

# Theosophical History



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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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*Theosophical History* (ISSN 0951-497X) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by James A. Santucci. The journal's purpose is to publish contributions specifically related to the modern Theosophical Movement, from the time of Madame Helena Blavatsky and others who were responsible in establishing the original Theosophical Society (1875), to all groups that derive their teachings - directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly - from her or her immediate followers. In addition, the journal is also receptive to related movements (including pre-Blavatskyite Theosophy, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and the philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg to give but a few examples) that have had an influence on or displayed an affinity to modern Theosophy.

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**THEOSOPHICAL  
HISTORY**

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**On the Cover:** Alexander Scriabin, 1913.

# Editor's Comments

## In This Issue

### Dr. Dmitri L. Spivak

News about Theosophy has been slowly filtering out of Russia since the recent political changes. The first evidence of this Theosophical interest and activity as far as *Theosophical History* is concerned appears in the present issue. Credit must be given to Miss Joy Mills of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy (Ojai, California), who first informed me of the paper delivered by Dr. Spivak that appears herein. Miss Mills, in response to my request to introduce Dr. Spivak and the circumstances surrounding his address, was kind enough to send the following, which is herein reproduced below.

#### Introductory to Dr. Spivak's Russian Ways to Theosophy

In June 1990, Mrs. Radha Burnier, President of the Theosophical Society (Adyar), visited the [then] U.S.S.R. at the invitation of the "Peace Through Culture" organization of the Soviet Writer's Union. She gave public talks in both Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), and the overwhelming response to these lectures opened the door for further theosophical activity in Russia. Later in the year, Curt Berg, Chairman of the European Theosophical Federation, visited the Soviet Union and met with a number of individuals interested in the Society. Meanwhile, Mrs. Burnier had arranged for the printing, by offset, of 5,000 copies of the Russian translation (by Helena Roerich) of *The Secret Doctrine*, to be done at Adyar, and sent to the Peace Through Culture" group in

Moscow for distribution to selected libraries throughout the country.

As a result of these contacts, Mr. Berg invited representatives of the "Peace Through Culture" organization, interested in Theosophy, to participate in the 31st Congress of the European Federation, held at Arolsen, Germany, in July 1991. Among those participating and speaking at the Congress was Dmitri L. Spivak, Ph.D., of Leningrad and a member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. Dr. Spivak is in the field of education, specializing in "creative thinking." His talk, which was given in English, is reproduced here.

To add slightly to Miss Mill's introduction, Dr. Spivak is a professional educator presently working as senior research fellow at the Human Brain Institute, which is part of the National Academy of Sciences (of the former U.S.S.R.) at St. Petersburg. His interest lay in researching Russian esoteric doctrines and the literary output of those who contribute to this area. He has published several dozen articles as well as three books: *Linguistics of Altered States of Consciousness* (1986), *Language Under Altered States of Consciousness* (1989), and *How to Become a Polyglot* (1989).

Dr. Spivak's paper, "Russian Ways to Theosophy," has been somewhat modified in style and language to read in more idiomatic English. A more complete bibliographic entry was also added. It goes without saying that I assume all responsibility for any errors that

may have inadvertently arisen from my editing the paper.

## Syzygy

*Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* (ISBN: 1059-6860), is a new quarterly journal (sponsored by the Center for Studies on New Religions in Torino, Italy and the Institute for the Study of American Religions in Santa Barbara, California) devoted exclusively to providing articles on the New Religions, New Age groups, and other non-traditional movements. Articles that have appeared or will appear are David Bromley's "The Satanism Scare in America"; Michael Homer's "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Spiritualism and 'New Religions;'" Michael York's "The New Age Movement in Great Britain"; and Gordon Melton's "European Receptivity to the New Religions." The editor of the journal is Dr. James R. Lewis and its International Editor, Dr. Massimo Introvigne. Subscriptions rates are \$30 annually for individuals, \$55 for two years (add \$3 per year outside the U.S. and Canada). The address to the journal is the

Center for Academic Publication  
Stanford University Branch Box 5097  
Stanford, CA 94309-5097

## International Theosophical History Conference

I realize the peculiarity of reporting the occurrence of an event held in June in the January issue, but until the journal can be brought up to date, oddities such as this will occasionally arise. The International Theosophical History Conference was held at Point Loma Nazarene College (San Diego, California) from June 12th to June 14th. A total of nineteen papers (summarized) were presented during the regular sessions; in addition a special day (June 12) was set aside to introduce the attendees to this historical site, the former international headquarters (1897 to 1942) of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society under Katherine Tingley and Gottfried de Purucker. Dr. Dwayne Little, the Director of Planning and Institutional Research at P.L. Nazarene College, presented slides of the Theosophical Society headquarters as it appeared during this period of time. W. Emmett Small, the Editor of *The Eclectic Theosophist*, together with his wife Carmen, both of whom were members of the community, provided additional comments on life at Point Loma. A tour of the campus then followed.

The papers were presented in summary format since many will be published in *TH* in future issues. The titles and presenters include the following:

- "Twentieth Century Theosophical Communal Experiments"  
(J. Gordon Melton, Director of the Institute

- for the Study of American Religion, Santa Barbara, Ca.);
- "The Green Village: An Italian Theosophical Community" (Isotta Poggi, Institute for the Study of American Religion);
  - "The Temple of the People: A Report on Research in Progress" (Elizabeth Pullen, University of California, Santa Barbara);
  - "The Teachings of Brother XII in the Context of the Theosophical Movement in the Late 1920s and Early 1930s" (John Oliphant, Vancouver, British Columbia)
  - "Joan Grant" (Jean Overton Fuller, Northamptonshire, U.K.)
  - "The Beginnings of Theosophy in New Zealand" (Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California)
  - "The Outlaws of Sherwood Forest: Victor Endersby and *Theosophical Notes*" (Jerry Hejka-Ekins, Turlock, Ca.)
  - "Katherine Tingley: The Theosophist as Progressive Reformer, 1890-1929" (Dwayne Little, P.L.N.C.)
  - "The Nationalist and Theosophical Movements" (James Biggs, Fullerton, Ca.)
  - "Esoteric Within the Exoteric: Esoteric Groups in the Theosophical Movement" (Gregory Tillett, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Macquarie University, Australia)
  - "Col. Arthur L. Conger: 1872-1951" (Alan Donant, The Theosophical Society, International Headquarters, Pasadena, Ca.)
  - "Secret Messages from Colonel Olcott" (Paul Johnson, Virginia)
  - "The Resignation of H.P. Blavatsky from the Theosophical Society" (D.J. Buxey, Bombay, India; presented by Jerry Hejka-Ekins)
  - "The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society" (John Cooper, University of Sydney, Australia; presented by James Santucci)
  - "Gottfried de Purucker: From the Mystical to the Ordinary" (Kenneth Small, Escondido, Ca.)
  - "Mathematics of the Cosmic Mind" (L. Gordon Plummer, San Diego, Ca.)
  - "The Life of Śaṅkarācārya After H.P. Blavatsky and T. Subba Row" (Henk J. Spiereburg, The Netherlands; presented by James Santucci)
  - "New Light on George Henry Felt" (James Santucci)

## Book Notes

James Santucci

*Indian Chelas on the Masters.* Compiled with foreword by Michael Gomes. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Lodge, The Theosophical Society, 1992. Pp. 42. \$3.00.

Mr. Gomes and the Adyar Lodge have provided in this pamphlet access to a number of hitherto obscure accounts by Indian pupils of personal contacts with the Masters. In his Foreword, Mr. Gomes remarks that

As these accounts are in obscure or hard-to-find sources, the Adyar Lodge has decided to publish a collection of the most important ones, not only for the inspiration of the disciple but also as an aid to researchers and historians.

Contents include contributions from Damodar K. Mavalankar's "Memorandum" from the First Report of the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research (December 1884, pages 87-88) and his account in *The Theosophist* (V/3-4, Dec.-Jan 1883-84: 61-2) entitled "A Great Riddle Solved;" Bhavani Shankar's letters to Damodar (reprinted from Sven Eek's *Damodar*, 331-32) and to the editor of the *Occult Review* (June 1927): 404-405 on "H.P. Blavatsky and Phenomena;" S. Ramaswamier's "How a 'Chela' Found his 'Guru'," found in *The Theosophist* (IV/3, Dec. 1882: 67-69); R. Casava Pillai's "How a Hindu of Madras Interviewed a *Mahatma* at Sikkim," originally published in *The Indian Mirror* (Calcutta),

Tuesday, 3 March 1885; Mohini M. Chatterji's contribution to *The Pall Mall Gazette* (2 Oct. 1884: 2) entitled "The Theosophical Mahatmas;" and G. Soobiah Chetty's "Master M.'s Visit to Madras in 1874" (*Adyar Notes and News*, I/30, 25 Oct. 1928: 2). To complete the collection, a letter by H.P. Blavatsky on this subject (dated 29 November 1889) is included in the Appendix.

Those interested in purchasing the pamphlet (via air mail) should send \$3.00 to Michael Gomes (c/o The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras, India 600 020).

*The Esoteric She: Articles on Madame Blavatsky's Life, Work and Teachings.* By William Quan Judge. Compiled and edited by Daniel H. Caldwell. San Diego, CA: Point Loma Publications, 1991. Pp. 108. \$5.00.

Mr. Caldwell's expressed purpose for this handy compilation of W.Q. Judge's writings on H.P.B. was to mark the centenary of her death in 1891. Eighteen texts are contained within this collection, including Judge's résumé of H.P.B.'s life from the *New York Sun* (26 Sept. 1892), from which the book gets its title; the article, "Yours till Death and After, H.P.B.'" (*Lucifer*, VIII, June 1891: 290-2), which recounts his first meeting with Madame Blavatsky in either 1874 or 1875,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Editor's note. Both dates are mentioned a few lines from

the series of articles from *The Path* (vols. VI-VIII) on the "Habitations of H.P.B. (with accompanying drawings of the dwellings); the "Authorship of *The Secret Doctrine*" (*The Path*, VIII, April, 1893:1-3) with accompanying reproduction of the letters quoted in the article; "Masters, Adepts, Teachers, and Disciples," originally published in *The Path*, VIII, June 1893: 65-68; and "Conversations on Occultism with H.P.B." appearing in the April, 1894 issue of *The Path*.

*Mystical Sex: Love, Ecstasy, and the Mystical Experience.* By Louis William Meldman, Ph.D. Tucson and New York: Harbinger House, 1990. Pp. 193. \$9.95.

Mysticism is often portrayed as a totally other worldly experience not capable of being achieved by the common folk. This book, however, delineates the topic in a completely understandable and straight forward manner, namely, that mysticism "identifies spirituality with the physical cosmos" and that the true mystical experience is that which is sensual and sexual. Basing his approach on the theory that there are two separate modes of thinking in the two hemispheres of the brain—the left being linear and categorical, the right being creative, intuitive and sensual, Dr.

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each other, obviously causing confusion regarding the correct year. In a future issue, *TH* will publish the paper presented at the International Theosophical History Conference by Will Thackara of the Theosophical Society, Pasadena that will end this confusion.

Meldman asserts that mysticism and mystical traditions are in fact right-brained in approach. This orientation explains the close association and even equation of mysticism with sexuality as is evident in such traditions as Gnosticism, Tantrism, the mystery religions, and later Taoism. Thus right-brained mentality, being mystical by nature, tends to regard the physical universe as one with the spiritual; the method of intuiting or experiencing such unity is through that ultimate sensual experience: sexuality or love-making. Dr. Meldman, however, differentiates normal love-making or sexuality with mystical sexuality, normal marriage with mystical marriage. His discussion of such matters make for a very readable account of an alternative psychological interpretation of the manifestation of the right-brained perceptions and attitudes in the individual, religio-philosophical institutions and cultures.

*The Occult World of Madame Blavatsky: Reminiscences and Impressions By Those Who Knew Her.* Compiled and edited by Daniel H. Caldwell. Tucson, Arizona: Impossible Dream Publications (P.O. Box 1844, Tucson AZ 85702), 1991. Pp. 336. \$13.95 (plus \$2.00 shipping within the U.S. or \$8.00 airmail).

Mr. Caldwell has done researchers a service by assembling an extensive number of reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky by her contemporaries: relatives, friends, enemies, acquaintances, and co-workers. Contributors in this collection (besides the leading lights in

the Theosophical Movement: H.S. Olcott, A. Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, and W.Q. Judge) include Nadyezhda A. de Fadeyev (H.P.B.'s aunt), Vera P. de Zhelihovsky (her sister), Countess Constance Wachtmeister, Emma Coulomb (an excerpt from her infamous *Some Account of My Intercourse with Madame Blavatsky from 1872 to 1884*), Elizabeth G.K. Holt, Rev. James H. Wiggin, Alexander Wilder, Charles C. Massey, R. Casava Pillai, A.P. Sinnett, William T. Brown (an abbreviated version of the pamphlet, *Some Experiences in India*, appearing in this collection is published in full in *TH III/7-8*), Francesca Arundale, Isabel Cooper-Oakley, and Rev. B. Old. Many of the excerpts have not seen the light of day for many decades. The compiler was thoughtful enough to add biographical sketches of the contributors. Add to this a brief account of H.P.B.'s life and a section entitled "The Blavatsky Bibliography," which includes a listing of selected biographies, studies, reminiscences, attacks, and literary output, including a section on the Study of the *Secret Doctrine*.

*Samnyāsa Upaniṣads: Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation*. Translated and with an Introduction by Patrick Olivelle. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Pp. xv + 320. \$17.95.

Most readers of Indian classical philosophical literature are familiar with the early Vedic Upaniṣads, such as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chāndogya*, and *Kena Upaniṣads*. Few are aware, however, that

Upaniṣadic compositions number over 200 and extend well beyond the 16th century C.E. In fact, there is even an *Allāh Upaniṣad* that reflected the tolerance that was encouraged on the part of enlightened rulers and teachers during Moghal times. Most of the later Upaniṣads, however, are sectarian in flavor. It is to the credit of the Adyar Library that most of these Upaniṣads were published in both Sanskrit and English in a series of collections under the Adyar Library Series (for instance, Sanskrit editions include *The Vaiṣṇava-Upaniṣads*, A.L.S.-No. 8, 1953 and *The Śākta Upaniṣads*, A.L.S.-No. 10, 1950; English editions include *The Śākta Upaniṣads*, A.L.S., vol. 89 and *The Śaiva Upaniṣads*, A.L.S., vol. 85). As would be expected, the Series also includes the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣads*, published in 1929 and 1966 (in Sanskrit) and the 1978 translation of the same by A.A. Ramanathan (A.L.S., No. 104). The translator, a Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Religions at the University of Texas, Austin and the author of a number of books, including *The Origin and the Early Development of Buddhist Monachism* (1974) and *Renunciation in Hinduism: A Medieval Debate* (1986), derives the collection of twenty Upaniṣads—including *Paramahansa*, *Jābāla*, *Maitreya*, *Nirvāṇa*, and the *Parabrahma Upaniṣads*—on the critical edition of F.O. Schrader (*The Minor Upaniṣads. Vol. 1, Samnyāsa-Upaniṣads*. The Adyar Library, 1912). This, together with a careful translation and a 109 page Introduction discussing the subject of renunciation provides the reader with an excellent account of its practice and expectations.

## Correspondence

*From Mrs. Helen M. Gething (England)*

On page 193 of *TH* Vol. 3 No. 7-8, I am puzzled by the reference to L.W. Rogers meeting Mabel Collins in Glastonshire, England in Nov 1920. There is no such place. There is Glastonbury which is in Somerset.

*Michael Gomes (Adyar, India) responds:*

The piece on Mabel Collins was written some time ago and my files are not with me at present. But I have been able to check L.W. Rogers statement about the place of his meeting with M.C. and he says it was in Gloucestershire, Cheltenham to be exact. Catherine Metcalfe in a letter in the May 1929 *Occult Review* also states that Mabel Collins spent the last 12 years of her life in her home in Gloucestershire. This has become transposed as Glastonshire. Reading over the article I find other misprints which are worth correcting. The publisher of *Cobwebs* should be Tinsley Brothers and the seven chapters of the Romance cover up to page 171 of Vol. III. The subtitle of *A Cry From Afar* should be *To Students of Light on the Path*. The last paragraph on page 195 managed to escape indentation and the quote begins with "by the help..." and ends with "chance" on page 196. On page 199 in the last line of the paragraph the word "write" should be "white": "His white robes..."

The relevance of this piece is not in what is said, or unsaid, in the introduction, but in the discarded chapter reprinted here for the first time. The introduction is only offered as a means of putting that material into context.

*From Andreas Terfort (Germany)*

I am in receipt of the new issue of *Theosophical History* (III/7-8). My congratulations!

I read the letter of Mr. van Egmond [p. 189], and I have to correct some points in it. Mr. van Egmond's information is misleading because volumes 264 and 265 do not include "all papers of his (Dr. Steiner's Esoteric Section." The first volume (no. 264) does not include "many letters from Annie Besant and other important members." We find only one letter from Dr. Annie Besant in that volume and it only concerns the appointment of Dr. Steiner as Arch-Warden of the E.S. for Germany and the Austrian Empire. The letter is published in facsimile (see page 26 of that volume). We find instead in this same volume about ninety pages of letters written by Dr. Steiner to his personal pupils (and members of the E.S.), several individually imparted meditations (many others not published herein will be published in future editions), and several notes from participants of E.S. meetings.

Letters written by Dr. Annie Besant (and others) to Dr. Steiner will be published in a volume from the series *Rudolf Steiner Studien* at a later date.

The second volume mentioned by Mr. van Egmond has nothing to do with the E.S. of the Theosophical Society. The "Erkenntnis-Kultische Arbeitskreis" (better: "Symbolisch-Kultischer Arbeitskreis") was an inner circle or members of the E.S. so to speak. All materials not yet published will be edited in coming years.

The right date of publication of the two volumes is 1984 and 1987, not 1904 and 1907.

## H. P. BLAVATSKY'S INFLUENCE IN LITERATURE

I. M. Oderberg<sup>1</sup>

The catalytic effect of H.P. Blavatsky's entry into Western culture is still in progress. Some material has been published about her influence upon literature and the arts. For example, Dr. Denis Saurat, formerly professor of French literature at King's College, London University, published in 1930 his *Literature and the Occult Tradition—Studies in Philosophical Poetry*.<sup>2</sup> He devoted a whole chapter to the writings of H. P. Blavatsky, claiming that she provided a mine of information relative to the subject of occultism. He saw her work as providing contributions to the compositions of some major poets. He referred to her as "an authorized witness of contemporary occultism... almost all of whose doctrines is to be found in fragments here and there in our poets, because, in spite of some appearances to the contrary, she had a modern mind." (p.66)

He states that he had chosen out of "Madame Blavatsky's colossal work the various features of the synthesis of occultism which she popularized at the end of the nineteenth century under the name of Theosophy. Her chief book, *The Secret Doctrine*, published in English in 1888, is a

kind of modern summary of occultism which made use of the data found in all works of this sort since the Renaissance. A kind of Indian veneer has been laid over the structure, but in its materials and build it is European. It is to Fludd, d'Espagnet, Court de Gébelin, Bailly, Fabre d'Olivet, Eliphas Lévi, that the ideas expressed by Madame Blavatsky belong, and their origin further back lies in the occultism of the Renaissance." (p.67)

This is almost a caricature of the case! Blavatsky was an "Opener of the Ways"—to use an Egyptian expression—into a new cycle of human culture and the reexpression of old principles that have stood the test of time. Among her tasks as a Messenger from the inheritor-guardians of an ancient core of wisdom teachings, was to restate those principles to suit the modern, and also the as yet unborn, mores: the new characteristics that are starting to unfold from their latent state. She said the kernel of it all was universal in scope, which includes the times and the age-old expressions of it. To provide a solid foundation of evidence for her assertion that these wisdom-teachings have come down to us from ancient periods, she referred to and translated some of their previous expressions in the various languages of peoples separated widely as to their epochs and locations. Dr. Saurat made the mistake—as others before him and since

<sup>1</sup>I. Manuel Oderberg is the research librarian for the Theosophical University Library, Pasadena (California).

<sup>2</sup>Denis Saurat, *Literature and the Occult Tradition*. Translated by Dorothy Bolton (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1930).

have done—of regarding the quotations and references in *The Secret Doctrine* as indications of *source material* instead of being, or providing evidence for, her claim of the *universality* of the concepts. Dr. Saurat has summarized:

We have in Madame Blavatsky a precious witness: she gives us in a genuinely rough state the only material in the great occultist quarry which was capable of being worked by the poets. What she rejected was, no doubt, almost totally impossible for the modern mind to assimilate. (p. 69)

The term "rough state" is surely inadequate to express the great subtlety of the cosmology in *The Secret Doctrine*, when he asserts in summarizing it that "God is the noumenon: unfathomable, intangible...." The term "God," as it has been used in the West for a "Person" who is somehow infinite, is really only an aggrandizement of the personal qualities of a human being. Dr. Saurat's definition is remote from the *Secret Doctrine's* profound philosophy of the manifestations of consciousness in a never-ending efflorescence of ever-more spiritual qualities emerging out of the subjective state we can only term potentiality or latency. The vast cycles of the birth of cosmos; the appearances of worlds and their disappearance into their rest-periods, to reemerge into materializing activities again and again in a series of reembodiments that elevates the very substance penetrated by the divine urge to grow, is not only more vast but it is also more exciting than what is offered in its stead.

Incomprehension is indicated by Dr.

Saurat's reference to the theosophic view of the "creation" as meaning a "degradation" of spirit into matter. As implied above, the *Secret Doctrine* references relate the immersion into material life of the divine "sparks" within each entity as involving also necessary evocations within the material particles of such qualities that result in the elevation of matter itself. Indeed, to go further: spirit and matter are perceived as a continuum—positive and negative poles of the essence of Being that Blavatsky finds can only be expressed in English as "Be-ness" because the language has not the metaphysical equivalents for those of the older languages such as the Sanskrit.

By limiting the anthropological side of the creation to the references to the various races mentioned in the *Secret Doctrine*, such names offered as "Lemurian," "Atlantean," and so forth, and ignoring the implication that the terms "Root-races,"—i.e. "stock-races"—and their subdivisions into "sub-races," "family-races," and the like, relate to the graduated unfoldment from within outwards of human qualities, is to miss the whole import of the *Secret Doctrine's* concept of evolution: the emergence from within of subjective, latent, faculties or potentials, into active, objective, manifestations. Such an abbreviated coverage of this theme that Dr. Saurat gives suffers from the compression as much as from the lack of due consideration.

Nevertheless, much can be gleaned from his enclosed diagram. Many more concepts, some of greater importance than those selected by Dr. Saurat, could be added to the list he chose, especially those in the *Secret*

Blavatsky	Folk lore	Egypt	India	Ancient Greece	Neo-Plato	Hermes	Bible (Judaism)	Zohar	Spenser	Milton	Blake	Shelley - (Wordsworth)	Emerson	Whit-man	Goethe	Wagner	Nietzsche	Hugo Lamarine Vigny
Noumenon God			♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Hermaphrodite	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Incest	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Logos: emanations			♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
God—Cosmos	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Divine Matter-Substance	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Fall: Creation			♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Failure of First Creations	♦					♦		♦			♦					♦		♦
The First Races	♦			♦			♦	♦			♦							♦
Incarnation of the Higher Ones			♦			♦					♦							♦
Mineral-plant Kinship	♦				♦					♦	♦	♦			♦			♦
Animal Kinship	♦	♦		♦		♦			♦	♦	♦	♦					♦	♦
Multiple Falls	♦				♦		♦	♦		♦	♦	♦						♦
The Non-Mental	♦								♦		♦					♦		♦
The Division into Sexes	♦					♦	♦	♦		♦	♦							♦
Advantages of the Fall							♦	♦		♦	♦	♦		♦				♦
Reincarnation	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦			♦		♦		♦	♦				♦
Cycles and Returns	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦				♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Eternal Plans: Fate			♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Elements 3, 4, 7, 10, etc.			♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Macro and Microcosm			♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Sensuality—Woman	♦					♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Reason and Passion				♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Normal Immortality	♦					♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Desire and Matter Good	♦					♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
The Elect: Liberty						♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
The Regeneration: The Total Man or Unique Being						♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦

Dr. Denis Saurat's diagram to indicate concepts in H.P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* and found in sources from folk-lore to nineteenth century authors.

*Doctrine.* It is a remarkable compilation indeed, all of it supportive of Blavatsky's claim that she brought only the string that tied together universal truths. She did not invent the separate concepts, nor did she cull them only from medieval, Renaissance or similar European sources. With the flow of the centuries, many previous expressions of the old wisdom to which she refers had suffered from accretions—misunderstandings and also "interpretations" that were merely the opinions of later speculators upon the meaning of old terms, yet older key ideas. What she expressed in her endeavors was derived from the actual fountain-head of the

previous outflows of what is termed a never-ending stream of wisdom/knowledge.

The name of the great Russian composer and pianist Alexander Scriabin has been mentioned in earlier studies discussing the influence of H.P.B. on the arts and sciences. Recently, a biography of Scriabin by his brother-in-law Boris de Schloezer<sup>3</sup> has been published for the first time in an English translation from the Russian by Nicolas Slonimsky, with introductory essays by Marina Scriabine, the composer's daughter.

<sup>3</sup>*Scriabin: Artist and Mystic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).

Among the many references to Theosophy and H.P.B. that occur throughout the book, de Schloezer writes:

[Scriabin] felt greatly beholden to Mme. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* in his own development; indeed he felt tremendous admiration for Mme. Blavatsky to the end of his life. He was particularly fascinated by her courage in essaying a grandiose synthesis and by the breadth and depth of her concepts, which he likened to the grandeur of Wagner's music dramas... He said that Mme. Blavatsky was the only great theosophist... The theosophic vision of the world served as an incentive for his own work. "I will not discuss with you the truth of theosophy," he declared to [Schloezer] in Moscow, "but I know that Mme. Blavatsky's ideas helped me in my work and gave me power to accomplish my task." (p. 68-9)

The *Hermetica*<sup>4</sup> is a term that has come into increasing prominence in the twentieth century. While Dr. Saurat seems to include medieval texts that were indiscriminately given this name, the original entitlement is to the *Corpus Hermeticum*, also called the *Hermetica*, purportedly ancient Egyptian texts reaching us in the form of Greek and Latin translations. Some portions of this heritage were translated into European languages in previous centuries. A diligent search for additional material culminated in 1924 with the publication of a collection of texts translated by Walter Scott (not the novelist)

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<sup>4</sup>Edited and translated by Walter Scott (not the novelist). Four volumes [vol. IV completed by A.S. Ferguson] (London: Oxford University Press, 1926-1936). [A later edition was published by Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1968.] English and source texts facing pages and with introduction, notes and appendices.

in four volumes, the fourth of which was completed by Professor A. S. Ferguson who "apologised" for and rejected Scott's "mystical" approach. The work contains the texts in their original Greek or Latin form, with the English translation on facing pages. This has the advantage of enabling the checking back of terms to the original to discern whether the translation has been colored by modern, Western cultural ideas. An earlier edition of the *Hermetica* was translated by G.R.S. Mead, a noted scholar of Greek and gnostic texts and of those of early Christianity, who was also H.P. Blavatsky's last private secretary. He published his own English translation in 1906, under the title *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*<sup>5</sup>, in three volumes. Both Scott's and Mead's translations have been reprinted. In addition to these, there has been a French translation by the Jesuit scholar A.J. Festugière<sup>6</sup>, with the original language texts on facing pages with the French translation.

Certain terms, such as *logos*, used anciently by Neoplatonists especially, and also by early gnostic Christians, appear in the *Hermetica*, leading Father Festugière to assume that the old hermetic material, available now in paperback, followed *after* and was actually derived *from* Christian writings, *not the reverse*.

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<sup>5</sup>G.R.S. Mead, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*. Three Volumes. First edition (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906). Reprinted by S. Weiser, 1992.

<sup>6</sup>A.J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum*, volume IV. Third edition (Paris: Les Belles Lettres Societé, 1946. French translation facing pages with Greek and Latin texts. Based on the A.D. Nock text [reprinted in Paris in 1972].

What has been forgotten in controversies such as this one is that the creator of the Alexandrian Library, the second Greek Pharaoh: Ptolemy II, Philadelphus, had instructed the first librarians to search out good texts of important works and, having secured them, to search for the best scholars to translate them from their various languages into Alexandrian Greek. So it should not surprise us to learn that, for instance, the concept translated *logos* is to be found not only in the New Testament, but also in the old Hermetic writings, for there can be no doubt that the Egyptian Tehuti (Greek: Thoth) is a term for the 'Mind' of the Divinity that animates the spiritual entity of which our physical sun is the body. Like *logos*, too, Thoth covers a wide range: not only the sun, but also the cosmos, for instance. Blavatsky, in her major works *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* refers to the *Hermetica* and quotes not alone the texts indicated above but refers also to others. Classic writers of ancient times referred to a considerable number of volumes termed the *Books of Thoth*<sup>7</sup>, and while figures mentioned for that collection might well be inflated, there can be no doubt that such a body of texts existed, for instance, as the *Secret Doctrine* indicates, passages contained in the *Hermetica* are to be found on Egyptian monuments dated to early dynasties (II: 506).

Texts cited in the *Secret Doctrine* include quotations from and references to the old Chinese heritage as well as to the Indian,

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<sup>7</sup>The Greeks identified Thoth with their Hermes, hence the names Corpus Hermeticum and The Hermetica.

showing that the phrase used by Dr. Saurat describing Blavatsky's major work as having an "Indian veneer" placed over the European contributions—going back ultimately to the Renaissance period—is a misleading viewpoint.

John Godwin's assessment of the many groups claiming to present "esoteric" material appeared in his book *Occult America*, published in America in 1972<sup>8</sup>. He stated that those meetings he attended presented "occult" knowledge that he had recognized as originating in Blavatsky's works though the words were taken out of context and were offered by speakers as their own contributions. Some of these presentations were even distorted when compared with the originals, but nonetheless did indicate how widely her influence had spread. Among such topics should be included the idea that at cyclic intervals there are renewals of seminal ideas "whose time has come," and one such illustration is the manner with which the "age of Aquarius" was presented and has caught on, a "folk opera" of this title being an illustration.

What has been called the "Irish Literary Revival" movement, born late last century and spilling over into our own, has received wide publicity through various books, monographs, and articles. The names of such authors as William Butler Yeats, the great poet, his friend and fellow author and theosophist, George W. Russell ("Æ"), another such friend Charles Johnston, a noted Sanskrit scholar in his day, and yet

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<sup>8</sup>New York: Doubleday and Co.

others forming the nucleus of the Revival movement, have appeared in many assessments of the flowering of Irish literature during the past hundred years.

Ernest A. Boyd devoted a whole chapter in his authoritative study *Ireland's Literary Renaissance*<sup>9</sup> to the group he called "The Dublin Mystics—The Theosophical Movement" and, among other credits, he referred to "John Eglinton" (W.K. Magee) as "the theosophists' gift to the Literary Revival, of Ireland's only great essayist." He praised Eglinton's *Pebbles from a Brook* as one of the few books Ireland had produced until then "which challenged comparison with the best prose of any English-speaking country. It transcends the relative standards by which we have to judge the bulk of Anglo-Irish literature" (p. 252).

In addition, he pointed out that while Russian literature was barely becoming known in England, the Dublin theosophists had already introduced it into Ireland when, for example, they fostered the works of R. Ivanovich Lippmann, among others. He was the translator of the works of the famous poet and novelist Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov (1814-1841).

Claude Bragdon relates in his *Episodes from an Unwritten History*<sup>10</sup> that Rudyard Kipling commenced his writing career when he began working in a junior capacity at the Indian newspaper *Pioneer* during the last year there of A.P. Sinnett, then its editor. Bragdon thought that Kipling's first short

story "The Finest Story in the World," with its theme of reincarnation, could have been influenced by his association with Sinnett, the noted recipient of letters from Blavatsky's teachers. The story had been published in the *Pioneer*, and was reprinted among Kipling's other collected material in 1889. Many notable figures in the literary field were affected by the work of Blavatsky and others of her associates. For instance, Sir Edwin Arnold, famous for his poetic life of the Buddha *The Light of Asia*<sup>11</sup>, gave Colonel Olcott some pages of his ms. of that work after he had attended a meeting at which Blavatsky spoke.

It would be possible to make a large book detailing the Blavatskian influence upon her times and in the fields of literature, especially upon some of her contemporaries such as Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian poet, novelist, dramatist, and symbolist; and other outstanding figures in various fields in the arts and sciences, among them Sir William Crookes, the chemist, and Carter Blake, F.R.S., the anthropologist. This essay can be but an introduction to a very broad theme.

<sup>9</sup>Dublin: Maunsel.

<sup>10</sup>Rochester, N.Y.: Manas Press, 1910.

<sup>11</sup>First edition (London: Trübner and Co., 1879). Many editions have appeared since the initial edition.

# RUSSIAN WAYS TO THEOSOPHY

Dr. Dmitri Spivak<sup>1</sup>

Russia is to be considered more a world unto itself rather than a country as a political entity. Thanks to the recent liberties granted to its citizens, Russia is beginning to open herself to the world. This is particularly true regarding the spiritual realm. There is little doubt that we are going to witness a vivid exchange of spiritual values between the Russian civilization and the rest of the world. It is Theosophy that should be given the place of honor among the doctrines that will contribute to the mediation and facilitation of this exchange.

A display of tremendous responsibility in its approach to spiritual problems and its respect to the heritage of various cultures have been the hallmark of more than a hundred years of activity on the part of the Theosophical Society. A considerable amount of publishing activity by Russian theosophists in the pre-revolutionary years has already contributed to the development of Russian culture. In this regard, it is especially appealing to a Russian that Madame Blavatsky came from Russia.

Of course, the doctrine founded by Madame Blavatsky is universal; it is not to be limited by national borders. Still, from the Russian point of view, what occurs now is not importation of Theosophy from abroad but its return home.

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<sup>1</sup>The author is grateful to Mr. and Mrs. John Minor for valuable discussions; and to Miss I. Hoskins and Mr. C. Berg for encouraging the appearance of this report.

What aspects of Russian esoteric culture influenced the formation of the spiritual personality of Madame Blavatsky? The question is not only of historical interest. Such aspects, if properly assessed, are able to present the most natural ways for the contemporary Russians to come to theosophy.

Further discussion will concentrate around three aspects: Orthodox Yoga, Russian Gurus, and the Northern Passage to Shambhala. The titles are preliminary, tentative, and designed for approximate delimitation of the topic.

## Orthodox Yoga

It was not uncommon for a wayfarer making his way on a sledge through the Russian countryside only a hundred years ago to discern through the snowfall a weird picture of an immobile ascetic figure deeply immersed in pious meditation seemingly not paying any attention to the frost. Moreover, snow seemed to melt under the place where he was seated on the ground, and on his slender body. Such ascetics practiced Hesychasm ((from the Greek word *hesychia* "quiet"). In the seclusion of cells and wilderness they assumed ritual postures, controlled their breath and fixed their gaze on one point. Often it was the navel which gave

Hesychasts the famous nickname of "navel contemplators." Such minute problems as the size of the meditation bench or the exact points on the body where breath was to be directed drew special attention in their quiet talks.

The similarity to yoga of this practice, as noticed by a number of researchers,<sup>2</sup> does not seem to be superficial. Hesychasm is firmly traced back to the psychotechnic culture of Hellenistic Egypt and to the civilizations of the Middle East. It seems to have experienced a fruitful contact with Sufism in the course of its development.

The principal peculiarity of Hesychasm, however, is that it has been the official doctrine of the Orthodox Church since the fourteenth century. Primarily tailored for and elaborated by the monks, it has been in principle accessible to the laity as well. References to such practices, taught to women as well, are not uncommon in the Russian literature of the nineteenth century.

A Hesychast's outlook was determined by the doctrine of the Orthodox Energetism.<sup>3</sup> The rationale of this complicated teaching is that vibrations ("energies") emanated by God are to be met by the human vibrations in the act of direct intercourse. In this framework ascetic practices are applied as effective means of refinement of the human energies.

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<sup>2</sup>E. von Ivánka, "Byzantinische Yogis?" *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 102/2 (1952): 235-39.

<sup>3</sup>S. Horuzhy. "Karsavin i de Mestzse," *Voprosy Filosofii* (Moscow), no. 3 (1989): 79-92.

"By grace we become gods ourselves," contended Hesychasts on the result of their practices as early as in the fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> To what extent were such statements possible and normal for the contemporary Catholics or Muslims? Answering this question might contribute to the assessment of the inner liberty of Hesychasts.

## Russian Gurus

Spiritual progress is impossible without guidance of a teacher. Such is the dominant theme of the Russian esoteric tradition. This is why the inner quest began with an ordinary journey. Only a century ago there were many teachers who were accessible and who welcomed visitors. Some of the latter were satisfied by a single talk, returning to that talk often in their thoughts in the course of their lives. Others humbly asked for a demonstration of special gifts since the teachers often developed the faculties of soothsayer and healer. And finally the chosen might grow into disciples.

A disciple's way was long and complicated. The disciple would begin by submitting his will and consciousness to the teacher, who thus assumed total responsibility for his life. The following inner journey was done along the route checked by the

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<sup>4</sup>G. Prohorov, "Isihazm i obshchestvennaya mysl v Vostochnoy Europe v XIV veke," *Trudy otdela dzeuneznsskoy literatury* (St. Petersburg), 23 (1968): 86-108.

teacher; it was done together. This "spiritual collectivism" formed the core of the sophisticated phenomenon called Starchestvo (a literal translation from the Russian is "elderhood" or guidance by an elder).

The Starchestvo, as were other good ideas, was borrowed from the Byzantine Orthodoxy. But it came to exquisite refinement and fruition due to the age-old esoteric teaching tradition of Russia, which may be traced back to the sources common for it and for the Indian tradition of gurus.

The institution of Starchestvo occupied a unique position in relation to the church hierarchy; in Russia they have always co-existed, but rarely coincided. It has never been unusual for an important bishop, respected for his piety and wisdom, to turn into a humble disciple visiting a taciturn elder living somewhere in the woods.

The last apex of the Starchestvo phenomenon in Russia occurred in the nineteenth century. Its peculiarity was clearly seen by attentive observers. One of the most brilliant disciples of an elder characterized them as meditators and gnostics inseparably rooted in the loamy and black soil of Russia<sup>6</sup> (St. Paul Florensky, 1906).

## Northern Passage to Shambhala

The "*Rahmanic Great Day*" was a unique festival celebrated in Old Russia on Holy Saturday. Eggs were painted by ritual

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<sup>6</sup>St. Paul Florensky, 1906: cited from N. Semenkin, *Filosofia Bogoiskatelstva* (Moscow: Politisdat, 1986), 39.

symbols of immortality, then smashed and let float downstream in a nearby river. For the next four weeks people kept returning to them in their thoughts, as it was known that at the end of this period, on Wednesday, the shells would reach the island of *Rahmans*, a people of unique piety and wisdom. The only thing they could not have was a calendar. Seeing the shells they rejoiced over the kindness of faraway peasants letting them know about Easter in such a fashion.

The major rivers of Southern Russia where this festival was celebrated flow to the South. But even without this hint of the location of the island, the relation of *Rahmans* to India does not evoke serious doubts. It is confirmed by a thousand year old tradition of Russian letters. The name *vrahman*—is firmly associated with the Sanskrit *brahman*—(the initial "v-" was dropped at the beginning of the XIV century). By the way, the name of the famous composer Rachmaninov derives from the term *rahman*-.

It would be a mistake, however, to identify the locale where the shells originate with India. Any peasant would point out that the island of the *Rahmans* is one thing, and the "kingdom of India" is quite another. The same peasant would further indicate that the inhabitants of the former were holy people who spent their time fasting, practicing pious exercises by assuming ritual postures, and praying to the earth and the sky. Their rituals reveal a similarity to Egyptian, Persian, and Judaic wise men. No wonder, then, that their chanting was listened to by the celestial hierarchies, and that their island abounded in

miracles. Indians, on the other hand, are but ordinary men encumbered with all their natural drawbacks. Furthermore, both countries border one another. If the image of India was generally in line with contemporary knowledge, the information concerning the island of *Rahmans* tended to contradict it; e.g., it was persistently emphasized that the appearance of water as white as milk was the sign that one was approaching the holy land.

Wishing to resolve such contradictions, contemporary scholars tend to identify *Rahmans* with some communities of Ajivikas or Jains, dismissing geographic details as fictitious.<sup>6</sup>

However, attentive readers of the old manuscripts sense that the authors are referring to a real country. One remark speaks of July and August as being the coolest months in the land of the *Rahmans*; another notes that many mahogany logs are brought by stream to shore, and so forth. (Some of these remarks elaborate topics touched upon by earlier Greek writers, especially the ninth century chronicler, Georgios Hamartolos). Did they allude to esoteric geography?

This assumption is corroborated by the development of the "Indian complex" in traditional Russian esoteric thought. Its latest surge occurred in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries in the community of Russian Old Believers. It assumed the guise of *Belovodye* (literally, White Water Land),

inhabited by chaste and holy people who closely resembled the *Rahmans*. Maps detailing the route to *Belovadye* and tales of people visiting it circulated throughout the country. Finally, not only daring adventurers but whole families left their villages to undertake the mystical journey. Little is known of their fate.

Summing up the esoteric geography of this tradition, we might approximately situate the White Water Land to the East of Russia, between the Ural Mountains and some river belonging to the Indian fluvial system (probably the Ganges). According to some additional considerations, the passage leading to *Belovadye* could be in the Altai Mountains. Is there a more plausible answer than Tibet, or rather Shambhala?

## Possible Influences

The three aspects briefly touched upon above not only existed but flourished in the place and time where the formation of the personality of Madame Blavatsky occurred. Every curious person was more or less informed about them. In principle, they could have influenced this personality which later came to be reflected in her teaching. Let us turn to some more direct arguments, discussing them in the same order as the aspects.

Firstly, Madame Blavatsky is known to have sincerely respected the teachings of the Slavic Church Fathers; she characterized them as "Aumreligion" (we cite here from the

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<sup>6</sup>V. Shohin, *Dzevnaya India v Kulture Rusi (XI Sezedina XV Veka)* (Moskow: Nanka Publishers, 1988), 249.

German text of the well-known monograph by W. Schelichowskaja.<sup>7</sup> According to the same source, she had a positive meeting with the exarch of Georgia (and later, Metropolitan of St. Petersburg) Ysidor; there is little doubt he was instructed in the above-mentioned teachings and in Hesychasm. So the influence of orthodox yoga could be possible.

Secondly, there is an interesting passage in the work *Practical Occultism* where Madame Blavatsky discusses the import of the relations between a teacher and a disciple. As a model of such relations the Orthodox Catholic tradition is proposed as opposed to both Roman Catholic and Protestant branches of Christianity. There is a certain vagueness about this passage. The text speaks of the godfather, but there is no great difference in this respect between the three aforementioned branches of Christianity. At the same time, the tradition of elders (that is, not godfathers but "fathers-in-god") undoubtedly is very specific for the Orthodox creed. Unfortunately, I do not have access to the original text of the work discussed. Studying it could help us better understand Madame Blavatsky's attitude to the Russian *gurus*.

Thirdly, the motif of a mystical journey over the Urals to Tibet and her return with esoteric knowledge may be found in the writings of Madame Blavatsky. She mentioned her finding such records in the Masonic archives of Russia (evidently dating from the first quarter of the nineteenth

century). Intermediary in such studies could be the famous Freemason and mystic Count Golitsyn; it is to be noted that shortly after making his acquaintance, Madame Blavatsky started her first journey. Thus, preliminary information about Tibet could be acquired via the informants having used the Northern Passage to it.

## Experiential Session

Information is not only to be discussed but is to be directly experienced. This is why the present report includes a brief experiential session. Its objective is to meditate in the traditional Russian way on the aspects discussed.

There is no sense in giving a full description of the meditation procedure. It is to be created *ad hoc* as a result of the collective will of the meditating group. A detailed description of its elements, however, is justified.

The difficulty about teaching traditional Russian meditation is its vagueness; in contrast to the West, it is not organized around comfortable retreats and workshops, standard manuals, or certified teachers. The cause is both the traditional modesty of esoteric teachers, and the pressure of the atheist state, driving them to the grass root level. It would be presumptuous for the author, being barely initiated, to propose some system of his own. Our decision is to propose those elements that are common for the majority of schools and which are well-described in the literature.

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<sup>7</sup>H.P. Blavatsky-Ihr Leben und Ihr Wirken (Schweidnits: P. Frömsdorf, 1905), 6.

The session is based on the Hesychast breath control. Its general purport is to "by bodily positions depict the mental, the divine, and the spiritual" as formulated by Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup> The elements are grouped into four blocks.

The first block includes physiological notions important for breath control. They are respiratory organs (lips, nostrils, mouth, windpipe, lungs), organs helping to regulate breath (eyes, the tip of the nose, chin, knees, belly, and of course the navel), secretions testifying to progress in exercises (tears, sweat), and finally those technical terms introducing more complicated procedures (most popular of which superposing points called Head and Heart).<sup>9</sup>

The second block includes postures, static and dynamic. Speaking of the former, we are reminded of the classical image of a Hesychast quietly sitting with his chin pressed against his breast, eyes directed to the tip of his nose or navel awaiting the moment when the vibrations of divine light would begin to diffuse from his heart. Other postures include standing (hands raised and relaxed, chin pressed to the breast), or kneeling (waist straightened or bent). Dynamic postures are primarily slow bows (to the waist or to the ground, from twelve to twenty at a session), and more complex

forms of simple periodic movement (like spinning).

The third block includes psychological processes, like imagination and memory. The Hesychast axiom is that one should decidedly refrain from contemplating images, both spontaneously arising, and deliberately induced, at all stages of training (except probably the final, and sometimes the initial). In practice, however, this unbending intent to work with pure and shapeless vibrations was modified and allowed for some geometrical symbolism. There were some instructions which were to be carried through various states. These were often conceived as graphic schemes. We might propose here images based on a circle (a circle with radii, or a four-pointed star with a circle in the center), or on a square (a stairway, or grills of sophisticated structure).

The fourth block is phonation. The texts are pronounced in an unhurried and measured manner (synchronized after respiratory rhythms, or heartbeats), mentally, or more often, under one's breath. A contemporary meditator accustomed to pronouncing suggestion formulas during the exhalation, may be surprised at the emphasis laid upon working with texts during the inhalation, and the pause after it.

The four blocks as well as elements forming them are joined according to proportions derived from traditional numerology.

In using the breathing exercises described above, in the context of Theosophy, it would be natural to resort to numerology inherent in the sacred symbols of this doctrine. The

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<sup>8</sup>The reference to St. Gregory Palamas is cited from Dobrotolubie, volume V (Moscow: St. Panteleimon Monastery Publishers, 1989), 323.

