

THE DIRECTION OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
BY MASTERS OF WISDOM

by
JOSEPHINE RANSOM



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JOSEPHINE RANSOM

(THE BLAVATSKY LECTURE)

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TO
THE MASTERS OF WISDOM
AND TO THEIR
DEVOTED DISCIPLE
H. P. BLAVATSKY

THE THREE OBJECTS
OF
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.
2. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in Man.

The Direction of the Theosophical Society by Masters of Wisdom

SUCH a title as the above emphasizes our firmly held opinion that the wise Guardians of humanity, whom we call Masters, ever keep our human spiritual progress in mind, and at all times strive to promote it. It is not possible within a small compass to relate with any adequacy the story of the guidance that some Masters of Wisdom have given to The Theosophical Society throughout its history. I have, therefore, selected, as supremely worth our consideration, the familiar, but ever fresh, early years of The Society.

One of the reasons, I think, of the fascination of those early years is that certain fundamental principles were laid down which are still in operation, and will undoubtedly go on into the future till there is need for restatement of them in new terms.

Most certainly another reason for fascination is the choice and preparation of individuals for special tasks. Here we find three factors taken into consideration: 1, their links with the Masters in other lives; 2, the immediate state of their kârmic records, showing bondage or freedom, their personal and individual attitude to life; and 3, most important, their inner aspirations and motives, between which and their outer attractions and idiosyncrasies the Masters drew (and still do with us all) a constant distinction.

But the main attraction is the effort to introduce to the world, and, I believe, for the first time in history, the ideal of Universal Brotherhood—a Brotherhood of Humanity transcending all distinctions, whether of race or nation, of creed or caste or colour, and all vexing problems of sex. A Brotherhood of which The Society was to provide the public starting point, the seed, though the flowering in

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universal beauty and completeness is not to come to fulfilment till far away in the future. Long periods of time are needed, apparently, for the growth and fruition of such seeds—for time processes are slow for the majority. Only the few, at first, speed ahead and must, in consequence, bear all the inclemencies of the unknown. They have the satisfaction of having cleared away some, at least, of the obstacles. It is said in India that he who clears away even one stone from the road makes it that much less rough for the pilgrim feet that follow.

Before considering these points it is necessary to say something about the Masters and their pupils. They do not seem to have welcomed this title of Master. They spoke of themselves as Adepts, as Brothers, as Initiates. Explaining the difference between western science and spiritual science, the Master K.H. said to Mr. Hume: 'You may be, and most assuredly are, our superiors in every branch of physical knowledge; in spiritual sciences we were, are, and always will be your—*Masters*.'¹

The title Mahâtmâ (great self or soul) so often applied to them is no more than an honorific given then or now in India to any person considered to be morally, intellectually, or spiritually exceptional. It has almost entirely dropped out of use in The Society.

The majority of the letters written to Mr. Sinnett have been published under the title: *The Mahâtmâ Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, and upon these and the incomparable *Secret Doctrine*, by H. P. Blavatsky, I have extensively drawn for what is here written.²

We have often been reminded that but a few of the Adepts accept and train pupils, and among the few are the two whom we speak of as the Master M., or Morya, and the Master K.H., or Koot Hoomi. The former uses a Râjput, the latter a Kâshmiri body. We read that in the

¹ *The Mahâtmâ Letters*, p. 213.

² For further bibliography see list at end.

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course of the years 1880 to 1884, the Master K.H. passed on to higher stages of attainment. He and the Master M. speak of their Superiors with reverence and humility, and of others greater still to Whom all bow in willing obedience. How watchful of the real needs of the world is his Superior, the Chohan (sometimes referred to as the Mahâchohan), and careful of his guardianship of Occultism against misuse, is apparent in the constant reference to his wishes by the Master K.H. The Master M. also said he obeyed instantly the Chohan's slightest injunction. Any profanation of the sacred spiritual science of Theosophy, or Self-Knowledge, by the selfish and unprepared is always prevented or not 'allowed'.

Through the eyes of these Adepts we see the conditions of the world in those days; and the intellectual and spiritual outlook of the West and the East of that time, and we realise how much both have changed since then.

The Master K.H. often mentions chelas and pupils, and of his house being full of them—those preparing for the exercise of their spiritual faculties for spiritual application. We are often reminded that they preserve and obey the rules for such development, rules made ages ago, which have become 'laws'. The brave wise ones of old had only the foundations laid for them. They had to experiment, and learn, and obey. Through such Laws, the Masters 'seek to bring men to sacrifice their personality—a passing flash—for the welfare of the whole humanity, hence for their own immortal Egos, a part of the latter, as humanity is a fraction of the integral whole, that it will, one day, become'.¹ Those Laws take no heed, naturally, of personal desire, but must be faithfully and ceaselessly observed. And more: the candidate for the esoteric science held in trust for mankind by the Great Brotherhood, is expected to live not only a certain kind of life outwardly and inwardly, but is expected also irretrievably to pledge himself to the

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 231.

