

From an Elder Brother

In December 1925 about three thousand Theosophists from around the world gathered at the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India, to celebrate the fifty-year anniversary of the organization. The convention was conducted in an atmosphere of great expectations and received some attention from the international press. After a couple of days of lectures and speeches by leading Theosophists a message from a Mahatma or Master of Wisdom was read. It was later printed as a supplement to *The Theosophist* of January 1926.

The title and full text are reproduced below; the footnotes are added comments

A Message to the Members of the Theosophical Society

From an Elder Brother (1)

BRETHREN:

Is it now, after all you have heard from the lips of your great President (2) during these last few weeks, too much for Us to say, and for you to realise, that the work of the Theosophical Society, on the threshold of its first half-century, is entering upon a period of service to the world far greater and far nobler than even the already wonderful record that stands to its credit?

During the first half-century of its existence our Society, first bearing testimony in a sceptical world to the great realities of the inner life and to the fundamental truths of evolution, making these its essential foundation, went on to its mission of re-sounding throughout the world the note of Brotherhood, of that Brotherhood which every Great Teacher and noble soul has proclaimed and practised, but which the world has still to learn to live.

And if the world has emerged safe from its recent crisis (3), if the erstwhile warring Nations are coming together again in some measure of growing accord (4), if the world is safe from the danger of a period of darkness and may look forward to the near coming of Him (5) who is the greatest living Theosophist--even though He be not a member of the Theosophical Society--it is because, thanks, in no small measure, to the heroism and example of our four great messengers of Brotherhood to the outer world, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Henry Steele Olcott, Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater (6), men and women of every creed, of every Nation, of all shades of opinion, are both earnestly living Brotherhood themselves and are stimulating its life in others.

To the Theosophical Society largely belongs the credit of being the bulwark against the forces of reaction, of narrowness, of separative pride. Relative to the population of the world you may be few in numbers, but spiritual strength and power depend not on numbers. Rather do they depend upon burning sincerity. Eager faith in the

truth can move mountains of ignorance and prejudice. You have believed. You have lived.

And though you have lived for the most part in what the outer world--the world of convention and orthodoxy and self-satisfaction--will call obscurity, (most of you do not belong to "society," a word which its votaries spell with so large an "S"), in Our world you are known and honoured as messengers of light and Joy. It *is* not you who live in obscurity, but rather those who think themselves the salt of the earth. Your light is shining in their darkness, and thus is the darkness giving way to dawn.

At this moment of the dawning, therefore, when you have good cause to rejoice at the signs of a bounteous harvest, look back upon the figures of the Founders and their faithful comrades, and offer *them* your reverent homage; for it is they who bore the brunt of the ridicule, the opposition, the hatred, the persecution, which all Truth encounters, as from time to time it emerges from its compassionate veiling to stand forth amidst an ignorance which so often would destroy all that it cannot understand. They know Our gratitude. Show now your own by nobly carrying on the work they so gloriously began.

We lend to you again for further inspiration and wise leadership your valiant President [Annie Besant], Our consecrated representative in the outer world, Our chorused, dearly loved brother. For many years she will remain among you and she will guide you--if you will--along the pathway We have chosen for Our society. You too love her dearly, and not many centuries ago you might have followed her to death.(7) To-day you can follow her, not to death, but to the larger life. Follow her, brothers. You can have no better guide than she, who for lives has lived but to serve her fellow-men, who has suffered heroic martyrdom, who has endured all the agony the world can sometimes in its frenzies inflict upon those who love it even against its will. Be loyal to her, for so are you loyal to those great ideals which she so magnificently embodies.