<sup>9</sup>These "points" as they are called in the original ms. correspond to the cakras.

author could tentatively propose the White Lotus as such a symbol.

## **Conclusion**

Russian ways to Theosophy are marked by a certain peculiarity and considerable hidden potential. A comparison of their methods might be elaborated by tracing back their transformation in the teachings of such otherwise incomparable personalities as Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, Florensky, Roerich, and Andreyev.

# Theosophical Influence in Baha'i History

Paul Johnson

In the first half-century of its existence, the Baha'i Faith was a heretical sect of Shi'a Islam, concentrated in Iran and adjacent countries. In 1844, Siyyid Ali Muhammad proclaimed himself the Bab (Gate), a divinely inspired prophet with a mission to reform Persian society. In the next few years his message spread throughout the country and his followers numbered in scores of thousands. Increasingly severe government persecution culminated in the Bab's public execution in 1850 and the extermination of thousands of his followers. Among Babi leaders exiled to Baghdad was Mirza Husain Ali, who gradually emerged as the Bab's successor. Known by the title Baha'u'llah (Glory of God), Husain Ali publicly proclaimed himself the second Manifestation of God promised by the Bab. Most of the Babis accepted his claims, thus becoming Baha'is. Baha'u'llah and his family were exiled to Adrianople, Constantinople and finally to Akka in Palestine where he died in 1892. Baha'u'llah's extensive writings provide a foundation for Baha'i beliefs. But his eldest son, Abdu'l Baha, succeeded Baha'u'llah as leader of the faithful, and modified the religion in a way which reveals an unrecognized aspect of the influence of the Theosophical Society.

The Baha'i Faith began its penetration of the West almost immediately upon Abdu'l Baha's succession, and continued this

expansion throughout his leadership. The 1893 Parliament of Religions is a remarkable event in American history from a number of points of view. For Theosophists, it brought a breakthrough into public acceptance and awareness which had hardly seemed possible a few years previously. For members of the Baha'i Faith, the Parliament of Religions is equally important, for it marks the first public exposure of their religion in the United States.

The book *God Passes By* is regarded by Baha'is as an authoritative history of their faith. It was written by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith from 1921 until his death in 1957. He writes:

It was on September 23, 1893, a little over a year after Baha'u'llah's ascension, that, in a paper written by Rev. Henry Jessup, D.D., Director of the Presbyterian Missionary Operations in North Syria, and read by Rev. George A. Ford of Syria, at the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, in connection with the Columbian Exposition, commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, it was announced that "a famous Persian Sage," "the Babi saint," had died recently in Akka, and that two years previous to his ascension "a Cambridge scholar" had visited Him, to whom He had expressed "sentiments so noble, so Christ-like" that the author of the paper, in his "closing words," wished to share them with his audience.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Baha'i, 1970), 256.

Within a year, a Syrian Baha'i, Dr. Ibrahim Khayru'llah, resident in Chicago, began to proselytize in that city. The gradual growth of the Baha'i Community in America and elsewhere in the West was warmly encouraged by Abdu'l Baha. When political changes in the Ottoman Empire freed him from house arrest in 1909, he was able to plan a series of travels which would catapult him and the Baha'i Faith into public prominence throughout the Western world. Prior to this his only contact with Western Baha'is had been through their pilgrimages to Palestine.

The Western travels of Abdu'l Baha began September 4, 1911, when he sailed from Cairo for Marseilles. He spent most of the fall of 1911 in London and Paris, returning to Egypt for the winter of 1911-12. On March 25, 1912, he departed for New York, which was a beginning of an eight-month tour of America. During this visit he traveled to thirty-eight cities from coast to coast. On his return trip he visited Europe again, this time including Scotland, Germany, Austria and Hungary in his travels as well as England and France. He returned to Haifa on December 5, 1913.

Abdu'l Baha captured the imagination of thousands with his flowing white beard, his turban and robes, his gentle humor, and his eloquence in proclaiming the Baha'i beliefs. His endurance and stamina were the marvel of his hosts, yet the most remarkable feature of his presence in the West was, as described by Shoghi Effendi, "the genuineness and warmth of His sympathy and loving-kindness shown to friend and

stranger alike, believer and unbeliever, rich and poor..."<sup>2</sup> A constant stream of visitors filled his days, described by Lady Blomfield, his hostess in London, as "ministers and missionaries, oriental scholars and occult students, practical men of affairs and mystics, Anglicans, Catholics, and Non-conformists, Theosophists and Hindus, Christian Scientists and doctors of medicine, Muslims, Buddhists and Zoroastrians."<sup>3</sup>

The Baha'i message of world brotherhood found an inspiring spokesman in Abdu'l Baha, and Theosophists figured among the most frequent hosts of his appearances. Annie Besant visited the Baha'i leader during his stay in London, as did A.P. Sinnett on numerous occasions. Each invited him to address the T.S. at its London headquarters.<sup>4</sup> The President and former Vice-President of the T.S. were apparently as impressed by Abdu'l Baha's holiness as he was by their hospitality and eclecticism. Abdu'l Baha's personal magnetism transcended the barriers of language. He addressed Theosophical gatherings in New York, and Theosophists appear even more prominently in the record of his Paris visit. Lady Blomfield recollected that:

Every morning, according to His custom, the Master expounded the principles of the teaching of Baha'u'llah to those who gathered round him, the learned and the unlearned, eager and respectful.

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<sup>2</sup>*God Passes By*, 283.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, 283.

<sup>4</sup>Bloomfield, Sarah, *The Chosen Highway*. (Wilmette: Baha'i, 1967), 154.

They were of all nationalities and creeds, from the East and from the West, including Theosophists, agnostics, materialists, spiritualists, Christian Scientists, social reformers, Hindus, Sufis, Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and many others.<sup>5</sup>

It seems unlikely to be a mere coincidence that Theosophists appear first in the above list, for in a visit to Vienna of only a few days, Abdu'l Baha addressed "a gathering of Theosophists in that city."<sup>6</sup> This is his only public appearance there recorded by Shoghi Effendi. In a somewhat more extended visit to Budapest he again addressed the T.S., and was visited by "Professor Robert A. Nadler, the famous Budapest painter, and leader of the Hungarian Theosophical Society."<sup>7</sup>

All the above may appear no more than an interesting footnote to Theosophical history, by no means substantiating any important relationship between Theosophy and the Baha'i Faith. If the hospitality extended to Abdu'l Baha by Theosophists were the only evidence of a connection, the strongest case one could make would be that Theosophy helped create the atmosphere of "ex oriente lux" which enabled him to be so successful in his travels in the West. However, far stronger evidence of a connection between Theosophy and Baha'i history is to be found in Abdu'l Baha's expression of Baha'i doctrines. Shoghi Effendi lists them among the "basic and distinguishing principles" of the Baha'i Faith

as enunciated by Abdu'l Baha in these travels:

The independent search for truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition; the oneness of the entire human race, the pivotal principle and fundamental doctrine of the Faith; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether religious, racial, class or national; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; the equality of men and women, the two wings on which the bird of human kind is able to soar...<sup>8</sup>

Baha'i historian H.M. Balyuzi refers to Abdu'l Baha's last public address in London, made to the T.S., as "the first time Abdu'l Baha made a systematic presentation of the basic principles of the Faith of his Father."<sup>9</sup> The system, however, owes as much to the audience as to the alleged source. Few will find much to dispute in these principles, but in several key instances, they are unknown in, or contradicted by the teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Bab. The most comprehensive critical view of early Baha'i history is provided in Samuel G. Wilson's *Baha'ism and Its Claims*, published in 1915. Wilson provides many interesting comments on Abdu'l Baha's transformations of Baha'i doctrines. He cites the same Rev. H.H. Jessup, who first brought Baha'u'llah's name to the attention of Americans, as comparing the Baha'i Faith to the town clock in Beirut. "The face turned towards the Moslem quarters has the hands set to tell the hour

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<sup>5</sup>*God Passes By*, 286.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*, 287.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*, 287.

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid*, 281-82.

<sup>9</sup>H.M. Balyuzi, *Abdu'l Baha* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1971), 152.

According to Oriental reckoning; the face towards the Christian quarter, according to the European day."<sup>10</sup>

The stated belief in the independent search for truth is questionable in that the first two duties of man, according to Baha'u'llah's Most Holy Book, the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, are the recognition of Baha'u'llah's authority and obedience to all his commandments. Yet neither this Most Holy Book nor the major work of the Bab, the *Bayan*, is made available in the West for Baha'is or others to peruse. Baha'i authorities from Abdu'l Baha to the present have refused to allow translations of either book into any language. Only a censored "Synopsis and Codification" of the *Aqdas* is published. The same authorities frown upon unauthorized translations and Baha'is who read them. Any member who disobeys Baha'i laws or the dictates of Baha'i authorities (Local Spiritual Assemblies, National Spiritual Assemblies, and the Universal House of Justice) will lose all rights of membership. If he or she publicly or privately proposes heretical doctrines, the classification "Covenant-Breaker" is applied, which is equivalent to "shunning" as practiced by the Amish. No believer is allowed any contact with such a person, on pain of being likewise ostracized. Since Abdu'l Baha was attempting to appeal to a Western audience which had been permeated by Theosophical eclecticism, he wisely downplayed the actual nature of Baha'i "independent investigation of truth."

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<sup>10</sup>Samuel Wilson, *Baha'ism and its Claims* (New York: AMS, 1970), 15-16.

It is indeed true that Baha'u'llah teaches the oneness of humanity, as do many great religious leaders before him. On the subject of the unity of religions, however, we again see Theosophical influence leading Abdu'l Baha to reformulate the doctrine. Nowhere in the writings of Baha'u'llah or the Bab can one find any acknowledgment of the Eastern religious traditions. The succession of prophets in the chain of "progressive revelation" includes Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Abraham, and a few lesser-known figures from the Koran. No other figure is included in Baha'u'llah's descriptions of his own predecessors as Manifestations of God. Yet Abdu'l Baha promotes Buddha and Confucius to this status, and modern Baha'is included Krishna and Zoroaster. It seems clear that Abdu'l Baha and subsequent Baha'is have followed the Theosophical example in honoring all major world religions. Yet again, in so doing they extend beyond the narrow view of the original teachings. Moreover, this "unity" does not really mean tolerance of differences. To the Baha'i, Mohammed, Jesus, et al, were predecessors of the Baha'u'llah, but now the entire human race must become Baha'is or be counted among the "people of error."<sup>11</sup>

Nowhere is there more evidence of duality than on the question of equality of men and women. The Baha'i ruling body, the Universal House of Justice, is limited to all-male membership. In Baha'u'llah's Most Holy Book, men are allowed two wives, but women are limited to one husband.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 38.

Baha'u'llah himself had two wives and a concubine. In his treatment of divorce laws, men can divorce their wives but no allowance is made for the reverse procedure. While Baha'u'llah affirmed the "spiritual" equality of men and women, in practical terms, men and women are not equal in Baha'u'llah's view, which may be one reason why the Most Holy Book and its predecessor, the *Bayan*, are not available to inquirers. Why would Abdu'l Baha (and his modern successors) conceal or misrepresent the Baha'i writings? In 1911 and 1912, the woman's suffrage movement was in full swing in the Western world. The Theosophical audience to which Abdu'l Baha presented his modified Baha'ism was extremely sympathetic to feminism. In appealing to this predominantly female market, Abdu'l Baha de-emphasized or denied (as do his successors) the anti-woman bias in Baha'u'llah's teachings.

According to Wilson, in 1906 the Baha'is of America numbered 1280, while the Theosophists numbered 2336. If that ratio persisted today, Theosophical membership would be twenty-five times greater than it is. Worldwide Baha'i membership has recently been estimated at three million, while all Theosophical bodies combined reach less than fifty thousand. It seems that without the reformulation which Abdu'l Baha derived from the Theosophical example to make Baha'ism more appealing to the West, such growth would not have occurred. It is possible that the stagnation of Theosophical membership is largely due to the immense expansion of other movements which have benefitted by unacknowledged borrowing

from Theosophical teachings. The Baha'is are surely one of the most successful such examples. There is karmic irony in the fact that the T.S. was successful in promoting Abdu'l Baha as an Asian messenger to the West during the same time that it was beginning its ill-fated promotion of Krishnamurti.

The Master is the name by which the early Baha'is called Abdu'l Baha. Upon his death, the London T.S. officials sent this message: "For the Holy Family Theosophical Society sent affectionate thoughts."<sup>12</sup> That this was a reciprocal affection is seen in his blessing, written in the T.S. guest book in London: "He is God! O Lord! Cast a ray from the Sun of Truth upon this Society that it may be illumined."<sup>13</sup>

The partnership between the Baha'is and Theosophists continued throughout the twentieth century, according to Peter Smith's study *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*. Discussing Baha'i propaganda in Europe, he comments:

Contacts with 'other liberal groups' became a particularly characteristic feature of Baha'i activity in Europe between the wars—perhaps accentuated by the European Baha'is' relative lack of success in enlarging their communities and the greater persistence of the 'universalistic movement' conception of their religion. In England such groups included the Fellowship of Faiths, the Free Religious Movement, the New Commonwealth Society, the Quakers and the Unitarians. Everywhere the

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<sup>12</sup>Abdu'l Baha, 456.

<sup>13</sup>ibid, 368.

Theosophical Society provided a convivial home from home.<sup>14</sup>

All the other groups mentioned were specifically English examples of the author's theme, while the T.S. played this role worldwide. In his description of Baha'i efforts to expand into the Third World, Smith again brings the T.S. into the picture. He portrays a crucial shift in emphasis in Baha'i propaganda during the 1950s. Up until that time, Baha'i groups were found mainly in what Smith calls "cultural outliers" of the Iranian homeland, such as Parsis in Bombay. He added that "during the period in which Baha'i expansion was confined to such outliers, Baha'i teaching techniques were almost entirely addressed to establishing contact with liberal and educated religious and social groups, often with meetings sponsored by the local Theosophists or Esperantists, or, on occasion, by a sympathetic university professor."<sup>15</sup> In his discussion of Indian teaching efforts, Smith comments that emphasis was placed on "public lecture tours, with talks being given in universities and business association meetings and under the auspices of fellow 'liberal' organizations such as the Theosophical Society..."<sup>16</sup>

In his letter to A.P. Sinnett reporting "the views of the Chohan on the T.S.," the Master

K.H. wrote "the Theosophical Society was chosen as the corner stone, the foundation of the future religion of humanity."<sup>17</sup> In the case of the Baha'i Faith, the T.S. was indeed the cornerstone of its transformation from a Shi'a sect to the newest independent world religion.

<sup>14</sup>Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions: From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion* (Cambridge, 1987), 149.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 48.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 49.

<sup>17</sup>Margaret Conger, *Combined Chronology for use with the Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett & the Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1973), 44.

# The Loss of Rudolf Steiner

Leslie Price<sup>1</sup>

The separation of Rudolf Steiner from the Theosophical Society, and the subsequent formation of the Anthroposophical Society were important events in theosophical history. What was the cause of the separation? A whole book could probably be written by a historian on the mechanics, and the underlying causation. So far it is difficult to point to any material other than statements from T.S. and A.S. sources.

Rudolf Steiner says in *An Autobiography*<sup>2</sup>:

But since 1906 things occurred in the Society upon whose leadership I had no influence whatever which had the character of spiritualistic aberrations and made it necessary for me to stress ever more emphatically that the section of the Society led by me had absolutely nothing to do with these things. The climax of all this came when it was asserted that Christ would appear in a new earth-life within a certain Hindu boy. For the propagation of this absurdity a special society, The Star of the East, was founded within the Theosophical Society. It was quite impossible for my friends and myself to accept as members of the German Section the members of this Star of the East, as, they, and more especially Annie Besant the president of the Theosophical Society, wished. This was the reason for our exclusion from the Theosophical Society in 1913. Thus we were compelled to establish the Anthroposophical Society as an independent body.

Without necessarily accepting all the statements here made, we may readily identify the step which organizationally, led to the exit of the German section. A General Secretary of the Adyar T.S., or an Executive Committee of a national Section, cannot refuse to accept as members of that Section, those who belong to some other body. T.S. members can join whatever bodies they like. No doubt, as every Theosophical leader from H.P.B. onwards has found, this has made the T.S. a limited instrument for spiritual work, but that is the price to be paid for such advantages as freedom.

Rudolf Steiner rejected profoundly the Star beliefs, and was also aware of the litigation at that time in which Krishnamurti's father tried to regain his son. He like others, could have left the T.S. in disgust. He and his friends could not, constitutionally, introduce as a qualification for membership of the German Section, a stipulation about non-membership of another body.

The *Adyar Bulletin* (January 1914) claimed:

The German Executive Committee had issued a notice, signed by the General Secretary and the Secretary, containing the following:

The Committee of the German Section of the Theosophical Society considers membership of the Order of the Star in the East to be incompatible with membership of the Theosophical Society, and requests members of the Star in the East to withdraw from the Theosophical Society.

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<sup>1</sup>Leslie Price is the founder and former editor of *Theosophical History*.

<sup>2</sup>Steinerbooks, 1980, 362.

The Committee of the German Section will feel obliged to exclude members who do not comply with this request from the German Section.<sup>3</sup>

The response of the Adyar authorities to the crises in Germany, which had been developing for some years, went through several stages, and as in some other schisms, communications were not always good between continents. Naturally Anthroposophical writers are at pains to portray Rudolf Steiner as the innocent victim of Adyar and to lay the blame for the exit on Adyar. Detailed examination of the sequence of steps leading to the A.S. may lead to criticism of this or that act by the international authorities, to whom the problem of aberrant behavior by a national section is not uncommon, but it remains the case that the attempt to exclude Star members from the T.S. by the German Section was constitutionally improper.

It would have been better, if many Germans were so appalled by the Star connection, for them as individuals, to withdraw from the T.S.

## An Anthroposophical View of the Schism

Garber Communications of New York has reprinted in their Spiritual Science Library *The Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner* by Günthter

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<sup>3</sup>*Mitteilungen* March 1913, No 1. Part 1. Translated from the German, and published officially.

Wachsmuth (1893-1963).<sup>4</sup> This biography, which takes a year by year approach to its subject, benefits from the author's personal acquaintance with Dr. Steiner, and his position as Leader of the Natural Science Section of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum.

The book offers one of the most detailed accounts available of the split with the T.S. Unfortunately, the language used is somewhat strong. We read of 'the grotesque announcement by Mrs. Besant that the Hindu youth Krishnamurti was to be the coming Christ' p.167 (which is not quite the role K. as vehicle was expected to have.) Of Dr. Steiner we learn 'He said that to indulge in further argument on the absurd ideas of Mrs. Besant and her representatives in the Society would be senseless' (p.168). He could not agree with the 'absurdities of the Orientalizing Theosophists.' This was in 1911, at the December General Meeting of the German T.S.

Mrs. Besant herself made one statement which was uncalled for, and pointlessly inflamed the situation. In her presidential address of 1912 she declared 'The German General Secretary, educated by Jesuits, has not been able to shake himself sufficiently clear of that fatal influence to allow liberty of opinion within his section.' Dr. Steiner was not in fact educated by the Jesuits.

One Theosophist on the look out for Jesuit influence was A.P. Warrington in the States who wrote to Mrs. Besant on 20 November 1912 'My opinion that Dr. Steiner

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<sup>4</sup>Translated by Olin Wannemaker. Blauvelt, N.Y., 1989.

is an unconscious or conscious Jesuitic agent is confirmed by an article appearing recently over the signature of a non-Theosophist. I had it briefed for you from the German, and enclose the same for your information.<sup>6</sup>

One might propose, as a hypothesis to be cast down by later research, that it was Warrington who put the Steiner as Jesuit idea into Mrs. Besant's head. This provided the opportunity for Wachmuth to speak of 'the grotesque assertion, for instance, that he was a pupil of the Jesuits.' This accusation was deeply wounding to Dr. Steiner; had she confined herself to purely constitutional considerations she would have been, I suggest, right in her interpretation of the T.S. rules.

I hope to discover that Mrs. Besant subsequently withdrew the Jesuit charge.

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<sup>6</sup>Joseph E. Ross, *Krotana of Old Hollywood: 1866-1913* (Montecito, CA: El Montecito Oaks Press, 1989, 194.

# Theosophical History



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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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*Theosophical History* (ISSN 0951-497X) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by James A. Santucci. The journal's purpose is to publish contributions specifically related to the modern Theosophical Movement, from the time of Madame Helena Blavatsky and others who were responsible in establishing the original Theosophical Society (1875), to all groups that derive their teachings - directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly - from her or her immediate followers. In addition, the journal is also receptive to related movements (including pre-Blavatskyite Theosophy, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and the philosophy of Emanuel

Swedenborg to give but a few examples) that have had an influence on or displayed an affinity to modern Theosophy.

The subscription fee for the journal is \$14.00 (U.S., Mexico, Canada), \$16.00 (elsewhere), or \$24.00 (air Mail) for four issues a year. Single issues are \$4.00. All inquiries should be sent to **James Santucci**, *Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.)*.

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\* \* \* \* \*

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# Editor's Comments

## *Theosophical History*: An Independent Journal Of Research

Every so often it is necessary to inform the readers of *Theosophical History* of the mission and goals of the journal. When I first took over the journal, I wrote in the first issue under my editorship (III/1 January 1990) that *TH* would “continue its role as an independent, impartial and scholarly journal conforming to the standards and expectations of the academic community.” It was a declaration that was specifically intended to support Leslie Price’s (the founder-editor of the journal) aspirations. In volume I, number 4 (page 62), he set forth in very explicit terms the degree of independence he considered necessary:

When “Theosophical History” was conceived, our relationship with the Theosophical societies was carefully considered. We decided to be independent, even of the Adyar Society, in which this editor [L.P.] is active....We feared that ownership by one society might lose us the confidence of other societies. We did not want the officers of any Theosophical group to be the target of pressure to stop or censor our publication.

We were worried too, lest any of the fringe groups on the theosophical scene, some of them with limited sympathy for historical enquiry or free discussion, might use their influence to try to control our coverage.

This statement remains in effect. *Theosophical History*, if it intends to maintain its integrity, must continue to be independent and reflect impartial,

academic principles of investigation. In this regard, the journal is first and foremost a **history** journal that considers Theosophical topics from a wholly empirical perspective. This editor does not consider it within his purview to arbitrate what teachings should be considered truly Theosophical or not. What the journal does provide is an inquiry into any and all historical questions within a Theosophical context. Statements of ‘Truth’ or of authenticity within such a context cannot and should not be deliberated; that is best left to Theosophical writers and journals.

As the editor of an historical journal, it is my task to ensure the publication of material that helps to expand our knowledge of Theosophy, to provide a forum for the free and open exchange of ideas, and to encourage the study of this topic within the framework of academic principles. Such principles include intellectual honesty, open-mindedness, and a critical application of research methods. Any violation of such principles, including the attempt to impose any degree of censorship based on some dogmatic, doctrinal, or ideological viewpoint on the one hand, or the exhibition of a lack of or improper utilization of research methods on the other, will not be condoned. The proper application of research methods must at the very least be supported by a sufficient data base; it must be free from any ideological agenda that might distort the data, and the analysis and conclusions must be intellectually rigorous. Readers should only expect from me an unflinching

dedication to intellectual integrity and hard work: nothing more, nothing less.

## Theosophical or theosophical?

The above discussion makes it abundantly clear that the more important term in the journal title is “*History*” and not “*Theosophical*.” Some may be disaffected by this assertion unless one maintains that the *method* of study is more important than the *object* of study. I base this on the strongly held belief that any existent *res*, any topic is worthy of study. All too often, we who are investigators or researchers—whether in religion, philosophy, and science—have to defend the study of a religious movement, a philosophical viewpoint, or an object of scientific inquiry against attack or ridicule based on an indubitably uninformed opinion towards the subject in question. Anything that *is*, is worthy of scrutiny. To take one pertinent example, the study of Theosophy and matters Theosophical in academe should, in my opinion, be allowed to proceed unhindered without recriminations from colleagues who consider the subject insignificant or unworthy. After all, the measure of historical inquiry is coeval with the *totality* of human activity and thought.

It is hardly expected that this history journal will inquire into the totality of human experience: obviously the limitations of the journal are given by the term *Theosophical*. How far afield does this field of inquiry take us? When Leslie Price initiated the journal in 1985, it was his intention to focus primarily on “the foundation of the Theosophical Society in 1875, and the history of the Theosophical movement since then....” He went on to write:

The assessment of a variety of bodies and impulses that claimed to be Theosophical, or even used different terms altogether but were

once part of the same family, is part of our task. Names such as Alice Bailey, Annie Besant, William Q. Judge and Rudolf Steiner that are offensive to this or that group of Theosophists even today, will be found in our pages. (1/1:2)

Mr. Price’s statement is very timely in the present discussion. When I took over TH, it was due in part that it was established as an independent journal committed to an open inquiry into any topic that properly comes under the label “theosophical.” Although he defined the range of “Theosophical” inquiry to be 1875 and later, there was the occasional exception to the rule, such as Leslie Shepard’s “The ‘Anacalypsis’ of Godfrey Higgins.” It was my view that the inclusion of pre-Blavatskyite theosophy and related movements and teachings also would be of interest to the readership. Therefore, the journal’s purpose stated on the inside cover page is evidence of this broader interest.

In order to avoid confusion between what I perceive as two separate categories of “Theosophical” and associated terms, the journal will henceforth employ “Theosophical”, “Theosophist”, and “Theosophy”—all with capital ‘T’—to refer to the societies, individuals, and literature that derive their teachings *directly* from the writings of H.P. Blavatsky. Conversely, ‘theosophy’, ‘theosophical’, and ‘theosopher’ or ‘theosophist’—all with lower case ‘t’—include all teachings, organizations and individuals that may either predate those of H.P. Blavatsky or that possess only an indirect or superficial relationship to modern Theosophical teachings. Thus, ‘Theosophical’ would refer to all the various Theosophical societies (Adyar, Pasadena, U.L.T., and other organizations that are direct descendants of the 1875 T.S.), ‘Theosophist’ to members of such organiza-

tions, and 'Theosophy' specifically to the teachings discussed in the writings of H.P.B. and all publications directly derived therefrom. These writings include those of W.Q. Judge, Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, G. de Purucker, B. P. Wadia, Robert Crosbie, and others who belong to the various Theosophical societies. Organizations such as AMORC, the Rosicrucian Fellowship, the Arcane School, the Anthroposophical Society, more recent movements such as Eckankar, the Church Universal and Triumphant, Morningland, the Aetherius Society, and individuals such as Alice Bailey, Rudolf Steiner, Max Heindel, Manly Hall, may all be considered 'theosophical' or 'theosophers' respectively.

## Theosophical History Foundation

Because of the difficulty and expense in establishing the Theosophical History Foundation as a non-profit corporation with tax exempt status in California, I have come to the conclusion that it would be more advantageous to edit *Theosophical History* and conduct Theosophical History Conferences on a purely private basis. Therefore, the Theosophical History Foundation is undergoing the process of dissolution. Despite this action, no changes regarding the operation and philosophy of the journal are planned or anticipated. Publication and planning for future conferences still rests with me. For legal purposes, I, as editor and publisher of the journal *Theosophical History*, have chosen to do business as [dba] Theosophical History.

Rather than expending time and effort in the business of operating a corporation, it was my decision to draw upon the considerable talents of THF Board members, April and Jerry Hejka-Ekins,

to participate as Associate Editors, thereby enabling them to serve in a more research-oriented capacity. In addition, Karen Voss and Robert Boyd have been chosen to serve as Associate Editors of the journal.

Karen Voss is currently a Ph.D. candidate specializing in esotericism. By her own admission, she is the only Ph.D. candidate in the U.S. who has chosen this subject as her area of specialization. To this end, she is working on her thesis in France with the advice of Professor Antoine Faivre. She serves as a Member of the Comité de rédaction of the journal published by *ARIES*, and since 1991 has been Co-Director of the Hermetic Academy, an affiliated society of the American Academy of Religion. Karen Voss is presently Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies at San Jose State University, where she lectured for five years, and where she designed and taught courses on esotericism and mysticism, and women and religion. From 1988 to 1990, she organized special sessions on esotericism for the American Academy of Religion, Western Region. It is our hope that Professor Voss will keep us informed of contemporary European scholarship on the subjects that concern this journal.

Robert Boyd served as a volunteer at Adyar for several months of each year between 1982 and 1990 during which time he assisted the Honorary Director of the Adyar Library, Dr. K. Kunjuni Rāja. He originally went to India at the invitation of the late Rukmini Arundale and stayed at Kalakshetra for some time. Having begun Theosophical study with Prof. Ernest Wood in Houston, Texas in the early 1960s, Mr. Boyd has over the years met several of the leading Theosophical figures who have now passed from the scene. He was a student at Krotona Institute and during the summer of 1986 volunteered in the library at Wheaton. His academic study was completed at

the University of Madrid (Spain) after which he taught Spanish and Portuguese at Western Illinois University at Macomb and edited a foreign language bulletin for teachers in Illinois. His work in educational travel has taken him to all parts of the world, and he is widely read in several European languages, including French, German, Italian.

# Book Notes

James Santucci

Readers may be interested in one book that was published during the H.P. Blavatsky Centennial (1991) that perhaps has not attracted as much attention or publicity as Daniel Caldwell's two compilations (*The Esoteric She* and *The Occult World of Madame Blavatsky*, both cited in this section, III/7-8): *Blavatsky and the Secret Doctrine* by Max Heindel. A booklet of 89 pages containing a short biography of Heindel (whom many know as the founder of the Rosicrucian Fellowship of Oceanside, California and as the author of *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*) and an introduction by Manly Hall that assesses Heindel's contributions plus additional notes, its primary importance is that it contains, according to Mr. Hall, the "only remaining unpublished manuscript of Max Heindel," which also happens to be his "first literary effort." The basis of this commentary on *The Secret Doctrine* were two lectures that were presented before an audience on the premises of the Theosophical Society in Los Angeles. The only (small) portion of the book that I would take issue with is a two page note by the publisher that contains an attack on the "churchian" or "Neo-Theosophy" of C.W. Leadbeater and a passing negative reference to the theosophy of Alice Bailey. Although intended to be informative, it is an unnecessary and detracting injection of a controversial topic that does not add to our understanding of Heindel's perspective. Published by Wizards Bookshelf (Box 6600, San Diego, CA 92166); price, \$5.00.

One of the more important reference works that have come along in recent years is the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae Canon of Greek Authors and Works* by Luci Berkowitz and Karl A. Squitier (N.Y./Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. lx + 471). Mention of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG), which is currently housed at the University of California at Irvine has already appeared in a previous issue (II/3 July 1987) in connection with a discussion of the occurrence of the form *theosoph-*. Also, the TLG provided the data for an article of mine, "*Theosophia*: Origins of a Name," which appeared in *The American Theosophist* (Fall Special Issue, 1987: 336) minus the original Greek citations included therein. To quote from a circular on the TLG:

The Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) represents twentieth century man's effort to collect, maintain, and preserve those materials which constitute the basis of western civilization. In essence, the TLG is a data bank containing all texts and documents surviving from ancient Greece.

The above-mentioned book is the much-expanded third edition that contains around 9400 individual works by 3200 authors. The total number of words cited in the project is calculated to be 65 million.. The new material included in this edition originates primarily from works after 600 C.E. and up to 1453. The price of the book is \$39.95.

While on the subject of Greek, another reference work from Oxford University Press, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (3 vols., edited by A.P. Kazhdan et al., 1991, pp. li + 2232, \$275), provides considerable information on the language, literature, culture, *realia* and daily life.

*The Modern Encyclopedia of Religions in Russia and the Soviet Union* (edited by Paul D. Steeves, Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press, 1988-1991, \$37.50 per volume) promises to be a major undertaking that will cover a wide range of topics. The publication schedule is projected at three volumes a year with a total of twenty-five volumes comprising the full set. Topics include Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, including articles such as the "All-Russian Muslim League," "the Ancient Slavic Religion," and "Armenian Animal Sacrifice" (volume 1), "Apocalypticism in Russia," "Antireligious Campaigns in USSR" (volume 2), "Apocrypha" (volume 3), the "Blessed Fools," and the "Black Clergy" (volume 4). As of this writing, four volumes have been published.

*Alternative Medicine and American Religious Life* by Robert C. Fuller (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1989, \$19.95) draws attention to the fact that all too often the investigation of a religion is incomplete because of the absence of healing techniques engaged therein. Alternative medical theory and practice based on metaphysical principles was and in some instances still is an important ingredient in American religious life. Subjects include hydropathy, homeopathy, the influence of Mesmer and Swedenborg, and New Age healing. The book fills a gap in our quest to understand the total religious experience.

Two books published in 1989 on Buddhism are worthy of mention here: one a general survey (*An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices* by Peter Harvey [Cambridge: Cam-

bridge University Press] pp. xxii + 374, \$14.95), the other a more advanced text intended as an introduction to Mahāyāna Buddhism (*Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* by Paul Williams [London and N.Y.: Routledge], pp. xii + 317). Harvey divides Buddhism into three traditions: the Southern (for example, Sri Lanka, Burma), Northern (Tibet, Mongolia, Nepal, etc.), and Eastern (China, Japan, North and South Korea among others), with the most emphasis on Southern Buddhist teachings and practice. A chapter, "Buddhism beyond Asia," may be of particular interest to those interested in the spread of Buddhism.

Williams' book demands a more careful reading, especially the chapters "On the bodies of the Buddha," "The path of the Bodhisattva," and "Hua-yen - the Flower Garland tradition." This is an informative book by the Indo-Tibetan Studies Lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Bristol (U.K.).

# The Destiny of Russian Theosophists in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

A.V. Gnezdilov<sup>1</sup>

[(This address) is one in a series of talks given by delegates from the U.S.S.R. to the European Theosophical Federation Congress at Arolsen, in Germany in July 1991. Dr. Gnezdilov, whose grandparents were active members of the Theosophical Society (Adyar) prior to the 1917 revolution and the subsequent closing of the Society in Russia in 1918, is chief of medical and scientific work of the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) Voluntary Charitable Society Hospice. **Joy Mills**]

In these memoirs I would like to honour those little known people who devoted their lives to Theosophy. After the [Russian] Revolution, when the Theosophical Society was dispersed, many of its members shared the destiny of people prosecuted and shut in prisons for their views diverging from the officially imposed way of thinking. Very few of them escaped this misfortune; some, however, survived and returned from captivity. Their names and their destinies are worth being remembered by their successors because in their hearts they kept and nourished the light of the Teaching they served, the light that helped them to go through severe trials with their will and their

Spirit unbroken. They went through the ordeal of fire bravely, and they were still able to share their knowledge, or rather their aspiration for knowledge, that was so characteristic of them. In all its errors and delusions, Russia has been and continues to be the land of Searching Spirit, and this is the guarantee of the eternal life in which, sooner or later, we reach the light of the Truth.

In my life I have met with Theosophists at various times and in different situations; that is why my memories are somewhat incoherent and inconsistent, but so is the outer pattern of life. I say the “outer pattern” because the inner laws - for example, the law of likelihood - govern our lives, and certain interests inevitably attract related circumstances.

I was lucky to be born in a family with Theosophical traditions. My grandmother, Sofia Slobodinskaya, who was born in 1870, lived in Kiev and, by the beginning of the century, led a group that had been studying the works by H.P. Blavatsky, A. Besant, C.W. Leadbeater and others. According to the memoirs of my mother, Nina Slobodinskaya, my grandmother was a very talented and enthusiastic woman who drew all her close friends and relatives to the Theosophical movement. Also, her husband, my grandfather, Konrad Slobodinsky, shared her interests. At first, he was interested in spiritualist seances; later on he was seriously engaged in Theosophy. He studied Sanskrit and helped to translate the *Bhagavad Gītā* and poems of Rabindranath Tagore.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Andrey Gnezdilov is a graduate from the Leningrad Medical Pediatric Institute, has specialized in psychiatry at the Bekhterev Institute of Psychoneurology, and has been associated with the Institute of Oncology for ten years. He is currently a medical director of the First St. Petersburg Hospice. His interests include art and music therapy, sculpture, and writing fairy tales.

He intended to travel to Adyar but circumstances did not allow him. After the Revolution he was arrested for having inconsistent views and died in Tashkent in prison in the 1930s. His wife, Sofia, died in the Caucasus in 1927. At her request she was buried on a slope of a mountain where a small theosophical colony was situated.

Alexander Usov, Sofia Slobodinskaya's brother, lived from 1872 to 1951. He wrote books for children and made many trips. He wrote stories about animals under the pen name "Cheglok." He travelled around the world twice with his friend, the artist Vasili Vatagin, who shared his theosophical ideas. In 1905 Alexander Usov took part in the revolutionary movement in Sochi, then for a period of time lived abroad. He was well-acquainted with A. Lunacharsky, the Peoples' Commissar of Education in the post-revolutionary government, and influenced his views. In 1914-15 Usov founded, with his friends, a small Theosophical ashram in Lazarevskoye, near Sochi, in the Caucasus. Also, in Guarek, a village, he planned to build a sun temple in the shape of a star, which, through a complicated system of mirrors, sunlight would last all day in every corner of the temple. Only design sketches of the temple were completed, however.

In the evenings the Theosophists used to light campfires by the seashore and read poems, meditate and discuss problems. Among those who visited the ashram was Maksimilian Voloshin, a famous poet who was interested in Anthroposophy. At the end of the 1930s, after Lunacharsky had died, Usov was arrested and banished to Siberia. In 1941 he went out from his home to die in freedom, and so never returned.

Among the Russian Theosophists, I would like to mention a good friend of M. Voloshin, poetess Adelaide Gerzik-Zhukovskaya, who lived in Sudak, a town in the Crimea. I heard a lot about her from

her son. She was a very courageous woman. While in captivity, she wrote her memoirs, which were later distributed in Samizdat: *Basement Sketches*.<sup>2</sup> They consist of very fine psychological observations of innocent people who ended up in prison because of their noble origin or for their religious or other convictions. About the character of the descriptions, one can judge from the title of a series describing the life in prison: "Sanatorium of Souls." Adelaide Gerzik-Zhukovskaya saw how unbearable conditions changed the psyche of the people. The hate between old enemies disappeared, and the proximity of death gave people a new understanding of life and beauty. People, who in their normal life were inconspicuous or egotistical, suddenly became heroic and showed sensibility, depth, mutual understanding and courage. I hope that some day these descriptions will be published. In them can be felt the heroism of the author, who was able to transform the most difficult trials into a lesson, from which she could learn without turning bitter.

Another bright personality was Adelaide's sister, Evgenia Gerzik. She also shared Theosophical views. She was a fine researcher of Edgar Allan Poe's works and was a good friend of the famous Russian philosophers Nikolai Berdyaev and Nikolay Lossky, the latter at the time researching the teachings of Bergson.

Adelaide Gerzik's husband, Dimitri Zhukovsky, also had relations with the spiritualist movement in Russia at the turn of the century. His uncle, Zhukovsky, was a friend of poet Andrei Belyi, a well-known Anthroposophist. These two men took part in founding an estate in the Crimea, which still now carries their name: Zhukovka. The

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<sup>2</sup> This was a manuscript which was later duplicated and distributed in Samizdat. Two fragments from the *Sketches* were published last year in the journal, *Our Heritage*.

plants and trees of the park on the estate were chosen by them in order to suggest occult symbols. The sculptures in the park were made by a well-known sculptor, Matveyev, and they have been preserved to this day. The park is arranged near the ruins of an ancient temple, and its atmosphere is filled with meditative silence, lofty images and the sound of the sea. One could hardly find a more appropriate place in the Crimea, for both beauty and wisdom seem to be concentrated there. Perhaps only Koktebel, near Voloshin's Park, at the site of an ancient volcano, could be compared to it.

In any event, let me return to other members of the Theosophical Movement. The son of Sofia Slobodinskaya, Leonid, was born in 1900. He took part in the "Children's Lodge" Movement of spiritual knights and "pages." If I am not mistaken, the name of this brotherhood was the "Golden Chain" or Ring of the Golden Chain." Theosophical ideas were always present in Leonid Slobodinsky's life. He was an agronomist who kept a diary about his life. Because the social atmosphere in which he lived did not exclude oppression, his diary was kept in symbolic drawings. Each drawing was set in a frame in the form of a shield that was to symbolize his participation in the spiritual movement of the "pages."

Leonid Slobodinsky avoided punishment in spite of his active membership in the Theosophical centre in Lazarevka organized by Usov ("Cheglok").

Among the members of the centre were the Obnorskys: Aleksei, born in 1898, and his wife, Olga. Aleksei Obnorsky belonged to the old Russian nobility. He was an exceptionally well-educated person who knew six languages and was deeply interested in philosophy and Theosophy. Being a smart and bright person, he was always surrounded by young people, whom he

provided with banned Theosophical literature. He translated works by Krishnamurti, kept contacts with the surviving theosophists in Moscow, Leningrad and other cities. In 1952 he was arrested after having been denounced, and only the death of Stalin and the resulting amnesty following his death kept him out of the camps. Olga Obnorskaya was a woman of exceptional spiritual character. She wrote poems and made drawings, and was an unusually strong medium. She received information through telepathic contact from the Teachers of the East, which was written down in a poetic manuscript, "Garden of the Teacher." She died in 1957. It is interesting to note that she could accurately tell the day of her death a couple of years earlier. Interesting also is her talent of telling the fortune of her close friends with amazing accuracy. The Theosophists of Leningrad used to gather around the Obnorsky family. Among them we have to name Olga Yenko. She had a wonderful, sunny nature: always joyful, cheerful and happy. She helped her husband in translating the *Kalevala* into Russian. She never parted with an ivory cross with roses. With deep honour she spoke of the Rosenkreutz [Rosicrucian] movement. She was a close friend of Unkovskaya, whose work *Colour-Sound-Number* was published by the Theosophical Publishing House in St. Petersburg. Also among the members of the Society were Sofia Lesman and her husband, Joseph Lesman, was a violinist in the Auer's Chamber Orchestra. She was the daughter of a wealthy Greek industrialist. She went out to help those suffering from hunger in Povolzhye, and so saw much pain and grief.

Sofia Lesman was a close and trusted friend of Anna Kamenskaya, the Chairman of the Russian Theosophical Society. After the scattering of the Society, and after Anna Kamenskaya left Russia, Sofia Lesman took her place, kept the literature

safe, gave help to those in need and kept contacts with other theosophists. She was arrested and, with her husband, exiled to Alma-Ata, where her husband organized a musical school. His pupils felt the influence of his Theosophical ideas. Later, Sofia Lesman moved back to Leningrad after her husband and son died, where she lived alone in a small dark room. She spoke very little of herself, fearing another arrest, but her very presence at meetings created the atmosphere of deep seriousness and wisdom. She was a remarkable person, able to win people's affection. She was always calm, simply dressed, and she never parted with amethyst beads given to her by Sofia Gerzik. Sofia Lesman gave special meaning to the lilac colour of the stones and used to say that they helped her to feel the contact with the great Masters who gave life to the Theosophical Movement. In her room she kept well in sight the portraits of Blavatsky, Besant, Jinarājadāsa, Leadbeater, Arundale and Krishnamurti. She took her heavy lot with amazing strength, seeing in it the manifestation of Karma. She died in the 1970s in an old people's home.

In this circle belonged the Timofeyevsky family. The head of the family, Pavel Timofeyevsky, a friend of the famous academician Bekhterev, was an important member of the Theosophical Society in St. Petersburg. His publications on the spiritual freedom of man and immortality, two basic ideas in theosophical thinking, are well-known. After the Revolution he was arrested and sent to captivity. He died in the 1950s. His daughter, Yekaterina Timofeyevskaya, was exiled but not imprisoned. His son, Timofei, fell victim to oppression at work as "the son of the people's enemy."

Yekaterina Timofeyevskaya was an artist and a poetess. Her works were not published because of their religious ideas and images. Fortunately,

her poems were preserved in manuscripts, and may someday be published. The heroic pathos and remarkable sincerity of the poems speak for themselves. The basic idea in them is the conquering of oneself and trust in the leadership of the Higher Powers. If we can apply the term "Knight" to a woman, this would be absolutely true for Yekaterina Timofeyevskaya. Full honesty of her thoughts, words, and deeds drew to her everyone she met. She died in 1989. She was found by her bed kneeling, her head resting on a pile of old copies of the journal "Theosophical Message." On the table before her was a portrait of Master M.

I could still name some other people who belonged to the Theosophical Movement, for example G. Shtal, O. Kazin and others, but unfortunately I cannot tell much about the people themselves.

I shall continue with a group of Theosophists in Moscow whom I was lucky enough to meet.

Ariadna Arendt is a sculptor, descendant of the doctor who treated the great Russian poet Pushkin. Ariadna Arendt is a woman who preserved an amazingly strong will and joy in spite of the fact that early in her youth she lost her legs. She was a friend of Maximilian Voloshin and shared the ideas of the Living Ethics of the Roerichs (husband and wife). Her house has always been open for the young, and her library was available to all who were interested. In her home works of Blavatsky, Roerich, Steiner, translations of Krishnamurti, Ramacharani, occult works, and novels by Krzhizhanovskaya Rochester could be found in spite of harsh times. Her handicap and openness of her life protected her and her husband from depression. Her husband was Anatoli Grigoriev, who married her in spite of her disability, kept close to her and served her to the last day of his life. Ariadna Arendt is still alive.

Among the Moscovite philosophers I met was

a wonderful woman, Yevgenya Dementyeva. A known musician, she preserved well into old age a very bright and clear intellect, wrote translations of Krishnamurti and poems of her own. As an example of her thought I would like to quote one of her poems. At the age of nearly ninety years, sick, with a broken hip, helpless, deaf, almost blind, she writes the following:

Louder and louder is the call of the skies.  
Weaker and weaker is the song of life.  
I wish that the end of my way will come soon.  
Someone is whispering a silent reproach to me: "Understand as long as you live, you may not wish to go..."

Not everything is accomplished, you still have many duties. Not yet is the silent peace of soul reached. Excitement and restlessness still live in your heart,  
So do not precipitate the end of earthly life.

Only those may go who have fulfilled their duties, or those who could not or did not wish to continue their way.  
Accept with blessing, as a gift, your suffering, so that every new day would be a step on the Path.

The name of Kora Antarova is also well-known in Theosophical circles. She was a talented singer and had remarkable visions, which inspired her to write a work entitled *Two Lives*, wherein she opened the occult side of the Masters' work through literature. Among the characters in the book is Leo Tolstoy. This work contains many occult insights and Theosophical ideas.