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service of the world, and to pass through at least one initiation in his present life.¹

The Masters know, for they have been through it, that each candidate—chosen for all sorts of reasons, including kârmic—must have his nature tested for fitness to deal with the risks of the inner worlds, where emotions and minds are open to subtle and intricate influences, and where both feeling and thought may be misled, sowing thereby seeds of future trouble. They said, and we observe the fact among ourselves, that some of the greatest problems were how to teach pupils not to be befooled, for nowadays the aspirant is 'assailed entirely on the psychological side of his nature'.² For Esoteric Truths are guarded, and those who would control Nature's forces must satisfy her sentries, on guard against unauthorised intrusion. To overcome these by the mastery of selfishness and passion is the greatest and most difficult victory. 'If it were not so, adeptship would be but a cheap acquirement.'³

They declared that while Truth is *One* . . . and pure Spirits who see it as it is cannot err, yet portions or different aspects are visible to different agencies and intelligences, each under various conditions. So that individual Brothers in choosing their agents, chelas, or pupils, develop their Egos 'by availing themselves of their physical, moral and intellectual idiosyncrasies'.⁴ As there are many agencies, cosmic and other, which tend to distort views, therefore a cleansing preparation is so necessary, and a careful probation. Tuition given to chelas who would acquire occult knowledge opens in them many unforeseen channels—hence bring about many unexpected results.

The reason why a chela is thus beset is that while 'the mass of human sin and frailty is distributed throughout the life of a man who is content to remain an average mortal, it is gathered in and centred within one period of

¹ *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 218 (Adyar edition).

² *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 365. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 316. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

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the life of a chela—the period of probation. That, which is generally accumulating to find its legitimate issue only in the next rebirth of an ordinary man, is quickened and fanned into existence in the chela—especially in the presumptuous and selfish candidate who rushes in without having calculated his forces. Self-personality, vanity and conceit harboured in the *higher* principles are enormously more dangerous than the same defect inherent only in the lower physical nature of man'.¹ They are rocks against which the cause of chelaship, in its probationary stage, might be dashed to pieces unless the would-be disciple has perfect confidence and trust in those he would seek out to help him safely toward the light of knowledge. But though all this care is given to the pupil, the Masters are careful to say they *advised*, but never ordered.

All these strivings and perplexities, deeds, thoughts, and soul struggles by night and by day are noted, for the pupil himself enters his desires and his spiritual development in the imperishable *Records* kept by the Masters. Such pupils have stepped across the border which divides our world from theirs.

The eager pupil seeks the Master, and because 'Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy, and . . . there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man, thought runs swifter than the electric fluid, and your thought *will find me* if projected by a pure impulse, as mine will find . . . and has often impressed . . . your mind',² wrote the Master K.H. If the impulse is not pure, then the Masters have their own protecting barrier.

The ways of training pupils vary with each Master; none interferes with the method of another. Each pupil is left to his own device, his own counsel, and is given help only when innocent of the causes which lead to trouble.

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 359.

² *Ibid.*, p. 267

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In their pupils they require active minds which can put two and two together with correct results, once they are on the right path. To unlock the storehouse of Occult information the pupil must use the key of intuition.

To reach the Masters, who are in all ways obedient to Law, one's nature must be cleared of the three poisons: anger, greed, and delusion; and of the five obscurities: envy, passion, vacillation, sloth, and unbelief, all or any of which prevent one from seeing the truth. It is clearly not an easy path of approach, there is so much to get rid of which clogs the personality, even for members of The Theosophical Society who have declared their adherence to Brotherhood. That declaration has brought them under the observation of the Masters, and they thereupon seek to draw out each person, that they may know what he is capable of under different kinds of opportunities and stresses.

Once a person becomes a regular or accepted pupil, the imprimatur of which acceptance remains with the Chohan, he is expected to fathom, in course of time, the nature and essence of the universe with which we are surrounded. One wonders at first why the Chohan watched with such care what the Masters did for their pupils. The answer soon comes from the Master K.H.: 'The misuse of knowledge by the pupil always reacts upon the initiator; . . . in sharing the secrets with another, the Adept, by immutable Law, is delaying his own progress to the Eternal Rest.'¹

The pupil, however, is instructed in the sevenfold principles of nature and man, and thus awakens his dormant powers. The culmination of this is the Adept. Here we see why so much emphasis was laid upon studying and understanding the constitution of man, and his relation, through his principles, to the manifold Universe; and how immensely important this is if the student is to become a wise and practical Occultist—that is to pursue with defi-

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 284.