A second half-century of fine promise lies before you. We say to you: You have the power to do more in the immediate future than any other body of men and women has ever achieved before. We say to you: Within this next half-century you can make Brotherhood a living reality in the world. You can cause the warring classes, castes, and nations to cease their quarreling, the warring faiths to live once more in brotherhood, respect and understanding. Make Theosophy a living force in your lives, and through your example those class and caste distinctions, which for so long have bred hatred and misery, shall at no distant time come to be but distinctions of function in the common service of the nation-family and of the World-Brotherhood.(8)

Great alchemists shall you be, if you will, transmuting ignorance into wisdom, hatred into active love, suspicion into trust, separative pride into loyal comradeship. Great gardeners shall you be, if you will, making of the world a garden of fragrant flowers, freeing the soil from noxious weeds. Great elder brothers shall you be, if you will, protecting all younger than yourselves, blessing them with your tender, wise and strong compassion, giving ever more as those to whom your compassion is due are more and more behind you on the pathway of Life. Be very tender to little children, yet more tender still to all who err--knowing little of the wisdom; and tenderer still to animals, that they may pass to their next pathway through the door of love rather than through that of

hatred. Cherish, too, the flowers and the trees. You be all of one blood, one source, one goal. *Know this truth and live it.*

Support all work and movements in the outer world which stand for brotherhood. Consider less what they achieve, and more the ideals which they embody. Do not over-value results achieved. Recognise generously all heartfelt effort, be the result what it may, whether or not it harmonises with your personal opinions and theories of life. Appreciate deeply all honest endeavour, be the apparent effect insignificant or outstanding. In our Lord's good time even the tiniest buds of brotherly striving shall blossom into marvelous flowers, shedding splendid fragrance. Concern yourselves with the motive and with the earnestness. These are the seeds for your cherishing. Our Lord will see to the harvesting. Trust in the Law.

Cease to judge a movement, a cause, an opinion, by the extent to which it appeals to you, satisfies you, or perhaps antagonises you. Examine rather the measure of its power to be of service to others in need. Actively commend all sincerity and earnestness, be the forms these take, according to your own personal appraisal, ugly or beautiful, congenial or jarring. Cease to be the slaves of likes and dislikes. Ardently seek Truth and Light, and learn to follow them at all costs as you find them. Inspire others to do likewise, remembering ever that the One Truth and the universal light veil themselves in many different forms--to your eyes often antagonistic--to meet the needs of diverse temperaments and stages of evolution. Take care not to seek to impose your standards of life, your convictions, upon others. Help them to gain their own standards, to reach their own convictions, be these what they may, provided they stimulate to nobler living. Seek out good causes. Help those you can usefully serve, and send out your sympathy and goodwill to all. Bestir yourselves, brethren of the Light, in the darkness which it is your task and Ours to dispel. You cannot truly be students of the Divine Wisdom, save as you are active in the service of the Divine Life. Where trouble is, where suffering is, where ignorance is, where quarrel is, where injustice is, where tyranny is, where oppression is, where cruelty is--*there* must We find the earnest members of Our society, those who study the truths of Theosophy and practically apply them to lead the world from darkness into Light, from death to Immortality, from the *un*-real to the Real. Blessed indeed are such peace-bringers, and they shall see God.

Within the society itself let the Brotherhood for which it stands be real. We have had enough of divisions which separate. Let there remain only distinctions which enrich. Respect all who differ from you. Let your Brotherhood be without, that is, above, distinctions of opinion, as it is already so finely above distinctions of race, creed, caste, sex and colour. As ever, there is only one test for membership of Our Society--a recognition of the truth of the Brotherhood of all life and an earnest desire to make such recognition effective.

It matters little, at the stage of most of you, *what* are your beliefs, provided Brotherhood is their chief cornerstone; but it matters much *how* you believe. No one need or should leave the Society because he disagrees with other members, be they who they may. Differences of opinion should enrich Our Society's life. But a member might well have reason to leave if his membership is made intolerable by those who disagree with him. We look to the members generally to guard against such a calamity, especially as

your President and other of Our messengers must, ever more often as the years pass, become Our channels to the world of the communications We hope more constantly to make. Those who are wise will heed Our messengers, but let none for an instant despise those who do not hear. Their time to hear may not yet have come; have they less a place in our movement because of this? And even if, with the duty to hear, still they hear not, remember ever that gentleness alone draws men to truth, never violence or contempt.