Sergei and Maria Antonjuk were amazingly wise and warm people. They were teachers, and their devotion to the Theosophical Movement inspired many of their pupils. When Sergei

Antonjuk spoke about the ideas dear to him, has kindled, inspired, displayed a radiating happiness; other people could not help feeling happy too because of the world being so wise, the stars radiating love, the grass smiling, everything around filled with sense and beauty. His cheerfulness brought into mind Francis of Assisi.

Lucy Hublarova is another person who was devoted to Theosophy. Her husband, Mikhail, died in the camps for his religious convictions. When I think about Lucy Khublarova, I see her dark-brown velvet eyes filled with kindness and sorrow. She typed many translations which helped to popularize Theosophical works. After the death of her father, she was left with a rich collection of butterflies, and she herself was like a beautiful butterfly in the world of harmony silently serving the Truth that was shining before her.

Vasili Yefimov was a professor of physiology. He researched the connections with the astral plane. In his lectures he denied the disability of old age, treating it as youth and the time of ripening of the soul. He spoke about the continuous evolution that cannot be stopped by death. Young people liked his lectures, but "official scientists" denied his ideas. When he came to Leningrad to visit the Obnorskys, their discussions lasted usually late into the night. He was a man of encyclopedic knowledge, most of all appreciated a synthetic approach to life, and regarded Theosophy as the only movement that could solve problems of a united world.

One to remember is Yevgeny Zelenit, a professor of mathematics and a person who loved India and the works of Chekhov; another is Tatyana Bukreyeva, who wrote many books, including *Eight Meetings with the Master*. I had never had the luck to meet her, however.

One could not help loving and admiring every one of these people. They were like sparks of a

whole epoch, of a teaching that came simultaneously from the past and from the future, and like seeds that fall onto the ground, they sprout ideas on the uniting of people, religions and philosophies.

I would like to close my memories with a quotation from the Dementyeva:

Do not weep for me, do not shed helpless tears, hoping to hold me when my last hour strikes. Remember - there is no death. I am spreading my wings, they will carry me to an impetuous flight.

It is birth, not death . . . The spiral leads all the steeper. Dimly I see a continuous row of coils. And ahead, in the mist, unknown precipices. When going up, do not look back.

But I love you, my dear Earth, and I'll return to you when the time comes. Will it be soon or not - I do not know . . . There's no time THERE, only the eternal stream.

# Marx and Engels on Spiritualism and Theosophy

Herman de Tollenaere<sup>1</sup>

There are several ways to look at relationships—friendly or unfriendly—between occultism and political currents, such as Marxism. In this regard, Bruce Campbell has observed that “[e]soteric and mystical sources have been identified as part of the intellectual background for Hegelian and Marxist thought.”<sup>2</sup> He did not elaborate on this observation, however, and neither will we. If this statement is indeed true, it must relate to an indirect influence of pre-1800 ideas via Hegel. This concerns, however, an earlier age than the subject of this article. Nor does this article consider subjects later in history, like the reciprocal opinions of twentieth century communists and theosophists in such countries as India and Sri Lanka, though it is part of the wider research in which I am now involved.

This article is specifically about Karl Marx’s (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels’ (1820-1895) views on Spiritualism and Theosophy. Both of them embarked on political careers in the 1840s, in the Communist League, an international organization in which migrant German workers in

England were heavily represented<sup>3</sup>.

Nineteenth century Spiritualism was a widespread but not well organized movement. As is well-known, it began with the Fox sisters claiming to hear ‘spirit rapping’ sounds at their Hydesville, New York farm in 1848.<sup>4</sup>

Nineteenth century Theosophy also started in the same American state through the aegis of the Theosophical Society (T.S.), this time in New York City in 1875 through the efforts of its founders, Colonel (U.S. Army, retired) H.S. Olcott and Russian aristocrat Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (H.P.B.; 1831-1891). They, and others from a Spiritualist background, wanted a more coherent doctrine and organization. It was only since the 1880s (the decade when Marx died and Engels was in his sixties) that the Theosophical Society became sizable, first in south Asia and later in the U.S. and Europe.

## Spiritualism

Marx and Engels, in their voluminous works,

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<sup>3</sup> It had as its motto the words “All people are brothers.” This was soon changed to the familiar “Workers of all countries, unite.” Some 35 years later, the Theosophical Society, after its founders had gone to India, included Universal Brotherhood in its Objects. See C. Jinarajadasa, *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925), 343.

<sup>4</sup> See Joscelyn Godwin, “The Hidden Hand, Part 1: The Provocation of the Hydesville Phenomena,” *Theosophical History*, III/2 (April 1990): 35-43.

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<sup>1</sup> Herman de Tollenaere is currently writing a thesis on the position of Theosophy in the political history of India from 1875 to 1947. He welcomes any information on this subject and may be reached at Haagplein 23, 2311 AC Leiden, The Netherlands.

<sup>2</sup> *Ancient Wisdom Revived* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 13.

often referred to Spiritualism, although on examination all the references are relatively brief. Some of the references do not mention Spiritualism by name, but the authors sometimes joke (for instance, Marx in *Das Kapital*) about dancing tables<sup>5</sup>, “ghost-rappers, ghost-rapping Shakers....”<sup>6</sup>

Engels in an 1886 letter briefly put the Movement into the perspective of U.S. society:

though the Americans . . . have not taken over from Europe medieval institutions, they did take over lots of medieval tradition, religion, English common (feudal) law, superstition, spiritualism, in short, all nonsense, that wasn't directly harmful to business, and now is very useful to dull the masses.<sup>7</sup>

So he thought modern Spiritualism was unmodern. He tried to explain its recent rise only when he used the word “now,” as he wrote about its usefulness to the rich in their battle against the poor.

Longest was a ten page article by Engels entitled “Die Naturforschung in der Geisterwelt” (“Natural Science in the World of Ghosts”).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Marx saw the 1850s, after revolutions in Europe had been suppressed, as the times when “China and the tables started dancing, as the rest of the world seemed to stand still.” See *Das Kapital*, volume I, in *Marx Engels Werke (MEW)*, vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 85: “China” refers to the Tai Ping uprising, which lasted from 1850 to 1864. All translations from German are mine.

<sup>6</sup> *MEW*, vol. 18 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 99 (Engels, “Die Internationale in Amerika”: 97-103). This article originally appeared in the German social democrat paper *Der Volksstaat* (#57, 17 July 1872). The “Shakers” refer to a Christian sect.

<sup>7</sup> *MEW*, vol. 36 (Berlin: Dietz, 1967), 579: letter to Friedrich Adolph Sorge in Hoboken. London, 29 November 1886 (*MEW*: 578-81).

<sup>8</sup> *MEW*, vol. 20 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 337-47.

Probably written in 1878, it was not printed during his lifetime; it first came out in an 1898 Hamburg social democrat calendar. It was similar to T. Huxley's better known observations on the credibility, or lack of it, of spiritualist mediums. The article in fact ended with a Huxley quote. This connection reflected the observation that English zoologists from the sphere of Darwin and Huxley were were prominent among the adversaries of Spiritualism. When the American medium Slade went to Europe in 1876 with recommendations from H.S. Olcott and H.P. Blavatsky, one of these zoologists, Ray Lankester (1847-1929), had Slade sued in court for fraud.<sup>9</sup> Later, Lankester was one of the eulogists at Marx' burial.

Engels thought that “modern Spiritualism” was the “emptiest of all superstitions.” As an example of the fraud present in the Movement, he cited the Holmes of Philadelphia, who were responsible for evoking the spirit of ‘Katie King’, an action that H.P. Blavatsky defended in the American press.

Engels' article aimed at a sociological explanation only in that it asked what kind of **scientist** spiritualism was most likely to attract. Paradoxically, it was concluded that empiricists were more likely to be attracted than *a priori* theorists like German nature philosophers; Alfred Wallace and Sir William Crookes<sup>10</sup> were cited as examples of the former.

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<sup>9</sup> See also Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*. Volume I (London: Cassell, 1926), 286f. H.P.B. referred to this Lankester in her “(New) York against Lankester”, which appeared in the *Banner of Light* on 14 October 1876. See *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1874-1878*. First edition. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume I (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1966), 221-25.

<sup>10</sup> Both would briefly become members of the Theosophical Society. See Josephine Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (Adyar, Theosophical Publishing House, 1938), 19.

## Annie Besant Before Theosophy

For four years prior to her joining the Theosophical Society in 1889, Annie Besant (1847-1933) was, like Engels, active in the English socialist labour movement: at first in the Fabian Society, which was too moderate for Engels, later in the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) - officially 'Marxist' but criticized for its sectarianism as well.

Although Annie Besant's biographer Arthur Nethercot<sup>11</sup> did not quote from Engels' works, he does mention his name several times. He writes on page 235:

Certainly Mrs. Besant never darkened the doors of Engels' home, though she was the Fabian for whom he had the greatest respect, because of her influential pamphlets.

Engels did not forgive her earlier anti-socialism<sup>12</sup>. He saw her as one of "those dummy men and women"<sup>13</sup> who played a role only while British workers weren't confident enough for leadership from their own midst yet.

Engels in 1891 wrote to German social democrat Karl Kautsky on Annie Besant: "Mother B. always is of the religion of the man, that has *subjected* her."<sup>14</sup> Engels shared that idea with many before and after him. It was first said against her by W.P. Ball, a fellow freethinker who op-

<sup>11</sup> *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>12</sup> *MEW*, vol. 36, 101. Letter to Laura Lafargue (Paris). London, 5 February 1884, 101-103.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 710: letter to Laura Lafargue (Paris), London 11 October 1887 (708-710).

<sup>14</sup> *MEW*, vol. 38 (Berlin: Dietz, 1968), 191. Letter to Karl Kautsky (Stuttgart). London, 25 October 1891 (190-191).

posed her becoming socialist; Nethercot and even her 1980's feminist biographer Rosemary Dinnage<sup>15</sup> tended to agree. I hope to write later on arguments against that view on influence on Besant.

Like Annie's supporters later, during the time she played a major role in India, Engels spoke of "Mother" Besant but not in a complimentary sense. Engels complained that a review copy of the new English translation of his *The Condition of the Working-class in England in 1844* he sent to Besant's *Our Corner* magazine was ignored.<sup>16</sup>

## Theosophy

The only time Engels mentioned H.P. Blavatsky was in an earlier 1891 letter from London to Kautsky:

Do you know Mother Besant has joined the theosophists of Grandmother Blowatsky (Blamatsky). On her garden gate, 19, Avenue Road, now is in big gold letters: Theosophical Head Quarters. Herbert Burrows has caused this by his love.<sup>17</sup>

These three lines in a private letter are all Engels (or Marx) ever wrote on the Theosophical Society. If he would have thought them important, he would have written more. Did he, apart from not really agreeing with them, underestimate them? My few lines are not enough to answer that question.

<sup>15</sup> *Annie Besant* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> *MEW*, vol. 37 (Berlin: Dietz, 1967), 58. Letter to Florence Kelley-Wischnewetzky (New York) London 2 May 1888 (58-59).

<sup>17</sup> *MEW*, vol. 38, 88. Letter to Karl Kautsky (Stuttgart), 30 April, (continued on next page)

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1891 (86-88). The last sentence paraphrases Heinrich Heine's poem *Die Lorelei*. H. Burrows was a S.D.F. member as was Annie Besant; he joined the T.S. shortly before her. He left after the 1907 controversy on C.W. Leadbeater. Compare Engels' view to that of Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement* (London, Longmans, Green, 1931), 91 [on her mother, Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst. Her father's views, like Besant's, had gone from liberal to socialist; unlike Engels, he had worked closely with Mrs. Besant's labour free speech Law and Liberty League]:

It was said that . . . Mme. Blavatsky, had been seen to extend her arm to abnormal length, in order to light a cigarette at the gas jet in the ceiling. Mrs. Pankhurst and her sisters attended some of the séances, but nothing remarkable happened during their presence. Mrs. Pankhurst was completely skeptical and dismissed Blavatsky's occult phenomena as mere imposture.

# Four Madame Blavatskys?

Leslie Price

Readers of the Rawson letter in T.H. January 1989 (III/1) may anxiously be wondering what the implications are of the fact there stated, and only occasionally recalled, that there were two Madame Blavatsky's at large in the Levant in the same era. In Jean Overton Fuller's biography of H.P.B. *Blavatsky and her Teachers*, Nathalie is identified, rightly in my view, as the mother of the child adopted by H.P.B. But we should note a paragraph from Col. Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves* (*The Theosophist*, May 1892: 456) omitted from the book version, which appears immediately after the testimony of Dr. Marquette.

A large proportion of the calumnious reports circulated about her in Europe for many years, arose from the fact that other ladies of the same surname—Mesdames Julie, Nathalie, Heloise, etc,etc. Blavatsky—were mixed up in adventures of various kinds, some not very creditable, and the enemies of H.P.B. attributed them to her. Her aunt, Mlle. N.A. Fadeyeff, mentions the circumstances in an explanatory letter quoted by Mr. Sinnett (*Incidents*, etc., p. 73) and I had from H.P.B. herself some of the stories, the foisting of which upon herself naturally aroused her fierce indignation.

Boris de Zirkoff and others have done sterling work trying to clarify the Russian family lines of H.P.B., especially on the Hahn side, but it appears we need much more information about the Blavatskys. Russian visitors to Adyar have ap-

peared in recent years, and it may be that these, and the improving political climate in Russia, may enable these connections to be traced.

# The Mead Symposium

Joscelyn Godwin

On 30 May 1992 a one-day symposium was held in London, under the auspices of the Temenos Academy for Integral Studies, to commemorate the centenary of G. R. S. Mead's first book, *Simon Magus*, first published in 1892. Kathleen Raine, for the Academy, introduced the program with a tribute to Mead's blend of scholarship with a spiritual commitment to his material: a combination that has prevented his due recognition by modern scholars.

Four papers followed, which together built up a detailed picture of Mead's work and, to a lesser extent, his life. Leslie Price (Founder of *Theosophical History*) spoke on "G. R. S. Mead and the Quest for Gnosis." In the course of a very detailed and informative account of Mead's career, Price raised the question of whether Mead's great mistake, made at the watershed of his life in 1909, was the refusal to stand as a candidate for leadership of the Theosophical Society. Having spent 25 years of his life in the Society, was Mead wrong to quit as a protest against the direction it was taking? Clare Goodrick-Clarke's paper, "Mead's Gnosis; a theosophical exegesis of an ancient heresy," pinpointed some likely academic connections of the young Mead with the Keightleys and with C. W. King, a Cambridge scholar who derived Gnosticism from Buddhism. A lively discussion was bedevilled by the misidentification of "gnosis" as the Way of Knowledge (the Hindu "*jñāna mārga*")—to which Mead was undoubtedly committed—with "Gnosticism," the term for a

group of dualistic religious movements of which he was the discriminating chronicler.

After lunch, Stephen Ronan spoke on "Mead and the Chaldean Oracles," admiring Mead for his avoidance of "mere textual analysis" on the one hand, and "glib esoteric waffling" on the other. Mead's own approach changed between his exposition of Chaldean theology in *Orpheus* and his edition of the Oracles in *Echoes from the Gnosis*, as he learnt from German scholarship that they were of late-antique origin. Like Ronan himself, Mead recognized in the "Chaldean" movement of second-century Rome a genuine instance of theurgy, and was able (unlike most scholars) to distinguish this science from that of magic. Lastly, R. A. Gilbert gave us "New Light on Mead's Break with Theosophy" from letters in archives as well as printed sources. Explaining why Mead was the "only real scholar in the Society," Gilbert traced his successive disillusionment with Judge, Leadbeater, and Besant, and his loyalty to the truth that came even before his affection and reverence for H.P.B.

The picture of Mead that emerged from the four papers and their discussions was of the most admirable and upright personality, with a lifetime commitment to the quest for "theosophy" in the original sense: that of the way of knowledge of the Divine, which—and this is another place where a discrimination of terms is essential—he no longer found compatible with membership of the "Theosophical" Society.

# Mme. Blavatsky Again.

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## A Further Explication of the Buddhist Faith and its Miracles.

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### The Marvelous Fakirs—Why a Russian Countess Firmly Believes in Magic.

[From the *New York World*, Monday, 2 April 1877: 1]

Mme. Blavatsky, so well known to the public as Secretary of the Theosophical Society—of which Colonel H.S. Olcott, the lawyer, is President—through the medium of several recent communications in these columns, emphatically forbids her friends to address her as “Countess,” although her title to that rank is undisputed. “I am a democrat, and I hate titles,” she says. She has been a traveller from childhood, and has visited nearly all the countries of the world. She is an accomplished scholar, being both linguist and philosopher, a Buddhist by religion, and an occultist of most firmly fixed convictions.

Her life has been an eventful one. Fascinated in early life by the mystic doctrines of the East, she was baptized by fire after the ceremonial of the Parsee priesthood, but afterwards embraced Buddhism, after studying the mysteries taught in the secret societies of the Orient, within whose guarded circles few Europeans have been admitted, but whose existence is as well attested as that of the Pyramids. Travelling often where no other European has ever been, living with the Orientalists as

one of them, she has become thoroughly imbued with many Eastern habits of thoughts and manner without losing the customs of the Western civilization. A photograph of her in a Russian head-dress which shows little but the face presents a girlish profile with straight nose—a little heavenward—a pouting lip and hair that is fluffed over a full forehead. In *propria personæ* she is a middle-aged woman more than *embonpoint*, with an eye as clear as a child’s, an intelligent brow and a complexion that has been darkened but by no means spoiled by tropic suns. She has lived in New York for several years, and her pleasant home in a French flat at the corner of Eighth avenue and Forty-seventh street is well known to a wide circle of friends, which include the whole of the Theosophical Society as well as many outside of that portentous organization. She quotes with equal readiness from Sanscrit or French, and cites authorities from Pythagoras to Huxley as fluently as a boarding-school miss from Owen Meredith. Careless of society, she sits under the shadow of her blue-glass windows between her desk and her piano, surrounded by her feathered pets and a thousand trophies of travel, and receives those of her friends who care to visit her,

but seldom leaves her own apartments. Defraying her expenses (it is said) from the income of her patrimony in Russia, she devotes her time to philosophical study, which is likely soon to take form in the publication of a book.

“The man who writes the editorials in your paper,” she said abruptly, as the WORLD reporter again entered her parlor on Good Friday, “should know that fakirs do not wear baggy trousers<sup>1</sup> or anything else excepting a dhoti. If the man of whom he speaks had a mechanism under his clothing he was not a fakir. And a swamee is not educated in a lamasery.”

The reporter assured her that if some of these words were interpreted the necessary corrections should be made in THE WORLD.

“A swamee is a fakir,” she resumed, with animation, “or holy man of the sect of Brahmins. A dhoti is the only garment he can wear, and consists of a cloth girt about his loins. A lamasery is a school for lamas or holy men among the Buddhists.”

“Yet you, a Buddhist, have acknowledged the magical power of the fakir,” said the reporter.

“Certainly, for I have seen it. I know what it is. The forms and dogmas of different religions differ, but the original essence of them all is the same. The fakirs are certainly holy men, as are the devotees of all the religions of the East. They are bound by their vows to the utmost purity of life, and they show publicly their terrible self-tortures.”

“And have all these devotees of the different religions magical powers?”

“Yes, those who really live up to their vows. And there are also black magicians as well as the holy men who practiced white magic. In India there are thousands of the sorcerers who are

ignorant men, who can neither read nor write, but who have wonderful powers that they have acquired from their parents. They perform these tricks for money, which the fakirs will not do. I remember once seeing a trial between a fakir and a sorcerer on the banks of a small lake. They had been disputing, the sorcerer affirming that he could do anything that the fakir could do and the fakir denying it. The fakir waded out waist deep in the lake and touched his finger to a large leaf of a water plant that lay on the water, and the sorcerer waded out and touched another leaf and they both came to shore. In a little while the leaves began to tremble, and then we heard strains of music, entrancingly sweet but unearthly in their sound, different from anything else I ever heard. And presently the leaf the sorcerer had touched shrivelled up and turned black, and a loathsome face appeared on it. And on the leaf that the fakir had touched appeared a number of characters of exquisitely beautiful tracery. I broke off the leaf and kept it, and showed it afterwards to a very learned gentleman. I did not know the Sanscrit then, but he told me it was a moral precept in the Sanscrit characters.”

“Fakir,” continued Mme. Blavatsky, “is a very loose word, and means one who is devoted to the service of God. They have many other names, such as gossain or holy mendicant, and guru or teacher. It is as Pythagoras that we know your Pythagoras. There are over a million fakirs in India, many of whom are women. They are born of all castes, but on entering on a life of devotion they relinquish caste. They place themselves under the instruction of the gurus and bind themselves by a great number of vows. Among other duties they are obliged to practice non-resistance; if you beat them they will ask you to beat them more. They are forbidden to cherish resentment for any injury even secretly, and are

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<sup>1</sup> *Theosophical History* III/7-8: 227.

compelled to relinquish entirely all worldly concerns. They are not even allowed to own a bit of metal, excepting a needle to mend their dhotis and a knife to mend their pens. These they carry, with their pipe, stuck in their hair, which is long and bushy. They may not eat but once a day, and if no one gives them food during the day they fast, for no matter how much they may have on one day they cannot keep any for the next, but are obliged to give away all that they do not eat at once. Another of their vows is that of chastity even in thought. If the thought of a woman crosses the mind of a fakir he is bound by his vows to fast for several days, and even if he touches a woman by accident in a crowd he must fast for a day to purify himself. So you see that the precepts of Jesus, which Christians consider exaggerated statements of moral obligation, which they are to follow, but are not expected to strictly conform to, are actual precepts to be literally obeyed in the estimation of the fakirs."

"But do they live up to them?" asked the reporter.

"They do. An American or European has no idea of the asceticism they practise. They mortify the flesh in a manner that St. Simon Stylites did not begin to approach. They lie for hours among burning coals that nearly touch their flesh. They sit sometimes for years in one attitude, absorbed in thought and not moving a muscle, until they sometimes become paralyzed. If you put food into the mouth of such a man he will eat it; if you don't he will starve. Sometimes a fakir will tie himself up in a tree, head downward, and hang so for days together. They will pass steel hooks through the flesh of their backs and suffer themselves to be swung around in the air until the flesh gives way and they fall to the ground. They do not care. If they die they are glad. They seek always to keep their physical nature in subjection."

"And you say there are a million such men in India?"

"Yes. They are of several different classes, but are all followers of Krishna or Brahmins. One class is composed of the disciples of Nirnarain who was in the line of succession to Odhow. Odhow was left in charge of the human race by Krishna. Among the most famous of the successors of Odhow were Gopal and Atmanund Swamee and Nirnarain. The school of Nirnarain numbers over one hundred thousand devotees; the most of whom are in Northern India. Their first principle is that all souls of whatever nationality or caste or sect, are equal before God. There is no difference, and any one can gain admission to their ranks. They are bound to abstain from wine and strong liquor, from eating flesh—anything that has animal life—from stealing, and from women.

"Then there are the Jains. They derive their name from the word *jinu*, 'to conquer.' There are hundreds of them, and they are especially careful about the destruction of animal life. They carry little brooms with them to brush away the insects that may get in their path. They are among the most powerful of magicians. An anecdote was told about one of them by Major Seeley, which had a wide circulation at the time and excited a good deal of comment. He said that a mischievous European showed a drop of water under the microscope to a Jain, and that he was so impressed by the sight of the numerous living organisms in the water that he vowed never to drink water again. Major Seeley goes on to say that the Jain kept his vow and perished in consequence. It is a pretty story enough, but the fact is that the Jains never drink water that has not been boiled two or three times, and on a rainy day they keep their mouths covered lest they should admit into their bodies the animalculæ of the water. So

you see, they are not as ignorant as the story would indicate.”

“The Fakirs,” continued Mme. Blavatsky, “have eighty-four ‘holy attitudes,’ as they are called—conditions which they assume for particular purposes or on particular occasions. The *asan dolna*, for instance, is the phrase used to express the state of a holy man, who, perceiving by his spiritual intelligence that someone is in distress is calling on him for aid, leaves his body and goes to the rescue. The *asan mama* is the name of the ‘attitude’ practiced solely by the yogis when at prayer. There are very few Buddhists in India. They are mostly in Thibet, Mongolia, Tartary and those countries, and the lamas are among them what the fakirs are among the Brahmins. I am more familiar with the lamas than with the fakirs, for I have been more with them, but they are alike in many respects. But while in India there are many black magicians or sorcerers who ply their trade openly, there are comparatively few among the Buddhists who persecute the jugglers and prevent them as far as possible from practicing their rites. Among the black magicians are the serpent charmers, who have the same powers as the *paillis* of Egypt. They have as keen a scent as a dog for a snake, and will go straight to his hole and dig it out with their fingers. Many of these jugglers will do the same things as the fakirs do, and by a similar process in incantation. I remember I was once in the bungalow of a rich Indian where a fakir and a juggler both performed the feats. In the room were a tame tiger, chained, a monkey and a parrot. While the fakir was performing they all showed symptoms of great delight, but when the sorcerer began the tiger leaped around in evident terror, roaring in a frightful manner, and at last became so violent that he broke his chain, leaped through the window, ran away and was never seen again. The

monkey fled to his perch, grasped it with his tail and hung in a fainting fit, while the parrot fell to the floor nearly dead.”

“Do you think that all this indicates a spiritual nature to these magical powers?”

“It does to me,” was the reply. “They work with the aid of *pitris*, or the souls of their ancestors. All the Orientalists venerate these *pitris*, and the magicians sometimes become powerful enough to create an atmosphere about them in which these spirits become visible. And on the other hand they often become invisible themselves. I remember the first time this was done in my presence. A fakir was in the room with me, crouched down in prayer, and suddenly the fakir disappeared. I was a great sceptic then, and I pinched myself to be sure I was not in a dream. The door was locked, and I searched the room carefully. At length I stumbled over something which I could not see and suddenly my fakir appeared. I thought even then that I had been deluded in some way, but I saw the same thing many times afterwards.”

“How do they acquire this power?” was the next question.

“By the subjection of the body. You will find that the most of the good spiritual mediums are unhealthy in some way, and the Eastern magicians reduce their physical nature until their astral body becomes the more powerful. Then they can work like disembodied spirits which they really are. But many spirits during this life and after it are evil. Not devils—I don’t believe in devils—but evil disposed. But the seemingly unnatural growth of seeds and voluntary levitation and all such feats are undoubtedly produced by these men. The black sorcerers for some reason always choose a mango seed for their marvels, but a fakir will make any seed grow into a plant bear blossoms and fruit in an hour or two. And they will sit in the

air a yard from the ground for twenty minutes or longer without being in contact with anything. I have seen all such things done hundreds of times, and so have hundreds of other Europeans.”

“How were you converted to the Buddhist faith?” asked the reporter curiously.

“By what was to me absolute proof. I was at a vihara in the northern part of India, and the chief of the gurus of the little village showed me things which I demonstrated to be truth. For instance he made me look at a bright tin plate and fix my thoughts on something I wished to see. I thought of my home and instantly saw a room in my father’s house in Russia. Two of my aunts were sitting there, one of them reading a book, the title of which I could read. And a strange looking hump-backed woman entered the room as I looked. I wrote home about it and learned months afterward, that at that time my aunts were sitting in that room and one of them was reading the book I mentioned. And the hump-backed woman was a Polish governess they had engaged after I left home and without my knowledge.

“Then the guru threw me into a trance, first asking me to think of some place to which I wished to go. Now, some of the most powerful mesmerizers of Europe have tried to throw me into mesmeric sleep, and have been utterly unsuccessful. Prince Dolgourouski tried it, but even he failed. But after this guru had made a few passes over my face and had given me something to smell, and had made me swallow a certain potion the ingredients of which I know but will not tell, I instantly fell into the trance. I had desired to go to the house of my dearest friend in Berlin, from whom I had not heard for a long time. I was there at once, and rang the door-bell. An old woman came to the door and I asked for my friend. ‘Alas,’ said the old woman ‘she was buried

three months ago.’ I asked her where she was buried, and she named the cemetery. Then I had a desire to see the grave and I was instantly beside it, looking through the earth at the corruption below. Suddenly I felt two arms about my neck, and a kiss pressed on my cheek. I looked up and my friends stood before me, a glorified image of what she had been in this life, but transparent. Some months later I heard by letter of her death, and years afterwards I visited her grave and recognized it as the place I had seen in my trance.

“After this guru, who was from Punjaub, had thus proved his powers to me, I was unable to doubt him when he showed me in similar ways the secrets of nature, the mysteries of the future life, and the truths that appertain to metaphysics. I studied them for years, and at last I did not believe, but I knew the truth of these things, for I saw them, felt them, tried them, lived them.”

“But you cannot expect others, who have not had your experience, to follow you in your belief,” said the reporter.

“I do not. What is proof to me is no proof to the public, and if they will not believe eleven millions of Spiritualists, because many of the mediums are humbugs and tricksters, they will not take my word, of course, and I don’t expect them to. But what I know I know. And these marvels that seem incredible to those who have not seen them—these miracles, as they are called by the Christian church, and tricks as they are called by self-styled scientists—are not wonders to me, for I understand them.”

# Book Review

## **BROTHER TWELVE: THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF CANADA'S FALSE PROPHET.**

By John Oliphant. Toronto, Ontario: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991. Pp. xii +371. \$29.95. ISBN 0-7710-6848-4.

Of all the so-called millenarian cult leaders to appear in the twentieth century, the name of Edward Arthur Wilson (1878-?1934) must surely be placed in the first rank as one of the most intriguing, mysterious, and infamously charismatic and prophetic to grace the annals of North American history. Sharing the brilliance of an L. Ron Hubbard, the destructiveness of a Jim Jones or a Tony Alamo, and the hypnotic hold of a Rasputin, E.A. Wilson, a/k/a Brother XII, Amiel de Valdes, Julian Churton Skottowe, certainly serves as a case study of and forerunner to the archetypal cult leader that became popularized in the 1960s. Wilson was a person who attracted a considerable following of earnest but gullible disciples—most of whom were highly educated and intelligent—who accepted the disturbing and exhilarating message of impending doom and subsequent salvation, who received the promise with the utmost fervor and expectation that those who participated in the great Work would be greatly rewarded for their considerable efforts. Furthermore, Wilson's Aquarian Foundation, the organization his disciples had joined, followed the

general pattern of a religious 'cult' in that only the leader was qualified to deliver or discern the Truth, at least until such time—often in the nebulous and distant future—when the disciples themselves achieved such status. As is often the case with cult leaders, when the bubble bursts, the devastation to those who committed their heartfelt loyalty to the Master and his Teaching can never be fully ascertained. At the very least, a sense of betrayal is certainly to be expected, but what other pain is suffered?

The story of the Edward Arthur Wilson is still shrouded in mystery, but his career as Brother XII (a name given Wilson by his Master around 1925) is very well-documented indeed by the author of this thoroughly fascinating book. Prior to its publication, the story of Wilson and his Aquarian Foundation was periodically brought to the attention of readers beginning with the narrative account of the Vancouver reporter for *The Daily Province*, Bruce A. McKelvie.<sup>1</sup> Later, the tale was recounted in Howard O'Hagan's "The Weird and Savage Cult of Brother 12"<sup>2</sup>, in Pierre Burton's *My Country: The Remarkable Past*<sup>3</sup>, in a fraudulent

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI of the book. McKelvie later authored a book entitled *Magic, Murder and Mystery* (published by McKelvie), in which he devotes his first chapter (pp. 1-20), to the story of Wilson and his Aquarian Foundation. The account, entitled "Brother XII's Magic," is based on his numerous newspaper accounts.

<sup>2</sup> *MacLean's Magazine* (23 April 1960).

biography that appeared in 1967 entitled *Canada's False Prophet: The Notorious Brother Twelve*<sup>4</sup>, and an article by this reviewer entitled "The Aquarian Foundation."<sup>5</sup> Despite the concentrated research of the author, however, precious little has as yet been uncovered about Wilson prior to his forty-sixth year.

Like magi before him (Gurdjieff and Blavatsky for example), there is a hidden, earlier life filled with travel in search of Truth, often coming into contact with human and supra-human beings who promise to reveal the Truth at such time when the candidate is primed for it. Sometimes too, the magus may possess a biological basis for justifying his worthiness and candidacy for such status. In Wilson's case, he made the claim that his mother was a Kashmiri princess, thus providing a direct link to the Eastern mysteries. This is of course, not unique. In my own research of two older contemporaries of Wilson, Count Albert de Sarāk ("Rama," "Alberto de Das" or "Albert de Sarāk, Count of Das") and the hitherto unknown Ezekiel Perkins, both claimed to have Asian parentage. Sarāk, asserting to have been born in Tibet, "son of a Rajan of Thibet and a French

marchioness," was a medium of sorts and the founder of a center for oriental studies in Paris who claimed to have received the secrets of the cosmos from the Mahatmas in Tibet. In actuality he was an Italian by the name of M. Alberto Santini-Sgaluppi, who was previously expelled from the Theosophical Society by President Olcott in 1892 due to his deceptions and confidence schemes.<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel Perkins, the self-proclaimed head of an occult order of magicians in New York known as the Lampsakenoi, claimed a mother (named Ayasha Maria Perkinje) who was descended from a long line of Bengali princes learned in Eastern wisdom and a father who was a Thug.<sup>7</sup>

Like Santini-Sgaluppi, the truth was less noble and romantic for Wilson. He was actually born to Thomas Wilson, a deacon in the Catholic Apostolic Church and an "Irvingite" who by profession was "a master-craftsman in the city's thriving metallic and brass bedstead trade" (17); and to Sarah Ellen Pearsall, both of whom presumably hailing from Birmingham, England, where they were married.

There is no doubt, however, that Wilson travelled extensively. He was an accomplished seaman and navigator that took him to all the continents with the possible exception of Australia. During this period, Wilson fulfilled his role as a magus by undergoing what he termed the

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<sup>3</sup> Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976.

<sup>4</sup> Richmond Hill, Ontario: Simon and Schuster of Canada, Ltd., 1967. The book was supposedly written by Wilson's brother Herbert Emmerson (*sic*) Wilson, who was actually a bank robber in the 1930s and an ex-convict who first learned of Brother XII while living on Vancouver Island during the 1960s. He and his wife collected what material that could gather and hired a Toronto writer named Thomas P. Kelley, to write the book.

<sup>5</sup> *Communal Societies*, vol. IX (1989): 39-61. Another recent publication which I have as yet seen is *The Devil of Decourcy Island: Brother XII* by Ron McIsaac, Don Colark and Charles Lillard (Porcepic Books, 4252 Commerce Circle, Victoria, V.C., V82 4M2, 1989). The book was reviewed in *Canadian Theosophist*, vol. 72/6 (Jan.-Feb. 1992): 139-140.

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<sup>6</sup> The quote is from *The Radiant Truth* ("The Official Organ of the Esoteric Centre of Washington"), No. 1 (24 Nov. 1902): 12. A series of articles in the *Annals of Psychical Science* exposed Sarāk for what he was. See especially Laura I. Finch, "All about "Rama." Vol. vi (Dec. 1907): 426-434. Sarāk is also mentioned in Henry Steel Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, vol. IV (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1910), 499-501.

<sup>7</sup> Information on Ezekiel Perkins is for the moment restricted to two articles in the New York *World*, which will be reprinted in a future issue.

Ceremony of Dedication, which revealed to him the special mission which he was to carry out<sup>8</sup> (19). For the next twelve years very little is known about Wilson except what little he chooses to reveal. Precious little was discovered by Mr. Oliphant during this period<sup>9</sup> until the significant year 1924, when Wilson claimed to have had visions in the south of France and to have been chosen by the Masters to carry forth their Work for humanity. Prior to this event, Wilson may have met many illustrious figures in South Africa (Jan Smuts), and England (Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Eddington, Sir Herbert Austin, Sir Neville Chamberlain). Perhaps further light can be shed on these interesting contacts by examining the papers and letters of these individuals. Oliphant also claims that Wilson became “a brilliant astrologer, and contributed numerous articles to scholarly magazines.” (20) A pity he did not document the claim.

The outcome of Wilson’s epiphany in France and his resultant expansion of consciousness in the months following, was to take down through automatic writing, so he claimed, a book of spiritual teachings entitled *The Three Truths* (12-13) in the latter part of 1925 and early 1926. It is in this book we discern the debt that Wilson owed to Theosophical teachings, containing as it did the primary teachings of the unity of all life, the immortality of the soul, and the law of karma.(13) No accident this, for Wilson was indeed a member of the Theosophical Society (Adyar) from around 1915 to 1917. Other teachings reveal impending doom for the “civilized’ nations of the world” (13), a Manichean vision of the forces of Evil and

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<sup>8</sup> This appears in “Letter IX: Preparations for the Work” (dated July, 1926). See the *Foundation Letters and Teachings* (Akron, Ohio: Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 43-46.

<sup>9</sup> And in my article, “The Aquarian Foundation”: 58.

Light engaged in warfare on the inner planes, and Wilson’s plans (and the Masters’ he followed), to bring forth the New Age at the turn of the millennium. The message of doom and disaster is, of course, not limited to Theosophical doctrine, but it did have an especial appeal to many Theosophists because of the Theosophical language and ideas employed.

With the theoretical foundation laid, Wilson set about organizing the Work of the Masters in their preparation for the “new Order” (29), the Aquarian civilization, through his Aquarian Foundation. Though it is not entirely clear in the book when the Foundation was conceived and engendered, it seems that the most likely time period was between February and May, 1926.

The promise and excitement of participating in the “laying the foundations of the new Order” (29) must have been profuse for those who were captivated by Wilson’s pronouncements. Many respondents were Canadian members of the Theosophical Society who heard Wilson at the various Lodges throughout Canada (nearly all in the Ottawa Lodge joined the Foundation to give but one example) although the General-Secretary of the Society and editor of *The Canadian Theosophist*, Albert E.S. Smythe, was hesitant and even sceptical of Wilson’s claims, as was Alice Bailey, the head of the Arcane School, and the young editor of *The All-Seeing Eye*, Manly P. Hall. Other, equally respected individuals - the novelist Will Levington Comfort, the astrologer Alfred H. Barley and his wife Annie, Joseph S. Benner (the owner of The Sun Publishing Company), and Coulson Turnbull, a well-known astrologer and author of such works as *The Divine Language of Celestial Correspondences* as well as the owner of The Gnostic Press - were far more accepting.

As promising a venture the Aquarian Foundation was, the issue of Wilson’s character was

almost immediately called into question. Despite the generally good impression that Brother XII had on perspective recruits<sup>10</sup>, what was to follow, from 1927 on, was most disturbing and sometimes frightening to all those aware of the events. Once Mr. Oliphant recounts the improprieties, disapprobations, libertinism, and scandals, the narrative becomes so “bizarre that it out rival[s] in real life the wildest imaginings of an old-fashioned dime novel,”<sup>11</sup> for it is the story of “His Doomed Cult of Gold, Sex, and Black Magic” states the dust jacket of the book.

Readers will no doubt find the narrative of Brother’s XII sexual escapades, his political ambitions, his increasingly harsh and irrational treatment of his followers, his insatiable and unscrupulous desire for gold, his attempts to kill his enemies by means of black magic or by psychic means, and finally the strange circumstances surrounding his disappearance and eventual, uncertain death in 1934 fascinating and disquieting reading.

As revealing as Mr. Oliphant is in his narration of the facts of E.A. Wilson’s later life as Brother XII, I still cannot unfathom this tenaciously enigmatic character. Was he totally evil as some might infer from his actions? Was he ever the charlatan whose sole purpose was to bilk his followers out of the thousands of dollars they willingly donated for his Work? Or was he at first a balanced and clear-

sighted prophet on a rightful mission only to be derailed by either some psychological breakdown or psychic assault which transformed him into a spiritual megalomaniac? There is a danger in jumping to conclusions about any person’s motivation for such behavior. Behavior is, after all, observable and therefore subject to evaluation and analysis. It is unlikely, however, that the motive upon which such actions are based can ever be uncovered with certitude. And it is on this basis that I hesitate making any superficial judgments about the man. Who knows what demons possessed him? As Colin Wilson states in his “Preface” (7):

there is, it seems, a certain risk attached to becoming a prophet and spiritual leader. Steiner was better able to cope with it than Crowley, because he seems to have been a genuinely decent and saintly man. Yet all these “avatars” seem to find themselves drawn into the same web of difficulty and compromise . . . “Teachers” who try to exert a direct influence on other people, to become gurus and messiahs, seem prone to “entanglement,” to involvement with fools and time-wasters, which often brings out the worst in them. Even when, like Steiner, they are too decent as human beings to succumb to power-mania or paranoia, they seem to find themselves in a trap that defies all attempts to escape.

It is therefore, unfortunate that the subtitle of the book included the phrase “False Prophet” when this is taken into account. Yes, Wilson betrayed the trust of his disciples and followers, but whether this was due to his being a victimizer or a victim only he himself would know. The mystery that resided in his heart, I fear, will ever be impenetrable.

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<sup>10</sup> Jane Comfort, the daughter of Will Levington Comfort, in an interview with Mr. Oliphant, remembered the following:

Everybody loved him . . . He was stimulating and wise, and always spoke carefully and with sensitivity. He wasn’t overbearing - if he’d acted like an authority, he would have been much less appealing. But you felt his presence - he was carrying a lot of voltage!

<sup>11</sup> “Finis Written to Long Search for Man of Mystery,” *The Daily Colonist* (Victoria, B.C.), 16 July 1939: 2.

# Theosophical History



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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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*Theosophical History* (ISSN 0951-497X) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by James A. Santucci. The journal's purpose is to publish contributions specifically related to the modern Theosophical Movement, from the time of Madame Helena Blavatsky and others who were responsible in establishing the original Theosophical Society (1875), to all groups that derive their teachings—directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly—from her or her immediate followers. In addition, the journal is also receptive to related movements (including pre-Blavatskyite Theosophy, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and the philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg to give but a few examples) that have had an influence on or displayed an affinity to modern Theosophy.

The subscription fee for the journal is \$14.00 (U.S., Mexico, Canada), \$16.00 (elsewhere), or \$24.00 (air Mail) for four issues a year. Single issues are \$4.00. All inquiries should be sent to **James Santucci**, *Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.)*.

The Editors assume no responsibility for the views expressed by authors in *Theosophical History*.

\* \* \* \* \*

## GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

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There is no limitation on the length of manuscripts. In general, articles of 30 pages or less will be published in full; articles in excess of 30 pages may be published serially.

Brief communications, review articles, and book reviews are welcome. They should be submitted double-spaced.

All correspondence, manuscripts, and subscriptions should be sent to:

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**On the Cover:** Carl Kellner (1851-1905). See "The OTO Phenomenon." Photo reproduced with the permission of P.R. König.

# Editor's Comments

## Theosophical History: Occasional Papers

### *Witness for the Prosecution: Annie Besant's Testimony on behalf of H.P. Blavatsky in the N.Y. Sun/Coues Law Case (Introduction by Michael Gomes)*

Many regular readers are aware that from 1985 to 1989 the Theosophical History Centre (London) published a number of pamphlets besides *Theosophical History*. Titles included my own *Theosophy and the Theosophical Society*, *Madame Blavatsky Unveiled?* by Leslie Price, *Autobiography of Alfred Percy Sinnett*, *Theosophia in Neo-Platonic and Christian Literature* by Jean-Louis Siémons, *Bibliography of H.P. Blavatsky* by Jean-Paul Guignette, *100 Years of Modern Occultism: A Review of the Parent Theosophical Society* by Leslie Leslie-Smith, *Senzar: The Mystery of the Mystery Language* by John Algeo, *The Beginnings of Theosophy in France* by Joscelyn Godwin, *Madame Blavatsky: The 'Veiled' Years: Light from Gurdjieff or Sufism?* by Paul Johnson, and *J'Accuse: An Examination of the Hodgson Report of 1885* by Vernon Harrison.

Now that *Theosophical History* is well under way, I believe that the time is ripe for a new publication series designed to investigate various topics either directly or peripherally related to theosophical history. To this end, *Theosophical History: Occasional Papers* is being initiated. The purpose of the series is to bring to light important documents that have either long been out of print or have never been published. In addition, the series will also include studies relating to theosophical history that are too long for the journal. To this end, I would like to extend an invitation to all scholars who have completed or are currently working on a topic pertinent to theosophi-

cal history to submit their work for possible publication either in this new series or in the journal. As a reminder, the term *theosophical* used in this context complies with the descriptions contained in *Theosophical History* IV/2 (page 34): "all teachings, organizations and individuals that may either predate those of H.P. Blavatsky or that possess only an indirect or superficial relationship to modern Theosophical teachings," and to "the societies, individuals, and literature that derive their teachings *directly* from the writings of H.P. Blavatsky." The subject matter, therefore, includes any subject that falls within the purview of ancient, medieval, modern, Western or Eastern theosophy, including Gnosticism, Esotericism, Mysticism, and related movements.

The first title of the *Occasional Papers* series is "Witness for the Prosecution: Annie Besant's Testimony on Behalf of H.P. Blavatsky in the New York *Sun-Coues* Law Case." Included will be the actual transcript of Mrs. Besant's testimony on 4 May 1891 during the proceedings held in the New York Supreme Court, New York [Manhattan] County. Michael Gomes, who is responsible for locating the transcript, will give an extended introduction to the material. The expected publication will be **April 1993**. Those interested in ordering this publication may receive it at the **pre-publication** price of (U.S.)\$8.00 (postmarked prior to 31 March 1993) or at the regular **publication** price of \$12.00 (after 1 April 1993). Payment must be made in

U.S. currency by check or international money order payable to Theosophical History and mailed to James Santucci, Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA (U.S.A.) 92634.

\*\*\*\*\*

## A Request to All Readers

One of my goals as the editor of *Theosophical History* is to increase and internationalize the circulation of the journal. *TH* is currently distributed on all continents to a readership consisting of members of the various Theosophical societies, academics, researchers in the areas of Gnosticism, Esotericism, Mysticism, New Age and New Religions. One positive sign apropos the journal's circulation is the growing number of libraries subscribing to the journal. In order to continue this latter trend, I am asking for your assistance. Please request the library you frequent to order the journal for its collection or, if the library does not have the funding for expanding its periodical collection, consider a contribution of the journal to a library. This is already the practice of some of the subscribers. If you are interested in expanding the readership of *TH*, please write me for additional information.

While on the subject of subscriptions, there is one more request that is of particular importance. Please inform me as soon as possible whether you plan to continue or terminate your subscription once the notice for renewal is sent. Because the journal receives no external financial support from any person or group, the printing and postage of *TH* is covered mainly from subscriptions. Although costs are greater than income, it has never been my policy to eliminate

deficits by including advertising in the journal or by selling my subscriber lists, so any shortfall must be up out of pocket. My only request of you is to keep me informed of your intentions.