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nite intent the Third Object of The Theosophical Society. Those really determined upon an intellectual mastery of the science of Occultism will study with patience and with care the valuable instructions given by H.P.B. on the subject, and printed in the fifth volume of *The Secret Doctrine*.¹

Up the difficult ladder of attainment the initiate climbs to knowledge *within* and to the utmost limits of this universe. Up 'to the very edge of the cosmic veil we know the facts to be correct—owing to personal experience; for the information gathered as to what takes place beyond—we are indebted to the Planetary Spirits, to our Blessed Lord Buddha.'²

Perhaps we would have understood our early leaders better had we realised that they, taking their cue from the Adepts, cared not at all for anything the world might think of them, and that 'the first requisite in even a simple fakîr, is that he should have trained himself to remain as indifferent to moral pain as to physical suffering'.³

It is only such a habit that makes possible continuous and unremitting service freely rendered. 'I am', said the Master K.H., 'the slave of my duty to the Lodge⁴ and mankind; not only taught, but desirous to 'subordinate every preference for individuals to a love for the human race'.⁵ And only he who grasps thoroughly the idea of a regenerating practical Brotherhood is entitled to the possession of the Masters' secrets. One who does not place the good of mankind above his own good does not attract them, nor 'is he worthy of becoming higher in knowledge than his neighbour'.⁶ Selfishness and exclusiveness wreck so much.

Through the faithful, steady practice of the ancient Law,

¹ Adyar edition; volume three of the previous edition.

² *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 138.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴ The Great White Lodge—The Occult Hierarchy.

⁵ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 225.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

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the initiate becomes the Arhat.¹ His personal fancies and antipathies are weakened; he takes all mankind into his heart and regards them in the mass. With our 'visible' selves, as with Mr. Sinnett and others, they have 'nothing to do'. It is with the evolution of that other, the unveiled Ego, that they are concerned.

'My "Arhat" vows are pronounced', said the Master M. 'I can neither seek revenge, nor help others to obtain it . . . revenge is unholy.' Such is the avowed Arhat position. Defence and vindication of those in the right is another matter. H.P.B., the Initiate, had for certain reasons occasionally to fight her own battles—for, the Master K.H. wrote: 'We have no favourites, break no rules . . .' 'Nothing draws us to any outsider saving his evolving spirituality. He may be a Bacon or an Aristotle in knowledge, and still not even make his current felt a feather's weight by us, if his power is confined to the *Manas*.'² The supreme energy resides in the Buddhi,³ latent when wedded to Âtman⁴ alone, active and irresistible when galvanized by the *essence* of "Manas" and when none of the dross of the latter commingles with that pure essence to weigh it down by its finite nature. *Manas* pure and simple, is of a lower degree, and of the earth earthly: and so your greatest men 'count but as nonentities in the arena where greatness is measured by the standard of spiritual development'.⁵ 'The adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers; and to become one, he must obey the inward impulse of his soul irrespective of the prudential considerations of worldly science or sagacity.'⁶

The Masters hoped that the information given by them to Mr. Sinnett's questions would be taken and pieced together, so that some sound idea of their system could be gained by the non-initiate. They saw, though, that only

¹ Arhat = one who has taken the fourth great Initiation.

² Mind. ³ Intuition. ⁴ Âtman = the Spiritual Self.

⁵ *The Mahâtma Letters*, pp. 341-2. ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

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those who have passed the third Initiation are able to write upon such subjects really comprehensibly. They hoped, however, that *The Secret Doctrine* would explain many things and set to rights more than one perplexed student.

Let us now consider the special interest of the early days of the Society, and the introduction of the idea of Universal Brotherhood to the world at large. Here we have to remind ourselves of the startling effect the remarkable phenomena performed by H.P.B. was having in every country. The hope was cherished by many that if they, too, were trained by the Masters they might exercise similar powers and share in unusual knowledge. Mr. Sinnett was deeply attracted by these powers and desired greatly to communicate directly with the 'Brothers', without H.P.B.'s agency, either by letters or audibly. He wished to be guided by one of them in the management and principally in the instruction in Occultism of The Society. He felt he was by far the best person to do so. But his 'motives' were seen as selfish, because 'the chief object of the T.S. is not so much to gratify individual aspirations as to serve our fellow men'.¹

In the Masters' view 'the highest aspiration for the welfare of humanity becomes tainted with selfishness if, in the mind of the philanthropist there lurks the shadow of desire for self-benefit, or a tendency to do injustice, even when these exist unconsciously to himself'. Then he added sternly: 'Yet, you have ever discussed but to put down the idea of a universal Brotherhood, questioned its usefulness, and advised to remodel the Theosophical Society on the principle of a college for the special study of Occultism. This . . . will never do.'²

