

# **H. P. Blavatsky's Letter to the 1888 American Convention**



Second Annual Convention — April 22-23  
American Section of the Theosophical Society  
Sherman House, Chicago, Illinois

A letter from H. P. Blavatsky, dated April 3, 1888.  
Read by William Q. Judge, afternoon session, April 22, 1888.

TO WILLIAM Q. JUDGE,

*General Secretary of the American Section of the Theosophical Society.*

MY DEAREST BROTHER AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY;

In addressing to you this letter, which I request you to read to the Convention summoned for April 22d, I must first present my hearty congratulations and most cordial good wishes to the assembled Delegates and good Fellows of our Society, and to yourself — the heart and soul of that Body in America. We were several, to call it to life in 1875. Since then you have remained alone to preserve that life through good and evil report. It is to you chiefly, if not entirely, that the Theosophical Society owes its existence in 1888. Let me then thank you for it, for the first, and perhaps for the last, time publicly, and from the bottom of my heart, which beats only for the cause you represent so well and serve so faithfully. I ask you also to remember that, on this important occasion, my voice is but the feeble echo of other more sacred voices, and the transmitter of the approval of Those whose presence is alive in more than one true Theosophical heart, and lives, as I know, preeminently in yours. May the assembled Society feel the warm greeting as earnestly as it is given, and may every Fellow present, who realizes that he has deserved it, profit by the Blessings sent.

Theosophy has lately taken a new start in America which marks the commencement of a new Cycle in the affairs of the Society in the West. And the policy you are now following is admirably adapted to give scope for the widest expansion of the movement, and to establish on a firm basis an organization which, while promoting feelings of fraternal sympathy, social unity, and solidarity, will leave ample room for individual freedom and exertion in the common cause — that of helping mankind.

The multiplication of local centers should be a foremost consideration in your minds, and each man should strive to be a center of work in himself. When his inner development has reached a certain point, he will naturally draw those with whom he is in contact under the same influence; a nucleus will be formed, round which other people will gather, forming a center from which information and spiritual influence radiate, and towards which higher influences are directed.

But let no man set up a popery instead of Theosophy, as this would be suicidal and has ever ended most fatally. We are all fellow students, more or less advanced; but no one belonging to the Theosophical Society ought to count himself as more than, at best, a pupil-teacher — one who has no right to dogmatize.

Since the Society was founded, a distinct change has come over the spirit of the age. Those who gave us commission to found the Society foresaw this, now rapidly growing, wave of transcendental influence following that other wave of mere

phenomenalism. Even the journals of Spiritualism are gradually eliminating the phenomena and wonders, to replace them with philosophy. The Theosophical Society led the van of this movement; but, although Theosophical ideas have entered into every development or form which awakening spirituality has assumed, yet Theosophy pure and simple has still a severe battle to fight for recognition. The days of old are gone to return no more, and many are the Theosophists who, taught by bitter experience, have pledged themselves to make of the Society a “miracle club” no longer. The fainthearted have asked in all ages for signs and wonders, and when these failed to be granted, they refused to believe. Such are not those who will ever comprehend Theosophy pure and simple. But there are others among us who realize intuitively that the recognition of pure Theosophy — the philosophy of the rational explanation of things and not the tenets — is of the most vital importance in the Society, inasmuch as it alone can furnish the beacon-light needed to guide humanity on its true path.

This should never be forgotten, nor should the following fact be overlooked. On the day when Theosophy will have accomplished its most holy and most important mission — namely, to unite firmly a body of men of all nations in brotherly love and bent on a pure altruistic work, not on a labor with selfish motives — on that day only will Theosophy become higher than any nominal brotherhood of man. This will be a wonder and a miracle truly, for the realization of which Humanity is vainly waiting for the last 18 centuries, and which every association has hitherto failed to accomplish.

Orthodoxy in Theosophy is a thing neither possible nor desirable. It is diversity of opinion, within certain limits, that keeps the Theosophical Society a living and a healthy body, its many other ugly features notwithstanding. Were it not, also, for the existence of a large amount of uncertainty in the minds of students of Theosophy, such healthy divergencies would be impossible, and the Society would degenerate into a sect, in which a narrow and stereotyped creed would take the place of the living and breathing spirit of Truth and an ever growing Knowledge.

According as people are prepared to receive it, so will new Theosophical teaching be given. But no more will be given than the world, on its present level of spirituality, can profit by. It depends on the spread of Theosophy — the assimilation of what has been already given — how much more will be revealed, and how soon.

It must be remembered that the Society was not founded as a nursery for forcing a supply of Occultists — as a factory for the manufactory of Adepts. It was intended to stem the current of materialism, and also that of spiritualistic phenomenalism and the worship of the Dead. It had to guide the spiritual awakening that has now begun, and not to pander to psychic cravings which are but another form of materialism. For by “materialism” is meant not only an anti-philosophical negation of pure spirit, and, even more, materialism in conduct and action — brutality, hypocrisy, and, above all,

selfishness — but also the fruits of a disbelief in all but material things, a disbelief which has increased enormously during the last century, and which has led many, after a denial of all existence other than that in matter, into a blind belief in the *materialization of Spirit*.

The tendency of modern civilization is a reaction towards animalism, towards a development of those qualities which conduce to the success in life of man as an animal in the struggle for animal existence. Theosophy seeks to develop the human nature in man in addition to the animal, and at the sacrifice of the superfluous animality which modern life and materialistic teachings have developed to a degree which is abnormal for the human being at this stage of his progress.

Men cannot all be Occultists, but they can all be Theosophists. Many who have never heard of the Society are Theosophists without knowing it themselves; for the essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man, the adjustment of his god-like qualities and aspirations, and their sway over the terrestrial or animal passions in him. Kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, goodwill to all beings, and perfect justice to others as to oneself, are its chief features. He who teaches Theosophy preaches the gospel of goodwill; and the converse of this is true also — he who preaches the gospel of goodwill, teaches Theosophy.