\*\*\*\*\*

## A New Biography of HPB

At the International Theosophical History Conference last June, a progress report on Sylvia Cranston's biography of H.P. Blavatsky was presented by Miss Cranston's research assistant, Carey Williams. Since that time, the uncorrected proof of *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, The Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*, has come into my hands, and it promises to be a comprehensive and careful biography. In fairness to the author, however, no review will be attempted until the final version appears in print. The publication date is scheduled for 6 January 1993 with an expected size of 656 pages. A total of 82 chapters divided into seven parts, notes, bibliography, and a number of illustrations comprise the book. The titles of the seven parts are "Life in Russia," "World Search," "Maturing Years," "America Land of Beginnings," "Mission to India," "Horizons Open in the West," and "The Century After." Selected chapter titles include "Army Camp Life," "Occult Wonders," "Tibetan Sojourn," "Writing of *Isis Unveiled*," "Among the Buddhists," "The Coulomb-Hodgson Affair," "Was She a Plagiarist," "Mahler, Sibelius, and Scriabin," and "Myths, Dreams, and the Collective Unconscious."

The book will be published by G.P. Putnam's Sons (A Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book), 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. The ISBN number is 0-87477-688-0.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Leslie Price

I am happy to announce that Mr. Leslie Price, the founder and former editor of *Theosophical History*, has consented to serve as Associate Editor. Mr. Price, a graduate in Religious Studies from the University of Sussex (England) serves on the Library Committee of the Society for Psychical Research, London, and was involved in the reassessment of H.P.B. which culminated in the 1986 Harrison report. Although he is formally retired from the Theosophical field, Mr. Price is currently examining the library of an early member of the T.S., Stainton Moses. His formal participation on the Editorial Board of the journal fills a void that was left after his departure as Editor. We therefore look forward to his future contributions to the journal.

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## I.T.H. Conference Videotapes

Most of the presentations given at The Fifth International Theosophical History Conference (Point Loma, California) in June of 1992 are now available on six videotape cassettes, thanks to Mr. Brett Forray of the Los Angeles Center for Theosophic Study (Adyar) and The Theosophical Society (Pasadena). The tapes may be ordered separately for \$12.00 each, or as a set for \$60.00. For those living outside the U.S. and Canada, please note that the tapes are available only in the NTSA format. We hope to have PAL format copies available in the near future. For California residents outside Los Angeles County, please add 7.25% tax; Los Angeles County residents should add 8.25% tax. For postage and handling, please add \$2.50 for the first tape and

\$0.50 for each additional tape. Checks should be made out to BRETT FORRAY and sent to 123 West Lomita #11, Glendale, CA 91204 (U.S.A.). All funds should be in U.S. currency drawn on a U.S. bank. Proceeds from the sales of the tapes will be donated to *Theosophical History* after the costs in producing each tape are recovered. Contents of the videotapes are listed below:

### TAPE 1:

“The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society”

John Cooper (Australia, read *in absentia*)

“The Teachings of Brother XII in the Context of the Theosophical Movement in the Late 1920s and Early 1930s”

John Oliphant (Canada)

“Col. Arthur L. Conger: 1872-1951”

Alan Donant (U.S.A.)

“Gottfried de Purucker: From the Mystical to the Ordinary”

Kenneth Small (U.S.A.)

### TAPE 2:

“The Temple of the People: A Report on Research in Progress”

Elizabeth Pullen (U.S.A.)

“The Outlaws of Sherwood Forest: Victor Endersby and *Theosophical Notes*”

Jerry Hejka-Ekins (U.S.A.)

“The Life of Shankarācārya after H.P. Blavatsky and T. Subba Row”

Henk J. Spierenburg (The Netherlands, read *in absentia*)

**TAPE 3:**

“Secret Messages from Colonel Olcott”  
Paul Johnson (U.S.A.)

“Katherine Tingley: The Theosophist as Progressive Reformer, 1890-1929”  
Dwayne Little (U.S.A.)

“The Nationalist and Theosophical Movement”  
James Biggs (U.S.A.)

**TAPE 4:**

“The Beginnings of Theosophy in New Zealand”  
Robert Ellwood (U.S.A.)

“Esoteric Within the Exoteric: Esoteric Groups in the Theosophical Movement”  
Gregory Tillett (Australia)

“William Q. Judge’s First Meeting with H.P. Blavatsky”  
Will Thackara (U.S.A.)

**TAPE 5:**

“Mathematics of the Cosmic Mind”  
L. Gordon Plummer (U.S.A.)

“The Resignation of H.P. Blavatsky from the Theosophical Society”  
D.J. Buxey (India, read *in absentia*)

“Joan Grant: Winged Phoenix?”  
Jean Overton Fuller (England)

**TAPE 6:**

“Katherine Tingley: Warrior for Peace”  
Grace F. Knoche (Leader, The Theosophical Society, Pasadena)

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## 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions

The one hundredth anniversary of the momentous World’s Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago’s “White City” in conjunction with the Columbia Exposition from 11 to 27 of September (1893), will be celebrated with the convocation of the Parliament of World’s Religions on 28 August 1993. The Parliament will be held in Chicago from 28 August to 4 September with most of the events held at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel (17 East Monroe Street, Chicago, IL 60603). Workshops, seminars, presentations, exhibitions, and performances will be offered on a wide variety of themes, including: New Religions; Myth, Ritual, and Tradition; Sacred Space and Sacred Time; The Next Generation; Religious and Cultural Pluralism; Health and Wellness; The History of Religions; Art, Music, and Dance; Race Harmony; Death and Dying; Interfaith Dialogue; The Feminine in Religion; Meditation and Contemplation; Religious and Cultural Pluralism; and Indigenous Peoples’ Spirituality. Participants will include H.H. the Dalai Lama, Ven. Thích Nhất Hạnh, Imam W. Deen Muhammad, Dr. Seyyed Hosain Nasr, Dr. Hans Küng, Swami Prakashanand Saraswati, Rabbi Herman

Schaalman, Sri Chinmoy, Dom Bede Griffiths, A.T. Ariyaratne, and Madame Rúhíyyih Rabbani.

The full registration received before 1 June 1993 is \$200 (\$350 for couples and family); after 1 June \$350 (\$500). Youth under 18 years of age may register for half the amount. One-day registration is \$75; three-day registration is \$200. All payments must be made in U.S. funds; checks drawn against non-U.S. banks must add a \$25 surcharge. Checks should be made payable to the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (P.O. Box 1630, Chicago, IL 60690 U.S.A.).

Reservations for lodging at the Palmer House is available for \$78 per room per night. The Hilton Reservation Service number (within the U.S.) is 1-800-HILTONS. It is advisable to consult with a travel agent if you reside outside the U.S. The telephone number for the Palmer House is 312-726-7500.

Should you have little or no knowledge of the importance of the World's Parliament of Religions, there are a few publications that are readily available in most major libraries, including *The Incredible World's Parliament of Religions at the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893: A Comparative and Critical Study* by Clay Lancaster (Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press, 1987); *The World's Parliament of Religions*, edited by John Henry Barrows in two volumes (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Co., 1893); and an article by Donald H. Bishop, "Religious Confrontation: A Case Study: The 1893 Parliament of Religions," *Numen* 16 (April 1969): 63-76. More difficult to procure are two dissertations, one by Kenten Druyvesteyn, "The World's Parliament of Religions" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1976), the other by Richard H. Seager, "The World's Parliament of Religion, Chicago, Illinois, 1893" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1987). Also in print is The Eleventh John Nuveen

Lecture delivered by Joseph Kitagawa, entitled "The 1893 World's Parliament of Religions and Its Legacy" (University of Chicago Divinity School, 1983).

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## **Brother XII Update**

The book, *Brother XII* by John Oliphant (reviewed in IV/2) is available from McClelland & Stewart (380 Esna Park Drive, Markham, Ontario, Canada, L3R 1H5) (Tel: 416-940-8855, extension 229). For hardcover, the price is \$29.95, paperback \$17.99. Shipping charge for one book is \$2.00.

# Book Notes

*Manimekhalai (The Dancer With The Magic Bowl)*. By Merchant-Prince Shattan. Translated by Alain Daniélou with the collaboration of T.V. Gopala Iyer. New York: New Directions, 1989. Pp. xiv + 191. Paper, \$11.95.

*Manimekhalai*, the story of a courtesan who becomes a Buddhist nun, is the latter of two Tamil literary “epics,” both composed about the middle of the first millennium C.E. (though Daniélou here claims a too-early, second-century provenance for the text). Daniélou also translated the earlier, related epic, *Shilappadikaram (The Ankle Bracelet)*, published by New Directions in 1965. *Manimekhalai* is the major Buddhist text extant in Tamil. Despite an overall narrative content, several of *Manimekhalai*’s thirty chapters are devoted to schematic philosophical presentation, including one featuring a highly technical discussion of Buddhist logic.

Daniélou’s efforts here are welcome, given that this is the first full translation of *Manimekhalai* into English. (An English summary of the text by Krishnaswami Aiyangar appeared in 1928, and Paula Richman’s able scholarly study of *Manimekhalai*, containing translations of several of *Manimekhalai*’s “branch stories,” was published in 1988.) But like Daniélou’s translation of *Shilappadikaram*, this is not a scholarly work. And though the English renderings here are fairly idiomatic, *Manimekhalai* is simply not as accessible or engaging a work as *Shilappadikaram*, nor is it as important a mirror of ancient Tamil culture as the earlier epic. Thus, one assumes the audience for this translation will mainly be specialists in Tamil literature or

in Indian Buddhism, few of whom are likely to be satisfied with a translation not up to current critical standards for annotation and scholarly apparatus (there is a glossary but no bibliography, index, or other aids to understanding).

**Glenn Yocum**  
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**Whittier, CA (USA)**

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*H.P.B. teaches: An Anthology*, compiled by Michael Gomes (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1992) is a collection of some of the more significant articles that have been previously published in the fourteen (minus the Index) volume *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*. Reprinted from the original sources exactly as they appeared (minus a nod to modern punctuation practices and Sanskrit spelling), the articles appearing herein are, according to Mr. Gomes, subject to less editorial changes than at the hands of Mr. de Zirkoff, the editor of the *CW*. The compiler argues, quite correctly, that a “handy, one volume compendium of what might be considered the best of Blavatsky, would serve as a useful introduction for those having no clear idea of what she actually taught.” He has chosen well, for the forty articles contained therein range in time from “A Few Questions to “Hiraf” (1875) to “There is a Road...” (1891) and are grouped in seven categories based on the location where H.P.B. was writing at the time. Titles include “Is Suicide a Crime?,” “The Septenary Principle in Esotericism,” “Is Foeticide a Crime?,”

“Theories about Reincarnation and Spirits,” “The Origin of Evil,” “What is Truth?,” “Occultism versus the Occult Arts,” and “Christian Science.” I highly recommend the collection. The price of the publication is \$11.50 (U.S.) and £6.00 (U.K.) and is distributed through the T.P.H. in Wheaton (Illinois) and London.

The U.L.T. (245 W. 33 St., LA, CA 90007) has available three bio-chronologies (free upon request) of what it considers the true architects of the modern Theosophical Movement—H.P.Blavatsky, William .Q. Judge, and Robert Crosbie—and a pamphlet, *Two Answers* by W.Q. Judge. (\$1.50), which focuses on the accusations made against W.Q.J. by Annie Besant that was to become known as the “Judge Case.” All the bio-chronologies provide the sources for all the information provided, a list of their writings, and a bibliography. Of special value for readers with little or no knowledge of Mme. Blavatsky’s writings are summaries of *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine*, and *The Voice of the Silence*. Furthermore, the “Judge Case” (1894-1896) is treated at length in the W.Q.J. biography, not unexpectedly in the form of a brief for the defence of this second most important figure in the U.L.T. In the Crosbie biography there is allusion to letters written by Joseph Fussell of the Point Loma T.S. that attack the Mr. Crosbie’s character. It is unfortunate but not unexpected that details are not given of this episode.

For Theosophists who are interested in acquiring some of the basics of the Sanskrit language, take heart. Thomas Egenes has provided a singular service in making accessible the rudiments of what is generally regarded by many as an impossibly difficult language. Most Sanskrit primers are beyond the understanding

of students who wish to study the language on their own. After teaching a semester of Sanskrit during the Summer, 1992 session, however, my students had no problem in following the explanations of the syntax and morphology contained in Dr. Egenes’ *Introduction to Sanskrit: Part One* (Point Loma, CA: Point Loma Publications, Inc., 1989, ISBN: 0-913004-69-3, \$18.75) or in learning the *devanāgarī* script contained in his *Sanskrit Workbook: Learning the Alphabet* (Fairfield, Iowa: Maharishi International University Press, 1990, ISBN 0-923569-09-X, \$10.95). The exercises contained in the *Introduction* conform closely with the explanations in the chapters. An answer key to all the exercises appears toward the end of the book. Also a number of Sanskrit quotation from such classics as the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Upanishads* also appear in *devanāgarī*, transliteration, and translation. Both books are available from Point Loma Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 6507, San Diego, CA 92106.

An additional tool to learning Sanskrit has just been published by the Theosophical University Press. Entitled *Sanskrit Pronunciation: Booklet and Cassette* (ISBN 1-55700-021-2), the author, Dr. Bruce Cameron Hall, provides a guide to all the sounds of the Sanskrit language and of those key Sanskrit terms that appear in Theosophical texts. The cassette is of high quality and Dr. Hall’s pronunciation very clear. This is certainly the best introduction into the pronunciation of the language. It is ideal for those with little or no technical knowledge of phonetics. The booklet and cassette are available for a total of \$10.00 through the Theosophical University Press, P.O. Bin C, Pasadena, CA 91109).

**James Santucci**

# Correspondence

## ***From Jutta K. Lebmann (Montréal, Québec)***

I would be interested in articles [dealing with] the role of astrology in Theosophical thinking, as well as astrologers linked to the Theosophical society. I am slowly gathering material on this for a thesis, and I would be happy if the journal could occasionally be helpful on this.

*Miss Lebmann's request is most fortuitous on two counts. At the International Theosophical History Conference last June, Dr. Gordon Melton announced that plans for The First International Conference of Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Astrology to be held in June 1993 under the sponsorship of the Institute for the Study of American Religion and Theosophical History. I recently learned, however, that the Conference has been tentatively rescheduled for 1994. Although Theosophical History is not able to co-sponsor the event due to my prior commitment to serving as Program Chair of the 1994 Triennial International Conference of the East-West Center Association and East-West Center (Honolulu), I fully expect it to occur at that time. Details of the Conference will be announced in the journal as I receive information.*

*Second, while at the Eighth Annual Conference of Politica Hermetica, "Les postérités de la théosophie," a new book came to my attention authored by the President of the Astological Society of France, Jacques Halbronn (with contributions by Patrick Curry and Nicolas Campion),*

*entitled La Vie astrologique il y a cent ans d'Alan Leo à F. Ch. Barlet (Paris: Edition La Grand Conjunction and Edition Guy Trédaniel, 1992). The book will be reviewed in a future issue.*

## ***From John Cooper (Bega, NSW Australia)***

In his editorial in *Theosophical History* for April 1992, James Santucci (pp. 34-35) outlines the scope of this journal. Briefly, he wrote that TH focuses on the 1875 foundation of the Theosophical society and on the various individuals and organisations whose work is based upon the original Society, plus certain pre-Blavatskian movements and teachings.

There seems little room for argument in so far as the 1875 and afterwards movements are concerned. The problem is with the pre-Blavatskian period. Unless we use some discrimination in this area, we may receive manuscripts dealing with Tibetan Buddhism or Gnosticism, all of which may be important in themselves but which may not fit within the parameters of this journal.

Therefore, I would suggest that pre-Blavatskian material be limited to research dealing with the post 1875 writings and just how they relate to earlier movements. An example would be the excellent paper by Jean-Louis Siemons on "Ammonius Saccas and His Eclectic Philosophy" (Paris, July, 1988), which deals with H.P.B.'s comments on this philosopher in *Key to Theosophy* and shows that they were based upon the writ-

ings of Alexander Wilder, who, in his turn, took his understanding of Ammonius from J.L. von Mosheim (1674-1755) in his *Ecclesiastical History* (English translation, 1806). Here, Dr. Siemons shows that Mosheim is a victim of “unchecked imagination” and he calls on Theosophists to avoid “unverified affirmations.”

However, as I see it, a paper on Ammonius as a philosopher would be better published in a general Theosophical or specialised academic journal.

This would still leave this journal open to contributions such as the influence of Swedenborg/Bulwer Lytton/Randolph, etc. on Blavatsky/Sinnett/Steiner, etc.

*John Cooper is an Associate Editor of TH. The scope of Theosophical History will be discussed at greater length in a future issue.*

# Communications

## Conference Updates from Europe

Karen Voss

*[Associate Editor Karen Voss has sent the following information on past and future events in England and the Continent. She writes:]*

**INFORM [Information Network Focus on Religious Movements], CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)**, and the Institute for the Study of American Religion will hold an international conference on the theme, **"New Religions and the New Europe."** The conference will take place in the London School of Economics, London, on March 25-28, 1993. "The general objectives . . . will be the exchange of information and discussion of issues concerning new religious movements in eastern and western Europe."

The official end of the "all for Papers" period was September 30. For further information contact: Dr. Charlotte Hardman, INFORM, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, United Kingdom or Dr. Massimo Introvigne, CESNUR, Via Bertola 86, 10122 Torino, Italy.

**The Eighth Annual Conference of Politica Hermetica** will be on the theme: **"The Legacies of Theosophy: From Theosophy to the New Age,"** and will be held at Ecoles Pratiques des Hautes Etudes, in the Sorbonne, on December 12-13, 1992. Antoine Faivre (EPHE, Sorbonne) will give the introductory address entitled "Theosophy," dealing with the history of the idea of theosophy and the etymological development of

the word itself. James A. Santucci (CSU Fullerton) will present "New Light on George Henry Felt: the Inspiration for the Theosophical Society." For more information write to: Professor Jean-Pierre Laurant, 02290 Vezaponin, France. (Please note: this is the complete address.)

The **Women's Studies Group 1500-1820** held a conference on the topic: **"Demystifying the Female: She Devils, Saints and Signifiers in Literature, Art and History,"** on November 24, 1991, at the Institute of Romance Studies, London. The conference was organized by Dr. Marie Roberts as part of an ongoing series of similar events. A sampling: "A Typology of She-Devils in 18th c. European Horror Fiction," by Emma Cleary; "Alchemical Images of Gender," by Carolyn Williams; "Women in English Fairytales: Body, Space and Experience," by Eliza Hannan; and "'Who Wears the Apron?' Female Freemasons and Masonic Misogyny," by Marie Roberts. For information about upcoming offerings contact: Dr. Marie Roberts; Literary Studies, Department of Humanities; St. Matthias; Bristol Polytechnic; Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2TP; Great Britain.

The **Center for Studies on New Religions (Cesnur-Torino, Italy)** and **Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Anthropologiques de l'Université Lumière (CREA—Lyon, France)** co-sponsored an international colloquium on the theme **"The Challenge of Magic: Spiritu-**

**alism Satanism and Occultism in Contemporary Societies**" at the Bibliothèque Municipale in Lyon, from April 6-8, 1992. Papers were given in French, English, or Italian (simultaneous translation was available). The opening address, "A la recherche des nouveaux mouvements magiques," was delivered by Massimo Introvigne, Director of CESNUR. Other presentations, including many by North American scholars, were: David Bromley (Virginia Commonwealth U.), "The Satanism Scare in the United States"; Peter Clarke (King's College, London), "Why are Women Mediums in Bahian Candomblé?"; Cecilia Gatto Trocchi (Univ. of Perugia), "Women as Leaders of New Magical Movements"; Joscelyn Godwin (Colgate U.), "Hargrave Jennings and the Philosophy of Fire"; Phillip Lucas (UC Santa Barbara), "Esotericism in a Modern Monastic Movement: An Analysis of the Holy Order of MANS' Sacramental Forms"; Christel G. Manning (UC Santa Barbara), "Restoring the Goddess: Z. Budapest and Religious Primitivism in America"; J. Gordon Melton (UC Santa Barbara), "Pascal Beverly Randolph: Occult Pioneer and Spiritual Innovator"; Bernice Glatzer-Rosenthal (Fordham U.), "The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture, and Historical Perspective"; and James Santucci (CSU Fullerton), "Forgotten Magi: George Henry Felt and Ezekiel Perkins." The Bibliothèque Municipale of Lyon also mounted two exhibits on the iconography of the monster and of the devil.

The **Association pour la Recherche et l'Information sur l'Esotérisme** organized an international colloquium on "**Magie du livre et livres de magie**" on May 22-23, 1992. Held under the auspices of the Sorbonne, in collaboration with the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, it was housed in the library itself, and included

an exhibit of old and rare books on esotericism and magic. Among the speakers at the conference: Umberto Eco (University of Bologna), whose talk was entitled "Pourquoi Raymond Lulle n'était pas un kabbaliste." Antoine Faivre (EPHE, Sorbonne), who gave a slide presentation on the topic of "La théosophie par l'image" and Massimo Introvigne (Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni, Torino), who spoke on "Livres magiques révélés et livres révélés religieux (d'Aleister Crowley aux 'Nouvelles Religions')."

The **Groupe d'Etudes Spirituelles Comparées** held a conference at the Sorbonne from June 13-14, 1992 on the topic "**Transmission Culturelle, Transmission Spirituelle.**" Among the speakers: Gilbert Durand (Emeritus, University of Grenoble and founder of the Centre de Recherche sur l'Imagination), whose talk was entitled: "Esprit de la culture et chair de l'esprit."

Also in France, "**l'Association des Amis de Pontigny-Cerisy,**" held a colloquium on "**Le Vampirisme dans la Légende, la littérature et le Cinéma,**" Aug. 4-11, 1992, at the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-la-Salle. Among the presentations we note: "Du vampire vilageois au discours des clercs, ou genèse d'un imaginaire à l'aube des lumières," by Antoine Faivre; "Le vampirisme, de la légende à la métaphore," by J. Marigny; and "La femme vampire dans la poésie romantique anglaise," by J. Perrin. No fewer than eighteen conferences are planned for 1993, including one to be held Oct. 15-17, 1993, on "**Stereotypes, textes et modernité.**" The 1994 season is not fully planned, but at this writing there are already *twelve* scheduled events including some that appear especially rich for those in our field: "**Le Masculin**" (July

2-12); **“Mythe et surréalisme”** (Aug. 1-8); and **“L’île, son image, ses fonctions”** (Aug. 10-17). For further information about membership in the Association write to : CCIC, 50210 Cerisy-Salle, France. Tel. 33.46.91.66; fax 33.46.11.39. Regular membership is 150 francs a year; student membership (26 yrs. or younger): 50 fr. (Same cost for foreign members, who must arrange to pay by check either in French francs, or to pay the bank fees connected with converting U.S. dollar checks into French francs). If you attend a conference, you are generally required to stay in the center at a cost of 355 francs (currently U.S. \$70) per day.

# Communications

## International Theosophical History Conference

Paul Johnson

The International Theosophical History Conference held on June 12 to 14 in San Diego was itself historic in several ways. Held at Point Loma Nazarene College, former headquarters of the Theosophical Society led by Katherine Tingley and Gottfried de Purucker, it was the first Theosophical gathering at the site in 50 years. It was also the first Theosophical History Conference in North America, succeeding four held in London from 1986 through 1989. Approximately 75 participants came from the United States, Europe, and Canada to hear presentations from 21 scholars. Several Theosophical organizations were represented as well as a substantial number of non-Theosophists. The atmosphere was relaxed and harmonious despite occasional controversy.

The first day was devoted to the history of Point Loma. In his opening remarks, Dr. James Santucci, Professor of Religious Studies at California State University, Fullerton, outlined his purpose in organizing the conference. Representing only the goals of *Theosophical History*, the conference had no institutional affiliation. Its intention was to provide a forum for presenting research and discussing ideas about Theosophical history. Due to time limitations, opportunity for discussion was severely limited, but research was presented on a wide range of topics.

Friday afternoon's tour of Point Loma was introduced by Dr. Dwayne Little, Director of Planning and Institutional Development at the college. Dr. Little had studied 20,000 photographs in the archives of the Pasadena Theo-

sophical Society's headquarters in preparing his slide lecture. After a photographic retrospective of Point Loma history, he gave a brief account of the ties of Emmett and Carmen Small to the site. Both were educated at Point Loma and later had careers in teaching there. Their guided tour of the campus provided personal anecdotes and details which supplemented Dr. Little's historical presentation with eyewitness descriptions.

Saturday morning's program focused on Theosophical communities. Dr. Gordon Melton described the work of the Communal Studies Association including a five year project on Theosophical communities. Intended to produce one chapter of a forthcoming book, the project expanded to much greater proportions than the four communities originally included. Dr. Melton, recounting the histories of Krotona and the Temple of the People as examples, concluded that the communal phase of Theosophical history lacked a critique of society and a model for resolving social problems. Theosophy's intense individualism tended to weaken the emphasis on social witness, and Theosophical communities generally lost their communal status.

Two of Dr. Melton's graduate students at the University of California, Santa Barbara followed with reports on living Theosophical communities. Isotta Poggi described the work of the Green Village (Villaggio Verde) in northern Italy. It emphasizes artistic activities and therapeutic programs. The work of the Temple of the People was portrayed by Elizabeth Pullen.

This community, located in Halcyon, California, was established in 1897 as a schism from the T.S. led by Katherine Tingley. It survives to the present as headquarters of an organization with branches in several countries. Temple leaders claim continuing messages from the Masters since the days of the founders, Francia la Due and William Dower.

Great interest was aroused by the next presentation, John Oliphant's summary of his research on Brother XII, Edward A. Wilson. This retired English sea captain received a series of revelations from the Great White Brotherhood in 1924 which led to the establishment of several colonies on the coast of British Columbia. Oliphant's book on Brother XII recounts the mixture of Theosophical teachings and prophecies of Armageddon which attracted Wilson's disciples, as well as the abuse and fraud which eventually alienated them.

Saturday morning closed with Jean Overton Fuller's report on her work in progress, a study of Joan Grant's fiction. Grant's works were inspired by past life memories, and Fuller recounted her interviews with the author in which she learned of the means whereby these memories became conscious.

Saturday afternoon's session began with Professor Robert Ellwood's presentation on Theosophical beginnings in New Zealand. Dr. Ellwood, Professor of Religion at the University of Southern California, had received a Fulbright research grant for a forthcoming book, *Islands of the Dawn: Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*. With one of the strongest ratios of T.S. membership to population of any country, New Zealand has been surprisingly influenced by Theosophy. A Prime Minister, Harry Atkinson, was a lodge member in Wellington.

Ellwood was followed by Jerry Hejka-Ekins,

who spoke on Victor Endersby. Closely linked with the inner circle of the United Lodge of Theosophists from 1924 through 1949, Endersby later worked independently, editing a curmudgeonly magazine called *Theosophical Notes*. Hejka-Ekins gave an entertaining account of meeting Endersby, still vigorous in his nineties and living alone in a mountaintop cabin.

Will Thackara of the Pasadena T.S. Headquarters explained his research on the confused question of the date of W.Q. Judge's first meeting with Mme. Blavatsky. Several sources give 1874 as the year, but others give 1875. Thackara assisted Sylvia Cranston, author of the forthcoming biography of H.P.B., to resolve this question concluding that 1874 was the correct year. Succeeding Thackara on the program was Dr. Dwayne Little, speaking on Katherine Tingley's role as a progressive reformer. He summarized her labors in education, prison reform, the peace movement, and the Theosophical Society, concluding that all showed the impact of the Progressive movement. Tingley's work and the Progressives simultaneously rose, flowered, and declined, and shared values, objective, and principles.

Closing Saturday afternoon's session was James Biggs, speaking on the Nationalist Movement inspired by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888). While pursuing a thesis on the subject, Biggs uncovered evidence of the extent of Theosophical involvement in Nationalist activities. Four of eight contributions in the first issue of the *Nationalist* magazine were by Theosophists, but by 1890 arguments arose between Theosophists and the more politically oriented members. The entire movement collapsed by 1894.

After a banquet Saturday evening, the featured speaker was Grace F. Knoche, Leader of

the Theosophical Society, Pasadena. She focused on Katherine Tingley's work in the Peace Movement in the early twentieth century, and concluded with reminiscences of many lesser figures in Point Loma's history.

Sunday morning's session included the most controversial of the papers presented, starting with Gregory Tillett's discussion of esoteric groups in the Theosophical Movement. Dr. Tillett, Director of the Center for Conflict Resolution at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, opened by reporting that since the publication of *The Elder Brother* ten years ago, his research into Theosophical esotericism had uncovered further secrets. The ULT's Dzyan Esoteric Section, which uses mostly H.P. Blavatsky's original Esoteric Section material, was briefly described. Among the Adyar-affiliated groups discussed were the Egyptian Rite of Ancient Freemasonry and the Seven Virgins of Java. Most disturbing to some conferees was Tillett's account of Leadbeater's secret teaching of homosexual magic and its apparent links to the Ordo Templi Orientis via Wedgwood and Yarker.

The next paper, Alan Donant's summary of the life of Arthur Conger, was controversial in an entirely different manner. Donant's portrayal of Conger as a heroic leader provoked disagreement among the Point Loma affiliated Theosophists whose leaders he expelled from the T.S. headquarters in Covina.

My own presentation on secret messages from Col. Olcott to Mme. Blavatsky cited two long-overlooked published letters in which the President-Founder gave names of adept sponsors of the T.S. These passages portray the Society's initiate supporters as far more mundane figures than they are usually understood to have been.

The final paper of the morning session was D.J. Buxey's analysis of H. P. Blavatsky's resigna-

tion from the Theosophical Society. This was controversial because of its harsh criticisms of Col. Olcott and Annie Besant, whom the author accused of turning away from Blavatsky's Masters.

Sunday morning's session concluded with Caren Elin, Sylvia Cranston's research assistant, giving a progress report on the new Blavatsky biography. She cited new Russian sources which had been translated for the book, entitled *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*. It is the 19th published biography of HPB, and the best to date according to several conferees who had examined the manuscript.

The closing session of the conference was held on Sunday afternoon. A paper from John Cooper of Australia was read *in absentia*. His subject was the Esoteric Section in the now defunct Theosophical Society founded by Ernest Hargrove. This group, which seceded from Katherine Tingley's T.S. in 1898, stressed democratic principles. It had an E.S. with an anonymous Outer Head, offering a graded course of study for members.

Next on the program was Ken Small's discussion on the importance of Gottfried de Purucker. This included a reference to G. de P.'s claim to be a tulku, a Tibetan who had occupied Purucker's body in childhood during an attack of typhoid fever. This had been unknown to the Theosophical public until the publication this year in *The High Country Theosophist* of a secret paper in which Purucker discussed this with a few members.

Next was a presentation on "Mathematics of the Cosmic Mind" by L. Gordon Plummer, in which he related Theosophical doctrines to geometry. The fourth afternoon paper was from

Henk Spierenburg of the Netherlands, read *in absentia*. It analyzed comments by HPB and T. Subba Row on the life of Shankarācārya.

The final presentation of the conference was by Dr. Santucci on George Henry Felt. Although only in touch with the T.S. for seven or eight months, Felt was a catalyst in bringing about its establishment. Santucci had uncovered Felt's military career, which included an attempt at court-martial which ended with his accuser being fired. Felt had two inventions patented, a signal rocket and a code for military communications. J.M. Bouton, who published *Isis Unveiled*, had agreed to publish a book by Felt on the Kabalah but plans fell through. He was an engineer by profession, and in 1872 announced his rediscovery of the lost Canon of Proportion. He died in 1906 at the age of 75.

In an informal session at the close of the conference, Dr. Santucci led a discussion of future conference possibilities and the future of *Theosophical History* journal. Many of the conference presentations will appear in future issues. Although plans for the future are unclear, participants left feeling that the journal and the Theosophical History conferences had been successfully transplanted from England to the United States. Whatever the setting of future meetings, the interest in Theosophical history among academic scholars and Theosophists is sufficient to insure enthusiastic participation.

# Review Essay

## ENCOUNTERS WITH UNFAMILIAR STATES: A REVIEW OF FIVE BOOKS BY KENNETH GRANT

Gregory Tillett

The author of these books, Kenneth Grant, is conventionally described on the dust jackets of his publications as having “studied magic under Aleister Crowley, and, a few years after Crowley’s death, took over the Order Templi Orientis (OTO), a body of initiates working toward the establishment of the Law of the Thelema and the true magical tradition that Crowley and others helped to revive”, and alternatively, as the Outer Head of the OTO. These claims are often, not unexpectedly, vigorously disputed by others who equally claim to be the successor of Crowley and the OTO. The complexities of OTO politics following the death of Crowley’s nominated successor, Karl Germer, in 1962, or indeed, the politics and complexities, both esoteric and exoteric, of Crowley’s own claim to be the Outer Head of the OTO have been explored at great length by other people, and are not relevant to this review. It should be sufficient to note, however, that Kenneth Grant was expelled from the OTO headed by Karl Germer on July 20, 1955, and that an account of this expulsion is given Francis King’s interesting volume *Sexuality, Magic and Perversion* [London: Neville Spearman, 1971], which also includes a chapter on Charles Webster Leadbeater with the interesting title “The Bishop and the Boys”.

*The Magical Revival* was originally published

in London by Frederick Muller in 1972, and was described on the dust jacket as containing “a detailed analysis of certain occult traditions which existed long before the Christian Epoch, survived its persecution and anathemas and reappeared in recent times with renewed vigour.”

The dust jacket of the current new edition, published in 1991 by Skoob Books in London, describes the work as a “valuable contribution to occult law, a conscientious document that will be much sought after as a standard source book in its special field”. If its “special field” is a history of occultism in the 19th and 20th centuries, this claim is indeed exaggerated. So indeed is Grant’s definition of the purpose of his book “to place in perspective the various occult tendencies that led up to the revival of interest in occultism in recent years, and to interpret this resurgence in terms of humanity’s needs for a universal approach to reality that transcends all previous systems of mystical and magical attainment.”

While Grant’s work is certainly interesting, and provided one can endure the complexities of the curious jargon which he persists in employing, it makes fascinating reading. However, as history, it leaves a great deal to be desired. A variety of bits and pieces of historical information, culled from a variety of largely unidentified sources is brought together in support of the

author's thesis, which insofar as it can be identified, appears to be that the organisation, now also largely unidentified, of which he claims to be the head is the repository and culmination of all previous occult endeavours. The author, not unlike a number of occult historians, including Theosophical writers, appears content to link together and fuse into one continuous stream a variety of individuals, organisations and traditions which, as far as the exoteric historian is concerned, seem to have no direct connection.

Grant has a minor, if passing, interest in Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society. Grant identifies Blavatsky's establishment of the Theosophical Society in 1875 as "the genesis of this change" leading to a "massive resurgence of interest in the hidden side of things, in the noumenal aspect of this phenomenal world" which ultimately made possible "the unsealing of dormant cells of consciousness through the use of sex, drugs, alcohol and other methods of consciousness control and exploration". He notes, as did Crowley himself, that the occult resurgence of the late 19th century "concentrated in a single knot in the year 1875" in which occurred both the foundation of the Theosophical Society and the birth of Crowley."

Grant identifies that "Blavatsky's intention in initiating her society, was, primarily, the destruction of Christianity in its historical as opposed to its 'eternal' form." He subsequently links this with Crowley's identification of himself with "the anti-Christian formula of the beast, in numerical form 666." Behind a variety of otherwise apparently unconnected occult and Masonic organisations, Grant sees the work of "the true occult order (sometimes called the Great White Brotherhood, and by Crowley the AA)". He traces the work of this order through the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and, prior to that, orders

established around 1886, and individuals including Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Eliphas Levi, Frederick Hockley, Kenneth McKenzie, Gerald Massey, Fabre D'Olivet and others. Grant traces the origins of the OTO, which appears to have had a rather shadowy beginning about 1895 under Carl Kellner, back to the historic Order of the Temple under Jaques de Molay (1293-1313) and thence through Adam Weishaupt (1748-1830) and such other illustrious figures as Count Cagliostro, Leopold Engel, Franz Hartmann and Rudolph Steiner.

However, Grant appears to agree with Crowley that "the true magical revival occurred in 1904, when an occult current of cosmic magnitude was initiated on the inner plains" and, on the outer plains, manifested itself in the writing by Crowley of a volume of allegedly inspired work, under the title *The Book of the Law*, "a grimoire of magical instruction the secrets of which are automatically preserved from profanation, because only those able to use the powers to which it is the key can understand the gabalistic and literary ciphers which it contains". Not unexpectedly, Grant claims to be one of those both able to use the powers and to decipher the mysteries of *The Book of the Law*. Equally predictably, those who are Grant's competitors as claimants to the Crowley tradition, often vigorously dispute both his abilities and his interpretation.

Grant has expounded both the theory and practice of magic as he understands it in a substantial number of substantial volumes, and it is therefore impossible even to begin to summarise them briefly.

Grant defines the main purpose of his books as "to prepare people for encounters with unfamiliar states of consciousness" including "extra-sub-, and ultra-terrestrial encounters". [*Skoob Occult Review* 1990 Issue 3:5] Grant believes

his books “seek to indicate certain ‘gateways’ through which alien forms of consciousness may manifest to man, and through which man may go to meet them.”

In so far as some simple themes can be extracted from his works, it appears that he argues that all religion and magic has its origins in the use of sexual activities to stimulate and to bring into focus superphysical powers. In expanding upon this theme, Grant draws from a wide range of religious and mythological traditions, notably those of Ancient Egypt, Babylon, and the Gnostics of the first to third centuries CE. Much of his work consists of drawing out of those traditions which have been excluded and denounced, popularly identified with black magic and Satanism, both theory and practice which gives clues to the expansion of consciousness and the attribution of super-human powers.

Such techniques include both sexual activities, the use of various drugs, including alcohol and hallucinogens, and various symbolic ritual practices designed to break down conventional barriers in the mind. Some of Grant’s teachings and techniques drew explicitly on aspects of traditional Indian *tantra* and he makes extensive use of Sanskrit words to describe elements of these traditions. A glossary is provided in the book, although its interpretations of many terms, including those drawn from Gnosticism, Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit and Tibetan traditions, are in many ways idiosyncratic, and would not be accepted by more orthodox practitioners within those traditions.

*The Magical Revival* includes a chapter on one figure of whom such unorthodox teachings and practices would not have been expected: Dion Fortune (Violet Mary Firth 1891-1946). Given Fortune’s published comments on any suggestion of unorthodox sexuality, let alone

black magic, it is difficult to accept that she would feel at home in such company as Grant brings into this volume.

Grant claims, however, that Crowley and Fortune corresponded, and indeed, that Fortune asked Crowley’s advice about correct ritual procedure in blood sacrifice involving two young roosters. Grant’s claim of Fortune’s Fraternity of the Inner Light that “the doctrine of sexual polarity was the core of the cult” will no doubt be disputed by many of Fortune’s disciples and those who claim to be her successors. Grant, however, does not appear to be claiming that Fortune engaged explicitly in any form of *tantra*, but rather, indirectly arrived at the theory and practice of *tantra*, albeit unconsciously.

Grant concludes his book by commenting: “the Work that lies ahead may be described symbolically as the marriage of the Beast and the Woman, the formula of which I have attempted to explain. Its hieroglyph is the eleventh key of the Book of Thoth. In the union of electro-chemical and stellar vibrations represented by Babylon and the Beast lies the key to the next stage in the advancement of evolution upon this planet. It will be achieved by willed congress with extra-terrestrial entities of which, in a sense, Aiwaz is the immediate messenger to humanity.”

In *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* [Frederick Muller, London, 1973], Grant undertakes an “exhaustive and critical study of Crowley’s system of sexual magic and the strange rites which he practised and advocated for the purpose of promoting the law of freedom with its formula of ‘love under will’.” As in all his other works Grant seeks to show that Crowley’s work, and the work of those who derived from him, represented the culmination of a long, and ancient, tradition of sexual magic with its origins not simply going back to the *tantric* rites of Kali,

but far beyond them into the mists of time. And, as also with his other works, Grant's concern is not primarily that of the historian, but rather of the synthesiser of information into a consistent and coherent pattern to demonstrate that the theses underlying all his works is supported, not simply by occult traditions of his, but by exoteric information as well. In this, as far as the exoteric historian is concerned, he fails.

At first, this book, like all of Grant's works, may be described as a scrapbook, consisting very largely of personal views (usually described as the teachings of esoteric traditions) with snippets of historical data, some of them accurate and many of them not. The hypothesis which Grant promotes is in itself interesting, and would probably have been more so had it not been presented in the guise of history.

In this book Grant describes in some more detail than in his other works the practice and psychological effects of ritualised sex magic. In particular, his chapter on "Dream Control by Sexual Magic" provides an interesting insight into the contemporary western interpretation of traditional *tantric* methods. In the following chapter, "The Sabbatic Wine and the Devil's Graal" Grant examines approaches to the stimulation of *kundalini* which would cause horror among more traditional practitioners. He notes, for example, that *kundalini* can be "stirred and sometimes fully awakened" by methods as diverse as "total concentration and absorption of the mind in its source", drugs and alcohol, shock, ecstasy induced by music, and speed (by which he means rapid physical movement rather than cocaine), magically controlled sexual activity, "absolute compassion for all created things", "aesthetic ecstasy or impersonal rapture", religious enthusiasm or "violence carried to the pitch of frenzy, either masochistic or the reverse."

Following his theme of the importance of using human magic for the purposes of attracting non-human attentions, Grant notes that "it is possible to draw off stella or transmudane energy by using the human organism as a condenser" and that "this is achieved by tapping the appropriate power zone, after *kundalini* has animated and magnetised it."

In many ways, Chapter 8 "Moon Power: Its names, numbers and reverberant atavisms" is the most interesting and important of the book, particularly the second half of that chapter. Here Grant explores the importance of symbols and symbolism in magic and ritual. He notes that "the subconscious mind is the repository of all images, all ideas, all concepts." He states: "Communication with it is possible only through symbols, and in order to traffic with it a symbolical language is necessary. The only magically effective symbols are those charged with the peculiar vitality of subconsciousness."

One must regret that Grant was not able to write a book in which he felt liberated from the necessity for historical justification and a tendency to attempt to explain everything he says in terms of traditional religion and myth. A simpler, and considerably briefer, volume outlining his approach to ritual, magic, and sexuality would have been considerably more interesting, and considerably less tedious to read.

In *Cults of the Shadow* [London: Frederick Muller, 1975] Kenneth Grant continues the themes developed in *The Magical Revival*. He states that "this book explains aspects of occultism that are often confused with "black magic." Its aim is to restore the Left Hand Path and to reinterpret its phenomena in the light of some of its more recent manifestations. This cannot be achieved without a survey of primal cults and the symbolic formulae which they deposited."

Grant continues his development of the theme that a magical current, having its origins in the remoteness of antiquity, has continued throughout time, and “appears to diverge into two major streams that reflect endlessly the original rift between the votaries of the feminine and the masculine creative principles known technically in *tantra* as the left and the right hand paths. They are of the moon and the sun and their confluence awakes the fire snake (*kundalini*) (the great magic power which illumines the hidden path between them—the middle way—the path of supreme enlightenment.”

Grant notes that “owing to the present state of humanity in this dark age of Kali there has been a great upsurge of primordial energy which finds its fullest expression in the phenomena of sex. But if the sexual energies are not primarily controlled and polarised, destruction awaits the practitioner who uses them without fully understanding the formula of the Left Hand Path, which is, of all paths, the swiftest and the most dangerous.”

Grant concludes the introduction to this book by citing the *tantric* saying: “one reaches heaven by the very things which may lead to hell”.

In the first chapter of this work, with the exotic title “The psycho-sexual substance of the shadow,” Grant explores traditional *tantric* descriptions of the psycho-physical nature of the human body, and attempts to relate these to traditional Qabalistic representations. Into this complex fusion he also brings the symbolism of the Tarot cards. In his second chapter he explores traditional primal symbolism of Africa, including the traditions commonly known as Voodoo.

Thereafter he pursues a theme, which had its origins in *The Magical Revival*, that there has been a Current of magical tradition, having its origins beyond the very mists of lost antiquity,

which has run through all the great mythical and religious traditions and which constitutes (insofar as it can be simply summarised) a fusion of psycho-sexual magic and communication with entities from other dimensions. Grant claims that this current, which in Ancient Egypt he identifies as Draconian or Typhonian, was the origin of the oriental systems of *tantra*. These traditions, Grant argues, found their focus and indeed, culmination, in the theory and practice promulgated by Crowley in the twentieth century.

Curiously enough, in support of his claims, that one of the key operations of magic is communication with, or indeed the very embodiment of, extra-terrestrial or non-human intelligences, Grant quotes from lectures given by C.W. Leadbeater to the Theosophical Society in 1894 and later published in *The Astral Plane* [Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1954: 169]. Leadbeater, however, is noting something which he describes as “an extremely improbable accident in an act of ceremonial magic, which fortunately only a few of the most advanced sorcerers know how to perform”. In such an “accident”, non-human intelligences which constitute one of the “two other great evolutions which at present share the use of this planet with humanity”, are brought into contact with human beings.

Grant comments: “No theosophist with whom I have discussed this remarkable statement has been able to offer any clue as to the nature of this magical operation, as to when and where it occurred: nor, to my knowledge, has any explanation of it, satisfactory or otherwise, appeared in works written since the lecture was delivered, although I have seen it quoted, once.” Grant claims, of course, that far from being a rare and improbable accident, acts of ceremonial magic to attract the attention of and communication with non-human intelligences ought to be

the primary aim of those seeking to advance the evolution of humanity on this planet. Indeed, Grant implies that Jiddu Krishnamurti was a “moon child” of Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater and therefore “proof of the magical efficacy of the Theosophical Society.”

In the final chapters of *Cults of the Shadow*, Grant explores the teaching and practice of Michael Bertiaux, whom he describes as “the Voodoo-Gnostic Master of the Cult of La Couleuvre Noire”. Insofar as Bertiaux is known outside Grant’s writings, it is as one of the chief adepts of an organisation known as The Monastery of the Seven Rays, which for many years advertised correspondence courses in occultism and magic through the pages of the American magazine *Fate*. Bertiaux and his Cult of the Black Snake attempt to do very much what Grant has been arguing for in his books: through the use of a variety of unorthodox techniques, including sexual magic and drugs, to achieve contact with non-human intelligences.