And 'the term Universal Brotherhood is no idle phrase'. For, said the Master: 'Humanity in the mass has a para-

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, pp. 7-8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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mount claim upon us. . . . It is the only secure foundation for universal morality. If it be a dream, it is at least a noble one for mankind; and it is the aspiration of the *true Adept*.¹

It is the *love* of Humanity which seems to the Masters of highest importance; and that individual the most unselfish who, free of desire for personal gain or place, helps, as best he may, mankind to move towards compassionate, universal, unselfish Brotherhood. The Master K.H.'s words on this should be cherished and practised by each one of us. He said: 'Until final emancipation reabsorbs the Ego it *must* be conscious of the purest sympathies called out by the esthetic effects of high art, its tenderest cords to respond to the call of the holier and nobler *human* attachments. Of course, the greater the progress towards deliverance the less will this be the case, until, to crown all, human and purely individual personal feelings—blood ties and friendships, patriotism and race predilection—all will give way, to become blended into one universal feeling, the only true and holy, the only unselfish and eternal one—Love, an Immense Love for humanity—as a *Whole*. For it is humanity which is the great Orphan, the only disinherited one upon this earth. . . . And it is the duty of every man who is capable of an unselfish impulse to do something, however little, for its welfare.'²

It was for the sake of this struggling but courageous 'Orphan' that the *Chiefs* want a 'Brotherhood of Humanity, a real Universal Fraternity started; an institution which would make itself known throughout the world and arrest the attention of the highest minds'.³ And further, they said to every western Theosophist, and especially to those who aspired to be their pupils, that in their Brotherhood 'all personalities sink into one idea—absolute right and absolute practical justice for all'.⁴ And 'Absolute Justice' makes no difference between persons or things.

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

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The Masters drew clear distinctions between: *a*, the practice of such Brotherhood, so urgent a world need, so that the whole social organisation might be based upon it with safety; *b*, the high philosophy of Theosophy and the work of The Theosophical Society; *c*, the study of Occultism and the display of Occult Powers.

We have seen from their own words what is the Masters' conception of real Brotherhood, and how it should affect the individual. How they thought it should work out in the Lodges we shall see presently.

Theosophy, the highest philosophy, was to them—after sweeping away the dross left by our forefathers, and making clean places upon which to plant such ideas, 'not physical phenomena, but these universal ideas that we study, as to comprehend the former, we have first to understand the latter. They touch man's true position in the universe, in relation to his previous and future births; his origin and ultimate destiny, the relation of the mortal to the immortal, of the temporary to the eternal; of the finite to the infinite, ideas larger, grander, more comprehensive, recognising the universal reign of Immutable Law, unchanging and unchangeable, in regard to which there is only an *Eternal Now*, while to the uninitiated mortals time is past or future as related to their finite existence on this material speck of dust. That is what we study and what many have solved'.¹

Clearly this conception of one of the great purposes of the Masters in encouraging the formation of The Society was early known to H.P.B., and, no doubt, communicated by her to the other founders, for the objects of The Society were defined already in 1875 as being 'to collect and diffuse a knowledge of the laws which govern the universe'.² In 1878 a Circular was issued which summarised the above exposition of Theosophy as follows: 'The objects of the Society are various . . . to acquire an intimate

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 24.

² *A Short History of The Theosophical Society*, p. 545.

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knowledge of natural law . . . study to develop his [man's] latent powers . . . [to] exemplify the highest morality and religious aspirations . . . to make known among western nations . . . *facts* about oriental religious philosophies . . . [to] disseminate a knowledge of the pure, esoteric system of the archaic period, and finally and chiefly, aid in the institution of a Brotherhood of Humanity . . . of every race.'

In 1879 it was simply stated that 'the Theosophical Society is formed upon the basis of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity'.¹

The Theosophy which The Society was to disseminate 'is no new candidate for the world's attention, but only the restatement of principles which have been recognised from the very infancy of mankind'.² But the Masters saw that the inherited and self-acquired grossness of the western mind, and its strong development along the lines of practical materialism, was (we might say still is) the bar that prevented a conviction of these Theosophical truths from gaining a wider currency among western nations, and caused Theosophical study to be cast aside as useless and fantastic by western philosophers. Through meditation, though, they thought, 'something of the delicate machinery of the Occult Kosmos could be comprehended.'³

These strong words of the Master M. ring clearly along the years to awaken our hearts and minds: 'The sun of Theosophy must shine for all, not for a part.' And he added: 'There is more of this movement than you have yet an inkling of. The T.S. is linked in with similar work that is secretly going on in all parts of the world.'⁴

It will be remembered that in the Rules of 1879 it was stated that 'The whole Society is under the care of the

¹ *A Short History of The Theosophical Society*, p. 546.

