



Towards Tomorrow and Beyond

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(Unrevised notes of Convention Address 1974, Sorrento, Victoria)

Today I would like to put forward the idea that the Theosophical Society was founded not only for the earlier days but for this century about which H.P.B. made a number of prognostications. It seems to have been intended that we should be part of that opening door to a consciousness based on the Oneness-principle which was relatively unheard of in the Victorian era in which the Society was founded. Brotherhood was to be the manifested expression of that Oneness, a stepping-stone to something else. At present we are undergoing a change from the past to the future and our task seems to be to maintain a kind of steadiness during this turbulent transition which is taking place in all fields of human experience and which is marked by a state of confusion amounting to panic where people waste a great deal of energy clutching straws and attaching themselves to all sorts of unlikely possibilities. When I speak of *steadiness* I am thinking of the person who comes through this problematical period maintaining a certain reliance or steadiness on what in theosophical parlance we might call basic principles.

When I talk about a condition which is akin to panic I mean that people are thinking far more in terms of the problems that lie ahead of them than of a happy and settled future. Consequently we see people all over the world, and even on the fringes of the Theosophical Society, grasping at all kinds of straws which seem for the moment to promise something new, something exciting, something hopeful, some quick solution to every problem. All the 'cocktails' of life

are very much to the fore. A cocktail gives a quick thrill, an instant feeling of pleasure so that the world looks a little better, but the feeling does not last. All kinds of organizations like this are springing up around us, offering quick solutions to everything, quick approaches to Nirvana. But is there any shortcut which avoids doing any work? I don't think so nor do I think you do.

Life is a River

In all this confusion and seeking after the false gods of power, of status, of money, of fame, surely it is our task to maintain the steadiness of which I was speaking. By steadiness, of course, I do not mean conservatism which suggests unwillingness to change. Rather am I thinking of a deep flowing river which moves steadily from its early beginnings up in the mountains to the ocean. But we tend to cut off the flow of this river, which is life, into locks. We like our own particular little lock, we feel comfortable in it and do not want the gates to be opened. We are afraid of what new things will come if we plunge into the river. Many of us are like this and it affects our theosophical work. But the river does not stand still; it does move and it moves with a certain direction, a certain sense of where it should be going.

Those who are in the avant garde of the New Today have to realize that Theosophy is for all and not just for an elect few. Clearly everyone is not going to want it or to respond to it, but equally clearly we have to make it available whether they want it or not and everything has to be done (including all kinds of new things which are not

in our lock but out in the wide river), which we have not done before.

Open-Mindedness

Yesterday we had an excellent meeting during which the Presidents of the various lodges put forward some very fine suggestions for the future work of their lodge. I feel that the value of such a meeting is that we *do* put some of these things into practice, not just listen and say 'weren't they interesting' and 'weren't they nice' or 'how nice for them doing it over in Perth but we can't do it in Adelaide'; 'how nice to do it in Melbourne but we can't do it in Sydney'. Don't let us live in our own little lock; let us try to be very open-minded. What do we mean by open-minded? We talk about it often enough, in the Golden Stairs for example. Do we not mean a mind which is open to everything and everybody, even to fools? We must all have been put in the position at some time of having in our lodge someone who is considered a nuisance because he gets up and talks at length at the close of every meeting. He does it so often that no one listens to him, and yet if we ever stop and really listen we might be astonished to find that what he says is sensible and relevant. I know this has happened to me and I have said to myself 'well this is a sort of lesson; I never really listened'. Often we put people into categories, even before we have met them, thinking they won't be any good to us or won't have anything useful to say.

Another thing about an open mind is that it is really in contact with what is happening—with the moment as it were. At least that is how it seems to me. For instance after this meeting, or after any theosophical meeting, A may say to B, 'what was the meeting like?' and B may reply, 'well, all right you know, nothing new.' Now the question is does B have an open mind in saying that? I think not. If you are in contact with the moment you could theoretically hear the same lecture 20 times. As the stars move in their course and nothing ever stands still so, if you live in the moment, it will always be different. So basically the person who says, 'well nothing new, we have heard it all before', is not open-minded.