Bertiaux lives in Chicago, and was raised in a Theosophical family, prior to studying for the Anglican Priesthood. After undertaking work in Haiti, he became increasingly interested in Voodoo and in the fringe occult tradition which operated in Haiti through organisations like Martinism and various Gnostic churches. In 1964 Bertiaux resigned from the Anglican Church and moved to Wheaton, Illinois where he worked as a researcher for the Theosophical Society and developed an interest in the Liberal Catholic Church. However, Bertiaux’s interest was primarily in the traditions of Voodoo and subsequently, the Monastery of the Seven Rays, the outer order of which the Cult of the Black Snake is the inner order. Bertiaux also became a Bishop in an independent Gnostic church, *Ecclesia Spiritus Gnostica*, for which he composed a liturgy

designed, in part, both to attract and protect from entities from other realms, including “sexual vampires”. As part of his magical work Bertiaux and his followers undertake rituals at particular “power zones” around the world, and make use of various machines designed to attract, conserve, and radiate psycho-sexual energy.

In *Outside the Circles of Time* [London: Frederick Muller, 1980] Grant develops further his interest in “the possibility of consciously directed and self intelligent life existing outside or beyond humanity”. He explores, yet again, the work of Aleister Crowley, and also of his “magical son”, (Fratr Achad, Charles Stansfeld Jones). Grant begins his book with a statement with which few commentators would disagree: “throughout the centuries sensitive individuals—priests of dark faith that inspired the poets and prophets of antiquity—have made themselves receptive and available to cosmic impulses and vibrations. By such individuals the consciousness of humanity has been prepared for the transformations we are witnessing, and which some of us are experiencing, in the world today.”

It is, however, with the nature of the sources of such inspiration, that many commentators would take argument with Grant. His interest is primarily in making contact with forces which may be characterised as dark, or forbidden, and which have traditionally been condemned as dangerous by both religious and occult traditions. For Grant, however, such contacts have existed since the beginning of human history, and current changes, leading to increased contact, “reveal the existence of a pattern, a consciously generated and vital thread leading from the fantasies of Blavatsky, through the purple and passion of Crowley, to weirdly disturbing visions of Lovecraftian worlds where enforcers considered by the ancients as dark and evil are

now revealed by science as the anti-worlds and inner spaces of the known universe.”

In this book as in his others Grant draws upon a wide range of diverse, and apparently (at least to the exoteric scholar) incompatible sources: Ancient Egypt, Africa, Babylon, Qabala, Gnosticism.

In this book one of Grant's themes is the impact on the individual who encourages “elements of an extra-dimensional and alien universe” to communicate with him or her. He notes: “it should be evident that those who let in the forces of the Qliphoth must themselves assume the mask of the Beast. It is therefore not surprising to find that the entire gamut of the so-called abnormal and perverted lusts has been exploited in attempts to transmit the vibrations of extra-cosmic or—at least—extra-terrestrial forces.”

Amongst those whom Grant considers to have done so are the French occultist Abbe Boullan, Emmanuel Swedenborg, J-K Huysmans, Arthur Machen and H.P. Lovecraft. With Lovecraft, Grant is particularly concerned in this book. In exploring Crowley's history and development, Grant notes that both the French occultist Eliphas Levi and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky “paved the way” for him.

*Hidden Law. The Carfax Monograph* by Kenneth and Steffi Grant (London: Skoob Books Publishing, 1989) is a beautifully printed, bound, and illustrated volume of essays which originally appeared between March 1959 and October 1963. The authors describe the main purpose of the monographs as “to reconstruct and elucidate the hidden law of the west according to Canons preserved in various esoteric orders and movements of recent times”. Each of the monographs published originally was limited to 100 numbered and signed copies. The present edition was limited to 1,000 copies.

*Hidden Law* consists of ten parts, ranging from “the Tree of Life” through “The Golden Dawn” and “Aleister Crowley”, to “Vinum Sabbati” and “Magical Creation”. Each part is illustrated by a beautiful reproduction of a coloured drawing by Steffi Grant. Each part is also permeated by Grant's central thesis, namely, that of a continuous stream of sexual magic, which culminated in the work of Aleister Crowley. However, his brief essays introducing the work of Crowley and Austin Osmond Spare are interesting and succinct outlines of the teachings of those two magicians. The essay on “Hidden Law” is an interesting exploration of the work of Bram Stoker, Arthur Machen and Charles Williams, Algernon Blackwood and Brodie-Innes, together with several other authors who wrote fiction with magical and occult themes. These include Mary Bligh Bond, J-K Hysmans, and Dion Fortune. Grant sees in their writings evidence of the Current of magical tradition which he describes in all his works.

In “an official statement concerning the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO)” published by Grant in 1977 he summarised what he regarded as the “three major concerns of the Book of the Law”. These were “the importance of extra-terrestrial influences and the necessity for establishing proper contact with them through the magic of the new aeon; the mode of their invocation by magical means; the science of the kalas (psycho-sexual emanations of fully-polarised male-female organisms) which lies at the heart of *The Book of the Law* and which is the substratum of all its teachings and the key to the curious ciphers (literary and numerical) which abound in its pages.” [quoted in Michael Staley: “The O.T.O. after Crowley”, *Starfire*, Volume 1 Number 2 (1987): 39-41]

Grant's work has an apocalyptic note: “most

people are reluctant to recognise, much less interpret, the ominous portents manifesting now the dawn of the Aeon. It is a hard saying, that the survival of the individual will depend upon the degree to which he has assimilated and identified himself with the Thelemic Current, whether he happens to have heard of Crowley or not.” And he concludes *Aleister Crowley and The Hidden God* with this declaration: “The keen and persistent practice of Thelema by even a few dedicated individuals will effectually overthrow society and thereby facilitate the unhindered development of a New Aeon and the reintegration of human consciousness.”

What, then, is the significance of Grant’s work for the historian in general, or the Theosophical historian in particular? Apart from their curiosity value as eccentric works in the by-ways of occult history and philosophy, Grant’s works have little historical value. For Grant, history appears to consist of a multiplicity of isolated facts, any or all of which can be taken by him and allocated to whatever place he chooses in his scheme of things, the end of which is to prove the existence of a Current moving inexorably from the distance of antiquity into the present and beyond into the future.

He is, in that sense, no different than a thousand other writers from within conservative religious traditions. With a broad brush, and on the basis of his theology (although, no doubt, he would vigorously dispute the use of this word) he has traced the outline of the progress of history, and uses what exoteric historians regard as history merely as supporting evidence. In this sense, he is little different from the writer from within the Jehovah Witness movement for whom every historical event can be neatly slotted into its predestined place in the grand design of time, or some of the more “orthodox” Theosophical historians.

People and events are linked not because they have any historical connection, but because, in the grand design, it is necessary that they be linked. Or, alternately, because they said things which were similar, or appear to have believed things which were similar, there must have been some direct link between them.

Grant’s writings are likely to attract much attention within the Theosophical movement, principally because of the (to most Theosophists) outrageous, controversial, and even (perhaps) obscene nature of their themes. Certainly there has been a long tradition within Theosophy of viewing any form of *tantra*, particularly any form of *tantra* which involved physical sex, with unmitigated horror.

However, despite the severe limitations of the work as history, Grant’s books contain, amidst substantial amounts of unnecessary and unexciting verbiage, significant material on the theory and practice of occultism and magic as understood in the west. He describes, in terms of theory and practice rather than of history, an approach to magic from a western tradition which is the equivalent of eastern *tantra*. In this regard he undoubtedly meets the needs of those who have been discouraged (or bored) by the conventionally abstract and unpractical approach of most contemporary western occultism, or its almost pathological distaste for sex and sexuality. It is unfortunate that Mr Grant, and many like him, who perhaps have the resources to undertake detailed historical study, fail to do so apparently because they believe that they already know where history has been and where it is going, and therefore do not need to support their broad themes with the tedium of factual detail.

# Theosophy And Education: From Spiritualism To Theosophy

Max Lawson<sup>1</sup>

Although the inter-relationship of Spiritualism and the early years of the Theosophical Society is a complex story, it is in the education of the young that elements common to both Spiritualism and Theosophy can be more readily seen. The educational organizations of the Spiritualists, the Progressive Lyceums, stem from the instructions of Andrew Jackson Davis who began the first Lyceum in New York in 1863. Davis believed that “Conversation is the heavenly method of teaching. Austere text-books and solemn teachers are adapted to schools where children are to be instructed and ‘finished’ for an outward work in the busy world of things and sense. But we are reminded that ‘Wisdom’s ways are the ways of pleasantness.’”<sup>2</sup>

An example of what Davis called the conversation method can be seen from the following description of a meeting of the Melbourne Progressive Lyceum in 1874:

At each ordinary session questions are suggested by individual members. If (as is generally the case) more than one question

is proposed, the selection is decided by vote of the whole Lyceum, and the answers are returnable on the following Sunday. The children are particularly enjoined to give their own ideas, and not to seek the assistance of their elders or books for replies; by this means thought is induced, originality developed, and self-confidence cultivated.<sup>3</sup>

In the Progressive Lyceums the children were divided into small groups, the discussion being initiated by the children themselves. As outside observers who were not Spiritualists commented,<sup>4</sup> the degree of pupil initiated work was remarkable, the teacher’s role being minimal. True to the liberalising elements within both Spiritualism and Theosophy in the nineteenth century, the free unstructured Progressive Lyceums were a sharp contrast to the conventional Sunday Schools of the times who used formal lesson guides often planned up to two years in advance<sup>5</sup> involving much learning by heart of Bible passages and catechisms.

When efforts were first being made to establish classes for the children of Theosophists the Lyceum model of the Spiritualists was kept in mind. For example, when the matter of educat-

<sup>3</sup> *The Harbinger of Light* (Melbourne), no. 42 (1874): 575.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, *Program of Study in Model Sabbath School* (Buninyong, Victoria: 1875). In the Mitchell Library (Sydney, New South Wales).

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Children’s Progressive Lyceum Manual* (New York: Andrew Davis & Co., Progressive Publishing House, 1874), 7.

ing the children of Theosophists was first raised in the pages of *Theosophy in Australasia* in 1895 the General Secretary suggested<sup>6</sup> a passage for responsive reading (this practice being called silver or golden chaining in the Lyceums) that was taken from the *Lyceum Leader*.<sup>7</sup> Another contributor to the discussion in the pages of *Theosophy in Australasia* suggested that the marching programme and calisthenics, a novel feature of the Lyceums,<sup>8</sup> should be emulated as well as the object lessons often on scientific subjects, that were given in Lyceums.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in the first Lotus circle (as the organizations for very small children of Theosophists were called) established in Australia in 1895 at South Yarra, object lessons were a prominent part of the programme. Subjects such as “The Formation of Coal, Lime, Basalt and the ‘Products of Volcanoes’” were given:

Many specimens of minerals were described and handed round:and much interest was shown by the class. The aim in this should be to stimulate the young minds to a love of science and to let them know what a rich fund of knowledge, in common things, lies ready at their hand to be acquired.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “The Lotus Circle: or, the Children’s Hour,” *Theosophy in Australasia* I/5 (5 August 1895): 8.

<sup>7</sup> *The Lyceum Leader*, compiled by the Conductor for the Melbourne Progressive Lyceum (Melbourne: Purton & Company, 1881), 45 [first edition, 1877; second edition, 1881; third edition, 1884].

<sup>8</sup> William Wattie, “Lotus Circle,” *Theosophy in Australasia* I/10 (4 January 1896): 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

This clearly parallels activities in the Progressive Lyceums. For example, the Sydney Progressive Lyceum had a small “museum” of fifteen hundred items—shells, coins, rocks, minerals and animal specimens—that provided the basis for talks.

Even today the legacy of the Lyceum movement may perhaps be detected in the youth groups of the United Lodge of Theosophists formed in 1907 in protest at what were considered to be authoritarian measures coupled with personality cults in the other Theosophical societies of the time.<sup>11</sup> A member of the United Lodge of Theosophists has recalled visits to Youth Groups in India and the United States.<sup>12</sup> Often there would be short talks at these meetings using various objects to explain the Theosophical emphasis on “a fundamental unity and purpose behind evolution”; there were also study circles where each small group of youngsters elected one of their number to run the class for the day, the “teacher” of the group taking as unobtrusive a part as possible in the proceedings. When each group had finished their conversations and discussion, the chairman of each group came to the central platform and presented the findings of their discussion.

The Lotus Circles of the Theosophical Society (Adyar) also tried to avoid a dogmatic approach from the time of the founding of the first Lotus

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<sup>11</sup> See the histories prepared by the United Lodge of Theosophists, *The Theosophical Movement 1875-1925* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1925) and *The Theosophical Movement 1875-1950* (Los Angeles: The Cunningham Press, 1951).

<sup>12</sup> Interview with the Secretary of the United Lodge of Theosophists, Sydney, 6 March 1970. (All officers of the United Lodge of Theosophists remain strictly anonymous in print or for the purposes of public acknowledgment).

Circle (1892) in New York.<sup>13</sup> In the first *Lotus Song Book*, published in 1907, the non-dogmatic yet nevertheless purposeful attitudes are evident in the foreword:

The lines on which the classes are conducted rest entirely with their leader, as in a society which has no specific creed, or dogmas of any kind, it would not be either possible or advisable to impose any set form of instruction. And it is interesting to note in reading reports from the different Lotus Circles, how varied are the methods employed to interest the children and to endeavour to awaken and to cultivate in them a response to noble thoughts and ideals.<sup>14</sup>

At one stage, in 1899, Mrs. Besant (who succeeded Colonel Olcott as President of the Theosophical Society in 1907) decided to transform the Lotus Circles into Golden Chains, the name of a movement founded by W. J. Walters<sup>15</sup> in San Francisco in 1895.<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Besant wrote a pledge at the request of Mr. Walters for the restructured organization<sup>17</sup> (reproduced on the next page) which won wide appeal, finding a place on the walls of many an American classroom. In Australia, in response to a statement about the Golden

Chain in the school magazine issued by the Department of Education in Victoria some eight thousand new “links” joined the Golden Chain in that State alone.<sup>18</sup> The pledge was to be repeated every day and honoured. Perhaps the purpose of the movement is best made clear in the following extract from a “Letter to the Links”:

What a beautiful thought that the promise is made—a promise “to be kind and gentle to every living thing I meet”—by children in one country after another, first perhaps in Australia and New Zealand, then in India, in Africa, Russia, Italy, Holland, France, England and America, all through the twenty-four hours—and if the promise is *kept*, it means that in each of these countries Links are being forged in a Chain of Love which encircles the world, and makes a girdle of pure thought and speech and action, and of protection for the weak, running round our globe.<sup>19</sup>

The Golden Chain in many countries, however, never became more than an ancillary to other organizations for Theosophists’ children; it remained a movement whose members were joined together by correspondence and cards on their birthdays. Nevertheless the movement did much to spread the first object of the Theosophical Society—“Universal Brotherhood”—throughout the world.

The Golden Chain movement in the United States developed a course of its own, the Golden Chains often replacing the Lotus Groups as such, as *A Manual for the use of Golden Chain Groups, Sunday Schools and Ethical Classes*, published in San Francisco, (undated), clearly indicates. This

<sup>13</sup> *Theosophical Yearbook* 1937 (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1937), 124.

<sup>14</sup> *The Lotus Song Book* (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1907), 111.

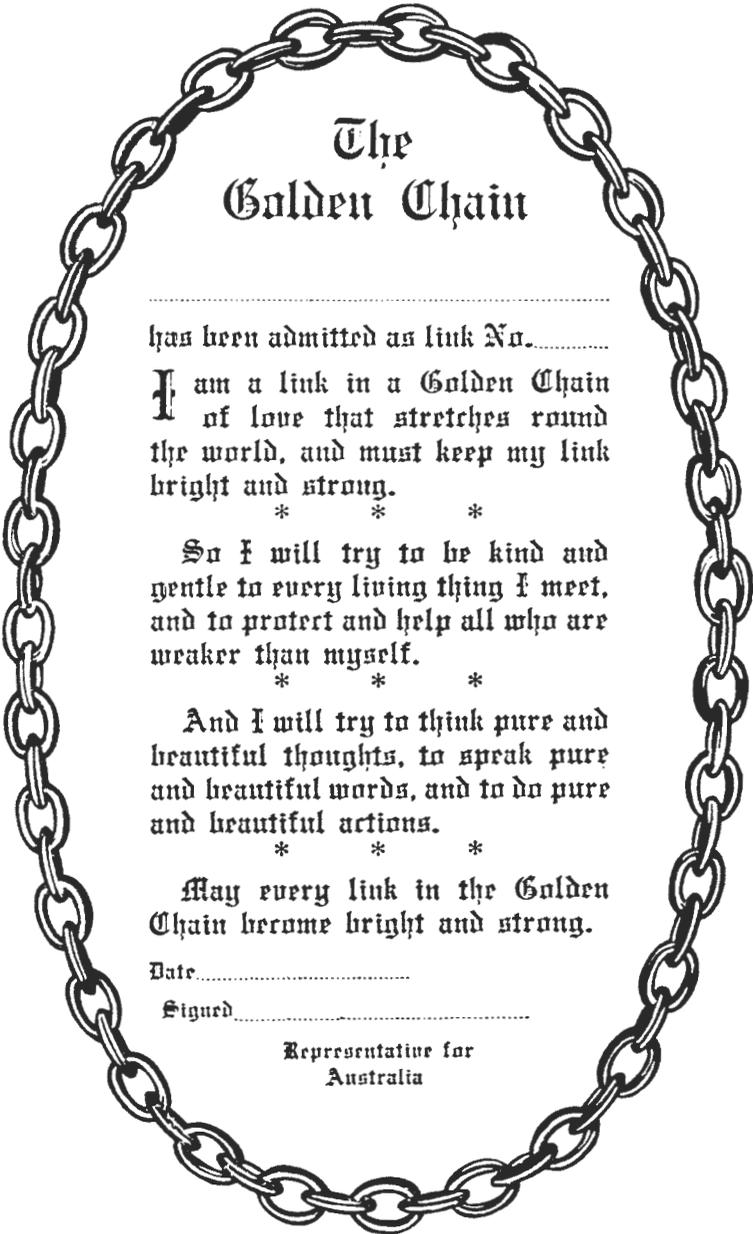
<sup>15</sup> A. Marques, “The Golden Chain,” *Theosophy in Australia* VI (15 May 1900): 27.

<sup>16</sup> “The Golden Chain,” *The Young Citizen* (Adyar, Madras), January 1913: 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Theosophy in Australasia* V (October 1899): 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ethel M. Whyte, “The Golden Chain: Letters to the Links: II,” *The Young Citizen* (April 1913): 191.



## The Golden Chain

has been admitted as link No. ....

I am a link in a Golden Chain  
of love that stretches round  
the world, and must keep my link  
bright and strong.

\* \* \*

So I will try to be kind and  
gentle to every living thing I meet,  
and to protect and help all who are  
weaker than myself.

\* \* \*

And I will try to think pure and  
beautiful thoughts, to speak pure  
and beautiful words, and to do pure  
and beautiful actions.

\* \* \*

May every link in the Golden  
Chain become bright and strong.

Date .....

Signed .....

Representative for  
Australia

manual suggests that readings from poems and other literary material may be used for responsive readings, the conductor or leader reading alternatively with the children. This recalls the “Golden Chaining” of the Spiritualist Progressive Lyceums. The terminology of the manual in the section “Suggestions for Lessons” also recalls the Spiritualist pattern: the role of the conductor, the winding movement and other marches, the non-dogmatic instruction and object lessons drawn from nature.

The atmosphere of a Golden Chain class may perhaps be recaptured by recounting some of the suggestions for a Golden Chain Session:

Having formed in a circle, the standard-bearer in centre, the children march, right hands extended toward the centre, like the spokes of a wheel; repeat in opposite direction, with left hands extended singing:

Day by day and hour by hour  
Turns the wheel around;  
Strong the hub, the spokes quite true;  
There may we be found.

Turning ever going onward,  
Round and round again,  
Sometimes upward, sometimes downward,  
Moving to one strain.

So is life, one, undivided  
Holding great and small -  
God the centre, we the sunbeams -  
Love is over all.<sup>20</sup>

After the marching and singing a gentler note was struck by the children handing in flowers (which they had been told the week before to bring on the following week) to a young girl holding a basket. On receiving a flower, the girl

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 67-68.

dipped into the basket and produced a “beautiful thought,”<sup>21</sup> especially written down on a slip of paper with the recipient’s name at the top.

There was a special “Ceremony of the Golden Chain” prepared in England<sup>22</sup> but it was not widely used. Another Theosophical organization for young children founded in 1908, was to make considerable use, however, of ceremonies. This was the Round Table founded by Herbert Whyte who as a youngster had been a member of the Lotus Circle and the Golden Chain Movement.<sup>23</sup>

Although Lotus Circles and Golden Chain Groups have virtually ceased to exist (a few Lotus Circles still function in India)<sup>24</sup> the Round Table is still operating, particularly in India, the United States and England.<sup>25</sup>

As with the Golden Chain, a pledge was repeated daily by members of the Round Table: “Follow the King”. Although modelled closely on the Arthurian pattern, the King was not Arthur but Christ Himself or to state the matter Theosophically “the King is the Teacher who is loved in the East as Shri Krishna and as the Lord Maitreya, and in the West as the Christ; for all these are really names for the one Great Teacher”.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> E.M. Whyte, *A Ceremony of the Golden Chain* (London: Theosophical Publishing House, undated).

<sup>23</sup> *Theosophical Yearbook* 1937, 124.

<sup>24</sup> Mention is made of Lotus Circles in India in the mimeographed *News from the Countries* 1969 (prepared by the International Order of the Round Table), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1-3.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert Whyte, “The Round Table,” *The Young Citizen* (January 1913): 39.

The Round Table, as with other Theosophical organizations, emphasizes Service. As well as the Act of Remembrance each day, a member has to have “something to do”—choosing regularly “some act of service to be done in the King’s name”.<sup>27</sup>

The Round Table invokes pageantry and ceremonial. According to the *Ceremonies Manual* issued at London in 1927 it is recommended that at all ceremonial meetings a special gown shall be worn. This should consist of a simple white linen garment covering the ordinary suit or dress with collars and cuffs in the colour of the grade of the wearer. These colours are: Crimson for Knights, Blue for Companions and Green for Pages.<sup>28</sup> Wooden swords were also used (See photo). The pageantry was more elaborate than the coloured badges, ribbons and flags of the Spiritualist Lyceums.

The use of ceremonial in the Round Table did not develop until about 1916<sup>29</sup> and reflected a wider concern of some prominent Theosophists’ renewed interest in ceremonial activities. Ceremonials now have their place at most Round Table meetings; the Bread and Salt ceremony being the one first adopted for use at meetings and still often performed. Other ceremonies were later added: the Flower Ceremony, the Ceremony of Light<sup>30</sup>, the Flower, Light, Star, Sword,

Christmas and Search ceremonies all being used on some occasions.<sup>31</sup>

The Bread and Salt Ceremony, a prominent occultist in the Theosophical Society remarked was older than the time of King Arthur—“I can certify that I myself shared in it rather more than three thousand years ago as part of the ritual of the mysteries of Mithra.”<sup>32</sup>

The importance and nature of the ceremonies help build up the ideal of service, even of sacrifice:

We stand in a circle about our Round Table in front of the great chair in which no physical presence ever sits; we unroll the silken cord of love and each of us simultaneously holds it; and our Senior Knight brings round to us the bread and salt, thus exemplifying the evangelical dictum; “He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant”. Each one of us, as he partakes of this symbolical food, proclaims that he performs this action, “To the Glory of God and to the Service of the King.”<sup>33</sup>

Whether it was the Spiritualists’ Progressive Lyceums or their heirs—the Lotus Circles and the Golden Chains and Round Tables—the over-riding aim was the same: “the mind and spirit of the child should be drawn forth progressively and educated in all the ways of love and wisdom.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. (February 1913): 87.

<sup>28</sup> *The Round Table: Ceremonies* (London, 1927), 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from the Rt. Rev. Harry Banks, Senior Knight of the Round Table, dated 22 October 1970.

<sup>30</sup> *The Round Table: Ceremonies*, 26-32. The Ceremony of Light was first used by the Round Table in Italy.

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<sup>31</sup> *The Order of the Round Table: Ceremonies* (Juhu, Bombay: The Theosophical Colony, 1943).

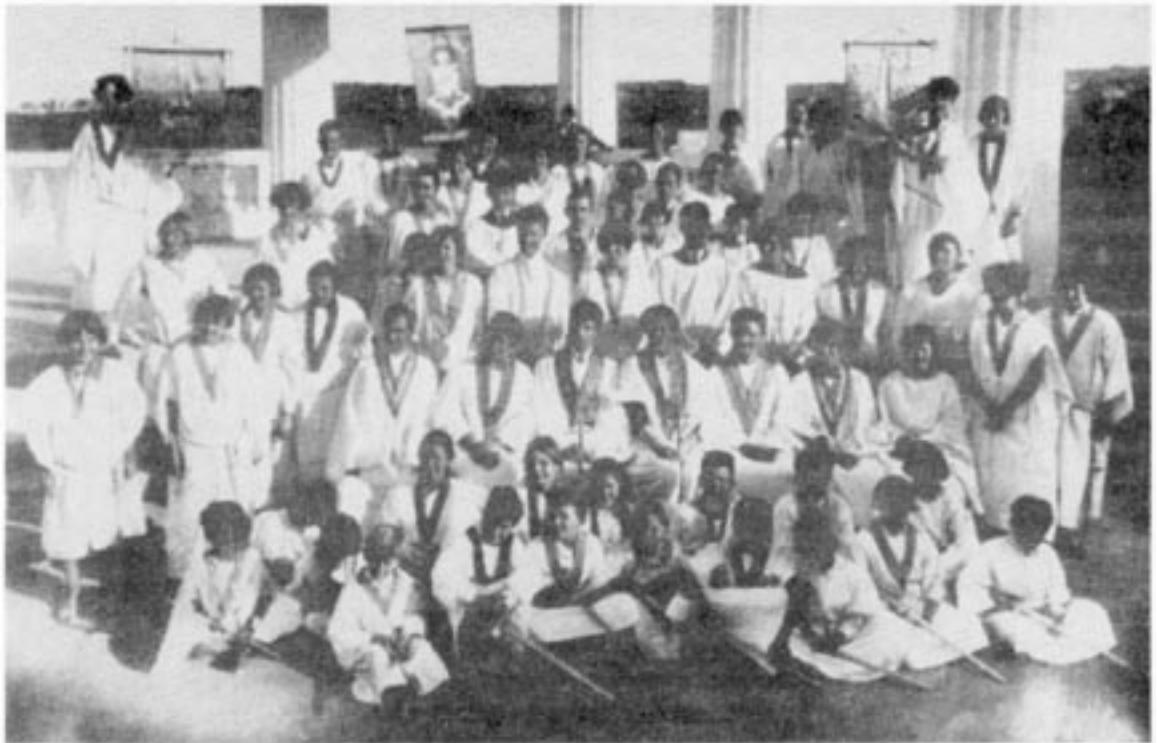
<sup>32</sup> C.W. Leadbeater, “The Bread and Salt Ceremony,” *The Round Table Annual* 1924, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> Davis, *The Children’s Progressive Lyceum Manual*, 26.

Spiritualists and Theosophists alike were ahead of their time in providing a grounding in morality without recourse to direct doctrinal instruction but it was in the wider world that

Theosophists were to make their mark on education and never more obviously than in India, homeland of many of the Masters Themselves.



**The Round Table Group of Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney at the Star Amphitheatre, Balmoral (circa 1925)  
(By permission of the author.)**

# The OTO Phenomenon

Peter-Robert König<sup>1</sup>

## [Editorial Note

Among the esoteric orders created by Theosophists in the years around 1900, none has had a more convoluted history than the Ordo Templi Orientis, founded by Theodor Reuss and Carl Kellner. The Swiss scholar, P. R. König, has been researching the various personalities and branches of the OTO for several years and has published his findings as a series of articles in the German-language periodical AHA (Abra-HadAbra). Later he intends to expand and fully document them in a book. Mr. König has made us an English adaptation of the first of his eighteen articles, in which he briefly surveys the main characters and their relationships. The rival claims to “apostolic” succession, mutual recriminations, and expulsions will have a familiar ring to historians of Theosophy. Two things especially mark the OTO phenomenon. One is the yearning for a quasi-masonic structure of grades, initiations, and secrets, such as was envisaged even in the early years of the T.S. in New York. In addition, most, though not all, of the OTO splinter-groups practice sexual magic in various modes: something that, while dis-

countenanced by the T.S. leaders, has periodically haunted the fringes of Theosophy.

**Joscelyn Godwin]**

## Introduction

Note: The history of the OTO (Ordo Templi Orientis) is extremely complicated, and this is only an introduction. Overlappings and interconnections are inevitable. Since a bibliography would exceed the bounds of the article, the reader is referred to the forthcoming book, in which complete bibliographical sources will be given. German-language readers may be interested in the eighteen-part serial in the German magazine AHA, where many photographs and facsimiles of documents and articles by the protagonists accompany the text.

oOo

The history of the OTO and its related fraternities is the history of their protagonists, and begins with that of Carl Kellner and Theodor Reuss. Theodor Reuss (1855-1923), an Anglo-German Freemason who is regarded by historians and Freemasons alike as a swindler, imported the “fringe-masonic” organization of French origin, “Alte und Primitive Ritus von Memphis und Misraim” (henceforth MM), via England to Germany in 1902. At that time the German orga-

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The author wishes to thank Joscelyn Godwin for helping him prepare the article in English.

nization had no definite name, but was declared to be founded on Harry J. Seymour's Cerneau charter (a 33° rite) of 21 July 1862.

The man who had the idea of the OTO as a private group which would work sex magic along Tantric lines as early as 1895 was the Austrian industrialist Carl Kellner (1851-1905). Kellner had no order, only some friends who worked sex magic. After Reuss came on the scene, he (Reuss) considered it a good idea to make the sex magic into an order and so chose the Memphis-Misraim. Some of the MM grades thus became the OTO grades, such as the 90°—95°, which were equal to the IX° OTO. As a result, Reuss' OTO consisted of MM-members, but only in the beginning.<sup>2</sup> Reuss and his self-proclaimed heir, Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), always considered the OTO and MM as linked.

The following orders and churches were associated with the OTO phenomenon before World War II:

“Fraternitas Saturni” [FS], established by the bookseller Eugen Grosche (1888-1964) in 1926 in Germany. This was the first order to be founded on Crowley's philosophical religion of Thelema (the “Law of the New Aeon”).

“Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua” [FRA], established by the German adventurer Arnold Krumm-Heller (1879-1949) in 1927 in South America.

The “Order of the Illuminati” [OI], whose affinity with the OTO was established only at the

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<sup>2</sup> While it is certain that Kellner worked sex magic, it is not certain whether he actually received any of these high degrees of MM. The only evidence of such appears in the magazine *Oriflamme*.

turn of the century by its re-founders Theodor Reuss and the actor Leopold Engel (1858-1931).

A mysterious Gnostic Catholic Church, the “Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica” [EGC], whose contact with the OTO through one of its branches is only noticeable from 1908-1920.

Furthermore, we have researched Heinrich Traenker's “Pansophia,” but omitted Crowley's own order “Astrum Argentum” [AA]. The bookseller Traenker (1880-1956) was very active in the development of German Theosophy before he started his own enterprise. He was furnished by Reuss with a X° charter in 1921.

## Introduction to the History

It remains doubtful whether Reuss continued the OTO in a manner congenial to Carl Kellner's conception when the latter died in 1905. But under Reuss's authority, the concept of the OTO was definitely structured within ten degrees, of which the VIII° and IX°, diverging from Masonic lines, practiced sexual magic. The X° represented the administrative leader of the country.

The controversial appearance of Aleister Crowley in 1910-1912 (in the latter year he was given the charter for his own OTO lodge in England and Ireland) incurred at least one distinctive feature, according to which the different OTO groupings can be classified: the acceptance of the “Law of Thelema” in the rituals. One of the main issues under dispute in the OTO phenomenon is the question of which of the many current OTOs are genuine. The OTO initiation rituals rewritten by Crowley between 1917 and 1919 were never used by Theodor Reuss. All other lodges at that time developed their own rituals.

There is reason to believe that even Reuss did not intend his OTO to be a vehicle for Thelema. Despite that, Crowley was already writing in his diary on 27 November 1921: "I have proclaimed myself OHO" (Outer Head of the Order).

In Germany, in 1922, Heinrich Traenker and his secretary Karl Germer established the "Pansophia," already established in 1921 by Traenker and his wife but now financially supported by the businessman Germer.

Reuss died in 1923 without naming a successor. Most probably, he intended as his heir the Swiss businessman Hans Rudolf Hilfiker (1882-1955), who was Grand Master of the lodge "Libertas et Fraternitas," founded 1917 in Zurich. But this serious Freemason held it incommunicado in view of Reuss's and Crowley's bad reputation. As Crowley admitted in a letter of 1924 to Heinrich Traenker, Theodor Reuss never chose him as his successor.

In 1926, after Crowley had visited Traenker and Karl Germer, the secretary of the Pansophia, Eugen Grosche, broke away from the inner circle of the Pansophia and founded the Fraternitas Saturni allegedly with sixty ex-OTO members. The FS became the first order founded upon the Law of Thelema. Traenker's remaining OTO, which makes only coy references to Thelema, almost became inactive.

Thus, at that time Reuss's remaining OTO of Monte Verità and the related branch in Zürich were the only active OTO in Europe, if not worldwide if one excepts Crowley's attempts to use his assumed OTO wing in America for easy income and a means to publish his own writings. The Swiss baker and ex-Communist Herman Joseph Metzger (1919-1990) was initiated in 1943 in Davos (Switzerland) by Alice Sprengel (1871-1947) of Monte Verità, and his actions deserve close attention.

We must not forget that after Crowley's death in 1947, his successor Karl Germer (1885-1962; ex-Pansophia) did not recruit any members in the USA, and that the Swiss OTO might even be regarded as the only OTO then active in the world. Furthermore, Metzger was able to produce reasons to believe that his OTO was of Reussian origin, a fact that gave him authority over every offshoot of Crowley's OTO.

## **Comparisons: What Happened after World War II? The OTO and the Fraternitas Saturni [FS]**

During his exile in the 1930s, Eugen Grosche stayed several times with Reuss's remaining group in the Ticino (Italian-speaking Switzerland). Metzger got in touch with him for the first time in 1950, and Grosche consequently and immediately ceded all authority for the FS outside Germany to Metzger, who traveled much in Europe. As he possessed a visa for the German territories under Allied occupation, Metzger served as a convenient messenger for several organizations. He traveled for the Order of the Illuminati, took care of FS business in between, and visited the various Thelemites of Europe, for example Frederic Mellinger (1890-1970). The latter, once an active director of the German Expressionist theater, a Spiritualist, and then Crowley's secretary in England, acted after World War II on behalf of Germer, examining and possibly initiating likely candidates for the Crowley OTO in Europe.

Thus in 1951, Reuss's OTO under the leadership of Metzger merged with Crowley's OTO ruled by Germer. This is substantiated by

Germer's and Mellinger's signatures on Metzger's document of acceptance. Mellinger would soon abandon contact with any OTO in order to work with German Theosophists, which he did from 1960 up to his death in 1970.

Soon disillusioned with Metzger, Grosche associated as early as the 1950s with Kenneth Grant's Crowley-OTO lodge in England. Grant's contacts with Grosche infuriated Germer (the head of Crowley's OTO) so much that Grant was expelled in 1955 from the masonic Crowley OTO.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Grant in his "Typhonian" OTO henceforth conferred OTO grades without initiation rituals.

When Grosche died in 1964, Metzger tried in vain to take over the FS, seeing himself as the "mother lodge" of all organizations oriented to the Law of Thelema.

## **The OTO and the Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua [FRA]**

Arnoldo Krumm-Heller received a charter from Reuss in 1908 and founded his FRA in 1927. The FRA was mainly active in Latin America but also had branches in Spain, Germany, and Austria. When Krumm-Heller met Crowley and Germer in Germany in 1930, some of the rituals were given Thelemic references. Krumm-Heller also became a Gnostic bishop in 1939, but after his death in 1949 his FRA split into countless groups. In 1963, Metzger tried in vain through his contacts in Venezuela to bring these all under his authority.

Today many FRA groups are connected either with Metzger or with the OTOA.

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<sup>3</sup> This is, incidentally, the reason which Grant gives in a letter dated 11 August 1987.

## **The OTO and the Order of the Illuminati [OI]**

Around the turn of the century, Reuss and Leopold Engel tried rather unsuccessfully to revive the OI, as founded by Adam Weishaupt in the eighteenth century. Even so, several groups of Engel's survived both World Wars and came under Metzger's presidency in 1963. Metzger then regarded the OI as a framework for his compilation of orders (OTO, FRA), and quickly integrated the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica, too, into the higher grades of his OI.

## **The OTO and the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica [EGC]**

The French Gnostic Church, which also suffered from countless splits, was established in 1890 and attempted to run along the usual ecclesiastical line of apostolic succession. But neither Reuss nor Crowley ever received a valid apostolic succession. Reuss tried to make Crowley's "Gnostic Mass" the "official religion for Freemasons" in 1920; Crowley only once used his assumed headship of the OTO to make the English Theosophist W. B. Crow head of his own Gnostic Church in 1944. But nowhere in the constitution of the OTO was the office of leader of the OTO, the "Outer Head of the Order," [OHO] connected with leadership of any church.

Metzger received a valid consecration because he stood in succession of the Krumm-Heller line, which held apostolic succession.

Crowley's student, G. L. McMurtry (1918-1985), received a few letters from his master in England in 1946, while McMurtry was staying in California. In these letters Crowley addressed McMurtry as "Caliph," a term never used in any

OTO context, nor in Reuss's or Crowley's writings: it was merely based on "Calif.," the then postal abbreviation for California. More than twenty years after Crowley's death, McMurtry interpreted Crowley's calling him "Caliph" as making him the OHO and Patriarch of Crowley's church. The EGC of his resulting "Caliphate" never received any kind of valid succession, either ecclesiastical or OTO. Obviously this OTO group rewrote its constitution in 1987.

## The Fight for Leadership



**Karl and Sascha Germer (By permission of the author)**

After Germer's death in 1962, there were four main contestants for sole leadership of Germer's Crowley-OTO. According to Germer's will, the final decision was up to his widow and Mellinger. Sascha Germer's first choice was the Brazilian Marcelo Ramos Motta (1931-1987), of the FRA, but soon she decided that in fact Metzger had been her husband's favorite. Thus in 1963 Metzger proclaimed himself OHO, and was accepted by some American Crowley-OTO members.

It was not until 1969 that McMurtry started making efforts to get to the head of the OTO and obtain the Crowley-Tarot writings and copyrights. This aroused especially the indignation of Motta, who felt excluded. Kenneth Grant, just like Metzger, Motta, and McMurtry, was able to claim the authority of a letter from a deceased leader of an OTO, implying that he might be chosen for high office. Grant managed to rise to the OHO position in 1970. His activities consisted mainly of publishing his own books. In 1969 there was a rupture within Metzger's group, and thus another, independent OTO emerged in Germany with its own OHO.

## Descriptions of the Groups

### **Fraternitas Saturni.**

Within this German fraternity, the opinion prevailed that the magic influence of the New Aeon demanded the permanent adaptation of Crowley's teachings to the latest developments. As a consequence, the Rituals of Saturn turned into a peculiar mixture of medieval magic, astrology, and a small admixture of Thelema. In the course of time, and especially after Grosche's death in 1964, this caused several ruptures, and from 1980 a splinter-group, the Ordo Saturni, felt

more and more drawn to Crowley's ways. Sexual magic was once talked of freely within the FS, but not as the main theme. The FS was supposed to have its own Egregor, now lending his powers to the affiliated organization, the Ordo Saturni. Some members of the German branch of the "Caliphate" are co-members of this Ordo Saturni, also lending their own sexual magic energies to that Egregor.

### **Pansophia.**

In 1921, the German Grand Master of Reuss's OTO, Heinrich Traenker, founded an organization called Pansophia, which published important Rosicrucian books as well as early writings of Crowley. Krumm-Heller and Reuss used the term "Pansophia" in their letterhead and stamps. When Reuss died in 1923 without naming a successor, the constitution of the OTO demanded that the remaining Tenth Degree members should elect the next OHO. There were only about eight of them. Two of these, Traenker and the American Grand Master, C. R. J. Stansfeld Jones ("Frater Achad," 1886-1950, who also had a Reuss charter), elected X° Crowley OHO in 1925. Both withdrew their votes very quickly.

The sexual mysteries of the Pansophia were communicated only by word of mouth by Traenker himself. Thelemic references were to be found only in the more advanced inner teachings of the group. Pansophia ended with Traenker's death in 1956.

### **Metzger's OTO.**

Some old and very masonic rituals of Reuss have been in use in Switzerland to this day, even though the Swiss never had any Reussian rituals higher than the Third Degree; other initiations

jumped directly to the IX<sup>o</sup>. After Germer's death, which meant the disappearance of the person in Thelemic control. Metzger blended his Order of the Illuminati with Crowley's OTO, now active again on Reuss's lines. In Switzerland, so far as is known, no rituals are performed apart from Crowley's Gnostic Mass. Metzger only propagated Thelema in order to ingratiate himself with Germer. Thus Germer considered Metzger as his sole successor, as he wrote in a letter and as was confirmed by Germer's widow. Metzger totally renounced any kind of sexual magic. Although he died in 1990 and the criteria for entry are very strict (in contrast to those of the "Caliphate"), this OTO, generally known as the Order of the Illuminati, is very prosperous.

### **Motta's Society OTO in the USA and Brazil.**

Motta chose his members according to the criteria of the Astrum Argenteum (some selected students having to learn by heart some Crowley material), rather than according to the precept "The Law is for All," as used in the masonic Crowley OTO. Thus his SOTO has never had more than a handful of members.<sup>5</sup> After the publication of the Crowley-OTO initiation rituals in 1973 by Francis King (*The Secret Rituals of the OTO*<sup>6</sup>), Motta began to create his own, for he believed in the danger of their desecration. The

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<sup>4</sup> It is doubtful whether all the Crowley-OTO groups had any initiation rituals higher than the III° as of 1973, when they were published by Francis King.

<sup>5</sup> The actual number of selected American students may have been around six, but the number is uncertain. The Brazilian SOTO Lodge allegedly had thirty members according to the court transcript, "McMurtry *et alii* versus Motta", California 16 May 1985, p. 741.

<sup>6</sup> London: The C.W. Daniel Company, 1973.

“Caliphate,” on the other hand, only then came into possession of them.

### **The “Caliphate.”**

Referring to two peculiar letters of Crowley’s, McMurtry, from 1977 on, started promoting the only Crowley-OTO lodge in the USA into a Grand Lodge. As in all OTOs close to Freemasonry, the grades were at first conferred rather haphazardly. McMurtry was favored for a time by Crowley, who in fact also appointed Mellinger, after McMurtry, as another possible successor. After being disgraced by Germer and many other members of the American lodge, McMurtry got rid of Motta as well as of Metzger and Grant. Motta made himself ridiculous with paranoid court proceedings, while the other two were not mentioned in court as OTO members. Despite the historical facts, a minor US court accepted the “Caliphate” as possessor of the American OTO copyrights, which is enforceable only within the 9th Circuit of Appeals!

Generally, the sexual mysteries are supposed to have sunk into obscurity again. Nevertheless, this OTO group is the one which regards all of Crowley’s words as the crux of its organization, and which has substantiated its position by legal proceedings. McMurtry was succeeded on his death in 1985 by William Breeze, a Canadian pupil of Grant and Bertiaux. There is reason to believe that the election of Breeze would not have met McMurtry’s approval.

### **Typhonian OTO.**

Crowley’s secretary, Kenneth Grant (b. 1923), has dispensed with the masonic structure of the Crowley- OTO. On one hand, Grant can refer to Crowley’s diaries, where Crowley wanted to train Grant as possible leader of the English OTO; on

the other, he was expelled from Crowley’s OTO by Germer in 1955. From that time, Metzger also severed contact with Grant.

Grant’s insights derive largely from Jones-Achad’s proclamation of the “Aeon of Maat,” which caused Crowley to expel Jones, since Crowley was himself the prophet of the “Aeon of Horus”; from Grosche’s teachings on Saturn/Set; and from Bertiaux’ teachings about sex and Voodoo. Sexual magic is discussed very openly.

### **Ordo Templi Orientis Antiqua.**

In 1921, the OTOA, a breakaway branch from the French OTO line (of Reussian origin), was extended to sixteen grades. In the course of time, the OTOA absorbed several different Gnostic successions, a Memphis-Misraim line, episcopal consecrations, and the Eleventh Degree (Crowley’s addition of homosexual magic to his OTO system of grades). Its most important current exponent and a powerful point of convergence is the American Michael Paul Bertiaux (born 1935), a former Theosophist associated with the Spiritualistically oriented Henry Smith. Bertiaux’ system works exclusively on a magical, not a masonic level, and sexual magic is regarded as an important focus of this Voodoo-oriented organization.

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# Book Reviews

Joscelyn Godwin

## **Le nuove religioni.**

By Massimo Introvigne. Milano: SugarCo Edizioni (viale Tunisia 41), 1989. Pp.429. 38,000 lire. ISBN 88-7198-090-5.

## **Il Cappello del Mago. I Nuovi movimenti magici dallo spiritismo al satanismo.**

By Massimo Introvigne. Milano: SugarCo Edizioni, 1990. Pp. 487. 35,000 lire. ISBN 88-7198-021-2.

These two books by the young director of CESNUR (the Center for the Study of New Religions) establish Introvigne and his center as the primary source in Europe for information on new religious and “magical” movements, complementary to the longer-established work in the USA of Theosophical History Editorial Board member J. Gordon Melton. Introvigne has previously written on the Mormons, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Unification Church (“Moonies”). In this pair of books he undertakes the more ambitious task of outlining the history, doctrines, and interrelationships of all the main religious and occult movements active today. The division into two books is evidently for convenience, as he himself admits that there are cases (Theosophy among them) that belong in

both categories. But his taxonomy is an interesting exercise in itself.

In the introduction to *Le Nuove Religioni*, Introvigne distinguishes between religion, magic, and gnosis. “Religion seeks the expression of the sacred for its own sake, keeping it superior to man, unsusceptible to domination or manipulation but nevertheless extraordinarily significant for human life. Its reference point, or at least its orientation, is to the Absolute, whether or not called God. Magical experience tries instead to enter into contact with a series of occult forces that, while remaining superior to man, can be attracted to his sphere and dominated or manipulated, according to the power of the person performing the magical operation or his clients.” 10)

The difference between religion and gnosis, Introvigne says, is harder to pinpoint. “In the religious mode of salvation, the initiative of redemption is ascribed to God, creator of this world. In gnosis, salvation is achieved through knowledge, in a framework which has as its fundamental element the idea that the world is the immature creation of a malevolent creator.” (pp.10-11) Introvigne is not the first to be misled by terminology into identifying the path of gnosis, or salvation through knowledge, with the cosmology of certain “Gnostic” sects of the early Christian era. The first does not necessarily involve the second. He himself admits that this definition is in difficulty when one turns

to Oriental religions, where obviously one has a path of knowledge (called in Sanskrit “jñāna,” a word cognate with “gnosis”) without any of the mythology of the evil Demiurge or the Deus absconditus.