We hope We may not have to withhold Our communications with you because some, with misguided zeal, would make them, in mischievous foolishness, a test of what they may call "good membership" of Our Society. Let no orthodoxy be set up in Our society. Good members of Our society, members whom We, at any rate, honour, are all who strive to live brotherly lives, be their opinions what they may about Ourselves or about aught else. We do not ask members of the Society as a whole to hold aught in common save the first great object upon which we receive them into this outer court of Our Temple.(9) But holding that object, honour demands that they shall maintain the Brotherhood they profess to accept by ensuring to others that same freedom of opinion which they rightly claim for themselves. We welcome differences of opinion, so be it that they are held and expressed in a brotherly spirit, courteously, generously, gently, however firmly. There is room in Our Society for any number of opinions and beliefs, however divergent, provided that those who hold them treat as brothers those with whom they have to disagree, whose opinions they may feel constrained actively to oppose. Have not our members yet learned the lesson of Kurukshetra, to disagree, and when need be, to fight, lovingly and generously? Let it never be forgotten that all life is one, even though its forms must sometimes seem to clash.

Much more shall we be among you during the coming years, for We ,too, are of that Universal Brotherhood from which sometimes We are sought to be excluded. Brotherhood does not stop short at humanity at either end, whatever some may think, and We hope that, as time passes, a place may be found for Us in your midst. We are content to wait your pleasure, for We can serve the world whether Our existence is recognised or not. Yet it is, perhaps, not too much to hope that the Theosophical Society, *Our Society* as well as yours, may some day recognise Us as facts, and not merely as plausible and logical theories.

Some there are among you who know Us well, and whom we have instructed to testify to their knowledge among you and in the outer world, in the hope that more and more may cast aside the veils which blind them to the recognition of those who love the world so well and whose treasure-house will open to all who bear in their hands the key of Brotherhood. But We impose Ourselves upon none. Those who so desire may seek alone, may tread alone their pathway; though we know that there will come a time when they will have had enough of loneliness. We do not thrust Ourselves where we are not wanted. Yet the world needs Us, and We could give even more abundantly could We but gain a wider welcome.

It is the Law that Our Blessed Lord [Maitreya, the World Teacher] comes among you, be His welcome what it may, though even he may not outstay His welcome. And only at long intervals, so far, has He been able to bestow upon you the priceless benediction of His immediate presence in your midst.(10) *We* have to wait. So be it. Yet,

if His welcome lasts, perchance grows, He may dwell long with you, and the doors thus be flung wide open between Our world and yours, and between other worlds and yours, that they may become one world, Ourselves restored to Our natural place among Our younger comrades, and Devas and mankind be once more together in happy comradeship.(11)

Believe with all your hearts in the triumph of the Good, the Beautiful and the True, and verily they shall prevail. Pursue ardently your ideals and they shall become realities. Put away all that makes for separateness--all harsh criticism, all sense of proud superiority, all unkind judgment, all jealousy, all self-righteousness, all ill-will--so shall you know the peace that passeth understanding and learn to use the power that makes for righteousness. Thus shall you conquer the Kingdom of heaven which gladly suffereth violence, and Our Theosophical Society shall be the nearer to the accomplishment of that mission of Brotherhood to which We dedicated it half a century ago. Step forward bravely to the goal, brothers. Fear not the obstacles, despair not in face of temporary defeat. Have confidence in yourselves, as We have in every one of you, for there is not one single member of the society without a link with Us, or whose help We do not need. Have we not chosen each one of you because we need you? You need each other, and We need you all. Be brave for Truth and Brotherhood, and we shall be with you throughout the ages.(12)