Learning to Let Go

Is not life rather like a piece of elastic? Each of us comes into life with all sorts of possibilities dependent on the past, the seeds as it were that are in us and are going to grow. There is some difference in growth between one oak tree and another or one rose and another—one may be a little taller than another and so on—but within limits, oak trees grow more or less the same height and so do various other species. In the same way we grow a certain amount but there is a point beyond which we will not grow be-

cause the elastic will stretch so far and no farther. However I doubt that most of us ever stretch our elastic the full distance. Now if you have got your elastic and you really have grown to full-stretch in this life (what happens in the next life is another matter) then if you want to get further you have got to let go one end. And this is one of the reasons why we are always getting these injunctions about letting go of the things of the past, the things of the lesser, in order to be able to receive something which is beyond. I feel we should really take this kind of idea seriously because most of us are still trying to have the best of two worlds; we are longing to have all kinds of messages for the future, so to speak, but we jolly well hang onto the past. I think we have got to give up all sorts of notions and ideas and habits and traditions, even theosophical notions, in order to get to something broader. We have got to make some kind of sacrifice, some kind of renunciation, if we are really going to get anywhere at all. Basically, of course, the whole purpose of getting anywhere is to be more useful and this is really the only thing that makes it valuable. We have the tremendous renunciation of the Lord Buddha, the Tathagata (after which one of the new lodges here has been named), the supreme renunciation of Nirvana until all men can enter in. What kind of renunciation can I make? What kind of renunciation can you make? Whatever it may be, I feel some sort of renunciation is demanded of everyone of us which means the giving up of many things we have considered necessary, that we have thought normal, that other people feel are usual in life and so on. It may not be possible to make the sort of renunciation Dr. Besant did:—'I see that teachers and helpers are wanted in the visible and invisible worlds to instruct and aid humanity and I offer myself to be evolved into such a teacher and helper at any cost of present or future suffering in the swift breaking up of my lower nature, by any means which the Masters in their wisdom deem to be the surest and swiftest, no matter how repugnant those means may be to my undeveloped understanding. Along any roads, however stony and precipitous which they may judge best for reaching the object in view.' Can you or I say that? And I believe she said it, being the person she was, with absolute sincerity. At any cost of present or future suffering—are we strong enough to invoke that? Do we want a swift breaking up of our lower natures by any means or are we frightened of it? Each can only answer to himself. 'I give myself without reserve seeking nothing, asking nothing, hoping nothing for the separated self. Content to be in the light or the dark, to be active or passive, to work or to wait, to speak or to be silent, to feel sorrow or joy. My only wish to be what they need as an instrument for their mighty work.'

Our Raison D'être

It seems basically in our theosophical background that we have to take it all very seriously which does not mean with a long face. We can laugh as much as anyone else. We may not know precisely for what reason we have been brought together into this Society, but we hope that we may be able to do what we came to do in this particular time of transition and that we may have the ability to respond to certain ideas. H.P.B. says 'In your hands, brothers, is placed in trust the welfare of the coming century.' We are now in what was to her the coming century and we may therefore accept may we not, that in our hands, brothers, is placed in trust the welfare of this century. It is coming to a close. So this is our *raison d'être*, our reason for existence. Not simply that we should benefit ourselves, not merely that we should go home with some new little occult tittle-tattle to tell someone else, but that we should be involved like soldiers in an army so to speak. There has to be a certain discipline, there has to be a certain understanding of what it is all about. What is the Society here for? It is for humanity, the great orphan the Masters speak about. You will recall that they stated they had not broken the silence of the ages for unimportant things, but to endeavour to bring about a brotherhood of humanity. The Society was started with very strict aims in view. 'The Chiefs wanted a genuine universal fraternity started, an institution which would make itself known throughout the world and arrest the attention of the highest minds.' Have we done this? Are we known throughout the world? We are not. If you ask the average person in the street in any big city of the world, you will find they have never heard of Theosophy. Can we be said to be doing our job of making it available to everybody, if nobody knows what it is? Our lodges are not there just so we may have some fun once a week. If life is flowing in a lodge it may be a sanctuary where members recharge their lights, but its prime purpose is that of a lighthouse. We have, therefore, to make sure our lodges are in good order and that the light is flowing freely. I would not like to think they are like the plough in the story. The owner went down to do some work one morning and found that there was a screw loose in the plough so he went back to his house and fetched his bag of tools and tinkered with the plough all morning getting it in working order. When he looked at his watch; it was time for lunch. After he returned from his meal he thought the plough was not looking too good and a spot of paint might improve it so he fetched his paint pot and painted away, making the plough look most beautiful. Again he looked at his watch; the sun was setting by now and he had the most wonderful plough in the world although he had not done any ploughing with it. Well you can have the

most beautiful lodge in the world, but are you doing something with it? The whole purpose of having a lodge is to work through it so that it is in touch with what is going on around it and so that it can arrest the attention of the highest minds. I rather doubt that we are doing this. 'Rather perish the Theosophical Society with both its hapless founders than we should permit it to become no better than an academy of magic, a hall of occultism. Theosophy must not merely be a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical ethics epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy must be made practical and has therefore to be disencumbered from useless discussion', said one of the Masters. Speaking about how they found and brought H.P.B. and Colonel Olcott together, they said, 'We sent her to America, brought them together and the trial began. From the first both she and he were given clearly to understand that the issue lay entirely with themselves.'