The author is on firmer ground in dealing with the “cult problem” and one of its consequences, the anti-cult movement. Introvigne deplors the simplistic reductionism typical of the latter reaction, and takes a sympathetic stance to the new religions: “Even the oddest ones are typically religious responses to religious needs which are not, or no longer, finding satisfaction in the traditional church and community. While not despising the researches of psychologists and sociologists, one can try to study their specifically religious dynamics. This is the first step towards understanding what these phenomena can reveal about the new search for the sacred which—despite secularization, or perhaps even because of it—seems today to permeate the West.” (25-26)

*Le Nuove Religioni* divides into “Groups of Christian origin” and “The lure of the East.” The first part begins with Mennonites, Quakers, Swedenborgians, Christian Scientists, and their derivatives. Among the groups it goes on to treat are Mormons, Adventists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses; prophetic and messianic movements including the Institute of Pyramidology, Rastafarians, and Moonies; Old Catholics; and Brazilian Spiritualism. As is to be expected in such an encyclopedic work, Introvigne relies heavily on secondary sources such as the books of Melton and Stillson Judah—and Theosophical History. His analytical bibliography is heavy with English-language titles.

The second part, on religions of Oriental origin, includes the Bahais, Sufis, and Subud; Theosophy and its derivatives, such as Alice

Bailey, “I Am,” the Halcyon Temple of the People, the Prophet family, Agni Yoga, Tara Center, Anthroposophy, Eckankar, and Da Free John. There is a list of Indian gurus from Ramakrishna through Satya Sai Baba to Rajneesh, and a long section on the new Japanese religions, including Soka Gakkai and eleven non-Buddhist sects. Lastly comes the Human Potential Movement: Scientology, Silva Mind Control, Werner Erhard, the “revolutionary cults” including Jim Jones’s Temple of the People, and Wilhelm Reich. One may well object to this line-up as representative of Oriental wisdom, of which Introvigne has scant appreciation and knowledge. But the book is, after all, about the new religious movements, not the ancient, traditional, or orthodox ones.

Introvigne’s treatment of his subjects (including several dozen not listed here) ranges from half a page to over ten pages, written in sober but interesting narrative prose, supplemented by often fascinating endnotes and bibliographies. In the case of Theosophy, he writes one of his longest essays in which he tries to cover its origins in the nineteenth century, its doctrines, and the post-Blavatsky schisms. Unfortunately he fails to discriminate between HPB’s teachings and those of Besant and Leadbeater, for example listing the Masters and their functions as elaborated by the latter as if that were part of the Theosophical consensus. The great value of Introvigne’s book is not for his telling of familiar tales like that of the Theosophical Society, but for its wealth of unfamiliar stories about sects on which objective information is very difficult to come by.

The same format and style serves for the second volume of Introvigne’s formidable one-man enterprise, *Il Cappello del Mago*. He remarks that while in one respect “the history of the modern world is the history of the expan-

sion of atheism” (Augusto Del Noce), it has also seen the unprecedented appearance of a new form of mythology, exemplified by the new religious and magical movements. The two types of movement resemble each other socially but differ doctrinally in that while religion offers general rewards, magic offers specific ones. Consequently magic is a more dangerous affair, especially for the magus who, unlike the priest, is expected to give empirical proof of his doctrines.

The first large category in the book is Spiritualism, both classic (since 1848) and modern. It is one of the strengths of Introvigne’s argument that he shows so clearly how Spiritualism blends into the “channeling” beloved of the New Age. He deals especially with Arthur Ford, Edgar Cayce, the older channeled texts of *Oahspe*, the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, and *The Aurantia Book*, White Eagle, Seth, and *A Course in Miracles*. An important section follows on Flying Saucer cults, whose relationship to the foregoing is made abundantly clear.

The second large category, Magic, begins with the Fringe Masonry of the nineteenth century, the Pythagorean and Rosicrucian orders, the Martinists, Templars, and the intricate web of the Gnostic churches. Then comes ceremonial magic (Golden Dawn, OTO, and their fellows), Oriental cults (in which it is a surprise to find the Dzogchen of Namkhai Norbu), and the Christian esotericism of Sedir, Milosz, and Schwaller de Lubicz. The category closes with Ariosophy and Neopaganism, many varieties of Wicca, and finally the “Harmonic Convergence” that no doubt loomed large while IL CAPPELLO as being written. I found this section the richest and most useful of all Introvigne’s investigations.

The third category, Satanism, is much shorter. A very important introductory essay treats the

Satanism scare, especially in the USA, placing it in the context of earlier persecutions of Jews, witches, and others suspected of dark occult plots against the Christian world. The real Satanists, of which there are many fewer than paranoid policemen and fundamentalist agitators would like us to believe, divide into the Rationalists (best known through La Vey’s Church of Satan), the Occultists (e.g. Aquino’s Temple of Set), and the “acid” luciferism of heavy metal and pop culture. The work ends on this depressing note. But here and throughout the two volumes, it is not Introvigne who condemns: he states the historical facts, summarizes the doctrines, and explains the sociological and intellectual contexts. The low-grade cults and the egotistical and self-deceiving leaders stand self-condemned.

Massimo Introvigne makes no secret of his own Roman Catholicism. But as a layman, a scholar, and incidentally a lawyer, he knows that nothing is gained by reiterating that Rome is right, and the rest of the world wrong. What is more important is truth and accuracy, which he has achieved as much as is possible when one man tries to compile an encyclopedia. Perhaps his work carries a message even to Rome, pointing out that the immense amount of spiritual energy poured into the new religious and magical movements is not merely the result of human vice, blindness, and folly: it is a reminder that Rome, not to mention the other Christian churches, is failing to provide the kind of spiritual nourishment that these people need.

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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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*Theosophical History* (ISSN 0951-497X) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by James A. Santucci. The journal's purpose is to publish contributions specifically related to the modern Theosophical Movement, from the time of Madame Helena Blavatsky and others who were responsible in establishing the original Theosophical Society (1875), to all groups that derive their teachings - directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly - from her or her immediate

followers. In addition, the journal is also receptive to related movements (including pre-Blavatskyite Theosophy, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and the philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg to give but a few examples) that have had an influence on or displayed an affinity to modern Theosophy.

The subscription fee for the journal is \$14.00 (U.S., Mexico, Canada), \$16.00 (elsewhere), or \$24.00 (air Mail) for four issues a year. single issues are \$4.00. All inquiries should be sent to **James Santucci**, *Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.)*.

The Editors assume no responsibility for the views expressed by authors in *Theosophical History*.

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There is no limitation on the length of manuscripts. In general, articles of 30 pages or less will be published in full; articles in excess of 30 pages may be published serially.

Brief communications, review articles, and book reviews are welcome. They should be submitted double-spaced.

All correspondence, manuscripts, and subscriptions should be sent to:

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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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# Editor's Comments

## In this issue

A wealth of material awaiting publication for the past few months as well as recent communications of special interest have led to the decision to publish a double issue of the journal. We trust that the readers have no objections to this decision.

A recent communication ("From the Archives") from Michael Gomes reveals a promising new avenue of research: the release of sixteen letters written by H.P. Blavatsky to William Quan Judge. It is our hope that this communication is but the first in a long series that we will receive from Mr. Gomes.

Speaking of archival material, Associate Editor Joscelyn Godwin ("The Haunting of E. Gerry Brown: A Contemporary Document") has uncovered a startling document in a London archive written by an anonymous reporter that summarizes E. Gerry Brown's (the editor of *The Spiritual Scientist* in Boston from 1874 to 1878) shocking account of H.P. Blavatsky's attempt to commit acts of "black magic" or psychic murder against Brown, his wife, and unborn child. A facsimile of the first page of the document is herein reproduced in the hope that some reader might recognize the hand-writing of the author or comment on its content. Readers may well wish to consult Dion Fortune's *Psychic Self-Defence: A Study in Occult Pathology and Criminality* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1957 [1984 reprint] for more insight in this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I thank Michael Gomes for the reference.

The final communication is Mr. Daniel Caracostea's welcome summary of The Eighth Annual Conference of Political Hermetica at the Sorbonne (Paris), entitled "The Legacies of Theosophy: From Theosophy to the New Age." Publication of the papers presented at the conference will appear in November 1993. An announcement will be made in *TH* as soon as the publication becomes available.

Among the articles appearing in this issue are two papers that were presented at the Fifth Theosophical History Conference, held at Point Loma in San Diego (California) in June 1992. They are Mr. James Biggs' "Theosophy and Nationalism: A Dialogue" and Miss Isotta Poggi's "An Experimental Theosophical Community in Italy: The Green Village." Mr. Biggs' paper is the outcome of extensive research undertaken for his Master of Arts thesis in History at California State University at Fullerton. The thesis, *Justice, Love, and Liberty: The Nationalist Movement in Los Angeles* (submitted in 1990), uncovered a number of hitherto unknown connections between the largely forgotten Nationalist Movement and the Theosophical connection to it.

Miss Poggi's article sheds additional light on the remarkable work of Professor Bernardino del Boca and his work on establishing an "experimental center of the new level of consciousness": the Villaggio Verde or Green Village. Readers may refer to Professor del Boca's own account of this experiment in the January 1991 (III/5) issue of

*Theosophical History*, entitled “The First Practical Expression of Theosophy in Italy: The ‘Villaggio Verde’ (Green Village).” Miss Poggi, a Research Associate with the Institute for the Study of American Religion in Santa Barbara (whose Director, J. Gordon Melton, serves as Associate Editor for this journal), has made Italian ‘alternative spirituality’ her special area of research as is evident in her recently published “Alternative Spirituality in Italy,” located in *Perspectives on the New Age*, edited by James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), a work that will be reviewed in a future issue.

The third article, “Mead’s Gnosis: A theosophical Exegesis of an Ancient Heresy,” is a most valuable entry deriving from “The Mead Symposium,” held in London on 30 May 1992 under the auspices of the Temenos Academy for Integral Studies (see Dr. Godwin’s summary of the proceedings in *TH* IV/2: 50). G.R.S. Mead is the subject of considerable ambivalence to those who are acquainted with his work in Gnosticism and his connections with Theosophy. Clare Goodrick-Clarke’s study ably unlocks some of the mystery surrounding this man and the controversial position he holds in Gnostic studies.

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***Theosophical History:***  
***Occasional Papers***  
***Joan Grant: Winged Pharaoh?***  
**By Jean Overton Fuller.**

In the last issue it was announced that a new publication series was being initiated designed to investigate various topics either directly or peripherally related to theosophical history. The first

volume of this series, *Witness for the Prosecution: Annie Besant’s Testimony on Behalf of H.P. Blavatsky in the N.Y. Sun/Coues Law Case* (with an introduction by Michael Gomes) will be published in April 1993. It is with great pleasure to announce a second volume of *Occasional Papers*: Jean Overton Fuller’s *Joan Grant: Winged Phoenix?* Readers of this journal know Miss Fuller as a contributor to *Theosophical History* and as the author of *Blavatsky and Her Teachers*. She is also the author of *The Comte de Saint-Germain, Shelley: A Biography*, *Swinburne: A Biography*, and nine other biographies and studies. In addition, Miss Fuller is a poetess of note and an artist, who studied at the Académie Julien in Paris.

*Joan Grant: Winged Pharaoh?* was first presented in summary form at the International Theosophical History Conference at Point Loma (San Diego) in June of 1992 (*TH* IV/3: 74). Miss Fuller’s work is based both on her observations of Miss Grant while a guest of the British writer during a long weekend in 1944 and on an extensive investigation of her literary works and life. These, together with her knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphics, result in a fascinating study of Joan Grant. Were her books *Winged Pharaoh*, *Eyes of Horus* and its sequel *Lord of the Horizon*, and *Life of Carola* works of fiction or were they remembrances of previous existences? Miss Fuller recounts how the *Winged Pharaoh* was to her “of such wonder as to be a landmark in my life.” Unsure whether the book was fact or fiction, Miss Fuller set out to find out for herself. An excerpt from the pamphlet recounts the vivid account of her meeting with the author:

My letter, addressed care of her publishers, was replied to from Trelydan, inviting me for a long week-end. I took the train from Euston to Welshpool, and then a long taxi-ride over

the border into Wales. It was Saturday 13 May, 1944, I was to stay until Tuesday, and it was my first and only holiday from London during the war. The taxi took me up to a large, spreading house, white with black beams, in a garden of forget-me-nots. I had wondered what she would be like, and imagined that a person with such psychic gifts might be a little brown mouse. The contrary was the case. The woman who opened the door to me was very tall, with sand-coloured hair braided over the top of her head, dark eyes, large mouth and good speech. . . . I felt I had dropped into a set that was very County, and unexpectedly alien. . . . Nothing serious had yet been discussed. It was the Canon who now said, "The time has come when we should perhaps ask Joan how she first became aware she had had previous existences."

This was the first overt confirmation that Joan's books were claimed not to be fiction.

The conclusions that Miss Fuller arrives at regarding Joan Grant's claims, however, are not merely subjective opinions but the result of a careful study of her writings as well as the land of Egypt in which Joan Grant claimed to have lived.

*Joan Grant: Winged Pharaoh?* will be released in September 1993. Those interested in ordering the publication should send a check in U.S. dollars or an international money order payable to Theosophical History to James Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634). The **pre-publication** price is \$10 (postmarked prior to 31 August); the **publication** price will take effect on 1 September 1993. California residents, please add 7.25% sales tax.

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## I.T.H. Conference Videotapes

In the last issue, it was announced that six videotape cassettes are currently available featuring the presentations at the Fifth International Theosophical History Conference. Brett Forray of the Los Angeles Center for Theosophic Study (Adyar) and The Theosophical Society (Pasadena), who so generously contributed his time and expertise in preparing the tapes, has requested that all orders be addressed to him at 123 West Lomita #11, Glendale, CA 91204 (U.S.A.). The tapes may be ordered separately for \$12.00 each, or as a set for \$60.00. For those living outside the U.S. and Canada, please note that the tapes are available only in the NTSA format. California residents outside Los Angeles County should add 7.25% tax; Los Angeles County residents should add 8.25% tax. For postage and handling, please add \$2.50 for the first tape and \$0.50 for each additional tape. Checks or money orders should be made out to Brett Forray. Readers may consult the last issue for the contents of the tapes.

As an update to the information given in the last issue, Brett has informed me that my talk, "New Light on George Henry Felt," is now included in Tape 6. He also has requested that European subscribers who are interested in ordering the tapes in PAL format should write him of their interest so he can arrange for the preparation of the copies.

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# Book Notes

**ARKTOS: THE POLAR MYTH IN SCIENCE, SYMBOLISM AND NAZI SURVIVAL.** By Joscelyn Godwin. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1993. Pp. 260 \$16.95. ISBN 0-933999-46-1.

While not a work of Theosophical history *per se*, *Arktos* is generous in its acknowledgment of Madame Blavatsky's intellectual influence. Although his bibliography lists 271 sources, nearly half in foreign languages, Joscelyn Godwin credits H.P.B. as "the most fecund source of ideas on our subject." (208)

Godwin's subject is various mythical, scientific and esoteric interpretations of the poles, the tilt of the earth's axis, and related themes. Part I, **Prologue in Hyperborea**, explores theories of a golden age before the axis shift, with special focus on H.P.B. and René Guénon. Part II, **The Northern Lights**, reviews attempts to attribute an Arctic origin to the "Aryan" race. These range from early Western science through Theosophy to Nazi and neo-Nazi legends. Part III, **The Hidden Lands**, begins with examinations of Agartha and Shambhala, with particular attention to Saint-Yves d'Alveydre and Nicholas Roerich respectively. Then the focus shifts to the speculations of UFOlogists and Hollow-Earth theorists, and finally to strange doctrines about Antarctica. Part IV, **Arcadia Regained**, surveys religious and literary sources from ancient and medieval times in search of a Polar tradition as an underground current in Western thought. Part V, **The Tilt**, is

described in Godwin's introduction in a way which conveys his approach throughout the text:

Finally, and again in a spirit of "agnostic suspicion," this book returns to the theme of the polar shift, its history, mechanism, and causes. In presenting the mass of contradictory theories in Part Five, I respect the examples of Charles Fort, the American collector of anomalies, who was content to document the facts that challenge "consensus reality;" and , more recently, Jacques Vallee, the writer on UFOs who emphasizes the seriousness of the phenomenon while discouraging emotional and premature conclusions . . . my intention is to equip the reader for an informed and open-minded consideration of these ideas. (8)

The subject matter of *Arktos* is intriguing and the explanations marvelously clear, especially considering how convoluted the doctrines in question are. Both these qualities are praiseworthy, but even more remarkable is the groundbreaking way Godwin applies the techniques and standards of intellectual history to a body of literature generally ignored by scholars. This has the double virtue of broadening the range of academic scholarship and raising the level of discourse among esotericists. Godwin, who teaches in the Music department of Colgate University, has been a frequent contributor to *Theosophical History*. In *Arktos* he has made a

valuable contribution to the study of modern esotericism.

**Paul Johnson**

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Arturo Reghini (1878-1946) was among the founders of the Theosophical Society in Italy. In 1925, he started a journal entitled *Ignis: Rivista di studi iniziatici* and published five issues before it was discontinued because of contrasts between Reghini and one of the main writers, the Italian esotericist Julius Evola (1878-1974). A single issue, marked “Year II, issue 1,” was published by Reghini in January 1929. A publication called *Ignis-Rivista di studi iniziatici fondata da Arturo Reghini* has been started again by Roberto Sestito, whose wife Emirene is a direct descendant of Amedeo Rocco Armentano (1886-1966), who is regarded by many as Reghini’s “hidden master.” Although Reghini and Armentano cooperated in many occult ventures, their main interest was a brand of neo-paganism presented as Neo-Pythagorism which was noted for its vitriolic anti-Catholicism. The same vitriolic anti-Catholicism is found in the new *Ignis*. A number of writers in the new journal appear to belong to the magical tradition established in Europe in the first decades of our century by the Italian Giuliano Kremmerz (pseudonym of Ciro Formisano [1861-1930]), who taught an Egyptian (rather than Greek) form of neo-pagan magic and a particularly elaborate form of “internal alchemy” (i.e. sex magic).

**Massimo Introvigne**  
**Director, CESNUR**  
Torino, Italy

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**AṢṬĀDHYĀYĪ OF PĀṆINI.** Translated by Sumitra M. Katre. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987. Pp. xlvi + 1330. ISBN 0-292-70394-5. No price indicated.

If we were to list the supreme intellectual accomplishments of the ancient world, perhaps only Aristotle could match the influence and accomplishment of the South Asian grammarian Pāṇini (5th or 6th century B.C.E.). Consider the feat of this relatively obscure linguist. In 4000 *sūtras* or aphorisms, a style unique to Sanskrit literature resembling an algebraic mode of expression designed to be precise and brief, Pāṇini described the Sanskrit language—or more precisely, a dialect of the language spoken around his birthplace of Śālātura (near the ancient Gandhāra) in what is today Pakistān—in little more than 60 pages quarto size. An equivalent grammar not following Pāṇini’s metalanguage would take hundreds of pages to accomplish the same breath of explanation. What is therefore known as Ockham’s razor, named after the 14th century English philosopher William of Ockham, was indeed followed by Pāṇini almost two thousand years earlier. Indeed, Indian grammarians had their own name for this Simplicity Criterion, *lāghava* (lit., ‘lightness’), which was defined in the *Paribhāṣenduśekhara* (122) in the following manner:

Grammarians consider the birth of a son (to be equivalent to) the reduction (of a vowel or syllable) to (even) half a length or *mora* [*ardha-mātra-lāghavena putro-’tsavam manyante vaiyākāraṇāḥ*].

An example of this Principle as employed by Pāṇini appears in his statement of the following phonetic rule, expressed according to the rules

of his metalanguage, as *iko yan aci* (6.1.77). The 19th century American Sanskritist, W.D. Whitney (*Sanskrit Grammar*, 129), states the same rule in ordinary language as follows:

The *i*-vowels, the *u*-vowels, and *r*, before a dissimilar vowel or diphthong, are regularly converted each into its own corresponding semivowel, *y* or *v* or *r*.

In addition to anticipating Ockham's razor by some 2000 years, Pāṇini was largely responsible for emphasizing a descriptive and not prescriptive approach to language study. For all practical purposes, therefore, linguistic methodology was formed and developed in India and not the West. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the groundbreaking work of the Swiss linguist F. de Saussure, and the Americans Leonard Bloomfield and Noam Chomsky harken back to their intellectual ancestor, Pāṇini.

Finally, it is evident that the grammatical method of the Pāṇinian school characterizes much of Indian philosophy in the same manner that the mathematical method, as exemplified in Euclid's *Elements*, characterizes much of Western philosophy, according to a provocative and highly interesting article by J.F. Staal ("Euclid and Pāṇini," in *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 15/2 [April 1965]: 99-116). Without going into details, Professor Staal observes that

[j]ust as Plato reserved admission to his Academy for geometers, Indian scholars and philosophers are expected to have first undergone a training in scientific linguistics. In India, grammar was called the Veda of the Vedas, the science of sciences. [Louis] Renou declares: "To adhere to Indian thought means first of all to think like a grammarian. . . ." (114)

Complete translations of Pāṇini's monumental *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (best rendered as "A Collection of Eight Chapters") in European languages have existed since the 1839-40 edition of Otto Böhtlingk's *Pāṇini's acht Bücher grammatischer Regeln*. Since that time, a revised edition (1887) entitled *Pāṇini's Grammatik* (the 1964 reprint is still available) has followed, as has an 1891 English translation by Śrīśa Chandra Vasu entitled *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini* (reprinted by Motilal Banarsidass in two volumes), and the 1966 French translation of the great Vedic scholar, Louis Renou, *La grammaire de Pāṇini traduite du sanscrit avec des extraits des commentaires indigènes*. The present translation is the culminating work of one of the great scholars in the field of Indo-Aryan linguistics, the former Director of Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute in Poona and Visiting Professor at the University of Texas (Austin), Sumitra M. Katre. The author of the multi-part series, *Pāṇinian Studies* (1967-1971) and *A Glossary of Grammatical Elements and Operations in Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Professor Katre presents in 1060 pages a transliterated text (not the Devanāgarī text as in previous translations), a lucid and linguistically precise translation, and a wonderfully detailed commentary to each *sūtra*. The remainder of the book consists of an informative introduction (xv-xlvi); the *Śiva-Sūtras*, the repository of sounds divided into fourteen *sūtras* that Pāṇini employs to create metawords for economy of expression; an alphabetic (in this case following the alphabetical order of Sanskrit) listing of the *sūtras* in the grammar (1067-1171); the *Pāṇinīya Dhātupāṭha*, a collection of some 2000 roots or verbal stems (*dhātu*) of the Sanskrit language (1173-1224), also arranged according to their meaning (1225-1258); sound or phoneme markers (*it*) placed either before or after meaningful units to indicate a grammatical

operation or the prevention of such an operation (1259-1263); and the *Gaṇa-pāṭha*, which contains classes of nominal stems, each named after the first stem of the class, that undergo grammatical operations (1265-1325).

Because of the technical nature of the subject, the reader should have background in both linguistics and Sanskrit. Should anyone be interested in pursuing such a venture, it will be one of the most rewarding intellectual experiences undertaken. Furthermore, such a study will also reveal, as perhaps no other body of work will do, the genius of the Indian mind.

**James Santucci**

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**MATHURĀ: THE CULTURAL HERITAGE.**

Edited by Doris Meth Srinivasan. New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1989 (distributed by South Asia Publications, Box 502, Columbia, MO 65205). Pp. vii + 405; illustrations. ISBN 0-945921-02-2. \$72.00.

The result of an eight day seminar held in Delhi in January, 1980, *Mathurā* contains a wealth of information spread over thirty-six separate presentations grouped under eight general categories: historical background, society and economy, religious sects, numismatics, archaeology, language and literature, epigraphy, and art and iconography. Readers interested in religion, art, and iconography will find particularly interesting Alf Hildebeitel's "Kṛṣṇa at Mathurā," John Huntington's "Mathurā Evidence for the Early Teachings of Mahāyāna," and the Doris Srinivasan's "Vaiṣṇava Art and Iconography at Mathurā." There are a number of fascinating

illustrations, including a set of palaeographical tables bearing the alphabets, conjuncts, and numerals dating from the 2nd century B.C.E. to Gupta times, *i.e.* the 6th century C.E., appearing in T.P. Verma's "Progress of Modification of the Alphabet as Revealed by Coins, Seals and Inscriptions from Mathurā." The entire collection is encyclopedic in content and adds considerable insight in this important artistic, and cultural, and trading center in the early centuries of the Common Era.

**James Santucci**

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# Communications From the Archives

Michael Gomes

A collection of sixteen letters from H.P. Blavatsky to William Quan Judge preserved at the Andover-Harvard Divinity School Library has recently become available to scholars. The collection was sealed for 25 years as per the instructions of the donor and was opened in January 1993. The letters have never been published though some extracts from them appeared in New York *Path* of 1892 under the title of “She Being Dead Yet Speaketh”—a selection of Blavatsky’s correspondence read at the first anniversary observance of her passing.

The collection is unique in that it presents a different picture from that usually portrayed by Theosophists of Blavatsky’s relationship with Judge, General Secretary of the American Section of the Theosophical Society at the time. The letters date from May 1, 1885, after Blavatsky’s arrival in Naples, to Nov. 19, 1890, London, and are in true Blavatskian style in that she rails against everyone and everything. No one is spared. The foibles of prominent Theosophists are subjects of her invective. The double character of Dr. Franz Hartmann, who accompanied her to Europe, is revealed; Col. Olcott, the President of the Society, who “mistakes the voice of his own flapdoodle self for the Master’s voice”; Elliott Coues, President of the T.S. American Board of Control, described as “a psychic and a crazy man.” But it is Judge who comes in for the most criticism. “Do as you do,” she wrote him from London on Feb. 9, 1890, after scolding him for his failure to handle E.S. Charters as she

advised, “and the T.S. will fall down into ruins in America, before six months are over. . . . I do not intend to keep on being bullied by you in every letter.” Typically Blavatsky, she alternately praises and blames him. “I will never forget your loyalty and devotion, your unswerving friendship,” she ended a letter to him on Nov. 19, 1890.

These letters also present her own feelings about events occurring in the Theosophical Society at the time and provide the rationale for some of her actions. “I cannot bear the idea,” she confided to him on Aug. 5, 1889, from the Isle of Jersey, “that I who has brought Theosophy into existence am expected now to bow to Adyar. . . . I rather see everything damned and turn a fresh leaf.” After the conversion of the London free-thinker Mrs. Besant to Theosophy, Mme. Blavatsky enthused to Judge, “Had we 100 Annie Besants and Herbert Burrows it might in time become a real Brotherhood of man.”

The question arises of why these letters ended at Harvard instead of with the rest of Judge’s correspondence with Blavatsky now in the archives of the former Point Loma Society headquartered at Pasadena. Since the overall tone of the newly accessible letters is more carping of Judge than the relationship depicted over the last century by his followers, it is to be surmised that they were purposely withdrawn for that reason. The letters were presented by the remnant of the Hargrove group of Theosophists, and it is known that E.T. Hargrove and C.A. Griscom were the

ones who went through Judge's papers immediately after his death in 1896.

Another unknown Blavatsky manuscript was recently uncovered in the Archives of the State Historical Society in Iowa. It is part of the autograph collection of Charles Aldrich (1828-1908). The manuscript comprises of two foolscap pages titled "The New Epidemics" and is annotated by Blavatsky at the end, "From a Russian article of mine retranslated by me into English and published in the 'Theosophist' June 1886." The collection contains an autographed photograph of Blavatsky and some other memorabilia. A similar manuscript was also discovered by myself in the Helen I. Dennis collection at the University of Chicago. It was published after Blavatsky's death in *Lucifer* under the title of "Fragments," and from internal evidence represents a rejected page from her *Secret Doctrine*. The MS. was probably a gift to Mrs. Dennis from Annie Besant.

This brings to six the known number of non-Theosophical institutions in America having original Blavatsky material. The others are the Dreer Collection at the State Historical Society of Pennsylvania which has an 1877 letter to Mordecai Evans (published partially in *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement* and the *Canadian Theosophist* Sept.-Oct. 1990); the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., which has a letter from 1878 (published in Vol. 1 of *HPB Speaks*); and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin which has eleven letters of Blavatsky to Elliott Coues (published in the *Canadian Theosophist*, 1984-86).

# REPORT ON THE VIII ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF POLITICA HERMETICA HELD AT THE SORBONNE

Daniel Caracostea

Organised by *l'Ecole pratique des hautes études, V<sup>o</sup> section*, religious sciences, from Sorbonne, together with the *Politica Hermetica*, the Conference took place on Saturday, and Sunday (December 12 and 13, 1992) with Emile Poulat (CNRS, EHESS) as Chairman, in the Guizot Amphitheater at the Sorbonne. The theme of this VIII<sup>th</sup> international conference was "Les Posterites de la Théosophie: du Théosophisme au New Age" ("The Legacies of Theosophy: From Theosophy to the New Age")

According to the organizers of the Conference, the word *theosophy* covers the works of the Christian theosophers starting roughly from the Renaissance down to the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, with some traces in our century. *Theosophism*, a word coined by Rene Guenon, covers the doctrines put forward by Madame Blavatsky.

The introductory talk, *La Théosophie*, was given by Professor Antoine Faivre, Director of studies at the Sorbonne, where he holds the chair on history of esoteric and mystical movements in modern and contemporary Europe. According to Professor Faivre, the word *theosophy* covers two aspects:

- a) a kind of spiritual investigation occurring between the XVI<sup>th</sup> and the XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries, and
- b) a referential corpus specific to the XIX<sup>th</sup> century.

Professor Faivre then divided the theosophical

current into four main periods.

a) The birth and first Golden Age beginning at the end of the XV<sup>th</sup> century with the confluence of several currents: Kabala, Paracelcius, Cornelius Agrippa, etc. and ending at the close of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century when the theosophical current, appropriately speaking, appears with Jacob Böhme. Paracelcius is the one that has the most affinities with that current.

b) This period covers the first half of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, when a second corpus, popularizing theosophy appears. The lecturer emphasized the fact that there were *as many theosophies as theosophers*.

c) The pre-Romantic and Romantic era (1750-1850) as the second Golden Age of theosophy with such individuals as Louis-Claude de St-Martin and Emanuel Swedenborg.

d) Finally, the last period starting with occultism down to modern times.

This talk was very erudite and deserves a careful reading.

The second talk was given by James Santucci, Professor of Religious Studies and Linguistics at the California State University (Fullerton, Ca.) and the Editor of this journal. He put forward in detail the researches he has done on George Henry Felt, who was the first (and ephemeral) official lecturer of the infant Theosophical Society in 1875. Felt

delivered a lecture at Madame Blavatsky's residence in New York City on *The Lost Egyptian Canon of Proportion* after which Col. Olcott suggested the creation of a society whose aim would be the study of the subjects dealt with in the lecture. Although there are not many details on Felt's life and activities, Professor Santucci was able to unearth some aspects of his life and to suggest Felt's place in the occult world.

For the benefit of those in the audience who could not understand English, Dr. Jean-Louis Siémons of the United Lodge of Theosophists (Paris) translated Professor Santucci's lecture.

Mr. Pierre Mollier talked in the early afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> on *Adyar, quatrieme Rome*. Delighted by his visit to the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, and having noticed that many people, including well-known personalities, were there at one time or another, Mr. Mollier wondered whether Adyar was, in the spiritual movement, like a fourth Rome; the second and third Romes being Constantinople and Moscow. Among the visitors at Adyar was the philosopher Hermann Keyserling, who while on a world tour stayed at Adyar and wrote more than 70 pages in his memoirs of his sojourn. Mircea Eliade, a young man who had just arrived in India, also stayed at Adyar where he met in the Library an individual who would become his master; Alexandra David-Neel also visited, as did Alain Danielou, who was director of the Library in 1954.

The second point Pierre Mollier tried to demonstrate was the place of the famous lecture by Felt on the *Lost Egyptian Canon of Proportion*. The leaders of Adyar seemed to have drawn their architectural inspiration from the lecture while drawing up the plans and setting the various buildings on the compound.

Mr. Alain Gouhier of Nancy II University, followed Mr. Mollier and spoke on *Bergson et la Théosophie*. The first part consisted mainly of what Guénon wrote about Bergson in his book *Le Théosophisme*. Because Bergson's sister married S.L. MacGregor Mathers, one of the three founders of the Golden Dawn and a friend of Madame Blavatsky, it is quite likely that Bergson must have been exposed to Theosophical doctrines. His thought in many areas is similar to Theosophy. This is why Guénon put him on the same level of what he called *theosophism* and rejected him also. The second part of Mr. Gouhier's talk dealt more precisely with some aspects of Bergsonian philosophy. It postulates an evolution of consciousness that is summed up by these words : *The universe is a machine that fabricates gods*.

The last speaker of the day was Mr. Enrique Marini-Palmieri, Professor at Paris III University, who read his paper on *La Théosophie dans la Littérature moderne latino-américaine*. One of the writers discussed, Lugones, was an Argentinian who lived partly from the XIXth to XXth centuries. He was one of the leaders of Theosophical Society in Argentina. Ideas on the universe and humanity put forward in *The Secret Doctrine* are found in his writings. He was active in politics, moved by the ideas he had drawn from Theosophy.

Daniel Caracostea opened the session the following day with his lecture, *Un aperçu sur le Mouvement Théosophique*. The Theosophical Movement was thus defined as:

the theosophical organizations stemming from the original Theosophical Society founded in 1875 and, by extension, the

organizations stemming from the former, without keeping the name and whose doctrines are more or less drawn from them.

The first part explained what the T.S. meant when it was founded, from the writings of the main founders. The modern T.S. was considered a resurgence of the Alexandrian Neo-Platonist school. The evolution of its objects was shown with the changes that occurred from time to time.

The second part gave a summary of the teachings on the universe and humanity as found within *The Secret Doctrine*: the three fundamental propositions, the birth of the universe with its several planes, the globes and their chains, the creative hierarchies, and eventually man in the course of evolution through the races on his quest for knowledge and on his ultimate fusion with his inner spiritual principles.

The last part discussed the three main Theosophical Societies with their peculiarities: the Adyar T.S., the Pasadena T.S. and the United Lodge of Theosophists.

Then some of the organizations stemmed from the T.S. were briefly described: the Liberal Catholic Church, Alice Bailey's Arcane School, Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical Society, Krishnamurti and the Order of the Star in the East that became ultimately the Krishnamurti Foundation, pointing out that if there are some common ideas between those put forward by these organizations and H.P.B.'s, there also exist wide differences as well. One example was the messianic current launched in 1911.

Françoise Champion (CNRS) ended the conference with *Le New Age, décomposition ou recomposition de la Théosophie*. One gathers that the introduction of the idea of the New Age in

France is traced to the early 1970s. As there is no structural movement, the New Age has been described as nebulous. In fact, it is very difficult to have a clear idea of this fleeting movement. Moreover what was true 20 years ago is no longer true today. The characteristics of the New Age were thus defined:

interest for the East  
experiential processes,  
the aim is the self-transformation,  
monist conception of the world  
and search for personal happiness down here.

The only organizations in France that is openly New Age are the Findhorn groups.

The early New Age in France had its roots in the XIXth century's Neo-Spiritualist tradition. The sources most often quoted are: Alice Bailey, Rudolf Steiner, Papus, Eliphas Levi and Spiritualism. Françoise Champion pointed out the main features of the late New Age:

self-transformation is not based on the study of a teaching but upon methodologies, deep conjunction with psychology (syncretism),  
in the XIXth century, there was a tendency to "scientific" religion. The New Age develops a protest against science. The latter cannot be avoided but is weakened because by itself it cannot give solutions. There is a tendency to spiritualized science. (The Cordoba conference in 1979 was given as an example),  
very deep individualism that leads to a refusal of organized groups. Krishnamurti is the typical example.

This conference was very interesting and enriching from many perspectives. The papers read at the conference, plus some others, as well as the discussion with the audience will be published in the review *Politica Hermetica* next November. For more details write to *L'Age d'Homme*, 5 rue Férou, 75006 Paris, France.

# THE HAUNTING OF E. GERRY BROWN: A contemporary document

Joscelyn Godwin

While researching last summer in a London archive<sup>1</sup> I came across the document which is transcribed here. The manuscript, nine pages long, is unsigned and unattributed in any way. Its recipient was almost certainly the Rev. William Stainton Moses, a writing medium, an early member of the Theosophical Society, and the founder of the journal *Light*.<sup>2</sup>

Elbridge Gerry Brown<sup>3</sup> edited *The Spiritual Scientist* in Boston from 1874-1878. Beginning on 3 December 1874 he published letters and articles from H.P.B. and Olcott, who gave him some \$1000 of financial support. Their contributions included Olcott's circular "Important to Spiritualists," signed by the "Committee of Seven, Brotherhood of Luxor"; H.P.B.'s "first occult shot," entitled "A Few Questions to Hiram," Olcott's review of Art Magic, etc. The entity that called itself Serapis entertained hopes for Brown to form a "triangle" with the Founders, but Brown's views

on Spiritualism set him at odds with them, and six months after their first collaboration (wrote H.P.B.) he had become their enemy.<sup>4</sup> Josephine Ransom dates this break to early 1876, but contributions continued to come from the Founders throughout that year. Thus we can probably date the events described in this document to 1876, though the interview may have taken place much later. Brown was still active in 1895, according to the National Union Catalogue.

The document was filed in proximity to a note from Colonel Bundy, editor of the Chicago *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, recounting Alexander Wilder's not very complimentary views on H.P.B. and *Isis Unveiled*. Could it be that Bundy was assembling a dossier from those who had known her and her close associates? In 1877, Brown himself wrote for Bundy's journal an article opposing the Spiritualist theories of H.P.B.<sup>5</sup> I suspect that the author of this document, who from internal evidence was an American man with a less than perfect command of French and even English spelling, was asked by Bundy to interview Brown and get his side of the story. Research in the Bundy archives at the University of Illinois in Chicago might clarify the matter. But the manuscript in question (of which the first page is illustrated here) has the careful, unimaginative penmanship that suggests that it is the work of a

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<sup>1</sup> The archive permits this publication, but wishes to remain unidentified.

<sup>2</sup> H.P. Blavatsky's first letter to Stainton Moses will be published in the next issue.

<sup>3</sup> On Brown and the Founders, see especially *H. P. Blavatsky, Collected Writings*, vol. I (Wheaton: TPH, 1977), 45-6, 85-95, 404 [hereafter *BCW*]; H. S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, First Series* (Adyar: TPH, 1941), 73-109 [hereafter *ODL*]; C. Jinarajadasa, ed., *Letters from the Masters of Wisdom, Second Series* (Adyar: TPH, 1977), 14-20, 36; Josephine Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (Adyar: TPH, 1938), 67-75.

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<sup>4</sup> *BCW*, I, 95.

<sup>5</sup> See *BCW*, I, 271.

copyist—as one would expect, under the circumstances.

In *Theosophical History* I/3 (1985): 55-56, Leslie Price presented a letter from Massey to Henry Sidgwick dated 15 October 1884, concerning the “British Letter” from K.H. to Massey. It includes the following words: “The other enclosures from Col. Bundy to Stainton Moses will explain themselves. S.M. sends them to me to be forwarded to you, as he is quite unable to write himself. But they seem to require no explanation.” Possibly this document was among the enclosures mentioned, and passed under the eyes of Sidgwick and the other members of the S.P.R. investigation of H.P.B.’s phenomena. If so, they kept a discreet silence about it. I am willing to believe in the authenticity of this story of a nine-months’ psychic attack on Gerry Brown, his wife, and their unborn child, in the sense of its being an accurate summary of what Brown told his visitor. Brown’s own perceptions and veracity are of course another matter. But of all the accusations ever brought against H.P.B., this one of black magic is surely the most serious from a Theosophical viewpoint, and it deserves to be recorded as such.

*Confidential*

When E. Gerry Brown commenced the publication of *The Scientist* in Boston he had no capital - not even one hundred dollars - and undertook and performed the duties of editor, composer and printer and his whole course with his journal was a struggle. Among others to whom he represented the difficulties of his position were Col. Elcott & Madame Blavet - Keys and they at once perceived and improved the opportunity by proposing to contribute to the maintenance of his paper provided he would admit to its columns such articles in favor of occultism as they chose to send him. With certain slight reservations he accepted their proposal and from that time for a certain period the *Scientist* became their vehicle for communication with the American Spiritualist public.

But this was not enough to satisfy the Madame she aspired to the ownership not only of the paper <sup>over</sup>

The above picture has been reduced 64%

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But this was not enough to satisfy the Madame: she aspired to the ownership not only of the paper [2] but as it seems to the control of Brown himself and to the full acknowledgement on his part of vassalship to her. He resisted her pretensions and this led to not only protestations but to commands on her part expressed in violent language and accompanied with threatening gestures. She had repeated interviews with him as also did Col. Olcott in which promises and threats were mingled but they failed to bring him to terms while at the same time he endeavored to avoid an open rupture mainly on account of the material assistance they were rendering the Journal.

This was the state of affairs when he became engaged to marry his present wife. The engagement was kept secret as far as possible both on his and the young lady's part but by some means the Madame became aware of it and immediately came on from New York and proceeded to his office and in a towering rage demanded to know

if the engagement [3] was intended by him to terminate in marriage and upon his replying in the affirmative she imperatively forbade the marriage cursed him in vile language and threatened him with worse than the curses of Rome if he did not at once write to his affianced retracting his promise. After she had expended her violence in some degree she left him and he at once telegraphed the young lady to be ready to marry him the next day and that night he left for her town and the next day was married.

It was arranged that the marriage should not be announced for some time and the succeeding day he returned to Boston to his duties and the *Scientist* of that week appeared as usual and matters continued to progress quietly for some two or three weeks when suddenly the Madame again made her appearance and this time it was more terrible than before. She by some temporal or spiritual means had learned of the marriage [4] and her rage was beyond bounds. Without condescending to address him in the usual formula of society she demanded to know whether it were true that he had dared to marry against her commands to the contrary and upon his replying that such was the case she uttered fierce and even foul maledictions upon the heads of both him and his wife, declared with blasphemous oaths that she would with the assistance of her spirit band take the life of his wife and cause both him and her to suffer the tortures of the damned. While thus venting her passion she strode up and down the room making violent and threatening gestures and Mr Brown was compelled to assume a guarded and watchful attitude fearful she would be led to make a personal attack upon him. In relating this he said he had never before realized a demoniac look, she looked and acted the demon.

[5] Mrs. Brown, unfortunately for her at that time, is one of the most sensitive and perfect mediums I have known she having visited me with her husband, after this affair, and for three days afforded me the opportunity of testing her power. It was not long before Mr. Brown had reason to know that the threats of mischief against his wife at least were in course of realization for one night he was aroused from his sleep by a sense of pain and suffocation and he found that the hands of his wife had been used as instruments to effect his death and it was with great difficulty he was able to release himself from the grasp of her hands. He is a remarkably well developed and healthy man with strength above the average while she is small and delicate and even feeble and less able to protect herself against force and violence than most women. While she was thus grasping his throat the foulest oaths were issuing from her mouth and when [6] he had succeeded in releasing himself they were varied with threats of a repetition of like attempts on his life and the promise of ultimate success.

And he was frequently subject to like attempts and sometimes the possessing spirits would control her when he was awake and use similar language towards him but after this course had been pursued by the invisibles for some time they became aware that Mrs. Brown was enceinte [writer first wrote enciente] and then their threats were extended to the unborn child. They would now almost daily control her and utter the most diabolical threats declaring that they would now be able to take the lives of both mother and child and boasted of the enjoyment they should derive from the accomplishment of their purpose and the suffering that would be inflicted on him by their loss. At different times different spirits controlled but each cursed and threatened and some-

times varied this course by endeavoring to persuade him to avert the [7] calamity in store for him by making his peace with the Madame - by submission to her in all things. They one and all declared they were members of her band and sworn to obey her commands in every thing. They said there were ten (-I think this is the number-) of them and each boasted of the number of persons he had murdered in his earth life and one declared that he had murdered hundreds and could not recollect the number. A number of them professed to have formerly been pirates. They said they had received the commands of the Madame to inflict all the suffering possible on Mrs. Brown and to cause the death of her and her unborn child.

Thus matters proceeded during her pregnancy and for some weeks previous to her confinement the malignants were professedly jubilant over the anticipation of the opportunity for evil which would be afforded by the approaching accouchment [sic]. Then they would surround her and cast their concentrated malignant influence over her and the child and nothing [8] could save her and it from becoming their victims. The possibility of their being able to fulfil their threats was naturally present to Mr Brown's mind but it did not affect him as it would have done had it not been that occasionally good and kind spirit friends were able to control her and promise their aid in her extremity and encourage him and her in hoping for the best but they did not attempt to conceal from him their apprehensions of danger.

The critical hour at last arrived and after much suffering the child was born but all through this stage of progress there were symptoms which clearly indicated the malevolent influence of the vile band although the power to protect on the part of their friends was greater than that to harm

on the part of their enemies.

Since that event they have not been frequently disturbed and Mr Brown attributes this comparative immunity from annoyance [9] to the assistance and interference of certain members of the band whom he succeeded in reforming. When they first haunted Mrs. Brown he made no efforts to conciliate or persuade them but on the contrary denounced them in vigorous language but this only exasperated them and stimulated them to greater efforts. His spirit friends perceived this and earnestly entreated him to always keep cool never become excited and above all things to avoid the use of language which could offend them and at the same time to sieze [sic] every opportunity to reason with and persuade them. From that time he pursued this course and soon one of them one day after he had said many things in the usual way paused and then said, "Why what a strange fellow you are. I have said enough to provoke all the saints in heaven - if there is such a place - and you take it all so quietly. You must be a good fellow after all and some things you say are true." Mr B. siezed [sic] this opportunity [10] to converse with him and he promised that he would have nothing more to do with the band and would hereafter be his friend and endeavor to shield him and his wife from the machinations of the others. He was true to his promise and afterwards two others abandoned the band through Mr. Brown's influence and all promised to render him all the assistance in their power and he believes they have been instrumental in bringing about a better condition of things.