This aspect of Theosophy has never failed to receive due and full recognition in the pages of the “PATH,” a journal of which the American Section has good reason to be proud. It is a teacher and a power; and the fact that such a periodical should be produced and supported “in the United States speaks in eloquent praise both of its Editor and its readers.

America is also to be congratulated on the increase in the number of the Branches or Lodges which is now taking place. It is a sign that in things spiritual as well as things temporal the great American Republic is well fitted for independence and self-organization. The Founders of the Society wish every Section, as soon as it becomes strong enough to govern itself, to be as independent as is compatible with its allegiance to the Society as a whole and to the Great Ideal Brotherhood, the lowest formal grade of which is represented by the Theosophical Society.

Here in England Theosophy is waking into new life. The slanders and absurd inventions of the Society for Psychological Research have almost paralyzed it, though only for a very short time, and the example of America has stirred the English Theosophists into renewed activity. “LUCIFER” sounded the reveille, and the first fruit has been the founding of the “Theosophical Publication Society.” This Society is of great importance. It has undertaken the very necessary work of breaking down the barrier of prejudice and ignorance which has formed so great an impediment to the spread of Theosophy.

It will act as a recruiting agency for the Society by the wide distribution of elementary literature on the subject, among those who are in any way prepared to give ear to it. The correspondence already received shows that it is creating an interest in the subject, and proves that in every large town in England there exist quite enough isolated Theosophists to form groups or Lodges under charter from the Society. But, at present, these students do not even know of each other's existence, and many of them have never heard of the Theosophical Society until now. I am thoroughly satisfied of the great utility of this new Society, composed as it is to a large extent of members of the Theosophical Society, and being under the control of prominent Theosophists, such as you, my dear Brother W. Q. Judge, Mabel Collins, and the Countess Wachtmeister.

I am confident that, when the real nature of Theosophy is understood, the prejudice against it, now so unfortunately prevalent, will die out. Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the condition of mankind. We are the friends of all those who fight against drunkenness, against cruelty to animals, against injustice to women, against corruption in society or in government, although we do not meddle in politics. We are the friends of those who exercise practical charity, who seek to lift a little of the tremendous weight of misery that is crushing down the poor. But, in our quality of Theosophists, we cannot engage in any one of these great works in particular. As individuals we may do so, but as Theosophists we have a larger, more important, and much more difficult work to do. People say that Theosophists should show what is in them, that "the tree is known by its fruit." Let them build dwellings for the poor, it is said, let them open "soup kitchens," etc., etc., and the world will believe that there is something in Theosophy. These good people forget that Theosophists, as such, are poor, and that the Founders themselves are poorer than any, and that one of them, at any rate, the humble writer of these lines, has no property of her own, and has to work hard for her daily bread whenever she finds time from her Theosophical duties. The function of Theosophists is to open men's hearts and understandings to charity, justice, and generosity, attributes which belong specifically to the human kingdom and are natural to man when he has developed the qualities of a human being. Theosophy teaches the animal-man to be a human-man; and when people have learnt to think and feel as truly human beings should feel and think, they will act humanely, and works of charity, justice, and generosity will be done spontaneously by all.

Now with regard to the "SECRET DOCTRINE," the publication of which some of you urged so kindly upon me, and in such cordial terms, a while ago. I am very grateful for the hearty support promised and for the manner in which it was expressed. The MSS. of the first three volumes is now ready for the press; and its publication is only delayed

by the difficulty which is experienced in finding the necessary funds. Though I have not written it with an eye to money, yet, having left Adyar, I must live and pay my way in the world so long as I remain in it. Moreover, the Theosophical Society urgently needs money for many purposes, and I feel that I should not be justified in dealing with the "SECRET DOCTRINE" as I dealt with "ISIS UNVEILED." From my former work I have received personally in all only a few hundred dollars, although nine editions have been issued. Under these circumstances I am endeavoring to find means of securing the publication of the "SECRET DOCTRINE" on better terms this time, and here I am offered next to nothing. So, my dearest Brothers and Co-workers in the trans-Atlantic lands, you must forgive me the delay, & not blame me for it but the unfortunate conditions I am surrounded with.

I should like to revisit America, and shall perhaps do so one day, should my health permit. I have received pressing invitations to take up my abode in your great country which I love so much for its noble freedom. Colonel Olcott, too, urges upon me very strongly to return to India, where he is fighting almost single-handed the great and hard fight in the cause of Truth; but I feel that, for the present, my duty lies in England and with the Western Theosophists, where for the moment the hardest fight against prejudice and ignorance has to be fought. But whether I be in England or in India, a large part of my heart and much of my hope for Theosophy lie with you in the United States, where the Theosophical Society was founded, and of which country I myself am proud of being a citizen. But you must remember that, although there must be local Branches of the Theosophical Society, there can be no local Theosophists; and just as you all belong to the Society, *so do I belong to you all.*

I shall leave my dear Friend and Colleague, Colonel Olcott, to tell you all about the condition of affairs in India, where everything looks favorable, as I am informed, for I have no doubt that he also will have sent his good wishes and congratulations to your Convention.

Meanwhile, my faraway and dear Brother, accept the warmest and sincerest wishes for the welfare of your Societies and of yourself personally; and while conveying to all your Colleagues the expression of my fraternal regards, assure them that, at the moment when you will be reading to them the present lines, I shall — if alive — be in Spirit, Soul and Thought amidst you all.

Yours ever, in the truth of the GREAT CAUSE  
we are all working for —

H. P. BLAVATSKY

*London. April 3. 1888. 17 Lansdowne Road.*