by the Brothers of the Shadow. But to force them will not help them, and do no good to anyone. If, metaphorically speaking, we slap the face of anyone who may speak disrespectfully of H.P.B., we will not help her reputation but rather strengthen the calumniator in his attitude. Our line of defence cannot be well chosen if it does harm. And it will do harm if made in such a way as to make a belief in any person or philosophy a criterion of good standing. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder; let us strengthen those ties which we are forming for this and the coming incarnations; let us by all means be grateful to her from whom so much has come to us and the rest of humanity, but let us for the sake of others be judicious. Let us make disbelievers in H.P. H., disbelievers in Karma, disbelievers in Reincarnation, disbelievers in the Masters as welcome, or more welcome, into the Society than others, provided always they wish to form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood.

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

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND H.P.B.

ANNIE BESANT, F.T.S.

PERSONALLY, I should have been content to have left Brother Patterson's "comments" unanswered, for when both sides have had their say on any matter of controversy, the outside public is a better judge of the merits of the question than either of the disputants can be. But it is thought better that I should point out some misconceptions of my critic, lest my silence should seem to assent to them, even though H. P. B. has already noted that much of Mr. Patterson's protest "is not exactly aimed at what Mrs. Besant wrote".

LET me say at the outset of my "re-comments " that I thoroughly and heartily endorse, as must every F.T.S., the statement of Mr. Patterson that "the Theosophical Society has no creeds". This is indeed a truism rather than a truth, since the Constitution of the Society so decrees, and since anyone who accepts the first object has right of entrance. By all means "let us make disbelievers in H. P. B., disbelievers in Karma, disbelievers in [Page 23] Reincarnation, disbelievers in the Masters "welcome" provided always they wish to form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood"; as H. P. B. has often pointed out, it is not necessary to become a Theosophist in order to enter the Theosophical Society. It is not I who would shut out disbelievers in H. P. B. if they want to come in; but what puzzles me is *why they should want to come in*. Enquirers may rationally enter; people whose judgment is in suspension until they have acquired fuller information, and who hope to obtain that information in the Society; seekers after truth, who join in order to prosecute their search under conditions which appear to be favourable. All these classes of people may become members of the T. S. on intelligible grounds without belief in H. P. B. or in the Masters; a person who regards H. P. B. as a fraud has an equal right to join, but I frankly say that his action is, to me, unintelligible and illogical. *Que diable va-t-il faire dans cette galère?*

But where Mr. Patterson seems to me to misread my article and to be rather misty in his own views, is in his apparent idea that the object of the "Theosophical movement" is merely to get people into the Theosophical Society, without the least regard to what they do when they are in. What "movement" can there be of any utility to the world, which does not tend towards some recognised goal? Granted that the honest materialist and his [Page 24] opponent the honest spiritualist, the honest agnostic and his opponent the honest dogmatic Christian, all enter, with co-equal honesty, the Theosophical Society. The Society extends to all an equal welcome. So far, so good. They all unite in believing in the brotherhood of man. But they can only unite passively, not actively, for their honest beliefs must govern their actions and all they do must be done in concert, not with each other but with those who share their creeds. They cannot even wisely talk about the brotherhood, since each will have for it a different foundation, and the laying of one foundation undermines the other. Nor must they study together, for study will lead to opinions, and opinions will become — *absit omem* — beliefs and even doctrines. So that if those who enter the T. S. are never to emerge from the chrysalis state which is quite permissible at their entry, they seem likely to prove as stationary as the chrysalis, instead of passing onwards into a movement which is to sway the destinies of the world. My object in the original article was to turn members of the Theosophical Society into the path that leads to Theosophy, or at least to awaken in them the idea that if they are to rationalise their position they should make up their minds to accept one of two mutually exclusive positions.

Mr. Patterson passes by without comment my first four positions to object to the fifth: but the [Page 25] fifth

depends on those that precede it. He does not deny No. 1. "Either she is a messenger from the Masters, or else she is a fraud" Yet everything turns on this, and the issue cannot be evaded. In the first case, it will not be said that I have put the argument too strongly. In the second, the magnitude of her fraud is undeniable: and in that case what honourable man or woman can condone that fraud and assist in maintaining it by remaining in a Society in which she holds an official position? For this is no question of merely accepting or not accepting a philosophy. A certain definite philosophy has been put forward by Madame. Blavatsky; I grant that, legally and technically, the philosophy is not the philosophy of the Society, and that "the Society has none". But *she* is distinctly committed to it, and either holds it in good faith from Those from whom she says she received it, or is palming off on the world a shameless deceit. The Society, by accepting her as one of its Founders, by recognising her as one of its two chief officials, and lately in its Convention, through its appointed delegates, announcing to the world by formal vote its confidence in her, makes itself a party to the fraud, if fraud there be. If, under these circumstances, a person believing her to be a deceiver, likes to join the Society, there is nothing in the Rules to keep him out; but persons of ordinary morality, to say nothing of intelligence, will surely form [Page 26] their own judgment on the incongruity of his position.

