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## TEACHING WITH HUMILITY

When we are moved by a profound idea that seemingly provides the key to unlocking some of life's mysteries, it is natural to want others to embrace that idea too. When we experience an epiphany into the nature of the human condition, we may feel a powerful urge to "share" our insight with others. In this heightened state of zeal, we may even frame our new-found fervor in the words of the Gospel: "You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine before others." But before we embark on a campaign to save the world, it may be wise to temper our momentary zeal by recalling the words of an old English proverb: "Discretion is the better part of valor."

The tendency to impose our particular views on others is not something exclusive to any one culture or people, but is a universal trait, which has been on display throughout human history. Sometimes it may surface in Theosophical gatherings. Shirley Nicholson reminds us of this potential problem in her article "Doctrine and Dogma," published in the October 1983 issue of *The American Theosophist*. "One of the most precious benefits of the Theosophical Society is the freedom of thought it offers. This may be one of the most important reasons that the Society has survived and remained viable for over one hundred years." Because of this long-standing policy of tolerance toward the views of others, the Theosophical Society is distinctly different from many other religious and esoteric organizations, which often require their members or followers to accept a certain set of beliefs or views.

To suggest that Theosophists strive to be open-minded does not preclude the fact that many of us have strong opinions, often becoming passionate and animated when discussing esoteric ideas. This is not a bad thing as long as we retain a sense of humility, recognizing that our present level of understanding is quite finite, our level of ignorance nearly infinite.

At one time, we may not have been receptive to the ideas that now provide great meaning in our lives. The power of comprehension grows with time. Yesterday we may not have possessed the wisdom we have today, and tomorrow our current store of "wisdom" may appear somewhat limited, as we continue to expand our intellectual horizons. There is also the matter of interpretation. Just as music conductors may bring different interpretations to the symphonies of Beethoven or Mozart, students of Theosophy may bring various interpretations to the timeless principles of Theosophy. When teaching Theosophy, therefore, we will find it more effective to use a "soft touch," rather than adopting an unyielding and authoritative approach. As a past president of the Theosophical Society in America once observed, "He who attains inner grace and understanding does not impose his ideas upon another."

David P. Bruce  
Director of Education