

IN THE BEGINNING

by Robert Crosbie, Letter Four in the Friendly Philosopher, p 370-372

Mere attendance at meetings is not enough to make us feel our identity with the work. Attendance is but the preliminary to a further step; this shows itself when those who attend begin to ask how they may obtain further understanding. As they participate they develop, of course—but they must not be allowed to forget the object of the help afforded them, nor that such help is but a means and a way. The object of Theosophical study and work is not individual development, but that each and all should become true helpers of Humanity. Some will catch the feeling. The tendency to say more than is useful to the newcomers is a common one in the beginning, but is gradually overcome when it is seen to minimize inquiry. We should push nothing, while responding to everything. We would not use force if we could, because each mind has to be free to choose; otherwise there would be no true progress. And I think this is a good attitude to be taken in the matter of questions concerning theosophical claims and exponents. These various stripes must have their place in the great economy of consciousness—they must have, or people would not be attracted by them, would not seize and hold on to them. When the particular “stripe” does not bring the devotee the expected result in knowledge, then a further search is indicated to the mind so caught. Every person really waked up by such claims or exponents will touch us sooner or later, if we hold to the straight line. On this, Mr. Judge once wrote: “By our not looking at their errors too closely, the Master will be able to clear it all off and make it work well.”

The fewer the words an idea can be expressed in, the better. Our effort is to disseminate among Theosophists the idea of unity regardless of organization. Many “old timers” will not see the need, but those disgusted with the claims and squabbles of organizations will fall into line on the true basis of union: “Similarity of aim, purpose and teaching”—for they will see that the failure of the various societies is in that basic lack. Let each go his own way, and with best intention, giving credit to others for the same: in this way we set up no hindrances, no matter what others may do. No hindrance leaves an inlet, and there is no saying what may come about even among those who hold to separateness. We sympathize with all efforts to spread broadcast the teachings of Theosophy pure and simple, without expressing preference for any organization or individual so engaged—recognizing that while methods differ, the Cause of one is the Cause of all. Meantime, we go on with our own line of work which, because of its freedom from any complications of organization, presents a catholic spirit. We are not drawing attention to ourselves as a body, but to the principles that, as a body, we hold. The Declaration is a summation of the stand that all Theosophists should take—toward the work and toward each other. We all need to cultivate that charity which sympathizes with every effort to spread Theosophy, even if the methods and other things do not appeal to us: any effort is better than no effort at all.

This tolerance does not mean “fraternizing” with everything and everyone that demands it; it only means that no one is to be condemned for his opinions. We may not care to spend time and energy in his direction, which is our privilege—and if he were himself tolerant he would not wish us to. Many who talk “tolerance” seem to think it means that everyone else should endorse what they want to say or do. The tolerance is of little value which consists in the egotistical attempt to enlist the support of those who have their own duty to attend to.

“U. L. T.” and its Declaration will be compared by many with the claims made by the various societies and their exponents. Each of these makes the claim that he or it is alone right. What are our claims?—it will be asked. We make none: we point to the Message, the Messengers, and Their enunciation of the Work—and carry on the latter in accordance; we have no “revelation” to offer, we only hand on that which was known before. The position is unique and unassailable in that it makes no claim to any other authority than, the Message and the Messengers. It should be our policy to state at each meeting what our purposes are—namely, to disseminate the fundamental principles of Theosophy and to answer questions on the provided.

The Authority which we recognize is not what men term authority, which comes from outside and which demands obedience, but an internal recognition of the value of that which flows through any given point, focus, or individual. This is the authority of one’s Self-discrimination, intuition, the highest intellection. If we follow what we recognize in that way, and still find it good, we naturally keep our faces in that direction. This means no slavish following of any person—a distinction which some are unable to grasp. H. P. B. wrote: “Don’t follow me or my Path: follow the path I show, the Masters who are behind.” We point always that the most and the best anyone can do is to do as Judge did—follow the lines laid down by H. P. B., regardless of any others. All that we are doing is to help others to find those lines. We do not want attention paid to us. It is true that “U. L. T.” necessarily centers around those most active in it, but they could do nothing if history, evidence, and energies were not in the lines taken. So we point to those lines of direction as the things to be seen and known. For ourselves we are merely some who are able to grasp and apply as well as aid in direction. This will prevent “U. L. T.” from degenerating into some such condition as now exists throughout the theosophical world, for if attention is attracted to detracted from the real issue. One may have confidence, however, without making the mistake of placing anyone too high. The strength shown by any worker is not that of the personality, which has none, of itself; it lies in the words, the ideas, the conviction of truth held by the inner man.