But Mr. Patterson takes exception to the view that "if there are no Masters the Theosophical Society is an absurdity". What does Mr. Patterson understand by the word "Theosophical" and what is its force as a qualification of "Society"? When I see "Geographical Society", I understand it is a Society for gathering and spreading knowledge of geography; the "Astronomical Society" deal, similarly with astronomy; and it seems to me that the Theosophical Society ought to have some connection with Theosophy. I may be quite wrong, for I am merely putting my own view of the matter; but it seems to me that many other Societies teach Brotherhood; that the Asiatic Society and many Sanskritists have done more than we for the second object; while the Psychical Research Society devotes its attention to the third. None of these objects justifies in itself our title "Theosophical", and what have we to differentiate us from other societies, if it be not the mission of spreading the knowledge of such fragments of Theosophy, of the Hidden Wisdom, of the Secret Doctrine, as may be placed in our hand? But the existence of Theosophy implies the existence of Masters. I do not mean that it implies the particular existence of those two who have been specially mentioned in connection with the Society; but of a Sacred Brotherhood, of a [Page 27] Hierarchy of Initiates, of Masters in whose hands rests the sacred charge of the garnered Esoteric Knowledge of all Time. Most certainly they are not "seeking . . . recognition of themselves". What to Them could import our recognition? They seek but the good of the race, but the elevation of Humanity. But it may be our wisdom to yield that which They do not ask, for the good of the race lies in approaching its highest children, and in following the way marked by the sacred feet of those who have trodden the Path.

How could the Hidden Wisdom be preserved in the absence of such a Brotherhood? How could it be handed down from generation to generation if there were none who learned it, none who verified it, none who increased it, none who transmitted it to their trained successors? And if there be no Hidden Wisdom, what is the *raison d'être* of the Theosophical Society? Some of us have looked to it with yearning hope that it will save the world from the deluge of materiality; we have joined it with the one idea of strengthening the struggling spirituality which alone can prevent the perishing of civilisation in a whirlpool of class strife and terrible hatreds, and preserve the nations from the horrors of a universal internecine war. If this hope be vain, we have nothing left to look to. Theosophy is our last chance, our last stake. If the Theosophical Society is not founded for the propagation [Page 28] of Theosophy, I for one, feel no interest in its future. What force has its declaration of brotherhood, on what foundation is its belief in brotherhood laid? Surely on that unity of Humanity which is the central truth of Theosophy, on

that spiritual oneness which, according to Theosophy, makes of Man one indivisible whole. Take away this, and the first object is without basis, and with the baselessness of its main object, its one enforced obligation, how shall the Theosophical Society stand? Granted that the Theosophical Society has no creed, and teaches no doctrines; none the less is it without foundation unless it be built on the rock of the Hidden Wisdom. By all means open its door wide that all may enter it; but let no Theosophist deny that it is built on the sure basis of the Esoteric Doctrine, and that its brotherhood is founded on the oneness of man's spiritual nature, that nature which exists alike in those who affirm and in those who deny. Welcome into the sacred circle with brotherly greeting those who reject the "Holy Spirit of Man", but never let them for one moment doubt that the very core of that welcome is the Theosophical belief in the presence in them of that Spirit which they are unable to discern.

With regard to the policy adopted in connection with the Coulomb slanders, the event has proved its unwisdom. Where members have shrunk from the defence of their Teacher, the Society has languished; **[Page 29]** where they have loyally supported her, the Society has flourished. That she will never ask such support, we all know, and her notes to Mr. Patterson's article sufficiently re-prove it, if fresh proof be necessary. But, as an Esotericist writes to me: "An attitude of mind towards her work which in H.P.B. is right and perfect, is not necessarily so in her disciples, however generous she may be in making it appear so." After all, was it not just because the exoteric Society was weak, uncertain, and wavering in its allegiance, that the E.S. was formed, so that the necessary work might be done? It is doubtless true that I look at all these matters from the Esoteric standpoint, and knowing how great the loss of the half-hearted, I am over-eager to show them "the things that belong to their peace" ere they are hidden from their eyes by the century's closing years, lest to them, as to others long centuries ago, the whisper shall come across the waves when it is all too late: "Ye would not come . . . that ye might have life". Bitter will be the struggle in the twentieth century between the dying materiality and the growing spirituality of the world, and it lies in our hands today to strengthen the forces which then shall work for good. And so I plead to all Theosophists that, while opening wide to all who seek the gateway of the Theosophical Society, they who have insight will speak out in no faltering tones; that they who halt between two opinions **[Page 30]** shall be helped to make their choice; and that no ill-timed hesitation, no half-hearted allegiance, shall put stumbling-blocks in the way of those who otherwise might walk in safety, or make our weaker brothers suppose that their blindness is more admirable than sight.