

To Change or Not to Change by Jack G. Patterson

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IN the given subject 'The Three Objects — their Enduring Relevance' the word 'enduring' offers a real challenge. The Objects as they now stand have, for one hundred years, served to convey the general aims of the Theosophical Society. But in the western world, at least, this may not be enough in the future to give a clear picture of these aims in a language which makes an impact on the general public in a world which now has many other movements proclaiming similar concepts of modern terminology.

Many times over the last fifty years the present writer has read these Objects to audiences containing some to whom Theosophy was new. Of recent years he has become increasingly aware of a lacklustre response indicating that the message was not striking home as it should do. Could it be that the Objects have an energy from the past which is almost spent indicating that regeneration is needed? On the other hand, the Objects have an old-world dignity, and, not being limited by narrow dogmas, have a quality which could be lost if changes were made.

The Society was brought into being under the guidance of the Masters of the Wisdom. H.P. BLAVATSKY who was the closest to these Masters died five years before the Objects were formalized in their present form; presumably by the President Col Olcott and other officials in the Society. It is difficult therefore to know to what extent they were inspired by the Masters.

One of the letters from those Masters, known as the Mahachohan's letter of 1881, gives a clear indication of what they considered is the work of the Society. I will quote two powerful extracts:

It is absolutely necessary to inculcate it [Theosophy] gradually, enforcing its theories, unimpeachable facts for those who know, with direct inferences deduced from and corroborated by, the evidence furnished by *modern* exact science.

Later on:

For our doctrines to practically react on the so-called moral code, or the idea of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc we have to preach and *popularize* a knowledge of Theosophy.

If we are to popularize Theosophy we must present it in the language of today's world. If we are to present evidence furnished by modern exact science we must present our ideas in a language that is in

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tune with that used by, for example, transpersonal psychologists, holistic healers, ecologists and sub-atomic physicists. How do our Objects measure up to these requirements?

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The First Object

To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. It seems that over the last hundred years, in spite of our highest endeavours, it has been beyond the ethical stature of our members, and even our leaders, to produce such a nucleus which would be an inspiring example in today's world. In these changing times the idea of a nucleus even appears to some people to be exclusive and therefore a negation of brotherhood. The word 'brotherhood' itself is today open to criticism because it excludes women and to a lesser extent because it is associated with that which is secret and sinister. On the other hand 'without distinction of race etc.' is widely used today. Perhaps the propagation of our Objects has played some part in this acceptance!

This Object includes the word 'universal' but is actually restricted to humanity. H.P. Blavatsky's concept of 'One Absolute Reality — the Rootless Root of all that was, is or ever shall be' is far more inclusive. It indicates the oneness of the forms and energies of all that exists in both physical and superphysical worlds. Of recent years the advance guard of thinking people are moving towards this holistic concept. They are beginning to accept the Gaia Hypothesis which sees the planet Earth as a 'living organism' and all living things as interconnected within ecosystems. What affects one affects all.

Perhaps the First Object could become something like: To recognize the truth that every human, every animal, every plant exists within an all-embracing wholeness — God, if you like, or Nature.

The Second Object

'To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.' This object adequately covers the aim of many theosophical activities but the word 'comparative' is not often used in this sense today. It can be seen to imply analysis, the study of differences, whereas our aim should be synthesis and the study of the coming together within the wholeness of the First Object and the endeavour of the Third Object. Perhaps this Object could read: 'To encourage a study of philosophy, science and all world religions in relation to the other two Objects.' For clarity this Object would then be placed third.

The Third Object

'To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.' This Object adequately covers theosophical activity but the word 'investigate' may not be the right one. Most theosophical investigation today is at the thought level. When the individual student strives to understand theosophical ideas by in-depth study the thought world is affected and at subtle levels real work is done. But this is not really

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investigation! There are few members in the Society today who can carry out clairvoyant investigations as was done by our leaders in the past; other movements are investigating the unexplained laws of nature in a practical way. Some investigators, including members of the Society for Psychological Research, have succeeded in recording voices brought through from higher realms. Some are working to make discarnate figures appear on television screens. The Esalen Institute in Northern California and other institutions are carrying out experiments in parapsychology. Experiments on telepathy and other ESP phenomena have been carried out in universities. Other groups are investigating the powers latent in man by attempting to raise *kundalini* — sometimes with disastrous results. But the TS does not encourage such experimentation. So to be honest the words ‘to investigate’ should be replaced by ‘to study’ or some more interesting words with similar meaning.

A New Approach

When the Objects are surveyed in this manner it becomes obvious that it is not easy to find words that will give a crisp and powerful expression of the Objects in modern terminology.

It is therefore worth while looking at quite different approaches. The present Objects do not mention Theosophia (Divine Wisdom) which the Neoplatonists called a seeking for Truth. But this approach may not appear modern. There is one approach which has stood the test of time. This is the powerful and enduring statement of theosophical principles known as the *Three Great Truths* from the *Idyll of the White Lotus*:

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour have no limit.

The principle which gives life dwells in us and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

Each man is his own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself, the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

This includes language very worthy of being incorporated into the Objects. It really is not a statement of aims but more a statement of a creed in terms so magnificent and transcendent they are almost timeless. Creeds have always been avoided in the TS which stresses freedom of thought. So the approach of looking into the principles of life and a search for truth appears more appropriate as a basis for the Objects.

If the Objects are to be reworded it must happen as the result of pressure from existing conditions — the pressure of modern ways of expressing ideas and modern terminology. This pressure appears to be increasing but if changes are made it is imperative that the changed form is, at least, as good as the existing form of the Objects. This is not an easy task but is one that may have to be faced up to.