

# THE MISSION *of the* THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

*An open letter to Theosophists the world over*

Brothers,

In the hope that you will kindly excuse the solecisms I commit in writing to you in English, which is not my mother tongue, although it is the official language of the Theosophical Society, I herewith take the liberty of saying a few words on the mission of the Theosophical Society, which matter will be discussed at the World Congress in Paris this year. I think it might be of some interest to you to hear the opinion of an old theosophist, living in a little country far away in the north of Europe, and I shall give my opinion partly in the form of a question, partly in that of a proposal.

What did we believe, when first entering the Theosophical Society? We thought we were admitted into a brotherhood of truthseekers, without distinction of race, creed, caste, sex or colour. The T. S. was said to be „an absolutely unsectarian body of seekers after Truth” and its members were said to „extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow, but as a duty they perform” (see inside of cover of „the Theosophist”).

We were seeking truth, and we understood that nobody amongst us knew the whole truth; we were brothers in ignorance or in the small amount of our knowledge, and as human beings we could but love and forgive each other our short-

comings. Still we firmly believed that truth was to be found, for were there not those Blessed Masters who had sought and found, fought and conquered. They were our standard, the ideal we aimed at. And they were perfect in love as well as in knowledge. Life was their school, and the T. S. was a very special class in that school; theosophical work was the short road to them. We lived in an atmosphere of spiritual purity, of human brotherliness.

But then there came the schisms and the splittings. Oh, if we had been brothers, if we had been tolerant, we had had to remain unmoved by the spirit of dissension and strife and intolerance. But did we? Did we live up to our ideal?

If so, why have we been divided into several different societies? Why has there been, from time to time, a secession and a building up of a new society with the old beliefs, but with a new name? Why have there sprung up the Judge society, The Temple, the Universal Brotherhood, the Hartmann Society, the Independent T. S. of America, the Anthroposophical Society, The Order of Christian Mystics, the Rosicrucian Fellowship etc? And why are these societies mostly inimical to each other? Why do they often use bitter and antagonistic and criticizing language, when speaking one of the other?<sup>1)</sup>

The T. S. is said to endeavour „to check materialism and revive religious tendency” and to do this, of course, in an absolutely unsectarian spirit. But how is this possible, when there are several rival societies, which proclaim the same

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<sup>1)</sup> The present writer was a quite young man studying at the University of Helsingfors, when the light of Theosophy fell upon his path. This happened in the month of January 1894, and he was then 18 years of age. In the following year he entered the Theosophical Society, and soon after the Judge secession took place. His public work for theosophy began in the year 1897, and in 1907 the Theosophical Society in Finland was founded. In 1917 he retired from the general secretaryship in order to dedicate himself more wholly to his literary and occult research work. Last year he took the lead of a new theosophical society, the Finnish Rosy Cross, founded in order to maintain the original theosophical brotherly and unsectarian spirit.

truth, but disavow each other? The world does not see the humour of it, but asks, „if you believe in tolerance, why don't you extend tolerance to your brother theosophists”?

Don't say, this is not the fault of the original T. S., but of these other people who seceded. Do you really mean to say that these secessionists did not believe in tolerance, that they were not unsectarian seekers after truth? And if you do, remember, that is your standpoint, but not necessarily theirs.

On the contrary, we may take it for granted that the secessionists, Judgeites and Tingleyites and Steinerites etc. firmly believed and still believe themselves to be genuine seekers after truth, aye, and tolerant and broadminded too.

We are often asked by outsiders, „if you all are theosophists and see the truth, why do you call yourselves by different names, theosophists and anthroposophists and rosicrucians, and why do you so often contend and disagree?” And we talk many glorious words about „different points of view” and „manysided truth”, but when it comes to the point, we always think, and sometimes confess, that we are the only owners of the right viewpoint and that our dear brothers of the other denominations wander in error and darkness.<sup>1)</sup>

We are apt to think that our special teacher of theosophy and occultism is the only one, or at least the best one, but we omit the necessary adjunction „for us”.

And thus it happens, that We do not see the truth. We do not see, that we are not tolerant at all, that it is almost impossible for us to be tolerant. We do not see, that our truthseeking is yet very feeble indeed, that we are more imposed by outer authority than by real inner knowledge to be attained by our own strenuous efforts. We do not see, that at the bottom of it all there is our very genuine unbrotherly intolerance.

For if we were tolerant, if we really understood that

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<sup>1)</sup> See for instance, what beautiful words were exchanged last summer between the Theosophical and Anthroposophical Societies resp. in Neuchâtel an Dornach (Switzerland).

truth has many sides and that there are many roads to Rome, should we not confess — not only without bitterness — but with real gladness of heart, that as there are many Masters in the White Brotherhood, so there ought to be many teachers in the outer humanity? Should we not indeed joyfully admit, that both Mrs. Besant and Dr. Steiner, and many besides, are competent occult teachers each in his or her own way, and each one to be known by his or her fruits. Should we not abstain from judging and condemning? What is our reason really to claim that Mrs. Besant or Dr. Steiner e. g. is the only occult teacher of any quality? Do we really know it or do we take it on authority? And, on whose authority?

We have no absolutely objective standard of measure, no divinely impartial criterion as to who is or is not a teacher. We have but the purely human standard. We must know them by their fruits, by their logical and unselfish teachings, by the sympathy, love and trust they awaken.