² *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 34.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

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General Council of the President of the Theosophical Society, its Founder, who is himself subject to the authority of a supreme Council representing the highest Section of the Society'. This highest, or First Section, is described as being 'composed exclusively of proficients or initiates in Esoteric Science or Philosophy, who take a deep interest in the Society's affairs and instruct the President-Founder how best to regulate them, but whom none but such as they voluntarily communicate with, have the right to know.'¹

That the Masters suggested or accepted such a position is seen in the words of the Master K.H. in 1884, when he spoke of Himself and the Master M. as the 'accepted leaders of the Founders of the Parent Theosophical Society'.² At that time the public had the notion (and to some extent still has) that the Society was under 'the sole management of the Adepts, while the fact is that the entire executive management is in the hands of the Founders and our Teachers give us advice only in rare exceptional cases of the greatest emergency', as wrote Damodar K. Mavalankar under the direct orders of Brother Koot-Hoomi.³

This was written because the public saw that there were errors of management which were from time to time exposed. The conclusion was, therefore, that either the Adepts do not exist at all or, if they do, they have no connection with The Society, and the members were dishonest imposters, or if they had any connection it was only with Adepts of very low degree—otherwise such errors would not occur.⁴ I think we find that even to-day some of this old public opinion about The Society and its members and management still hovers about us, and pounces with quick condemnation upon any of our sins of omission or commission.

A Short History of The Theosophical Society, pp. 546-7.

² *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 408.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 487-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 487.

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Though withdrawn from the public gaze, yet the Masters are not severed from the direction of our world of action 'so long as the Theosophical Society exists, and this with the assent of the Chohan'.¹

Of the value of The Society we get a somewhat startling intimation in the words of the Master K.H., who said in 1884 that the crisis then shaking the still infant Society to its foundation, 'is a question of perdition or salvation to thousands; a question of the progress of the Human Race or its retrogression, of its glory or dishonour, and for the majority of this race—*of being or not being*, of annihilation in fact'.² I think the Master must have had in his mind a vision of the future, of this terrible day that is upon us in the denial of Brotherhood by so many, that they may try to pursue their wicked course undeterred. Probably the conscience of each one of us to-day is pricked by the thought that perhaps we could have done so much more to avert or minimise the worst had we but lived more as Brothers, and paid less attention to personal and national antipathies and objections to one another. We have, too frequently, permitted these to ravage our ranks, to the detriment of the whole precious Brotherhood movement. Among the Rules of 1879 was one saying that among The Society's plans was one to promote a *feeling* of Brotherhood among the nations. The present condition of things was evidently seen and it was hoped that this 'feeling' of Brotherhood might modify events, for H.P.B. wrote: 'It is simply knowledge, and mathematically correct computations, which enable the WISE MEN of the East to foretell, for instance, that England is on the eve of such or another catastrophe; that France is nearing such a point in her cycle; and that Europe in general is threatened with, or rather on the eve of, a cataclysm to which her own cycle of racial Karma has led her.'³

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 378.

² *Ibid.*, p. 365.

³ *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 371.

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But, despite all crises in the Society, by 1883 it was thought that no great harm would come to it. The Master K.H. expressly said: 'The Society will never perish as an institution, although branches and individuals in it may.'¹

In 1879 it was stated in the Rules that among The Society's plans was one 'especially to encourage the study of those laws least understood by modern people and so termed the Occult Sciences'. As we have seen, Mr. Sinnett was consumed by a desire to study and teach these Occult Sciences to western minds. Again and again the Masters tried to show him that Occult Science was but a subsidiary aim of The Society—one of its branches of interest. Anyone pursuing this Science should clearly observe that it has its own methods of research as fixed and arbitrary as the methods of physical science.

It is necessary to remember that the words Occultism and Occult Sciences were used where now we would say Theosophy. The word Theosophy did not come into general use until the publication of *The Key to Theosophy*, by Madame Blavatsky, in 1891. For some time the idea was that The Society stood for Esoteric Buddhism, this being the title under which Mr. Sinnett issued his well-known book in 1883, an explanation of the letters from the Masters, which letters were fairly recently published under the title of *The Mahâtâmâ Letters to A. P. Sinnett*.

Writing to Mr. Hume in 1882, the Master K.H. said: 'The world of force is the world of Occultism and the only one whither the highest initiate goes to probe the secrets of being. Hence no one but such an initiate can know anything of these secrets. Guided by his Guru the chela first discovers this world, then its laws, then their centrifugal evolutions into the world of matter. To become a perfect adept takes him long years, but at last

¹ *The Mahâtâmâ Letters*, p. 245.