The Purpose of a Lodge

Is it not true that the issue lies entirely with us? We have to work together but we also have to initiate action. What is the lodge to be then? It may be intended as an instrument, but it must be an instrument which is used. It has to be something through which and with which the work is one. Is not that what we have to be both individually and as lodges? Is not that what a nucleus is? A nucleus has got to nucleate, if there is such a word; it has both to attract and transmit. By all means let us have attractive premises, but do not let us stop there. It would be nice if people going into lodge rooms all over the world could say 'Oh what a beautiful room; these must be enlightened people' but I recall the story of a man who joined a lodge as a result of reading theosophical books. He visited the lodge which had just such pleasant rooms, but he never came again. Something must have happened on that occasion which made that person feel that the professions of theosophists were not apparently made manifest in their lives.

A lodge is very like an individual. Many individuals are seeking what I may call discipleship. They are looking for something, perhaps a deeper experience, and they hope to become more useful in the work of those who brought our Society into being. I feel that the lodge can be a sort of group disciple and many of the rules that apply to the one apply to the other. The guru-chela relationship and attitude could be expressed in the lodge in the same way as it may be in the life of an individual. Just as the individual may begin his day with a meditation which is a kind of dedication, so I think it is a good idea for lodges to begin in a like manner. Whether it is a few minutes silence, a few minutes meditation or an actual pronouncement of some dedication, is

unimportant. However, I do not think this necessarily applies to public meetings, where it may work in the wrong way. In East Africa, for instance, the members are Indian and they commence their public meetings by chanting in Sanskrit or Gujarati so that any European passing the door would obtain the impression that a theosophical meeting is a Hindu one. Accordingly they avoid it because, with the present problematical situation between the races, they are not particularly interested in the Indians as a community. There is no virtue in this practice, however, unless you really mean what you are saying. It is just an empty noise. A mantra is also like this. It does not really have any particular meaning or effect unless you put your thought behind it and give it your full attention. I remember speaking to brother Sri Ram one day about some of the groups I had seen in Japan who repeat a certain mantra a hundred or more times. He said, 'Well, I daresay for the first couple of times they repeat it it might work but for the other 98 it probably does not because they cannot keep up the force behind it.' It was his view that even with the beautiful invocation of Dr. Besant's 'Oh hidden Life vibrant in every atom' we tend to let the attention wander as it is so familiar, instead of giving ourselves time to think about what we are saying.

Use of Invocations

When I say 'Oh hidden Life vibrant in every atom' I must have time to think that the whole room and every other member, whether I like him or not, is also full of those atoms and there is nothing between him and me at all in that homogenized field of atoms including the chairs and the lights and everything else. We are all reduced to this atomic level, we are all one. There is no question that basically we *are* One, whether we like it or not. It is only when the atoms start building up other forms that we feel separated, but basically we are One, the hidden Life in *every* atom. These words should bring us to a realization of our Oneness and we should have time to think what it means. I can only explain what it means to me; you probably have your own ideas about it. The hidden Light shining in every creature: I know that from the very beginning I associated it with the Egyptian teaching of looking for the Light, following the Light, Thou art the Light and then let your Light shine. You find the Light within yourself and this is the Light within every creature, in the heart of everyone or in the heart centre, if you like, of everyone; the Master in the heart. But in everything there is the same centre as it were, because if there was no light shining there would be no Life. The light is shining here in Gladys and in our friend the chairman and in everyone else in the room. Can my light be so strong that it fuses with Gladys' or with his? The light within each one of us has