The main points as related by Mr Brown I have here given but there are many minor points related by him which have escaped my memory and which would add to the interest of the narrative were I able to remember them. He is a

fluent yet concise [writer inserts "sic" here] talker and two hours were consumed in his narrative to me. I have the fullest confidence in his truthfulness and integrity and he is a remarkably intelligent man.

# THEOSOPHY AND NATIONALISM: A DIALOGUE

James Biggs

## Introduction

The decades leading up to the twentieth century are generally pictured as a time of rapid, often bewildering change. It was a period marked by the incorporation and centralization of business, monopolies and trusts, greed and corruption in business and politics, the loss of authority in religion and growth of an epistemology based upon empiricism, increasing immigration and cities teeming with tenements and crime, and an ever widening gap between wealth and poverty. Arrayed against these were the various strands of reform: farmers' alliances, socialists, labor unions, populists, social gospelers, and progressives.

These turbulent years saw a proliferation of protest books as discontent with prevailing conditions intensified. Without exception, the most popular was Edward Bellamy's utopian novel *Looking Backward*. Sylvia Bowman, in her critical biography of Bellamy, asserts that *Looking Backward* is the most widely read and the most influential utopian novel ever written by an American.<sup>1</sup> First published in January 1888, Bellamy's novel had sold 400,000 copies in the United States by 1897, making it a best seller of its period. From 1890 to 1935, 235,400 copies were sold in England, not counting the four editions distributed by the William Reeves Company.

*Looking Backward* was translated into German, French, Norwegian, and Italian.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of *Looking Backward* is not revealed by the volume of sales alone. The novel stimulated the growth of both socialism and populism in the United States, as well as various utopian endeavors. Many were the meetings of Social Gospelers, Christian Socialists, and Theosophists where Bellamy's ideas formed the basis of dialogue, discussion, and debate. Traditional scholarship maintains *Looking Backward* as instrumental in the formulation of American liberal thought, its ideas influencing such luminaries as Thorstein Veblen, William Dean Howells, Upton Sinclair, Eugene Debs, Samuel Clemens, and Adolph A. Berle Jr.<sup>3</sup> In 1935, *Atlantic Monthly* editor Edward Weeks asked Charles Beard and John Dewey to join him in preparing lists of the twenty most influential books published since 1885. All three lists placed *Looking Backward* second only to Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*.<sup>4</sup> Also during the 1930's, the *Wilson Library Bulletin*

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<sup>2</sup> Bowman, *The Year 2000*, 121.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur E. Morgan, *The Philosophy of Edward Bellamy* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1945), v-xvii, 245-298; Vernon Parrington, *American Dreams: A Study of American Utopias* (New York: Russel and Russel, Inc., 1964); Sylvia E. Bowman, ed., *Edward Bellamy Abroad: An American Prophet's Influence* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), 110.

<sup>4</sup> Sylvia E. Bowman, *Edward Bellamy* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 14; Arthur E. Morgan, *Edward Bellamy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), ix.

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia E. Bowman, *The Year 2000: A Critical Biography of Edward Bellamy* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958), 14.

published a list of twenty-six books written during the previous four centuries “that have changed the Modern World,” and *Looking Backward* was included in that list.<sup>5</sup>

Shortly after the publication of *Looking Backward*, the First Boston Bellamy Club was formed by middle class men and women who wanted to see Bellamy’s blueprint for society become reality. Calling themselves Nationalists, after Bellamy’s term for the political, social, and economic system he outlined in *Looking Backward*, their message was positive, urgent, and surrounded with expectancy. On the strength of that optimism, Nationalist clubs were established across the United States, as well as in Europe and Asia, and were centers of intense activity, developing into the Nationalist Movement. By the summer of 1890, California alone had over forty clubs holding regular meetings, the most active being the clubs in and around Los Angeles and in the San Francisco Bay area.<sup>6</sup>

One of the factors for the early successes and growth of Nationalism is the influence of Theosophy.<sup>7</sup> Even before the publication of *Looking Backward*, Theosophists were interested in Bellamy. Three of Bellamy’s short stories, “The Blindman’s World,” “At Pinney’s Ranch,” and “To Whom This May Come,” were favorably reviewed in relation to Theosophical ideals in *The Path*, the American Theosophical Magazine. In a review of *Looking Backward* from the same magazine,

Bellamy was called “a natural Theosophist.”<sup>8</sup>

As the movement ran its course, the often impatient but ever hopeful Nationalists met with limited success in reaching their goals. Nevertheless, after a few years the interest dissipated and the clubs dwindled in size and number as their members drifted into other reform activities. Yet, as they moved on to support other causes, their response to Bellamy’s ideas continued to shape their world view. Clearly, *Looking Backward* has had a lasting impact on its audience.

### **The Vision of Edward Bellamy: Looking Backward**

As a romance, *Looking Backward* was of uneven quality; good but not great. Its importance, however, lies not in literary value, but in its vision for the future. Bellamy’s novel presented a picture of society that many nineteenth-century

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<sup>5</sup> Morgan, *Bellamy*, x.

<sup>6</sup> “California Nationalist Directory,” *Weekly Nationalist*, 21 June 1890: 8.

<sup>7</sup> Morgan, *Bellamy*, 260.

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<sup>8</sup> Morgan, *The Philosophy of Edward Bellamy*, 30-33. The question of whether Bellamy was influenced by Theosophy is an interesting one. There is no record that he was ever a member. While he may have been familiar with some of the early writings of the Theosophical Society or had access to translations of Hindu writings, Bellamy’s “Religion of Solidarity,” which captures the basis of Bellamy’s philosophy and was written in 1874, predates much of the literature produced by Theosophists. The “Religion of Solidarity” was not published in Bellamy’s lifetime, but has been since published in Morgan’s *The Philosophy of Edward Bellamy* and in Edward Bellamy, *Selected Writings on Religion and Society*, ed. Joseph Schiffman, (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1955). Most tend to agree that Bellamy’s influence in this direction came indirectly from India through the Transcendentalist works of Emerson and Thoreau, although Schiffman finds a strong link to Auguste Comte (*Selected Writings*, xx). See Bowman, *The Year 2000*, 36; John Thomas, Introduction to *Looking Backward*, by Edward Bellamy (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1967), 9; Morgan, *Bellamy*, 202-203; and Morgan, *The Philosophy of Edward Bellamy*, 34.

readers found attractive. It is a society characterized not so much for the marvels and conveniences of modern technology as for a social and economic organization that allows each person access to the fruits of technical innovation. As important as material concerns were, Bellamy's contemporaries also found the psychological changes of twentieth-century Bostonians a salient feature.

After spending the day visiting a Civil War gravesite with his fiance, Julian West, the protagonist in *Looking Backward*, seeks the services of a hypnotist as a cure for insomnia. The overzealous mesmerist performs his task all too well, and the wealthy young Bostonian later awakens to find himself 113 years in the future, the guest of Doctor Leete and his family. Through a Socratic dialogue between West and the members of the Leete family, Bellamy introduces the reader to the much improved Boston of the year 2000.

The world of Dr. Leete is one of cooperation rather than competition. There is no private property, save personal possessions. The people of the United States had assumed the ownership and management of "The Great Trust, (the) final monopoly in which all previous and lesser monopolies were swallowed up."<sup>9</sup> The one great corporation was now run by the federal government for the welfare of all, with every person receiving a share of the gross national product each year of their life, in the form of a credit card. Each person receives an equal share, regardless of the amount or type of work performed, but the amount is limited. While sacrifices may have to be made to indulge a particular desire, such as travel,

no one lacks the means for a dignified and comfortable life.

The labor is provided by an "industrial army," consisting of all those who have reached the age of twenty-one but not yet forty-five.<sup>10</sup> The first twenty-one years of a person's life are devoted to education, then he or she is "mustered" into the industrial army. After serving three years as a common laborer, each person is free to choose an occupation. When twenty-four years of service in the industrial army are complete, the individual is mustered out and is then free to follow a life of ease and relaxation.

One of the key features of Bellamy's novel is that the people not only enjoy a more comfortable life but all are different in a psychological sense. The basic idea that underlies his system of production and distribution was that all men were brothers, in the sense that the human race is an organic whole. Through the mouthpiece of Dr. Leete, Bellamy insists that the brotherhood of humanity is the most significant difference between the world of the nineteenth century and his vision for the twenty-first century.

If I were to give you, in one sentence, a key to what may seem the mysteries of our civilization as compared with that of your age, I should say that it is the fact that the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of man, which to you were but fine phrases, are, to our thinking and feeling, ties as real and as vital as physical fraternity.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of the brotherhood of humanity translates into a number of practical applications in the society presented in *Looking Backward*.

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<sup>9</sup> Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (Boston: Ticknor, 1888; reprint, New York: New American Library Signet Classic, 1960), 54 (Page references are to reprint edition).

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<sup>10</sup> Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 57-58.

<sup>11</sup> Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 99.

The first and most important is that economic competition is immoral, incompatible with the brotherhood of man. "The field of industry was a battlefield" in which workers assailed workers, regarding "each other as rival and enemies to be throttled and overthrown." As a result, Dr. Leete condemns competition as the "instinct of selfishness" and "morally abominable."<sup>12</sup>

A natural outgrowth of the brotherhood of man is economic cooperation. The inefficiency of the competitive system has been replaced with a nationalized economy, the capstone of cooperation. Described in evolutionary terms, it is the development of the economy from the corporation to the Great Trust of the United States. In an orderly manner entirely without violence, the gradual movement "toward the conduct of business by larger and larger aggregations of capital . . . was recognized as . . . a process which only needed to complete its logical evolution to open a golden future to humanity."<sup>13</sup>

## Nationalism in Boston

With the encouragement of Bellamy, two groups of men who had been meeting for informal discussion of *Looking Backward* formed the First Nationalist Club of Boston. During 1889, the membership of the First Nationalist Club of Boston grew to about two hundred, drawn primarily from the middle class along the lines originally envisioned by Bellamy. Among the charter members were journalists and Theosophists William Dean Howells and Cyrus Field Willard. Also among the organizers were Civil War veterans Captain Charles E. Bowers and General Arthur F.

Devereaux. Later members included Sam Walter Foss, poet and editor of the *Yankee Blade*; Reverend W. D. P. Bliss, a prominent Christian Socialist; Francis Bellamy, cousin of Edward Bellamy and author of the familiar pledge of allegiance to the flag; Arthur Hildreth, a painter; Laurence Gronlund, author of *The Cooperative Commonwealth*; and John Boyle O'Reilly, editor of the Catholic weekly *The Pilot*.

Among the women were Frances E. Willard, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union; Abby Morton Diaz, president of the Boston Women's Christian Temperance Union; Lucy Stone, editor of the *Woman's Journal*; Helen Campbell, author of *Prisoners of Poverty*; and Constance Howell, an English writer. Although not a charter member, Katherine Tingley, who replaced William Q. Judge as head of the Theosophical Society, added her name to the list of Boston Nationalists.<sup>14</sup> In describing the membership of the Nationalist Club in Boston, Nicholas Gilman noted it included "very few businessmen actually engaged in production or distribution" and its membership was largely composed of women. He reported a considerable number of clergymen (some being active leaders in the Christian socialist movement), along with a few physicians, journalists, and lawyers.<sup>15</sup> In his work on socialism in Massachusetts, Henry Bedford characterizes the Nationalists of Massachusetts as "respectable reformers of the middle class or

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<sup>12</sup> Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 157-158; 165-166.

<sup>13</sup> Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 53.

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<sup>14</sup> Morgan, *Edward Bellamy*, 247-251, 263, 285.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Paine Gilman, *Socialism and the American Spirit* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 197-198. Also see Gilman's article "Nationalism in the United States," in *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (October 1889): 70, where he reports that out of 107 members there were 26 women, 13 clergymen, 6 physicians, 3 or more journalists, and 2 or 3 lawyers. Nevertheless, I wonder who the other 56 members were.

patrician class, men of position, educated, conservative in speech and of the oldest New England families.”<sup>16</sup>

Nationalism, as an outgrowth of *Looking Backward*, was approved of by the Theosophical Society as well, probably contributing to the early growth of Nationalism. In *The Key to Theosophy*, there is a clear endorsement for Nationalism:

... The organization of Society, depicted by Edward Bellamy, in his magnificent work *Looking Backward*, admirably represents the Theosophical idea of what should be the first great step towards the full realization of universal brotherhood. ... In the constitution of all their clubs, and of the party they are forming, the influence of Theosophy and the Society is plain, for they all take as their basis, their first and fundamental principle, the Brotherhood of Humanity, as taught by Theosophy.<sup>17</sup>

While it is true that the organizers of the First Nationalist Club of Boston were divided between military men and members of the Theosophical Society, it was the Theosophists that provided the leadership. One of the first tasks before the newly elected officers of the First Nationalist Club of Boston was to prepare a “Declaration of Principles.” Dominated by Theosophists, the committee that drew up the statement of Principles included chairman Cyrus Willard, Henry Willard Austin, Arthur B. Griggs (president of the Boston

branch of the Theosophical Society), George D. Ayer (president of the Malden branch), Sylvester Baxter, and Edward Bellamy. In fact, only Bellamy was not a Theosophist. Because the Principles form the cornerstone of nationalism, it is interesting and perhaps necessary to quote them in full.

The principle of the Brotherhood of Humanity is one of the eternal truths that govern the world's progress on lines which distinguished human nature from brute nature.

The principle of competition is simply the application of the brutal law of the survival of the strongest and most cunning.

Therefore, so long as competition continues to be the ruling factor in our industrial system, the highest development of the individual cannot be reached, the loftiest aims of humanity cannot be realized.

No truth can avail unless practically applied. Therefore those who seek the welfare of man must endeavor to suppress the system founded on the brute principle of competition and put in its place another based on the nobler principle of association.

But in striving to apply this nobler and wiser principle to the complex conditions of modern life, we advocate no sudden or ill considered changes; we make no war upon individuals; we do not censure those who have accumulated immense fortunes simply by carrying to a logical end the false principle on which business is now based.

The combinations, trusts and syndicates of which the people at present complain demonstrate the practicability of our basic principles of association. We merely seek to push this principle a little further and have all industries operated in the interest of all by the nation - the people organized - the organic unity of the whole people.

The present industrial system proves itself wrong by the immense wrongs it produces: it

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<sup>16</sup>Henry F. Bedford, *Socialism and the Workers in Massachusetts, 1886-1912* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1966), 13. It is telling that a work on socialism would begin the first sentence of chapter one with “Before 1887, Edward Bellamy . . .”

<sup>17</sup>H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, (Theosophical University Press, 1889), 44-45 ; quoted in Morgan, *Bellamy*, 265.

proves itself absurd by the immense waste of energy and material which is admitted to be its concomitant. Against this system we raise our protest: for the abolition of the slavery it has wrought and would perpetuate, we pledge our best efforts.<sup>18</sup>

One of the first actions taken by the Club was to form the Nationalist Education Association, and begin publishing *The Nationalist*. In May of 1889, when the first issue of *The Nationalist* was released, the presence of Theosophists was marked. Four of the eight contributors were Theosophists and they wrote the majority of the essays and short stories. In addition, the first two editors of the monthly publication were Theosophists.<sup>19</sup>

However, the first major controversy faced by the Nationalists owes as much to Theosophy as their initial interest and growth. Many of the Nationalists, including Bellamy, saw Nationalism as a force on the political scene, agitating for political, economic, and social reform as steps in the accomplishment of their goals, based on the premise that human nature is a product of environment. The Theosophists in the Club, on the other hand, tended to differ on this point as Theosophy typically avoids political involvement, believing that no political or economic reform can endure unless there is first a change in human nature, particularly in relation to the problem of selfishness. This disagreement over the non-political principle precipitated a split in the membership and a second club was formed in October

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<sup>18</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, 1 July 1889, 4. The Principles of Nationalism were first published in the May 1899 issue of *The Nationalist*.

<sup>19</sup> Morgan, *Bellamy*, 263.

of 1889.<sup>20</sup> The approach of the Second Nationalist Club of Boston is reflected in their publication, *The New Nation*, edited by Bellamy himself, where the majority of articles dealt with such topics as government ownership of utilities, transportation, and communication, public works projects, the Australian ballot, and unions. When *The Nationalist* ceased publication in April of 1890, so ended the active cooperation between Theosophy and Nationalism in Boston.<sup>21</sup>

## Nationalism in Los Angeles

The formulation of the First Nationalist Club of Los Angeles seemed to follow along the pattern previously described by Morgan.<sup>22</sup> Initially, the

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<sup>20</sup> Morgan notes that the literary and theoretical preoccupation of the original club also contributed to the formation of the second club. (Morgan, *Bellamy*, 253.)

<sup>21</sup> Morgan, *Bellamy*, 275.

<sup>22</sup> Morgan, *Bellamy*, 265-266. Approximately 40 percent of all Nationalist clubs formed were located in California, yet the usual understanding of the people who made up the clubs is superficial at best and misleading at worst. Understandably, the lion's share of the research has been on the Nationalist clubs in Boston, particularly the First Nationalist Club of Boston. They were the first to organize and the last to fade. They were responsible for publishing *The Nationalist* and the *New Nation*, guiding the development of Nationalist thinking across the country. Because of these facts, many scholars have concluded that the Nationalist clubs around the country had the same concerns and attracted the same types of individuals, and to a certain degree their conclusions are valid. Nevertheless, that type of reasoning can lead to errors, and the experience of the Los Angeles Nationalists is a case in point. There are many excellent studies on Bellamy and his work, but very little research on the reader response. Recently, Glenn C. Altschuler has suggested examining the various local Nationalist clubs to discover whom the novel transformed and why. Glenn C. Altschuler, review of *Looking Backward, 1888-1888: Essays in Edward Bellamy*, ed. by Daphne Patai, in *The Journal of American History* (December 1989): 952.

club was started by women. Anna F. Smith, a Theosophist, and Louise Off, a teacher of art at Ellis College, canvassed their friends; and a meeting was held at the latter's home in May 1889, the same month that the first issue of the *Nationalist* (Boston) was released. By early June, the group had fifty names on the membership list and began preparations to form a permanent organization. The principles of Nationalism drawn up by the First Nationalist Club of Boston were adopted, and temporary officers were picked. A. C. Fish, an author, was elected as the chairman; Louise Off as secretary; and Jacob Neubauer, a ladies hairdresser and owner of a wig and beauty supply store, was chosen as the treasurer.<sup>23</sup> The first public expression of Nationalism in Los Angeles was not *Looking Backward*, but rather the Principles of Nationalism. In fact, it seems that many who were attracted to the ideas of Nationalism probably had not yet read the novel.<sup>24</sup> As with the experience of the Boston club, it is not surprising that a number of Theosophists in Los Angeles were drawn to Bellamy's vision. Especially attractive was the concept of the "Brotherhood of Humanity or universal brotherhood," particularly in the abstract manner which it is related in the Principles.

However, from the very beginning, the clubs in Los Angeles deviate from the rest of the clubs in the nation, contrary to the traditional scholarship on Nationalism that stems from Arthur Morgan's study. While Morgan's analysis of the Nationalist movement is generally very thorough, his section on the movement in California is weak,

particularly where he argues that "California was the most active field of Theosophist development and of Theosophist participation in the Nationalist movement."<sup>25</sup> He bases his conclusions on an unreferenced memoir by Abbott B. Clark, who is labeled the "sole surviving California Theosophist of those days."<sup>26</sup> Although Clark was from San Diego, his observations generalized for all of California and were made many years after the fact. The telling statement for Morgan is the testimony of Clark, who stated that "[a]ll the Nationalist clubs in the West traced their origin . . . to the kindly mention and praise of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* in *The Key to Theosophy*."<sup>27</sup> However, Clark's testimony appears to be unreliable, weakening Morgan's argument. Everett W. MacNair, in his study of the Nationalist movement, found that Clark's reminiscence of the San Diego Nationalist Club, his home territory, was inconsistent with other written accounts. According to the contemporary local papers, Knights of Labor, communism, anarchism and the consumer co-operative movement were major points of view expressed at the meetings, while no mention was made of Theosophy. Clark claims that he was elected secretary and Judge Sidney Thomas was president, yet written accounts depict different people as president, vice-president and secretary.<sup>28</sup> A similar problem is apparent in Clark's observations about Los Angeles. Little mention is made in the *California Nationalist* or

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<sup>23</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 1890, 5.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Ralph Hoyt, although the chairman of one of the early meetings, had not yet read the novel. See the *Los Angeles Times*, 24 June 1889, 3.

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<sup>25</sup> Morgan, *Bellamy*, 265-267.

<sup>26</sup> Morgan, *Bellamy*, 266.

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, *Bellamy*, 266.

<sup>28</sup> MacNair, *Bellamy*, 204.

the *Weekly Nationalist of Theosophy*.<sup>29</sup> During the week of January 19-25, 1890, Bertram Keightley, the private secretary of Mme. Blavatsky, was giving a series of lectures in Los Angeles. He attracted attention from the press and was invited to lecture at the regular Sunday meeting of the Los Angeles Nationalist Club on January 26, 1890. His address compared Nationalism to Theosophy, holding Theosophy as superior while reducing Nationalism to a fad, objecting that it appealed to the selfish element in man. Echoing the same sentiments that created the split between the First and Second Nationalist Clubs in Boston, Keighley said,

. . . You may urge the co-operation as the solution of the pressing problems of humanity, and you naturally appeal to the selfish element of humanity; that is, under co-operation how much better off you will be; and that no one will suffer as they do now. . . . All reforms to be successful must have their foundations laid deep, and only selfishness was at the bottom of this [Nationalism] movement, it has within it the elements of self-destruction. Co-operation is not now started for the first time. For if any one, laying aside

all prejudice, would inquire into the ancient histories of China and other countries they would find there had been co-operation; but, unfortunately, it had been overthrown by the internal decay of corrupted greed and not from any external cause. Nationalism would receive from theosophy the necessary true ideal of entire unselfishness. Selfishness is self destructive.<sup>30</sup>

His tone was reported to be condescending, particularly in his criticism of Nationalism for appealing to the selfish element of humanity and for not recognizing the need to change human nature. In comparing the membership list compiled on the Nationalists in Los Angeles and surrounding cities with newspaper reports on Theosophy and the membership lists at the Theosophical Society's Library in Pasadena, California, only seven Nationalists have any cross-over with Theosophy. The majority were women, and with the exception of Anna Smith, none were involved in leadership positions. Mrs. J. T. Coan provided entertainment during meetings for both groups. Mrs. Elizabeth A. Kingsbury, had only a marginal role in the Nationalist meetings and divided her attentions in Women's Suffrage activities. If Theosophy was as significant to Nationalism as Clark remembers, it would seem that there would be more reference to it in both the make up of the leadership and the nature of the articles in the

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<sup>29</sup>It seems that the leadership of the Nationalists in Los Angeles began to separate themselves from Theosophy, a point seen in such statements as the following: "It seems to me that our aim should be to keep steadily to the fundamental principles of our common cause . . . the nationalization of all industries and the bettering of man's condition. Many speeches have brought in outside issues, such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, Free Thought and Old Theology. This all brings discord and disgust," and "Not Wanted: Long-winded effusions on the natural affinities that lead to Universal Brotherhood." (Dolphus S. Van Slyke, "Letter," *California Nationalist*, 8 February 1890, 7; *California Nationalist*, 8 February 1890, 5). Also see the summary of the lecture given by Bertram Keighley, secretary to Madame Blavatsky, in the *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January 1890, 6, where the relations between the two groups was depicted as being tense.

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<sup>30</sup>"Two Isms Together," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January 1890, 6; "Nationalistic," *Tribune*, 27 January 1890, 8.

<sup>31</sup>True, a lack of evidence only proves that there is a lack of evidence, but in this case the evidence is available and does not support the conclusion that Theosophy and nationalism were one in the same in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, others such as Howard Quint, in *The Forging of American Socialism*, 83, have sustained the same misconception of the Nationalists in California.

newspapers published by the clubs.<sup>31</sup>

The first marked departure from the pattern set by the Theosophy dominated First Nationalist Club of Boston was the adoption of an additional clause in the Principles of Nationalism.

As first steps toward the nationalization of our industries we demand that the Government, by just and lawful methods, assume control of and management of railroad and telegraph lines, either purchasing those now in existence or constructing new ones at the earliest possible day. And in order to secure this much needed reform, we will use every proper effort to insure the election this year of Congress pledged to the principles herein set forth, to the end that the Government of the United States may become in reality what it is now only in name — a government of, for and by the people.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly advocating participation in government and political “agitation,” they began to move in directions independent of their eastern counterparts. Immediately after assuming that posture, the Nationalists petitioned the city council, in an attempt to prevent the granting of water rights to the privately owned Citizen’s Water Company.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, 15 January 1890, 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Los Angeles Tribune*, 20 January 1890, 2. See “The Unemployed,” *California Nationalist*, 15 March 1890, 8, for the letter sent to the City Council, dated February 2, 1890. Also see “The Water Franchise,” *California Nationalist*, 29 March 1890, 3 for a complete version of the resolutions. A similar resolution was adopted, signed by over eight hundred people, and sent to the City Council in April, 1890. (*Los Angeles Times*, 3 April 1890, 8; *Los Angeles Tribune*, 4 March 1890, 8.) In this particular resolution, the Nationalists demanded the public ownership of gas and water works. Also see N. J. Judah, “The Tribune Letter Bag: The City Water Supply,” *Los Angeles Tribune*, 25 May 1890, 4 and *Cactus*, 5 April 1890, 3.

By June of 1890, the complaints over high rates and impure water led to the formation of a movement to agitate for municipal ownership of the water works. A number of Nationalists, including H. Gaylord Wilshire, Arthur Vinette, and William C. Owen, were among the leadership of the resulting organization that helped lay the groundwork for municipal ownership of utilities in Los Angeles.<sup>34</sup> Later efforts included a “Co-operative Construction Company,” to bid on sewer projects, and the “Los Angeles Cooperative Relief Club Number One,” an outgrowth of the

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<sup>34</sup> *Los Angeles Tribune*, 6 June 1890, 8; *Los Angeles Tribune*, 18 June 1890, 2; *Los Angeles Times*, 19 June 1890, 2; *Los Angeles Tribune*, 19 June 1890, 2-3; *Porcupine*, 21 June 1890, 8. It is interesting that the Nationalists objected to privately owned water works on an ethical basis, stating that it was a moral crime to make a profit out of drinking water, a “. . . gift of God, and priceless.” (Adolphus G. Hinckley, “A Practical Water System,” *Weekly Nationalist*, 28 June 1890, 4.) Gilbert Dexter and Ralph Hoyt were engaged in forming the Municipal Reform Association of Los Angeles in the fall of 1890. (*Los Angeles Tribune*, 21 August 1890, 2.) After the campaign for water bonds in 1892, the reform movement in Los Angeles tended more and more toward the advocacy of municipal ownership of public utilities as a panacea for the political as well as the social and economic problems of the city. The Union Labor Party of 1902 and the Public Ownership Party of 1906 can be seen a direct result of these early activities. See Albert Howard Clodius, “The Quest for Good Government in Los Angeles 1890-1910” (Ph. D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1953), 46-47.

<sup>35</sup> “The Unemployed,” *Los Angeles Tribune*, 11 March 1890, 4; “Wage-Workers,” *Los Angeles Tribune*, 30 March 1890, 4. The organization was a joint stock company where the members (the laborers) contribute money and labor, receive one certificate of membership, were to share equally in the profits of the company, and received a wage based upon the number of hours worked. To their credit, after a committee appointed by the city council investigated a series of charges against the contractors on the sewer project, the Co-operative Construction Company was the only company found not breaking laws governing the hiring of workers and the length of the work day. Also see “Unemployed Labor,” *Los Angeles Tribune*, 22

“Hill Street Relief Club.”<sup>35</sup> The Nationalist Club in nearby Compton organized a cooperative movement within the neighborhood to repair damages of winter floods. They also encouraged a cooperative creamery and established a lending library of over two thousand volumes.<sup>36</sup>

An important expression of political involvement for the Nationalists was the formation of a political party. By responding to public criticism and the needs of the community, the Nationalists took an active role in the political life of the city. Unfortunately, the unintended results led to their eventual demise. Nevertheless, the clubs in Los Angeles continued with regular meetings, but they looked elsewhere for public expression of their ideals. Those that did not turn to socialism looked to populism. The first steps in that direction were taken in January of 1891, when the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved. That, while we intend to continue our organizations, and retain our individuality as nationalists, . . . we would gladly pledge our political support and assistance to a party

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March 1890, 4 for an account of a “Laborers’ Co-operative Association” being formed and headed by Fellers to solicit work from business and to propose and perform improvements of public parks. Also see “Ready for Work,” *Los Angeles Tribune*, 27 April 1890, 3; *Weekly Nationalist*, 21 June 1890, 3. Owen, “The Laborers’ Co-operative Construction Company,” *Weekly Nationalist*, 24 May 1890, 3. “Sewer Work,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 12 June 1890, 6. *California Nationalist*, 22 February 1890, 15. Related ideas included W. H. Warren’s plan to create a cooperative boarding house, a practical concept in light of the population boom Los Angeles had just experienced. It is not known if Warren’s idea was acted upon. See *California Nationalist*, 9 February 1890, 13. The Company also became involved in agitation for the eight-hour day. See *Los Angeles Tribune*, 9 May 1890, 2, *Los Angeles Tribune*, 11 May 1890, 8; *Los Angeles Times*, 11 May 1890, 6, for examples.

<sup>36</sup> *California Nationalist*, 5 April 1890, 9.

based upon such leading issues as the nationalization of transportation and of currency, and the extending of the ballot to all above the age of 21, irrespective of sex, as all such reformers are but preliminary steps toward the final consummation of complete nationalization.<sup>37</sup>

Later that year, the Nationalists came out in full support of populism and sent a delegate to the Cincinnati Convention, held May 19-21, 1891. The delegate was long-time member Augustus R. Hinkley, who eventually was chosen as chairman of the California delegation and served on a number of committees during the convention. He pushed for the Nationalization of the railroads as part of the populist platform.<sup>38</sup> As the coming elections grew nearer, the Nationalist support of the the Peoples’ Party increased. In fact, one local editor equated Nationalism with populism.<sup>39</sup>

Very little attention was given to Nationalism after 1891. It seems that the clubs died out one by one as their members became increasingly involved in other organizations. Yet, as late as 1893, there are some references to Nationalism in Los Angeles.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

The study of the relationship between nation-

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<sup>37</sup> “News From The Clubs,” *New Nation*, 7 February 1891, 34.

<sup>38</sup> “Report from A. R. Hinkley,” *Porcupine*, 27 June 1891, 3.

<sup>39</sup> In an article titled “Socialist and Nationalists,” the author compared the Socialist Labor Party platform to the People’s Party platform. “Socialist and Nationalists,” *Porcupine*, 13 June 1891, 3.

<sup>40</sup> H. P. P. [Peebles], “Things Said About the Cause and Us,” *New Nation*, 21 January 1893, 36. “Concerning Nationalism,” *New Nation*, 13 May 1893, 243.

alism and Theosophy has yet to run a full course. The popularity of *Looking Backward* certainly owes much to groups such as the Theosophical Society, radical labor organizations, and the Fabians. But the relationship is not unilateral. To what extent did Bellamy's literary works influence the membership and ideas of Theosophy?

For example, beginning as a debating club and later an educational arm, the Nationalists did not intend to become involved in the political arena. While attempting to affect a new social and economic system, the Nationalists were themselves transformed. In this way, reformers and reform movements are not static expressions of utopian constructs, rather they are fluid, adjusting to public expectations and changes in membership. If this is true, then it is reasonable to suggest that the Theosophical Society was transformed by the novel as well. Was there a decline or increase in membership roles of the various Society chapters during and after *Looking Backward's* heyday in the sun? Were there any changes in the sorts of people who were attracted to (or ceased to be for that matter) Theosophy during this period? Perhaps it was through a reading and discussion of *Looking Backward* that individuals like Katherine Tingley were drawn into Theosophy. Utopian novels are important as distinctive modes of thought in which values are examined and displayed. The role that utopian fiction performs is one of awakening new perceptions of society and revising the usual way of regarding its structures and institutions.<sup>41</sup> Speculative fiction finds its relevancy in disrupting and revising basic patterns of existence. In what way did *Looking*

*Backward* clarify and revise, or disrupt and obscure, Theosophical ideology and practice?

Nor was Bellamy's ideas confined to the United States. With the exception of Sylvia Bowman's *Edward Bellamy Abroad: An American Prophet's Influence*, very little research has been done regarding the impact of *Looking Backward* and Nationalism in countries besides the United States.<sup>42</sup> The study of the dialogue between Theosophy and Nationalism in other nations promises to yield rich harvests.

It would seem that Bellamy's ideas spread fairly rapidly throughout the British Empire. In 1889, while Frances E. Willard was using *Looking Backward* in her classes at Oxford, H. P. Blavatsky was recommending the novel to members of the Theosophical Society in the British Isles. Later, Annie Besant lectured on Bellamy in London. Others interested in nationalism at the time were William Butler Yeats and George William Russell.<sup>43</sup> In 1890, the Nationalization of Labor Society was formed, with later chapters appearing throughout Britain, with Theosophists making up a portion of the membership.<sup>44</sup> The *Nationalization News*, a monthly published by the Nationalization of Labor Society, merged, interestingly, with the *Brotherhood*, edited by J. B. Wallace.<sup>45</sup> While *Looking Backward* was extremely popular in Australia and contributed to the creation of the Labour Party in Australia, studies on the relationship

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<sup>42</sup> Sylvia Bowman, et al. *Edward Bellamy Abroad: An American Prophet's Influence*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962. In this section, I have necessarily relied on Bowman's work to a great extent.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Marshall, "A British Sensation," in Bowman, *Bellamy Abroad*, 86.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 97-99.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 99.

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<sup>41</sup> See Lee Cullen Khanna, "The Text as Tactic," in *Looking Backward, 1888-1888*, ed. Daphne Patai (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 37-50, for a discussion of how speculative fiction can transform the individual, moving from theory to praxis.

between Nationalism and Theosophy on that continent have not been done and many questions remain.<sup>46</sup> *Looking Backward* was also popular in New Zealand, with bookstores selling out at a rapid rate. Influential New Zealanders as diverse as William Pember Reeves and William F. Kitchen endorsed the novel with varying degrees of enthusiasm.<sup>47</sup> Who made up the membership of these groups? What were their concerns and how did they put into practice their ideas? How were they transformed by Bellamy's novel and to what extent did they adapt its themes for their own agendas? How did Theosophy fit in this process? Current secondary literature does not address these concerns and sheds little light on the specific relationship between Nationalism and Theosophy.

One of the most interesting, and as yet incomplete, is the account of the influence of Bellamy's ideas in India. It would seem reasonable that *Looking Backward* would find a warm reception in India. According to Bowman, "the Theosophical Society . . . has interested many of India's leaders, and has retained an interest in Bellamy since *Looking Backward* was first published."<sup>48</sup> The novel generated much interest in India and received a good deal of press, such as an article by E. Douglas Fawcett for *The Theosophist*, published in Bombay.<sup>49</sup> Bowman also speculates, based upon statements by Sophia Wadia, that

both Gandhi, who was in England when *Looking Backward* broke upon the scene, and Jawaharlal Nehru took Bellamy's ideas seriously as well, Bowman notes that a study of such men as A.O. Hume, Damodar K. Mavalankar, A.P. Sinnett, Shriman Narayan, and Sardar Jugendra Singh might uncover interesting information about the impact Bellamy made in Indian society.<sup>50</sup>

But just quoting sales reports and listing prominent individuals who had read the novel hardly scratches the surface. Admittedly, discovering the degree of influence a particular novel has upon a reader is problematic. Yet it is no reason to shy away from the task. Edward Bellamy offered his ideas to society, and his readers, including Theosophists, took him seriously. As a result, *Looking Backward* encouraged dialogue and discussion on the meaning and effect of the changes occurring in society. In this sense, the nature of the novel's influence is indirect and not immediately obvious. Primarily theoretical, Bellamy did not explicitly detail a plan for the reformation of society, but rather gave a vision for society. He provided an impetus and gave direction, supplying not only a vision for the future, but a vocabulary for dialogue. Therefore, it is not so much a program of action or a philosophy of life offered in speculative fiction that influences the reader, but that the novel presents something for contemplation. In this way, his novel can be viewed as dynamic, not as a static framework that reflects a certain system of thought. By disrupting the status quo and its stereotypes, the reader is forced to evaluate and reconsider. Inviting discussion, utopian fiction provides a vocabulary for dialogue by expanding alternatives to current patterns of

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<sup>46</sup> See Robin Gollan, "The Australian Impact," in Bowman, *Bellamy Abroad*, 119-136.

<sup>47</sup> See Herbert Roth, "Bellamy Societies of Indonesia, South Africa and New Zealand," in Bowman, *Bellamy Abroad*, 231-257.

<sup>48</sup> Bowman, *Bellamy Abroad*, 385.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 388.

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 400.

existence.

During an address in dedication of the new Berkeley campus for the University of California, Bernard Moses remarked that “the makers and advocates of utopias appear, as the direct factors of social progress.” He continued, “their numbers are at once a sign of intellectual activity and a hopeful promise of the future. Utopists are not destroyers, but creators.”<sup>51</sup> And so they are.

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<sup>51</sup> Bernard Moses, “Social Transformation,” *The Overland Monthly* (June 1890): 565.

# MEAD'S GNOSIS: A THEOSOPHICAL EXEGESIS OF AN ANCIENT HERESY

Clare Goodrick-Clarke<sup>1</sup>

G. R. S. Mead, who took his Classics degree alongside the famous ghost story writer, medievalist, and future Provost of Eton, M. R. James, graduated from Cambridge in 1884. It is worth remembering that he had begun his academic career at Cambridge by setting out to read Maths. Is it possible that in his first year at St John's College, Cambridge, he met Bertram Keightley (1860-1945), who was then, as a Senior Optime, in his final year reading Maths at Trinity, and through him, his older nephew, Archibald Keightley (1859-1910), medical student at Pembroke?

We do not know whether they all met this early or not. In the busy world of undergraduate life, where common interests can soon find friends out, it seems not unlikely. Whenever the meeting occurred, it is easy to imagine the strong impression the two Keightleys would have made on Mead and how refreshing he would have found their company after his conventional upbringing. To the son of a military officer educated at



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Rochester Cathedral School, the Keightleys' Swedenborgian Church background and their wide-ranging interests - alchemy, mesmerism, mysticism, neo-Platonism and the writings of Eliphas Levi - must have opened new and unorthodox worlds. The eclectic ideas the Keightleys put on the agenda would have had a great appeal to Mead who may well have felt stifled by the conventional society in which he was brought up.

It is quite likely also that Bertram Keightley, at Trinity, was aware of, and perhaps even acquainted with Charles William King (1818-1888), by then an eccentric grand old man. Admitted to Trinity at the age of 16, King had been a Fellow of Trinity since 1842. In 1845 he went to Italy, where he spent several years studying Italian and collecting antique gems. It was his extraordinary collection of engraved gems, now in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, that had prompted his bold and inspired book, *The Gnostics and their Remains*<sup>2</sup> first published in 1864. Following his return from Italy, King resumed residence at Trinity and remained there for the rest of his life, publishing a number of works on ancient religion and archaeology. As a genial elderly Fellow in College he would have been a mine of information on esoteric matters. With his interest in Buddhism and his belief that Manichaeism and other Western heresies derived from it, conversations with King would certainly have paved the way for an event that was to change the lives of Bertram and Archibald Keightley and G. R. S. Mead for good.

This event was the publication in 1883 of A. P. Sinnett's book, *Esoteric Buddhism*<sup>3</sup> The Keightleys

embraced it wholeheartedly as a system that would co-ordinate their eclectic interests and combine them in a complete philosophy of life. As a summary of the cosmological and religious ideas of Theosophy in its Eastern guise, of course, it pre-dated H.P. Blavatsky's own statements, since *The Secret Doctrine* was not published until 1888. And we may well consider that, but for *Esoteric Buddhism*, which led to the meeting of the Keightleys and H. P. B., *The Secret Doctrine* might not have been published at all, for without the efforts of Archibald and Bertram Keightley, and their financial backing of the project, it is unlikely that Madame Blavatsky would have been able to pull the three-foot high manuscript with which she arrived in England in 1887 into coherent shape fit for publication.

*Esoteric Buddhism* became what today we might call a 'cult book.' A measure of its popularity is the complaint by Max Müller, Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford: "Who has not suffered lately from Theosophy and Esoteric Buddhism?" he whines, "Journals are full of it, novels overflow with it, and oh! the private and confidential letters to ask what it all really means."<sup>4</sup>

*Esoteric Buddhism* had such a profound effect upon the two Keightleys that they wrote to A. P. Sinnett, then living in London, and sought an introduction. They soon became friends and frequent visitors at the Sinnetts' London home. Thus it was through their friendship with Sinnett that they met H.P. Blavatsky when she visited London in 1884 on the final leg of her European tour, undertaken to drum up more support for the Theosophical Society. It was a turning point for

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<sup>2</sup> C. W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains* (London, 1864). [Editor's note: a reprint of the second edition (1887) was published by Wizards Bookshelf (San Diego, CA.) in 1973]

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<sup>3</sup> A. P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (London: Trübner & Co, 1883).

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *New Review* (January 1891).

both of them. They were both to devote the rest of their lives to the publication of Blavatsky's works and the promotion of Theosophy.

Mead, being younger, was still in Cambridge in 1884 taking his finals. Cambridge at this time was lively with philosophical and religious speculation. Whether he stayed on there for the summer after taking his degree, we don't know. Had he done so, he might have heard something about H.P.B.'s visit to Cambridge at the invitation of Henry Sidgwick, Knightsbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge and the first President of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). It was this interview in August 1884 with H. P. B. and other Theosophists that led directly to Richard Hodgson being commissioned by the SPR to go to India to investigate the Theosophists' claims. It was fortunate for Blavatsky that she had already met and secured the loyalty of the Keightleys, for their devotion to her and her cause enabled her to weather the later disgrace of Hodgson's report and the adverse publicity it aroused. Evidently Mead already knew quite a bit about Theosophy by 1884 - he may have read some of Sinnett's journalism during his undergraduate years and perhaps he had read *Isis Unveiled* (published in 1877) - for he says in his autobiographical note (in *The Quest*) that "I joined the Society in 1884, immediately on coming down from Cambridge."<sup>5</sup> His membership was to last twenty-five years.

Mead himself did not meet Madame Blavatsky until 1887 when she returned from Europe to England at the invitation of Archibald and Bertram Keightley. We should not be surprised to discover that it was at the Sinnett's that he met her, probably through the initiative of the Keightleys. It was a momentous event in his life as it had been

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<sup>5</sup> G. R. S. Mead, "The Quest" - Old and New: Retrospect and Prospect, *The Quest* (London), 17/3 (April 1926): 289-307.

for both Archibald and Bertram Keightley before him; scarcely two years elapsed before he had given up his teaching job at a public school in order to become private secretary to H.P.B. and contributor and later editor of *Lucifer*.<sup>6</sup>

What are we to make of Mead? Though he became one of H. P. Blavatsky's intimate circle, was her private secretary for the last three years of her life, formed the European Section of the Theosophical Society and became its General Secretary, he finally distanced himself from it in the strongest terms and claimed in 1926 that he was now "utterly disgusted with the Theosophical Society, its innumerable dogmatic assertions, its crooked methods, and reprehensible proceedings. I had never," he goes on "even while a member, preached the Mahatma-gospel of H.P. Blavatsky, or propagandized Neo-theosophy and its revelations. I had believed that 'theosophy' proper meant the wisdom-element in the great religions and philosophies of the world."<sup>7</sup>

But Mead is also known, and perhaps rather better known as a scholar of Gnosticism - one of the first to translate the whole of *Pistis Sophia*<sup>8</sup> into English, and to compile a summary of Gnostic

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<sup>6</sup> *Lucifer* was founded by Madame Blavatsky in 1887 as the principal periodical of the London Theosophists and was edited by her, together with Mabel Collins and Annie Besant, until her death in 1891.

<sup>7</sup> G. R. S. Mead, "The Quest" - Old and New: Retrospect and Prospect, *The Quest* 17/3 (April 1926): 289-307 (p. 296).

<sup>8</sup> *Pistis Sophia: A Gnostic Gospel* originally translated from Greek into Coptic. G. R. S. Mead translated it from Schwartze's Latin version of the only known Coptic MS, the Askew Codex acquired by the British Museum shortly before 1785. [M. G. Schwartze, *Pistis Sophia, Opus gnosticum Valentino adjudicatum, e Codice manuscripto coptico londinensi descriptum*, (Berlin, 1853)]. *Pistis Sophia* Englished by G. R. S. Mead (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896).

scholarship in *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*<sup>9</sup> Was he a Theosophist or a Gnostic? If he was a Gnostic scholar, and amongst the first of the few, why is he so little read and acknowledged today by subsequent Gnostic critics? He has been praised on one hand; De Zirkoff says: "Of all the members of the Theosophical movement throughout the years, G. R. S. Mead was one of the few true scholars to emerge."<sup>10</sup> and he has been dismissed as a "pseudo-scholar" on the other.<sup>11</sup> What is the truth about him and when we find it out, will it tell us more about his Theosophy or about his Gnosticism?

Mead came to Theosophy, like many, many others including the Society's two founders, and A. P. Sinnett, having first been interested in spiritualism. With its belief in the gradual sloughing off of matter as the spirit endured life after life, and the pseudo-scientific language in which many of its tenets were couched, spiritualism prepared the tilth of the mind for the growth of Theosophy and occultism in the late nineteenth century. The contemporary conflict of religion and science produced a generation, protesting at the rigid orthodoxy of the one, and despising the hard, rational, materialism of the other. Darwin's theory of evolution was particularly upsetting to people of religious inclination and epitomized the challenge of materialism, positivism and reductionism to ideas about man's spiritual nature and purpose. In the longing for a belief that would include science and yet acknowledge and value religious

or other-worldly experience, Theosophy seemed to have the answer. It was a protest against orthodoxy and, by painting a vision of spiritual evolution on a vast cosmic canvas including the stars and the planets and aeons of time, it managed to dwarf and trivialize empirical science.

To satisfy this hunger for meaning and metaphysics, Madame Blavatsky added her own psychological insights and arrived at Theosophy, a secret wisdom that seemed to transcend science and organized religion by being older and more all-embracing than either. In search of mystery and exoticism, she found Gnosticism in Egypt and Buddhism in the Orient - both gifts to the occultist. As W. B. Crow puts it in his *History of Magic, Witchcraft & Occultism*, "No religion is richer in fantastic mythology and hierurgic ceremonial than Buddhism."<sup>12</sup> As one of the most ancient of all ancient religions and with its paraphernalia of astrology, divination, oracles, spirit control, incense, vestments and complex rituals, no less than "its slow evolutionary trek though many incarnations and many planetary chains"<sup>13</sup>, one can easily see why it would appeal to Madame Blavatsky. Similarly, Madame Blavatsky, who while pretending to include all races and creeds in her Theosophy, never missed an opportunity to let fire some caustic remark about the "newly-made-up" religion of Christianity, found by means of her own brand of "ancient wisdom" a way to make Christianity appear foolish, irrelevant and redundant.