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he becomes the master. The hidden things have become patent, and mystery and miracle have fled from his sight for ever. He sees how to guide force in this direction or that—to produce desirable effects. The secret chemical, electric or odic properties of plants, herbs, roots, minerals, animal tissue are familiar to him . . . no change in the etheric vibrations can escape him. He applies his knowledge, and behold a miracle! And he who started with repudiation of the very idea that miracle is possible, is straightway classed as a miracle worker and either worshipped by the fools as a demi-god or repudiated by the still greater fools as a charlatan! And to show you how exact a science is Occultism let me tell you that the means we avail ourselves of are laid down for us in a code as old as humanity to the minutest detail. But every one of us has to begin from the beginning, not from the end. Our laws are as immutable as those of Nature. . . . Learn first our laws and educate your perceptions.’¹

So seriously were the Occult Sciences (Theosophy) regarded in the early days that even the applicant for Fellowship in The Theosophical Society had to sign an obligation whereby he declared that he gave ‘the President individually, and to each and to everyone who is or may be accepted hereafter as a Fellow of the above Society, my most solemn and sacred promise that whatsoever information connected with the legitimate philosophical work or researches of the Society may be communicated to me, as a member of the Society, with the intimation that it must not be revealed, I will faithfully keep secret, allowing no one, under any pretext, or by any threat or promise, to extort the same from me. For the faithful performance of this promise, I do hereby, in the presence of these witnesses, *pledge my word of honour*.’²

This obligation covered a rule concerning the early signs

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 144.

² *A Short History of The Theosophical Society*, p. 548.

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and passwords given to probationers in The Society and especially its experiments in Occult Sciences, which it was forbidden to disclose. H.P.B. had already a group of people whom she instructed under the direction of the Masters, and, as The Society grew in numbers, this group gradually changed. By 1888 those interested in the Third Object, as then stated, formed a distinct and private division of The Society under the direction of a Corresponding Secretary, H.P.B., and with the official sanction of Col. Olcott, the President Founder. A group of such Fellows has been in existence ever since and undertakes much of that preliminary training in thought and practice which leads to the stage of chela-ship. And then as now whatever teachings or instructions are given to this group from or on behalf of the Masters, The Society is not made responsible. *Its* task is Universal Brotherhood. Says an old rule, as this is so, it 'inculcates perfect tolerance towards this or any other activity carried out by Fellows'. Another old rule says: 'No Fellow shall slander [we now call it gossip] any Theosophist'; but as this was not kept, therefore the Master K.H. said: 'The policy of absolute neutrality of the T.S. in occult teachings and phenomena will be rigidly enforced.'¹

Presently, to her great relief, H.P.B. was permitted to cease from producing phenomena. There was no further need for it, and it caused too much misunderstanding, and therefore trouble. But individuals still are trained in similar occult powers and could produce phenomena if they chose. The Masters still cause to be trained those suited for such work. Not that The Society is the only Occult Brotherhood where such training for the few goes on; the Masters said there were three others at least. The methods of this branch of Occultism, though in the main unchangeable, have to conform to altered times and circumstances.

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 366.

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The state of society in England, for instance, is quite different from that in India, where the existence of wise men is taken for granted. That makes 'occult education' easy; in the West, in general, the average mind is not prepared to accept 'wise men', and is deeply sceptical of occult phenomena. So a different policy is required in the presentation of the Occult Sciences to ensure a measure of their acceptance. '*Truth* has no ear-mark and does not suffer from the name under which it is promulgated.'

Mr. Sinnett was told frankly 'that the path of Occult Sciences has to be trodden laboriously and crossed at the danger of life; that every step in it leading to the final goal is surrounded by pit-falls and cruel thorns; that the pilgrim who ventures upon it is made, first, to encounter and *conquer* the thousand and one furies who keep watch over its adamantine gates and entrance—furies called Doubt, Scepticism, Scorn, Ridicule, Envy and finally Temptation—especially the latter; and that he who would see beyond has first to destroy this living wall; that he must be possessed of a heart and soul clad in steel, and of an iron never-failing determination, and yet be meek and gentle, humble and have shut out from his heart every human passion that leads to evil.'

The Masters were interested in the organisation and management of The Society and of its parts, the Lodges, or Branches as they were then called (and are still so called in several countries), and in the individuals who, as officers, had to play their allotted parts. It is of deepest interest to examine the kind of mission, or work, which they thought should characterise Lodges. They were quite clear on this vital matter. 'Let every Branch', said the Master K.H., 'before it is chartered, choose some one object to work for, an object naturally in sympathy with the general principles of the T.S.—yet a distinct and definite object

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, pp. 351-2.