Now there is nothing wrong in our appreciating one or the other of the occult teachers above everything else. It is well we do. But there is no use thinking that other teachers except our own are more or less of a humbug. Don't let us see fault in other people, only let our own light lighten the world.

You agree that this is common sense. Why then not confess it in life and teaching?

Are we not all brothers? Ought we not to feel as brothers, although belonging to different societies? Variety is richness, not despicable at all. But charity begins at home, and we who are of that common stock, Theosophy, we ought to live in peace. We have a great work to do, and we must be united in that work. Ought we not to stand as one man against the materialism of the age?

Oh yes, against the materialism of the age!

It is stated that the first object of the Theosophical Society is to „form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, caste or colour". The T. S. is an international body, and we proclaim that we have to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. It seems that we originally believed in

brotherhood and that we felt to be in the company of Buddhas and Christs.

I remember a dream I had some years ago. I dreamt that in case of war the Theosophical Society would stand as one man for peace, that all members of the T. S. would be followers of Christ and Buddha, that they would proclaim and preach brotherhood in the midst of warfare and be citizens of the world instead of nationalists and chauvinists. I dreamt that all theosophists would refuse to carry arms, to use violence, to kill and murder. I dreamt that the Masters and H. P. B. had meant it to be thus. This was only a dream, of course, and I had to awaken to reality. But it seemed to me that such a course on the part of the theosophists would have been a tremendous spiritual help to the world, — even in case we should have been all killed (which was not probable).

This dream of mine was too beautiful to be true on the physical plane, and so we theosophists got immersed in the war, killed and were killed on the field of wordly honour. We did our duty as citizens, and the gap between the theosophists of different nationalities got ever wider.

And to-day nations are still at war, revolutions are everywhere pending, there is yet no peace in the world.

When will there be? Not until we, who stand for Universal Brotherhood, again look at each other as brothers; not until we forget all our contests and disharmonies, not until we forgive each other our mutual sins. How do you think that the outer humanity could be at peace, so long as the truthseekers are not united by a common bond of brotherly love? You think too little of yourselves as truthseekers, if you think that it doesn't matter what you individually feel and think. It does matter. It matters tremendously, for truthseekers are leaders of thought and leaders of men. And has not Christ prophesied that there will come a time, when the meek shall inherit the earth? And who are to be those meek ones, if not they, who are truthseekers and call themselves theosophists and occultists and anthroposophists?

Out of the truthseekers' family there will rise the leaders of that great orphan, Humanity.

International brotherhood is still awaiting, and it is we, who must lay the spiritual foundations of the league of nations. We must find the solution, we must find the first word of peace and good will.

Many years ago we could have thought of the Theosophical Society opening its portals again to all who had left it, inviting them to return in corpore. That was years ago, for to-day we understand that the portals of the T. S. never were closed, but that the members of the T. S. — actual as well as seceded members — did not look at the aim and objects of the T. S. in the same broad way as did H. P. B. and H. S. O. And so another means of reuniting the separate elements, the disjointed members of the great Theosophical Movement must be found.

The new solution must be founded on a feeling of abundant joy. For must we not be thankfully joyous indeed, that the original theosophical movement has become so rich, so manifold in its manifestations? It is no matter of regret that so many societies have sprung up from the original root, on the contrary, it is the best testimony of the great spiritual power, the far reaching tendencies of the original impulse. Rejoice we may that all these secessions and separations and reconstructions have taken place. We never shall return to the old conditions.

What we need now is a new bond, a new brotherhood, a new outer organism for that original mighty impulse, which has been somewhat obscured lately but which never has changed.

We need — not a new society in addition to the old ones, but — a new league of the existing societies, a common platform, where all can meet.

*Let us form a Universal Federation or League of Theosophical and kindred Societies* with its international Bureau, its international Bulletin, and its regularly recurring World Congresses.

Great would be our mutual gain, and the gain of the world. Our mutual discord would cease, for it goes without saying that sister societies belonging to the same organisation would not abuse each other any more. They would es-

teem, help and support each other, and the world would be so much the richer spiritually, for there would be only one great and united front against the materialism of the age. Not that the different societies would abandon their own special lines of work. They would continue as heretofore, ever deepening their inner studies, ever broadening and enriching their outer realisations. But they would no more look askance at each other, they would know and feel their innate, natural brotherhood.

Is this proposal unwise, or is it wise and appropriate?

If it is unwise, then let us drop it.

But if it is not unwise, it must be a true and good scheme. Don't say it is unpractical. If it is true, it matters not, how practical or unpractical it is. Truth is always unpractical until it gets practised. So, if the plan is true, it must be realised.

And it is for us to realise it.

I propose that the matter be discussed at the Theosophical Congress in Paris July 23—26:th this year, and also that it be discussed in every lodge of the T. S. the world over. And I propose that the plan be discussed in every theosophical, anthroposophical, mystic, rosicrucian, occult etc. society that gets information about it. I am sending this letter to as many addresses as I possibly know, and I sincerely beg Editors of Theosophical Journals to print it in their own languages in their resp. magazines.

It seems to me that the International Federation may be formed as soon as its formation will be duly proposed by the original theosophical society, viz. the T. S. (Adyar). Representatives of all societies could then be called upon to draw up the constitution, the rules and regulations of the Federation.

Brothers, let us never forget what the old Romans said, *concordia res parvae crescunt*, and let us begin the new era *viribus unitis*. With fraternal greetings, yours sincerely,

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General-Secretary Founder of the Theosophical Society in Finland.

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