Annotations

1.	<p>Originally published in <i>The Theosophist</i> 47\4 (January 1926), supplement, pp. 1-7. The message was read by George Arundale to members of the Theosophical Society, gathered at Adyar, India, for the Jubilee Convention of the Theosophical Society from December 22 till 27, 1925. According to Gregory Tillett (1982, p. 222) the message came almost certainly via Leadbeater. Which Adept the "Elder Brother" was is not known. The message was read probably on December 26 or 27, one or two days before Star Day, when the first overshadowing of Krishnamurti by the Lord Maitreya took place.</p> <p>The document is important for several reasons. First it is a very eloquent and inspiring statement of the Theosophical principle of brotherhood. For that reason the message is rightfully placed by some Theosophists among other 'Letters from the Adepts' (see for example the back flap of the third edition of <i>The Mahatma Letters</i>). Secondly, it expresses not merely Theosophical expectations regarding the development of the World Teacher project, but it is the view from a Master himself. As such the document carries some weight as a tool to evaluate the outcome of the World Teacher project with Krishnamurti. A close comparison of the Master's expectations with the actual development of the project will contribute to the position that the</p>
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	<p>project was genuine, but unfortunately unsuccessful. The strongest example would be the contrast between on one side the hope of the 'Elder Brother' to have the doors flung wide open between the different kingdoms (Adepts, humans and Devas) as a consequence of the project and, on the other side, the reality that Krishnamurti, probably more than any other Theosophist, closed these doors quite tightly. Its expectations not fulfilled, the reading of the message, to effect its transformative work, should not be clouded by such ponderings.</p>
2.	<p>Annie Besant (1847-1933) was the second President of the Theosophical Society from 1907 till she made her transition in 1933. She followed Col. Henry Steele Olcott (1832-1907), who, as President-founder, served in that position from 1875 till 1907.</p>
3.	<p>Referring to World War I (1914-1918), which was fought between at one side the Allies England, France and Russia and the other side the Central Powers Germany and Austria-Hungary. About 10 million soldiers and 13 million civilians died in this unprecedented carnage. From the point of view of its participants and victims referring to it as a 'crisis' is somewhat of an understatement. From a Mahatmic point of view, taking the laws of karma, reincarnation and spiritual evolution into consideration, the war might have been seen as a crisis, because the conflict was probably a severe disruption by the forces of darkness of the Master's plan for humanity.</p>
4.	<p>This was happening to a considerable extent during the autumn of 1925 when the heads of state of France, England, Germany, Belgium and Italy met in Locarno, Switzerland, to discuss their post-war differences in an amicable and cooperative spirit. This resulted in the Pact of Locarno, a series of international treaties, which was "significant because it marked a break from the atmosphere of world War I, and former enemies committed themselves to a peaceful policy among themselves." (<i>Encycl. Britt.</i>, 14 th ed., s.v. "Locarno, Pact of.")</p>
5.	<p>Referring to the World Teacher Lord Maitreya, who on the 28th of December, one or two days after this message was read, overshadowed Krishnamurti for the first time.</p>
6.	<p>It is quite remarkable that representatives of the Brotherhood often work in married or unmarried pairs. So we have: Blavatsky and Olcott; Besant and Leadbeater; Edna and Guy Ballard; Helena and Nicholas Roerich; and Mark and Elizabeth Prophet.</p>
7.	<p>In a former life Annie Besant was the renaissance philosopher and Hermeticist Giordano Bruno, who was burned at the stake by the Inquisition in Rome on February 17, 1600, for his heretic views.</p>

8.	Obviously this fine vision for the future has not yet become reality. On the contrary. After the dissolution of the Order of the Star in the East by its head, Krishnamurti, the world went into a cycle of war and violence, which this earth had not seen before. Since then the problems of race, caste, class and gender have not been solved, even not in the most advanced countries of the west, where certain advances have been made though.
9.	<p>The objects of the Theosophical Society are the following:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity.</p>
10.	According to C.W. Leadbeater and Geoffrey Hodson Lord Maitreya indeed was present at certain moments during and after addresses given by his medium in those days, Krishnamurti. According to Hodson the overshadowings were only short and of an experimental character.
11.	Unfortunately Krishnamurti failed some of his tests and disqualified himself to be used as Lord Maitreya's vehicle. Instead of retreating into private life, he went on speaking to the world, claiming to be a realized being and denouncing the Masters of Wisdom and the Theosophical worldview.
12.	Though the Masters apparently still back the Theosophical Society, They also have initiated other organizations as channels for their wisdom and compassion. Chief amongst them are the Agni Yoga Society, the "I AM" movement and The Summit Lighthouse.