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of its own, whether in the religious, educational, or philosophical line. This would allow a broader margin for its general operations; more real, more useful work would be done'.¹ 'Though the Branch might be composed of those with diverse interests, yet all could unite in knitting together brotherly hands for the furtherance of the common objects of the Society.'²

In 1877 Col. Olcott was already authorising Branches, and in 1884 the Master K.H. wrote: 'We can never approve or tolerate disloyalty in any member of whatsoever Branch to the *fundamental principles represented by the Parent Organisation*. The rules of the mother-body must be lived up to by those composing its Branches; provided, of course, that they do not transcend the three declared objects of the organisation. The experience of the Parent Society proves that the usefulness of a Branch very largely, if not entirely, depends on the loyalty, direction and zeal of its President and Secretary; however much their colleagues may do to assist them, the efficient activity of their group develops proportionally with that of those officers.'³ This 'direction' is still honoured in the fact that each national section of The Society must, in the main, conform its rules to those of the international General Council, and each Lodge in turn likewise conforms its rules to them.

The Masters had said earlier that if Branches were formed at all, they must contribute to the vitality and usefulness of The Society, by promoting its leading idea of a Universal Brotherhood. Branches were to remain as parts of the whole. They saw no point in having separate organizations with the same declared Objects of the Society 'with the same directors behind the scenes'. That would not only deal 'a mortal blow' at The Society, but put upon them a 'double labour and anxiety without the slightest compensating advantage' that they could perceive.

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 318. ² *Ibid.*, p. 402. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

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We turn with interest to those whom the Masters selected for their work in relation to the Society.

First and foremost there was, of course, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the enigma. There was a real inner H.P.B. and an outer H.P.B. A brilliant analysis of these two selves is given in her own letter to Mr. Sinnett. She showed to the world a rugged exterior whom the Masters described variously as 'old lady', 'old woman', and so on. They smiled at the erratic creature who held the pearl, the true H.P.B., the well-hidden person whose actual inner presence in the outer shell was so necessary for the venture they had undertaken, that humanity might be served. The real H.P.B.'s presence made easy the transmission of the Masters' letters and the performance of the phenomena they consented to for a period, and also made more readily possible their appearance from time to time. The Master K.H. pointed out at that time that only two of the Great Brotherhood, himself and the Master M., had at heart the dissemination of the doctrine they held, and at first H.P.B. was their 'sole machinery' in the world.¹

The outer and the inner H.P.B. fought brilliant battles together for the establishment of Brotherhood among men, and for the presentation in new garb of the Ancient Wisdom. For this purpose to the real H.P.B.'s inner sight was unrolled a vista of the past and of the future. The tired Madame Blavatsky drudged unceasingly to give us as much as she could of the vision. H.P.B. was, said the Master M., 'a woman of most exceptional and wonderful endowments. Combined with them she had strong personal defects, but just as she was, there was no second to her living fit for this work. We sent her to America, brought them together²—and the trial began. From the first she and he were given clearly to understand that the issue lay

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, pp. 367-8.

² That is, Colonel Olcott and H.P.B.

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entirely with themselves'.¹ H.P.B. was their devoted, loyal, much attacked agent and disciple throughout a stormy and eventful life. We salute her.

Colonel Henry Steel Olcott was the other of the two entrusted with the delicate and very difficult task of starting the flow of the slow tide of Universal Brotherhood, a flow that still savours somewhat of a Forlorn Hope, requiring for its continuance unstinted, enthusiastic aid.

One or two of the Great Brotherhood, said the Master M., 'hoped that the world had advanced so far intellectually, if not intuitionally, that the occult doctrine might gain an intellectual acceptance, and the impulse given for a new cycle of occult research. . . . Consent was given for the trial. . . .' It was stipulated, however, that the experiment should be made 'independently of our personal management; that there should be no abnormal interference by ourselves. In casting about we found in America the man to stand as leader—a man of great moral courage, unselfish and having other good qualities. He was far from being the best, but . . . he was the best one available.'²

From that time onwards the Masters trusted Colonel Olcott under all circumstances, and his faithful service was pledged to them—come well, come ill. Neither Mr. Sinnett nor Mr. Hume could bear his bluff American ways. Sinnett regarded him as socially and intellectually too unpolished for work in London. Both were reminded of Col. Olcott's real abilities and of his faithfulness under all trials and strain. The Masters were grateful to him for his work was important, and 'by reason of his official position, if for no other, stands with Upâsika [H.P.B.] closest to ourselves in the chain of Theosophical work'.³ And his 'magnetism, after six years of purification, is intensely sympathetic with ours—physically and morally is becoming more and more so'.

No task was too hard for Colonel Olcott to undertake on

¹ *The Mahâtma Letters*, p. 263. ² *Ibid.*, p. 263. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

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behalf of The Society; he never spared himself or shirked any discomfort. He watched over The Society with zealous care until 1906, when he died. The Masters attended him on his deathbed. They came personally to thank him for his long services so ungrudgingly rendered, despite all hardships.

