

**‘WHAT IS “A FACT”?’**

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[in: H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, p. 367-71]

Once fairly started on a friendly discussion – not “quarrelling,” we hope – with *Light*, we may just as well set matters right regarding another topic, about which, it seems to us to use a rather faulty argument. Remarking in another paragraph that it desires to treat its “friends, the Theosophists, perfectly fairly, and to give them the fullest credit for honesty and sincerity of purpose,” it adds — “Spiritualism, we say, *is* a fact. Theosophy, we also say, *may be* a fact for aught we know, but at present we are without sufficient proof.

Now to this we must take exception. We find ourselves forced to reply as follows: Either both Spiritualism and Theosophy are “facts” or — neither. For how is either of them “a fact” except through its respective votaries? As an existing and, we may say, an effective organization, a society — Theosophy is as much of a “fact” as Spiritualism is, and certainly no less so than any of the established recognized bodies, and sects, whether they be in the domain of philosophy or religion.

As regards phenomena produced – limited to a very small fraction of our Society – the manifestations stand, or fall along with those of the Spiritualists. We may suppose then, that, when asserting Spiritualism to be a “fact,” the writer had in his mind the “Spiritual” manifestations or rather the agency, the disembodied intelligences claimed to be at work in their production? If so, then once again *Light* used an incorrect, or we should say, an incomplete expression. For, if the theory of communicating “spirits” is an undeniable axiom for Spiritualists, it is yet an open question – or oftener – positive delusion in the eyes of the majority of non-Spiritualists, and skeptics. Moreover, the manifestations which even to the Theosophists are a truth, are considered illusory and impossible to a much larger portion of the people in the world. Again we, the Theosophists, though accepting the phenomena as a fact, refuse to accept it as a “fact” that such manifestations are produced only by the spirits of persons deceased.

As with Spiritualism, so with the Occultism of Theosophists; to some persons it is a fact, and to others it is not. Spiritualism and Theosophy are both forms of belief, and nothing more; inasmuch as there are persons who believe in them, they are both facts. In the same way Christians, Brahmins and Mohammedans are an existing fact, while neither Christianity, nor Brahmanism, nor Mohammedanism are “facts” *per se*, or for those who are opposed to these creeds. The divine inspiration of Mohammed and his direct communion with Allah is an undeniable “fact,” for about 300 millions of the followers of the Prophet, but is rejected as the grossest error and imposture by as many Christians. The phenomena of the Spiritualists being a genuine, proven, incontrovertible reality – whether many or few believe in it – so far the “facts” of Spiritualism have a far better claim to acceptance than those of dogmatic Christianity or of any other creed, based exclusively on blind faith.

Their personal views, however, the orthodox theories regarding “spirits,” being not a matter of fact but of opinion and simply a belief, they can no more claim to be regarded as a “fact” than any other emotional belief. If the physical senses, intellect and reason of the Spiritualists testify to them that “Spirits” are at work in their phenomena, the physical senses, intellect and reason of the Occultists testify to them, in their turn, that the subjective world outside and around us containing a great variety of *non-human* intelligences, and beings, more associated with humanity than Materialism, Positivism and even Spiritualism will ever consent to admit — most of these manifestations are produced by Forces and Powers quite outside and beyond the calculations of the orthodox

Spiritualist. In so far as the existence of higher, pure Spirits outside of our sphere of physical senses is concerned, the Theosophists and Spiritualists agree.

But they entirely disagree in their respective theories regarding the nature and cause of the so-called “communicating intelligences.” Our friends, the Spiritualists, who are visited by them, are pleased to call the latter the spirits of deceased persons; and, notwithstanding their contradictory statements, they believe what these “spirits” tell them and regard it as a revelation and a “fact.” Our mystics are visited by what every one of them knows to be living men of flesh and blood, whose wisdom can scarcely be denied (even by those who disbelieve in their powers), and who tell us quite a different tale of the weird visitors of the Spiritualists from that given by the “spirits” themselves at their *séances*. The assertions of the “spirits” and “Brothers,” however, are, and can be accepted as “facts” by only their respective believers. No one would ever think of offering these assertions to the world as something mathematically demonstrated. Spiritualists and Theosophists may dispute interminably without convincing each other, and the facts of one will probably for ever continue a delusion in the eyes of the other. Alleged gods – Avatars and Incarnations – have descended from time to time on earth, and every word they uttered remained a fact and a gospel truth for those who believed in them. Yet these dogmatic utterances have made their respective votaries neither happier, better, nor wiser. Quite the contrary; for they have often proved conducive of strife and misery, of fratricidal wars, and of interminable crimes due to fanaticism and bigotry.

Men naturally disagree on most subjects, and we cannot hope to force others to accept as facts the things that appear so to us. But what we can do is, to show more mutual tolerance and abstain from dogmatism and bigotry as there is too much of it already outside of our two unpopular and equally tabooed systems. One undeniable fact exists on earth; a sad, a tacitly and universally recognized yet as universally ignored “Fact,” namely — that MAN is man’s worst enemy. Born helpless, ignorant, and doomed to a lifelong struggle through that ignorance, surrounded by intellectual darkness which no amount of scientific or spiritual research can entirely dispel, instead of helping each other in that life struggle, one half of humanity is ever striving to create obstacles, over which the other half may trip, stumble and even break its neck, if possible. Were we wise, instead of boasting of our partial knowledge, we ought to unite and act on the principle common to the Books of Wisdom of all nations; on the sublime precept taught by all sages; by Manu, Confucius and Buddha alike, and finally copied into the Christian Gospels: “as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”

Time alone will show who of us is right, and who wrong, in the matter of Spiritualism; or, perchance, the great problem might be doomed forever to remain unsolved for the majority, while the minority will go on explaining it, each according to its light, and understanding. Still, instead of abusing and endeavoring to annihilate each other, as Protestants and Roman Catholics do on account of their faiths, we ought to confine ourselves to a correct presentation of our facts and of the theories we found on them, allowing everyone to accept or reject what he pleases and quarrel with no one on that account.

This is the position we, of the Theosophical Society, composed of so many different creeds and beliefs, have always desired to take. In our turn — firmly convinced of “the honesty and sincerity of purpose” of the Spiritualists, if *The Theosophist* has occasionally derided some of their too tricky mediums, it has ever, on the other hand, defended those it knew to be genuine; and the journal has never insulted or tabooed their whole body, as the Spiritualists have our Society. Some of our best and most devoted members are Spiritualists, and very prominent ones, who have ever been the best friends and supporters of the movement.

This has not prevented the London *Spiritualist* (see every *weekly* number since the beginning of last July) from denouncing, mocking, laughing and allowing its *contributors* to revile us individually and collectively. We need not mention the American so-called “Spiritual” organs in this connection. They, with the single exception of the *Banner of Light*, have been throwing every impermissible missile at us for the last seven years. From its beginning *The Theosophist*, if it has not always advocated, has, at least, warmly defended Spiritualism, as a careful perusal of its back numbers will show. It has defended it from the attacks of Science, of Journalism, and against the denunciations of private individuals, while the *Spiritualist* has never lost an opportunity of caricaturing us. With Spiritualists as a body, we have never quarrelled, nor do we ever mean to quarrel. Let our esteemed contemporary *Light* give credit for so much at least to those who profess themselves the enemies but of BIGOTS, HYPOCRITES AND PHARISEES.

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