got to grow until basically it fuses with everybody else's and in the whole crowd in this room we ought to be just one enormous light, one huge flame soaring, if we really understand what could be that hidden Light shining in every creature. Now let us take the hidden Love embracing all in Oneness. If I may be excused for using a materialistic conception again, I used to live in Vienna and in the summer I would go swimming in the Danube in one of those excellent places which were arranged in such a way that there was something for everyone and the whole place was like a maze of many compartmentalized areas. There was one where you kept your bicycle, another where you could go for a cup of coffee, another to do exercises, yet another where the boys kicked footballs around, and still another where the girls could go and sunbathe with nothing on, and so on and on. It seemed to me that love embracing all in oneness would be a knocking down of all these barricades which compartmentalize us, a knocking down of all the hedges that we put up against people and, in the process, helping us to get rid of our hang-ups and our inhibitions and so on. And love does that—it won't have any hedges, it won't have any fences, it won't have any walls; it knocks them all down, embracing all in Oneness. Eventually we all disappear into that picture, at another level of consciousness perhaps, but basically we have to become that Love. Let us imagine that Gladys and I love one another. I am A and she is B and there is a line between us which we call love. At a certain level of consciousness I think we both move along that line until nothing is left but the love. A and B disappear into the centre and all that is left is the love. In a sense that has got to happen to everybody. Everyone finally merges into the Love, it is real and it alone remains. It is by thinking in this way about invocations that we glean meaning from them and come to deeper realizations.

What may be said about the attitude and work of a disciple? He is supposed to listen. We have heard about listening in this Convention which has been so full—to me at least—of interesting and unusual happenings from which one can learn much. The poem Maree read about a thrush was very meaningful to me because I had similar experiences with a thrush in Cornwall. By really listening to the bird one can get inside it as it were and know why it has to sing because life has to sing to life. I don't know how else to put it. Life has to sing to life because that is Nature, so the thrush poured itself out as a channel of life singing to life and if one really identifies with the thrush then one even gets a warble within one's own throat and can identify with it.

Complete Commitment

You will remember readiness was part of

Dr. Besant's renunciation. It made her ready to do anything at any moment. Am I ready to do anything at any moment? I don't know and perhaps the test has not come, but it will if we are willing and it will mean giving up something that we cherish, even something which, with our minds, we consider to be important. Otherwise there is no real virtue in having to make a choice, is there? Are we really ready to leave, as the Masters have said, our world and come into theirs, whatever that may mean? Am I ready to do that if the opportunity comes? Jesus said to his disciples 'forsake *all* and follow me.' That may be symbolic, of course; it may mean forsaking the world of the mind and coming into the world of Buddhi. However it is interpreted, there is a feeling of completeness involved in it, completeness of commitment to something new and different. And the disciple has to be humble. This is one of the most difficult tasks. It is relatively easy to pretend to be humble, but to be truly so is another matter. Then there is self-initiated helpfulness which is not waiting to be told by somebody else but watching, seeing and then stepping in to do whatever is needed, even in small things. And what of fearlessness? No one can do anything to me, no one. No one can do anything whatever to you, except yourself. Physically speaking they can put you in prison, they can laugh at you, they can think your behaviour is disgraceful and report you to the police but they cannot touch you. As long as we have fear, it is because we do not know what we are. We can only have fear when we do not know ourselves, apart from the little fears that come from the animal elemental; it does not want to be burned—it is a real fear for an animal elemental—but I am not talking about that kind of thing. I am talking about the things which so often impede us in life because we are nervous and afraid of what other people will say and think and do. No one can touch you, no one, just as no one can improve you or change you except yourself. So fearlessness is one of the characteristics we must have.

The disciple, it seems to me, is not more clever than everyone else, but more useful. When Jesus said I must be about my Father's business, should we not also say that? I think that would be quite a good motto for us too in the theosophical world. It means, I think, a willingness to go on whatever happens, no matter what obstruction, what difficulty, what inconvenience, what sickness. You have all probably had the experience of working in an office or some other place of employment where there are certain people you come to rely on because you know if you ask them to do something they will do it and will not plead being too busy or any other excuse. I imagine that if the Elder Brothers want help, and I expect they do in the world, they want people

they can rely on and who will go on with the work whatever happens. The opportunity is given to us to serve if we wish. I have always liked the sentence 'nothing that affects the welfare of humanity can fail to be of consequence to those who are training themselves to be of service'. Are the problems of the world of any concern to us, do we really care? If we are sincere then they cannot help affecting us. Do we think of training ourselves for humanity's service or not? I think that those whom we refer to as the Elder Brothers are humanity's most faithful servants.

You may not agree with me, but these are some of the things which seem important for the individual and also the lodge. Should the lodge not initiate, should the lodge not bring change, should the lodge not be perpetually listening and alive, should the lodge not be growing, should the lodge not be ready, to have courage, seize its opportunities, stand on its own feet and not wait to be told what to do. An alive lodge will be doing all those things in exactly the same way as the alive individual.