Mr. Alfred Percy Sinnett and Mr. Allan Octavian Hume were two characters who played a very vital part, especially Mr. Sinnett, in the work proposed by the Masters. Both Sinnett and Hume were Englishmen, typical of an era now quite finished with. They were entirely sure that no Asiatic, however exalted, could possibly equal themselves in intellectual attainment and worldly *savoir faire*. They knew themselves welcome in clubs and drawing-rooms where at that time no Asiatic would be admitted. Yet both had ties with the Masters. Both were helped to the limit of their karma. One sees that because of service given in a long past, the Masters could give them no nobler reward than opportunities to serve their fellow-men by the dissemination of the Ancient Wisdom, now given more openly than ever before. Neither could be won over to giving up personal habits in order to bring them into the Masters' presence; yet they demanded that the Masters should change their habits to suit their own worldly prejudices and conventions. Both thought they were bestowing high honour on the Masters by inviting them into their own homes.

Sinnett was a brilliant journalist, and had a unique and influential position as editor of the powerful newspaper, *The Pioneer*, published at Allahabad. He imperilled and finally lost that position through his friendship with H.P.B., and his advocacy of reforms the Government was not yet prepared to consider. Sinnett had already written his pioneering exposition of Theosophy, or Occultism, or the Ancient Wisdom, or, as he called his book, *Esoteric Buddhism*. It went far and wide and drew attention to the

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teachings which the Masters had given him in their many letters.

Hume's critical and suspicious mind stood in his occult way. He was a high Government official, and he is remembered in India as the 'Father' of the National Congress, because he piloted this political movement (started mainly by Theosophists to help India study and practise parliamentary procedure and approach to problems) through its infancy to a steady growth.

And we should remember the work in America of William Quorn Judge. He built up a powerful movement in the United States and led it until 1896, when he broke from his allegiance to lead a large seceding party. But whatever the ins and outs of this matter much will be forgotten of any faults, as with others, and only his devotion to Theosophy and his love for H.P.B., who cherished him, will be remembered.

Other exceptional figures pass before us as we study the stages of growth of our history. Splendid notable men and women they were and are, each in turn claiming to take orders and suggestions for special work, or training from the Masters, and being derided for such claims. Dr. Besant, asked to help the India she loved, disappointed many western friends by doing so, for they thought she should continue to reside in and help the 'more important' West. No concern in which she was vitally engaged but was at the instance of a Master, mainly her own. We know how rapidly The Society expanded under her direction, and how deep and strong was her influence upon men and affairs, especially in India.

Bishop C. W. Leadbeater, trained by the Masters and some of their pupils for special psychic work, faithfully performed the arduous and delicate tasks allotted to him. In carrying them out he was utterly impervious to all blame or criticism of the line he pursued. He was answerable to the Masters, not to the public. Wise student

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and accurate observer, his knowledge and occult powers were greater than we shall ever know.

Our President, Dr. George Sydney Arundale, early in life associated with the leading figures in The Society, later dedicated his life to it. He, too, writes of the Teachers who guide him to the investigation of those inner natural forces of which the Masters spoke. The President declares that he also, in the moves he makes to promote the welfare of The Society, is inspired by Those to whom it is still a cherished institution.

C. Jinarâjadâsa has told us in his little books of how he has been enabled to see his future work in the ages to come. Then, having won the final spiritual victory over all littleness and self, he will lead the people of those days to the Light. Already his gentle charm and influence encircle the world.

Shrimati Rukmini Devi, wife of the President, declares her worship of the mysterious World Mother, lover of the women of the world, consolatrix of all in the woes that beset them. Rukmini Devi chooses as her main expression among the arts, for her genius and devotion, the unusual line of the dance. She translates through that medium her perception of the rhythms of the inner worlds, where right movement is the symbol of power. She links this with the revival of India's beautiful arts and crafts, which have fallen into sad degradation.

And others, too, follow the Masters in their hearts, and thus make their own spiritual imperishable records; and will come again to work with them as competent, trusted agents for the helping of others. For 'the Theosophist's duty is like that of the husbandman's; to turn his furrows and sow his grains as best he can: the issue is with nature, and she, the slave of law'.

So the golden story runs, without break and in ever-widening circles. Into the ranks come the many, to be

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encouraged in their spiritual efforts. Ever the Wise Ones watch for helpers, great and small, and fit each one into his appointed place. We have been told many times of their joy when a pilgrim enters the stream of well-doing. They assist him to reach the 'farther shore' of spiritual liberation. For him the gift of responsibility is ready. Nature rejoices in him as another co-worker in her tireless progress towards the goal of perfection.

What a joyous adventure The Theosophical Society is in such company—and under such direction!

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