The Oneness of Life

The universality of the Oneness is basically the central theme, the main plank of our platform. H.P.B. calls it 'an Omnipotent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude'. Nevertheless she does make this attempt which I believe has a broadening effect upon our minds. This idea of a boundless infinitude which is everywhere, is not new to us but perhaps we can let ourselves flow out with the idea and feel more one with each other as a result. 'It is all that is, all that ever was and all that ever will be, the fountain of everything, an inexpressible source, an ineffable source from which everything flows forth and into which everything finally returns, all atoms, all gods, all worlds and everything on them and in them. Boundless life, boundless space, boundless duration, frontierless and beginningless and without limiting extensional dimensions of any kind because it contains them all. How can you describe this indescribable THAT? There is not a word about God here for it is not personal nor impersonal, it includes both personalities and impersonalities and is beyond both. It is not Spirit, it is not non-spirit because it includes and is beyond both. It is not time, it is not non-time because it includes and is beyond both. And yet it is the very core of the heart of each one of us and indeed of everything and every entity in this boundless infinitude. It is what we essentially are as individuals and collectively, call it cosmic intelligence and you will not err, but it is not only the intelligence of a solar system

or of a galaxy or of a thousand million galaxies, but all these and infinitely more. Nothing manifested, however vast, ever can approach the end of it because it has no end. It is the cells of the gods, the cells of the universe, the cells of the great spaces, all the inner worlds, all the outer worlds, that mysterious, awful indescribable something which surrounds and permeates and enfolds and encloses and which flashes through all. It is all energy that is, it is all substance that is, it is all destiny that is, everything at all times and in all places and everywhere. How can you give a name to THAT'?

To me that is almost like a meditation. We can try to deeply understand that THAT is all there is and there isn't anything else, although we have to work with its myriad manifestations. Somehow in our feebleness and inadequacy we are called upon to make it real to the world in which we live. There can be truly nothing more important than that. With this in mind, let us find more ways and means of great efforts, great self-

sacrifice to make this concept of Oneness available to others. Dr. Besant knew of the difficulties which beset us in our turbulent world but she obviously expected us to face them as in her stirring birthday message in 1922; 'My birthday greetings to you, brothers, all the world over, is written from amidst the encircling Himalayas but not a vestige of them is visible thick-shrouded as they are in earth clouds. Shall I then doubt that the mountains are there, that their green slopes, their mighty crags, their heaven-piercing peaks of snow are only dreams, imagination, fashion. Nay verily for I have seen them, I have trodden them and I know. With equal certainty, with equal surity, I know the unshakable truths of the ancient wisdom, of the hierarchy who guides, the teacher who inspires, the embodied will that rules. The Himalayas may crumble but these abide in the eternal. Lift up your eyes my brothers and you shall see and then face fearlessly the raging of the storm'. Let us go forth to face fearlessly the raging of the storm.

Our own Research Library

One of the ideas coming out of the 1973 Convention at Binna Burra was that of a Research Library in the new headquarters building. This has been received with considerable enthusiasm and space has been allocated for it.

The concept has far-reaching possibilities. It will NOT be a lending but a RESEARCH Library where students, scholars and all interested may come and browse and/or carry out research. While it is hoped the library will cover a wide range of subjects covered by our three objects, the emphasis will be on those things which are not so well-catered for in Australia such as Eastern religion, philosophy, culture and thought, with the idea that it may gain a reputation as a library where first class books on these subjects can be found.

It is hoped the library will be used, too, to mount seminars round given topics, with guest-speakers both from in- and outside the Society, cultural exhibitions and posters. The topic might, for example, be Yoga or Japan or Buddhism or the Australian Aborigines. In each instance it is envisaged participants would be encouraged to probe these subjects in depth and research material for themselves as well as listening

to the speaker. One seminar, for instance, might be on Indonesia, and individuals, or groups of individuals, might examine different aspects of the country such as its religions, its peoples, its culture. This would accentuate our first and second objects by creating a greater understanding for other countries and peoples. It is anticipated that the results of such seminars would be collated and the material plus books used might be lent to other lodges and groups on request.

Adjacent to the Library is a small audio/visual room which we ourselves will use for making tapes, etc. However, this room has been so situated in order that it may also be used by students wishing to supplement research in the Library by use of slides, tapes, cassettes and (hopefully) microfilm.

Will You Help?

Already members are giving enthusiastic verbal support to the concept and it is hoped all the membership will have a feeling of involvement in this THEIR LIBRARY, and will also give more practical support. Marjorie Alderman, before her death, had given a fine collection of