Mead, an earnest, hard-working man with scholarly interests in comparative religion, a de-

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<sup>9</sup> G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (London and Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900).

<sup>10</sup> H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings 1890-1891*. Volume XIII (Wheaton, Ill: Theosophical Publishing House, 1982), 395.

<sup>11</sup> James Webb, *The Flight from Reason* (London: Macdonald & Co, 1971), 178.

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<sup>12</sup> W. B. Crow, *A History of Magic, Witchcraft & Occultism*. Second edition (London: Abacus, 1972), 130.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley, California and London: University of California Press, 1980), 72.

gree in classics and a flair for languages was drawn into Theosophy. I suspect it was partly due to his friends, the Keightleys; partly a flight from the conventional; partly the apparent magnetism of the Old Lady. Perhaps he was more of a theosophist (theosophist with a small 't') than any of them, but his theosophy was not the same as theirs. It is my belief that Mead was a Gnostic before he was a Theosophist; that what he found in Theosophy confirmed his Gnosticism; and that what he remained when he was done with Theosophy was a Gnostic - in short, that he was a Gnostic, first and last, and a Theosophist only on the way. Theosophy represented a phase in his intellectual development and interpretation of Gnosticism. I shall essay some ideas about the kind of Gnostic beliefs Mead held, and I shall attempt to show what were the strengths of his Gnostic scholarship, and what the weaknesses. There are some ways in which Mead's understanding of Gnosticism has been validated by later discoveries of Gnostic texts - the Nag Hammadi Library was not discovered until twelve years after his death. And there are some ways in which his guileless, trusting nature perhaps failed to read the dangers that all Gnostic beliefs are prey to.

Evidence for Mead's interest in Gnosticism is immediately apparent from his own bibliography. Of the seventeen books he published, only two deal exclusively with Eastern literature and thought: these are his comparative studies in general Theosophy published in 1895 under the title *The World-Mystery*,<sup>14</sup> and the edition of the *Upanishads*<sup>15</sup> he translated and published in 1896.

<sup>14</sup> R. S. Mead, *The World-Mystery* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1895).

<sup>15</sup> *The Upanishads*, translated by G. R. S. Mead and Jagadisha Chandra Chattopadhyaya (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896).

With these two exceptions, Mead's work is concerned with ideas and texts from Western antiquity, and seven of these deal specifically with Gnosticism or Gnostic texts, beginning with his *Simon Magus* in 1892. It is perhaps even clearer to see the drift towards Western traditions from Mead's articles. He was the author of some eighteen articles for *Lucifer* beginning soon after he had gone to work for Mme Blavatsky in 1889, and a further forty-five for *The Theosophical Review*.<sup>16</sup> After making his debut with a short piece on the evils of vivisection, Mead's first major contribution to *Lucifer* was a serial translation of *Pistis Sophia* described as being "translated and annotated by G. R. S. M., with additional notes by H. P. B."

It is interesting that these additional notes (many of which are complete *non sequiturs*) are dropped in the book publication of 1896, and that the translation itself is different in many respects. In *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, Mead claims that "the first attempt at translation in English" [of the Askew Codex in the British Museum] "appeared only in 1896 in my version of *Pistis Sophia*."<sup>17</sup> Such a statement looks rather as though he wanted to forget or discount his serial translations of the *Pistis Sophia* in 1890-1891 with their Theosophical and Buddhistic commentaries by Madame Blavatsky. The second edition, published in 1921 was completely revised and was reckoned by Mead to be "practically a new book."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Lucifer*, the principal London-based journal of the Theosophists, was retitled *The Theosophical Review* from the beginning of volume 21 in September 1897.

<sup>17</sup> G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 152.

<sup>18</sup> G. R. S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia*. Second edition (London: J. M. Watkins, 1921), xx.

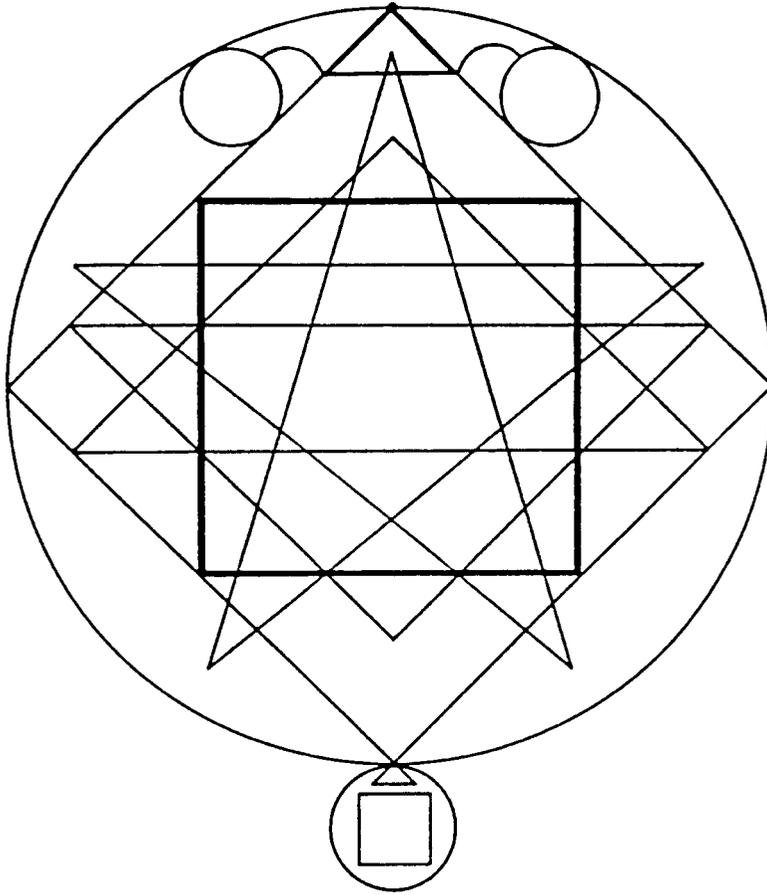


Figure 1 shows the Pleroma according to Valentinus (2nd c. AD), reproduced in the *Pistis Sophia* commentary, *Lucifer 6* (1890): 237f. The chart represents the hierarchies of creation proceeding from the Godhead. The larger circle represents the Pleroma (fullness or completion; the unmanifested or invisible world of creation), while the smaller, lower circle represents the Hysterema (incompletion; the manifest or visible world). At the top of the Pleroma circle is the apex of a triangle, the Bythus or Point, through which God enters into the Creation. The circumference itself is the Stauros or Boundary, also known as the Stick, Stake or Cross; according to some Gnostic speculation the Crucifixion symbolises the link between our inferior, material world and the higher world of the Pleroma. The Valentinian Pleroma summarizes many important aspects of Gnostic cosmology and aeonology, involving the generation from the Bythus of the triangle (Triad) with the first emanated pair or Duad of Nous (Mind) and its syzygy, Aletheia (Truth). Next comes the square (Tetrad) of two males, the Logos (Word) and Anthropos (Man), and two females, their syzygies, Zoe (Life) and Ekklesia (the Church), followed by the pentagram, with its syzygies a Decad, and then the hexagram and its Duodecad of cosmological principles.

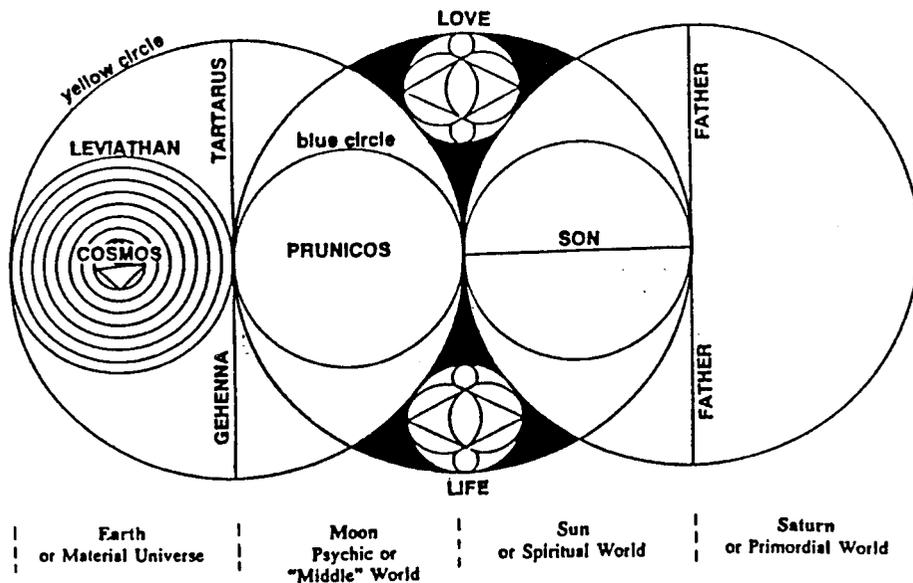
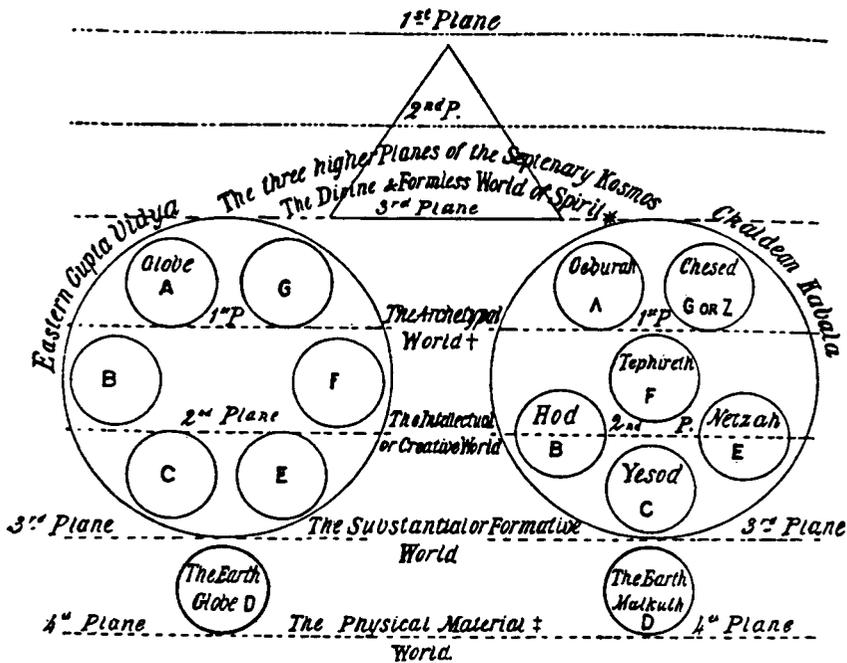


Figure 2 shows the Ophite diagram as reconstructed in Andrew Welburn, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (Edinburgh, 1991), 69. Here a left-right axial hierarchy contrasts with the vertical descent of the Valentinian Pleroma. The Ophite diagram was first discussed by Origen, *Adversus Celsum* (vi, 30) and cited in the *Pistis Sophia* notes, *Lucifer* 6 (1890): 316.



The above picture has been reduced 77%

Figure 3. Eastern, Jewish and Western cosmologies compared in H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, two vols. (London, 1888), I, 200. Blavatsky related the Eastern Gupta Vidya (Esoteric Philosophy) with its Chains, Rounds and Globes to the Cabbala with its *sephiroth* on the Tree of Life against a sevenfold (three higher and four lower planes) hierarchy of reality.

Table I

The Mystery of the Ineffable.		
Pneumatic or Spiritual	Treasure of Light or Plērōma	Lumen or Light
Psychic	Right Midst Left (The Loka of the thir- teenth Aeōn)	Kerasmos or Mixture ( <i>sc.</i> of Lumen and Hylē)
Hylic or Sidereal	The Twelve Aeōns Fate (Heimarmenē) Sphere	Hylē or Subtle Matter
Choric or Material	Firmament World (Kosmos) of men Underworld { Orcus Chaos Outer Darkness (Caligo Externa)	Kosmos of Choos (Gross Matter)
Planes	Names	Substances (Prakritis)

Vide S.D., I, 200.

Figure 4. The three higher planes (the Triad) and the four lower planes (the Tetrad) are compared with the Arūpa (the formless) and the Rūpa (formed) levels of reality in Buddhism, *Lucifer* 6 (1890): 319. This table in the *Pistis Sophia* commentary summarizes this comparison of Western Gnosticism and Buddhism and refers to *The Secret Doctrine*.

It is likely that Mead's interest in Gnosticism was first awakened by Mme Blavatsky who discusses the Gnostics and their beliefs frequently and at length in *Isis Unveiled*, often deferring to their "profound erudition."<sup>19</sup> By the time Mead came to be working for her in 1889, she had moved the whole focus of her attention eastwards, though it is clear from *Isis Unveiled* that H. P. B. thought, right back in the 1870s, that the best of Near Eastern thought had travelled westwards over the centuries from its cradle in the high mountain fastnesses of India and Tibet. "No people in the world", she asserts, "have ever attained to such a grandeur of thought in ideal conceptions of the Deity and its offspring, MAN, as the Sanscrit metaphysicians and theologians."<sup>20</sup> ". . . it is to India, the country less explored, and less known than any other, that all the other great nations of the world are indebted for their languages, arts, legislature, and civilization."<sup>21</sup> The idea that Gnosticism was itself derived from Buddhism was first postulated by C. W. King in his classic work, *The Gnostics and their Remains* (1864). In his Introduction to the second edition (1887), he remarks:

That the seeds of the Gnosis were originally of *Indian* growth, carried so far westward by the influence of that Buddhistic movement which had previously overspread all the East, from Thibet to Ceylon, was the great truth faintly discerned by Matter,<sup>22</sup> but which be-

came evident to me upon acquiring even a slight acquaintance with the chief doctrines of Indian theosophy<sup>23</sup>. . . . In the history of the Church it is most certain that almost every notion that was subsequently denounced as *heretical* can be traced up to Indian speculative philosophy as its genuine fountain-head.<sup>24</sup>

In *Isis Unveiled*, H. P. Blavatsky argues that there could plausibly be "a direct Buddhistic element in Gnosticism,"<sup>25</sup> an idea she had found emphatically stressed in C. W. King's work. What is interesting about all this is that C. W. King was one of the earliest and most emphatic scholars to propose the Gnostic debt to Buddhist thought, and it seems likely that she got it from him. King suspected it, writing in the preface to his second edition: "There seems reason for suspecting that the Sybil of *Esoteric* Buddhism drew the first notions of her new religion from the analysis of the *Inner Man*, as set forth in my first edition."<sup>26</sup> And of course his suspicions were confirmed by William Emmette Coleman in his Appendix, "The sources of Madame Blavatsky's writings" in Vsevolod Soloviev's *A Modern Priestess of Isis*.<sup>27</sup> In *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, Mead apparently dismisses the Indian provenance of Gnosticism saying that King's work "lacks the thoroughness of the specialist."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> C. W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, second edition (London: David Nutt, 1887), xiv.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>25</sup> *IU* II, 321.

<sup>26</sup> C. W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, ix.

<sup>27</sup> Vsevolod Soloviev, *A Modern Priestess of Isis* (London: Longmans & Co, 1895).

<sup>28</sup> G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 144.

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<sup>19</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, two vols (New York: J. W. Bouton, 1877), I, 436.

<sup>20</sup> *IU* I, 583.

<sup>21</sup> *IU* I, 585.

<sup>22</sup> A. Jacques Matter, *Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme* (Paris, 1828).

At any rate, Mead's first major piece of work for *Lucifer* seems to have been a collaborative effort by Mead and Blavatsky on the *Pistis Sophia*. I think it is significant that he removed her Buddhist-inspired commentary in later editions of the work and I think it is symptomatic of his general turning away from the East as a source and repository of all wisdom.

By 1891, the year of Madame Blavatsky's death, Mead was emerging from her influence with his own manifesto of the work that Western Theosophists should be doing. His paper read before the Convocation of the European Section of the Theosophical Society<sup>29</sup> sets out his own path, at least, as being firmly on the track of Western antique traditions. In his paper, "The Task of the Theosophical Scholars in the West," he is exerting his own independence of thought and indicating the direction his own lines of research will lead him. He recommends the Western field for theosophical industry; it was, he says, "practically inexhaustible for many generations," and he views the recovery and interpretation of the texts of the Western tradition as "one of the most important tasks before our Society in the West." It was, of course, his own specialism, the realm where his classical education could most shine. It is interesting that the concept that Western literature and thought was derived from ancient Oriental ideas, a thesis energetically propounded by H. P. B., did not seem to concern him in the least. He did not argue against it; he simply ignored the whole issue.

What Mead argued for was the recovery of the literature and thought of the West. "The work of the theosophical scholar" (and it is interesting to note that he spells theosophical here with a lower-case 't') ... is one of interpretation" and "the

rendering of tardy justice to pagans and heretics, the reviled and rejected pioneers."<sup>30</sup> Clearly his "tardy justice" refers to his desire to rehabilitate the Gnostics and indeed his paper makes several references to them. He calls them "the real Christians of the first centuries of our era" and he profoundly identifies with them claiming that "our Gnostic ancestors" were "a past incarnation of the Theosophical Society of today."<sup>31</sup> In their work is to be found the portrayal of "the mysteries of the soul and its earthly pilgrimage", and thus the interpretation of Gnosticism is, Mead believes, the special province of the theosophist. In his view, the "stupendous system of the Gnosis, which has so completely baffled the scholars" is "sufficiently understandable to the Theosophist who has the patience to master the terminology." He goes further with a statement of his own creed. Mead asserts that "the true Gnosis *is* Theosophy."<sup>32</sup>

Also in 1891, Mead wrote an article on "Theosophy and Occultism."<sup>33</sup> It shows the struggle Mead was having with himself over the words "*Occultist*" and "*Theosophist*". Madame Blavatsky had defined a Theosophist as being "Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness and Wisdom for their own sakes, not the the benefit

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 479.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 477.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 478.

<sup>33</sup> *Lucifer* 9 (September 1891-February 1892): 106-112.

<sup>29</sup> Published in *Lucifer* 8 (March - August 1891): 477-80.

they may confer - is a Theosophist.”<sup>34</sup> Mead paraphrases this as one “who endeavours to be moral, just and unselfish, and who at the same time exercises his reason in matters of belief.”<sup>35</sup> And Mead tolerantly suggests that a Theosophist may even be the follower of some exoteric creed as long as his sectarian views do not warp his love of humanity. But he is not quite sure about this point: it is a little too biased, after all he thinks “The Occultist to be just to all beliefs must be free from all.”<sup>36</sup> Mead’s chief anxiety however is to make a distinction between the true Occultist and the practitioner of magical or occult arts. Quite tricky given the proclivities and sensitivities of his readers. Ethics is what divides them, Mead decides; the occultist is “one who learns how to consciously distinguish good from evil.”<sup>37</sup> This is not quite enough though; “he must be something more than merely *good*; he must be *wise*”<sup>38</sup>; and he must also be learned because: “a man cannot be really just if he is ignorant.”<sup>39</sup> The problem about occult arts - in which Mead clearly had no interest whatsoever - still presents a difficulty: the practitioners of occult arts he says are not “fit to untie the shoe-latchet of the true Occultist, whose heart throbs in response to the pulsation of the Ocean of Compassion and whose mind vibrates in unison with the great harmony of the Intelligent Universe.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.: 106.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.: 106.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.: 108.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.: 106.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.: 106.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.: 107.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.: 110.

As his article progresses, Mead arrives at a statement of his own position. It is that of the scholar. What he calls “real occultism” can be discovered from books “but the study is one of enormous difficulty and of no avail unless the spiritual intuition of the student is developed by...the habit of mental concentration.”<sup>41</sup> What this points to, I think, is that Mead saw himself a metaphysician, rather than an occultist, in the sense that he aspired to a moral understanding of the spiritual universe, rather than seeking secret keys to its technical manipulation. When *The Quest* came to an end in 1930, Mead became active as a member of the Society for Promoting the Study of Religion, and this I think is the clue to what he was all along: a student of comparative religion. While he was to retain his profound interest in Gnostic ideas throughout his life, he later resolutely turned his back on occultism as “a view I now hold to be most fundamentally false”<sup>42</sup>, and on founding *The Quest* he decided that “‘Esotericism’ and ‘occultism’ were to be eschewed as corrupting rather than helpful.”<sup>43</sup> How long, we may wonder, did he hold such views before pronouncing them? Mead seems never to have quite lost hold of the fine Ariadne’s thread that might lead him on to mystical Christianity. The Theosophical Society seemed at first to offer Mead, as someone outside the academic world, the opportunity to be something of a scholar, pursuing his interests in the translation and interpretation of Gnostic texts. What I think he found, however, was that the Theosophical

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.: 110.

<sup>42</sup> G. R. S. Mead, “‘The Quest’ - Old and New: Retrospect and Prospect’, *The Quest* 17, 3 (April, 1926): 291. The article appears on pages 289-307.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.: 297.

Society also had expectations of its members with regard to their beliefs and practices. In these two articles Mead wrote in 1891, I think we see the origins of his ultimate break with the Theosophical Society in 1909. Ostensibly Mead resigned, with hundreds of others, over the Leadbeater affair. But the break was presaged intellectually as early as 1891 with his blueprint for his own scholarship as being Western in general and Gnostic in particular, rather than Eastern and Buddhist; and he is struggling to find acceptable formulations for the words “Occultist” and “Theosophist”. It is almost as though the death of Madame Blavatsky was thoroughly emancipatory and liberating for him, at least intellectually, even though it took him many years to finally break the tie with her Society.

1891 was also the year in which *The Vaban* was started and edited by Mead for publication by the T. S. *The Vaban* was a sort of newsletter, circulating members with details of meetings and lectures, but also setting out to answer some of the knotty problems relating to Theosophical thought. Bertram Keightley contributed to it, as did Annie Besant, Leadbeater and others. Again and again there are cases of Mead resisting any idea of there being a specific code of beliefs to which all good Theosophists should subscribe. Although all forms of esoteric and occult knowledge was grist to the Theosophist mill, its motto, “There is no religion higher than Truth”, encouraged members to seek something hard and fast that could be called “The Truth”. Against this tendency, Mead urged his readers to learn about other faiths believing that “he who is acquainted with one mode of theosophy only does not know theosophy truly” and he urged his readers to compare “the theosophy of the Hermes-Gnostics with the theosophy of the Christian Gnostics, or of the

Buddhist or Brahmanical lovers of the Gnosis.”<sup>44</sup> His was a generous, undogmatic temper, content for others to arrive at their own independent opinions. We find that this was one of the things for which he admired the Gnostics; referring to the Trismegistic school (i.e. the *Hermetica* dating from the first to third centuries AD), Mead says “one of the most attractive elements in the whole discipline is the fact the the pupil was encouraged to think and question. Reason was held in high honour; a right use of reason, or rather, let us say, right reason, and not its counterfeit, opinion, was the most precious instrument of knowledge of man and the cosmos, and the means of self-realisation into that Highest Good, which, among many other names of sublime dignity, was known as the Good Mind or Reason (Logos) of God.”<sup>45</sup> There are themes that unite Gnosticism and Theosophy quite closely, as Madame Blavatsky perceived - but perhaps made too much of. They both involve the drama of human and cosmic evolution. The Gnostic story of how mankind came about can be seen in parallel with Theosophy’s theory of root races. Like Gnosticism, Theosophy teaches emanationism; the world-soul, the descent of the soul and its entrapment in matter. It is a tale of separation from the Supreme God, a period of exile in the bondage of matter, and ultimate return; the drama of a single human life becomes, in Theosophy, a cosmic pilgrimage, not only through the planets and the stars, but through aeons of time, very similar to the successive spheres of being found in Gnostic thought. The means to salvation in Gnosticism is *gnosis*, knowledge of what is hidden from view, in the

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<sup>44</sup> “The Gnosis of the Mind” in *The Complete Echoes from the Gnosis* (Hastings: Chthonios Books, 1987), 14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

same way that occultists believe that what is apparently “hidden” is the true state of affairs and knowledge of it, the source of power and means of escape.

The superficial parallels between Gnosticism and Theosophy are many and striking and if part of the appeal of Theosophy was its occult initiation by means of ancient cosmologies, lost writings, hermetic fragments and esoteric wisdom relating to soteriology and eschatology, then Gnosticism was a close rival.

What then did Mead see in Gnosticism? He admired their syncretism. He admired the Gnostics for their attempts “to reconcile the irreconcilable; to synthesize as well science, philosophy and religion; to create a theosophy.”<sup>46</sup> Certainly he thought they were “centuries before their time”<sup>47</sup> and he respected their teachings as a repository of wisdom, of living ideas, which by virtue of their ancestry, were no longer highly charged with human passion and opinion. Gnostic writings appealed to those able “to appreciate the beautiful and permanent in literature.”<sup>48</sup> Mead’s own rendering of Gnosticism and Gnostic ideas soars; I think he found Gnosticism a vehicle for his own mystical Christianity. It was, I think, a link back to his Christian upbringing, representing a kind of counter-tradition, outflanking the received orthodox tradition of Christianity. What he found there was a Christianity transfigured. In *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, he writes “The claim of these Gnostics was practically that Christianity, or rather the Good News of the Christ, was precisely the consummation of the inner doctrine of the Mys-

tery-institutions of all the nations.”<sup>49</sup> In *Pistis Sophia*, Mead says of its compilers, “It is clear that they loved and worshipped Jesus with an ecstasy of devotion and exaltation.”<sup>50</sup>

These are clues to the mystical Christianity Mead found in Gnosticism and in this he was ahead of his time, for some neo-Gnostics today make the same claim. They are also clues as to why he has been overlooked as a Gnostic scholar despite his considerable efforts in bringing Gnostic writings to a wider public. What Mead failed to see in Gnosticism was its bleak pessimism, its nihilism, its world-weariness and world-rejection, its mood of despair. The evilness of the created world, the rottenness of human nature and the hopelessness of moral struggle expressed in Gnosticism are overlooked by Mead. Caught up in its abstractions and metaphysical speculations, Mead failed to realize that Gnosticism has no ethos, offers no doctrine of loving-kindness, and has no guide to the perplexed about moral action in the world.

E.M. Forster commenting on a suggestion that there might be a Gnostic revival, remarked “Pessimistic, imaginative, esoteric - three great obstacles to its success.” Mead thought the Gnostics’ only sin was to be “centuries before their time.” He was wrong. The chronic heresy of Gnosticism has continued to haunt the Western mind since antiquity, but it is clear to any historian of ideas that its wider prevalence in specific periods of history is a direct function of a contemporary breakdown of stable social orders and their religious and moral prescriptions. In illustration, I need only point to the first outbreak of Gnosti-

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<sup>46</sup> G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 112.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>48</sup> “The Gnosis of the Mind” in *The Complete Echoes of the Gnosis* (Hastings: Chthonios Books, 1987), 13.

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<sup>49</sup> Quoted in G. A. Gaskell, *Gnostic Scriptures Interpreted* (London: C. W. Daniel & Co, 1927), 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Pistis Sophia*, second edition (London: J. M. Watkins, 1921),

cism during the globalization of the Roman Empire; the revival in the Florentine Renaissance at the eclipse of the medieval world-view<sup>51</sup>; and, in Mead's own time and in the context of the modern occult revival of the late nineteenth century against a decline of religious orthodoxy and the challenges of modern science. At such times Gnosticism performs a valuable role in supplying a much-needed integrating metaphysic. What it lacked, and still lacks, is an ethos capable of inspiring a new dispensation on earth with precepts for natural and human law, justice and government, leadership and social order. Christianity proved its credentials very early in this respect, while Gnosticism quickly faded. When, as now in the New Age, there is a resurgent interest in Gnosticism, I think we should all be asking the question why?

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<sup>51</sup> In the buoyant mood of the Renaissance, world-rejecting Gnosticism did not get a grip. There was considerable interest in the unorthodox, the esoteric and the occult during the Renaissance period, but the chief investigators of this arcane knowledge—Ficino, Agrippa, Dee and Bruno—counted themselves as Christians, maintained the nobility of the created world and asserted the dignity of man within it. See John M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*, third edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 533.

# AN EXPERIMENTAL THEOSOPHICAL COMMUNITY IN ITALY: THE GREEN VILLAGE

Isotta Poggi<sup>1</sup>

In the late 1980s, the West became aware of a new spiritual millennial movement known as the “New Age.” Tracking its roots led researchers to Europe, specifically to a network of theosophically-inspired “light”<sup>2</sup> groups which had come

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<sup>1</sup>Isotta Poggi is a Research Associate with the Institute for the Study of American Religion. This paper was delivered at the International Theosophical History Conference at Point Loma (June 1992). Readers of *TH* will no doubt be familiar with the subject of Miss Poggi’s article through Dr. Bernardino del Boca’s own article that appeared in III/5: “The First Practical Expression of Theosophy in Italy: The ‘Villaggio Verde.’”

<sup>2</sup>According to Alice Bailey, the New Age would be ushered in through the work of a network of meditation groups which would channel the Light or spiritual energy from the cosmos into the world of human beings. Each group, designated as a point of light, would channel the light in concert with other like groups. To assist them in their work, Bailey proposed the use of a meditation called the Great Invocation which called for the Light to stream forth in accordance with the Master’s plan. Following Bailey’s death in 1949, centers doing the Light work, but disconnected from the Arcane School which Bailey founded, emerged. In the 1960s, in England, some of these Light centres began to informally network. Among them were the Wrekin Trust headed by George Trevelan, the Findhorn Community in Scotland, and the Universal Link in London. The Green Village in Italy is very similar in purpose to these independent theosophical groups. See J. Gordon Melton, “The Alice Bailey Movement,” in the *Encyclopedia of American Religion*. Third edition (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1989), 132-33.

together in the 1960s. The leaders of these light groups had each been touched by a spark of the “light” at an earlier point in their life. By the early 1970s the light movement had become a worldwide network with a vision of transforming the world through contact with and the spreading of a new wave of spiritual energy now available to planet earth. During the 1940s one of the first sparks of the light that would connect with the larger movement, would reach the office of the Italian consulate in Singapore.

Now, 30 years later, an extended network of “aquarian” theosophists (as they like to call themselves) gather in the area of Turin and its province, to listen to the lectures of Prof. Bernardino del Boca, who brought the spark of light he received back to Italy and out of which the Green Village, Italy’s communal contribution to the international New Age Movement, took its shape.

## Initiation, Secret, Service

It is through Prof. Bernardino del Boca’s thought that the Green Village has been conceived, and through his basic writings we can understand those principles which animate it: Initiation, cessation of Secret, and Service. Prof.

del Boca was born in 1919 in Crodo, in the province of Novara. From 1947 to 1951 he lived in Singapore (then still under British administrative rule), working as Italian Consul. There, in addition to his governmental position, he devoted his energy to anthropological research and to Theosophical studies and meetings. Through this intense activity he had the opportunity to move among the most interesting people of the political and spiritual *élite*, upon whom he kept extensive notes in diaries which he later published in Italy during the 1980s.

More importantly, his Singaporian experience provided the environment for the event which transformed Prof. del Boca permanently: his Initiation, an event through which he became aware of his destiny to serve and to teach. While visiting some of the Buddhist temples in Singapore, he began to hear about “those who walk on the High Roads.” Through Jimmy, his interpreter, and an unidentified American esotericist living in Singapore, he finally secured the chance to be initiated in these High Roads, where, as he later phrased it, the “Energies of the Parallel Reality guide our lives.” Through the ceremony, which took place in the “Temple of Han,” located on an island in the Sea of Janji, (devoted to the worship of Shiva-Buddha), he experienced the different levels of the mind, ranging from the first one, in which our mind is “our crazy one,” slave of the illusions of matter, through the fifth one, the dimension of the parallel reality, where the “continuum-infinite-present” can be experienced.<sup>3</sup> He described his initiation in an early book called *Iniziazione alle Strade Alte* (Initiation to the High Roads). His initiation made him aware of what he

came to call *Il Segreto* (the secret). The secret is “the beginning of deception and the desire of power,”<sup>4</sup> in general any system, political or otherwise, which perpetuates the usage of a secret as a weapon to achieve power, referring, for example, to those organizations which operate secretly, such as the CIA. Dr. Del Boca looks at the occult and esoteric centers as the antidote to this evil. It is only with no secrets and calculations that humankind can achieve harmony and wisdom, thereby attaining to a new level of consciousness.<sup>5</sup> At the Temple of Han, del Boca was also informed that his mission in the world would be service, and thus, upon his return to Italy, he began carrying out this message by giving lectures as a Theosophist, and actualizing this theosophical community.

During the process of his initiation, del Boca discovered for the first time what he calls the “Psychothematic,” i.e. the ability to perceive with the soul rather than with the mind. The “Psychothematic” is the Cause of Effects, the way to reach intuition and the dimension of the fifth level of the mind, that is the “dimension of the present which annuls past and future.”<sup>6</sup> It is through the psychothematic that his books have been written and it is through the psychothematic that they should be read. In his writings, del Boca integrates his spiritual growth with his workaday life, combining the Singapore events with his activity as a Theosophist in Italy during the 1980s. Initiation to the High Roads, abolition of the Secret, and Service are the three first steps through

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<sup>3</sup> Bernardino del Boca, *Iniziazione alle Strade Alte* (Turin, Italy: Bresci, 1985), 106f.

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<sup>4</sup> Bernardino del Boca, *Il Segreto* (Turin: Bresci, 1986), 208.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>6</sup> Isabella Bresci, ed. *Che Cos'è l'Età dell'Acquario* (Turin, Italy: Bresci, 1991), 69.

which the village was conceived.

## The Green Village Experiment

The project of the Green Village began roughly ten years ago, when Prof. del Boca and his closest Theosophist friends began looking for a good location for an “experimental center of the new level of consciousness.”<sup>7</sup> They registered it as a cooperative in Dec. 1981 and had the first stone blessed the following year. Since then, in spite of many economical, organizational, and political ups and downs, the village started taking shape. As a Theosophical community, the village aims to realize the three goals of the Theosophical Society:

- 1) to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of mankind, with no distinction of race, belief, sex, caste or colour,
- 2) to encourage comparative study of religion, philosophy and science, and
- 3) to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and latent human powers.<sup>8</sup>

At the Village the principle is stressed that you go there “to be and not to have.” Through this principle it will be possible to experience, perceive, and even realize, the new level of consciousness, that is, a new spiritual dimension based on the search for wisdom rather than the search for knowledge, which so characterizes our age, conceived of as the Age of Pisces. The present age is dominated by fear, ignorance (to be unaware of not knowing), egoism, and indifference, evils which only those who are able to

achieve the New Level of Consciousness will be able to change. The Green Village should become, in del Boca’s view, “an oasis which builds peace and receives men of good will, those who will prepare the new level of consciousness.”<sup>9</sup> Nowadays, many signs have already appeared which prove that humankind is entering the New Aquarian Age, as can be testified by several initiatives spread all over the world which purport to develop these new trends. The Green Village brochure refers to familiar examples for an American audience, such as the Lorian Association, the Esalen Institute, The Friends of the Earth, and the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland.

The Village is located in a clearing, among the hills, near the village of Cavallirio (Novara), a few hours distance by train from Turin, isolated but well connected to the railroad and to the Milan-Turin motorway. Upon leaving the highway, one travels some 500 feet along private road through woods and fields, flowers and wild vegetation. At the end of the road, upon looking at the row of houses which make up the village, the first thing to welcome the visitor is a shrine devoted to the *pbi*, the spirit being which in the Thai tradition “inhabits rivers, mountains, wild places and trees.”<sup>10</sup> It was imported from Thailand during one of Del Boca's trips there.

The row of houses which make up the village, is behind the shrine and is composed of sixteen mini-apartments (called *moduli*), each sharing a common wall in row-house fashion. The row-houses are laid out in a semicircle. Each apartment is independent from the others, and made

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<sup>7</sup> *Il Segreto*, 149.

<sup>8</sup> *Che Cos'è l'Età dell'Acquario*, 77.

<sup>9</sup> Bernardino Del Boca, *Il Servizio* (Turin: Bresci, 1988), 224.

<sup>10</sup> Bernardino del Boca, “The First Practical Expression of Theosophy in Italy: The ‘Villaggio Verde’ (Green Village),” *Theosophical History* III/5 (Jan. 1991): 149.

up of a living room, small kitchen and bathroom, all on the first floor, with a loft serving as a bedroom above. Two main doors are located in each apartment, one facing the front entrance of the village and the other opening towards the inside of the semicircle, where a small circular lake, symbolizing the aquarian age, has been placed. The building of 35 additional houses, to complete the circle, and to frame the whole lake, has been deferred to the future. Nevertheless, since 1989, approximately ten families, some with children, have already settled in the completed part and have created businesses. Those who want to work for the Village and cannot afford to live in a row-house, are supported by the community. They sleep in recreational vehicles parked in a relatively secluded area and are permitted to use an unoccupied apartment for kitchen and bathroom functions.

The village is yet to become a self-sufficient community. Most of the people are employed externally, but a self-conscious goal to eventually achieve that independence, exists. A significant step was taken in the spring of 1989. At that time, members who are for the most part vegetarian, planted a small organic vegetable garden from which the community now gets part of its food. They started to organize cultural activities, Theosophical meetings, lectures and courses, and began to operate a publishing house, called "The Aquarian Age." This publishing house was started in Turin, in 1970, when the village was far from being realized. In that year its founders, editor Edoardo Bresci and director Bernardino del Boca, both Theosophists, published the first issue of the *Rivista dell'Età dell'Acquario* (*Review of the Age of Aquarius*), now one of the oldest continuously published New Age journals in Italy. In 1975 they published *The International Guide of the Aquarian*

*Age*, an accurate directory and sourcebook on the Aquarian Age all over the world. This guide represents one of the first works published in the Italian language to provide information at an international level on the new, coming age and on all what goes with it: astrology, UFO, metaphysics, neo-paganism, macrobiotics, and much more. Most of the information originates from the wide collection of del Boca's books and magazine, which he donated to the Green Village to create a 13,000 volume library. The *Guide* is for the most part an assemblage of essays which draws upon diverse religious, cultural, and historical sources mainly collected by del Boca. At the end of the *Guide* is a section devoted to documenting the history of the Village since 1989, with photos and descriptions thoughtfully assembled by the inhabitants of the village. The final few pages of each issue report the "Newsletter of the High Roads" which provides information on outstanding cultural events and new publications throughout the world which testify to this new aquarian consciousness. The newsletter somehow carries out the function of the *Guide to the Aquarian Age*,<sup>11</sup> as its updated version in a small scale. The High Roads which name this newsletter in del Boca's esoteric view are "those roads from where the Energies of the Parallel Reality guide our lives,"<sup>12</sup> the spiritual dimension of which our material reality is nothing but a reflection.

Dr. del Boca's passionate and eclectic interest in art, history, comparative religion, philosophy, spirituality, and esotericism, emerges as a new collage of thoughts which aim to transmit to the reader the impetus to answer his or her own

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<sup>11</sup> Bernardino del Boca, *Guida Internazionale dell'Età dell'Acquario* (Turin: Bresci, 1975).

<sup>12</sup> Bernardino del Boca, *Iniziazione alle Strade Alte*, 100.



“Collage”  
(By permission of the author).

individual and personal questions. His books are also enriched with pictures of friends and people whom he had met throughout his life, and with images of his own artworks, i.e. paintings and collages. During his trips in the Far East, Del Boca also collected numerous religious artworks which he is planning to display for a permanent Museum of Animism. It will contain small statues representing the *nats*, spirit-beings from Burma, the *phis* of Thailand, and the *kami* of Japan. These figures are expressions of the spirituality of those

countries, but beyond these temporal-spacial borders, should be thought of as “products of human thought that unconsciously got in touch with the invisible world which surrounds us.”<sup>13</sup>

Along with its publishing activity, the Village supports itself through the creation and sale of handicrafts, new artistic designs of objects for interiors, such as boxes, bottles, frames and pictures. Taking inspiration from del Boca’s works,

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<sup>13</sup> Bernardino del Boca, *Birmania, Un Paese da Amare* (Turin: Brescia, 1989), 162.

a trend developed among the people of the Village to create collages, pictures built composing images taken from different sources, for the creation of a new message. Here we see the “Psychothematic” and intuition as tools used to express an original form of art and a new perception of reality. There is little attempt to present visual depth in the collage technique, nor is there interest in merely reflecting reality. The collage technique offers the opportunity to translate in images the surrealist world of one’s own dreams, feelings, abstractions, and new messages. Notable are the series of collages upon Christian subjects created by del Boca. Here the spacial dimension all but disappears, and equally important, time is overcome through a new combination of images of the same subject as they were produced throughout history. For example, the subject of Jesus’ Passion is expressed by the juxtaposition of images which were produced throughout the centuries in the paintings of great artists. The result will offer a new impression of those subjects, since those expressions of the time they were produced are now shown as the reflection of another reality which goes beyond them.

The Green Village has built a growing network within the country through its intense cultural activities, notably its lectures and educational courses, and most of all through the organization of annual feasts, open to everybody, which are devoted each to a specific subject interpreted from an esoteric point of view, such as the symbol of the Rose, Poetry, the Air (Nameron-Namenor)<sup>14</sup>, and Crystals.

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<sup>14</sup> The name of the feast was *Nameron-Namenor*, *Nameron* being the Egyptian name for the Air elementals. *Namenor* is the Celtic name, as the third material manifestation; the first is *Ki*, the second is the Word (St. John), the third is Air), (*Il Servizio*, 24).

Dr. del Boca and his associates have produced a significant amount of literature on the New Age perceptions of reality, on the parallel reality which moves our world, about the etheric fluid of the *ki*, the Reality of the Continuum-Infinite-Present, and about the *Zoit*, (those new energies, “who are preparing the new consciousness”).<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this paper can merely hint at these other aspects of the village life. The internal economic structure is still in its infancy, and it is difficult to know when and how the village may become an independent self-sufficient community. As a Theosophical community, the Green Village is the first initiative started in Italy. Children here are brought up in a dimension created by people willing “to be and not to have,” and aiming to realize the new level of consciousness. The Village is still in its infancy, but the foundations are laid. Dr. del Boca says that the Village “is a dream that should touch peoples’ heart, since it is based upon the reality of the *phi* and the *nats*, i.e. upon that invisible reality on which the continuum-infinite-present stands.”<sup>16</sup> The energies of the invisible world, as represented by the shrine of the *phi*, landed in Italy.

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<sup>15</sup> *Iniziazione alle Strade Alte*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Che Cos’è l’Età dell’Acquario*, 118.

# BookReviews

## **INVENTING THE MIDDLE AGES: THE LIVES, WORKS, AND IDEAS OF THE GREAT MEDIEVALISTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.**

By Norman F. Cantor. New York: William Morrow, 1991. Pp. 477. ISBN 0-688-9406. \$28.00.

“Umberto Eco in 1974 boldly proclaimed ‘the Return to the Middle Ages’. . . by drawing close parallels between medieval alternative cultures and disempowered groups on the one side and counterculture and student radicalism in the United States in the 1960s on the other.” (p. 36) One is tempted to add that a certain similarity not only obtained then but also a century earlier and is still active at present. Ideas of the nature of the medieval European world and its relation to our own have engaged the interest of historians, philosophers, literary and art critics, amongst others, over the last century and a half especially with regard to their observations which have provided a counterpoint to the thrust of first a newly developing industrialized world and later to the challenge of rapidly expanding technology, two problems as that still remain largely misunderstood and unresolved in third world countries. Consider for a moment how the medieval world, even for theosophists, was rife with alchemists, unworldly philosophers seeking escape from the

tension of the present through mystic communion with the creator, departures into magic realms with knights of the round table and a search for the Holy Grail. In such fertile ground myth and legend come alive to provide tentative answers in the present.

Having wondered about the methodological tools of historiographers-and those of H.P.B.- in terms of crafting a picture of the past, Professor Cantor’s illuminating study of the lives of modern medievalists that spans three generations approximately from 1885 to 1965 deserves the attention of today’s theosophists, particularly since we are presented with new insights into the character of historical figures ranging from Hildegard of Bingen onward and into the Renaissance. The theories and enthusiasms of modern writers on medieval topics are of course subject to limitations imposed by national outlook and tradition, but at the same time establish useful guidelines.

The intimate insights into the creative world of such figures as J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis should serve to advise the lay reader that the pursuit of historical studies at the most elevated levels of academia has a poignant human quality scarcely imagined by those who do not come into contact with it. True, there are Olympian figures such as Percy Schramm at Göttingen and Etienne Gilson at Toronto whose worlds both private and

public transcended those of mere mortals, but clearly their opinions and ideas came to have an importance on humanistic thought at the most general levels after these had filtered down and been disseminated by select followers or set out in overviews expressly written for students.

Now having trudged through H.P.B.'s *Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*, the question arises as to her methodology beyond, that is, the accepted stance of her efforts as a result of psychic abilities that allowed of teleportation of source materials for inclusion. That sort of thing has no scholarly connotation and representatives of any learned society who lend their support to such specious activity frequently come to a diminished and marginal status within their own profession precisely because a discipline, be it academic or other, is grounded in verifiable research using accepted tools and methods to arrive at conclusions that stand up to thorough examination. At least that is the purpose of historical study, whether it is obtained directly through archaeological excavation or examination and translation of ancient documents. And where scholarly work in itself remains too technical to be accessible to the general reader even of advanced education, highly meaningful accounts can still be constructed on the basis of such materials and their interpretation is subject generally only to the reader's acceptance of it as truth or on faith for what he himself cannot otherwise determine by personal investigative effort. Such is the basis of scholarship and the establishment of credentials amongst a group of one's peers.

While reading of the insights and judgments arrived at by eminent modern historians, and to an extent bearing in mind that all comparisons are odious at least to the point of possibly clouding perspective, one cannot but wonder again just

where H.P.B. fits into the scheme of things. With her roots in eastern orthodoxy it may be a point of speculation only that that was the cause of her antipathy to the western tradition of the same as expressed by Roman Catholicism and otherwise by organized Christianity in general. After all, one has but to remember that even as she wrote, Moussorgsky was composing an opera, *Boris Godounov*, that pitted a Jesuit against an imperial dynasty, i.e., Rangoni subtly advising the ambitious Marina Mnishek. Yet at the same time, Biblical references abound, along with quotations from the canon of Hindu and Buddhist traditions respectively. To paraphrase Dr. Cantor, H.P.B. "had a proclivity to synthesize history, dealing with big subjects treated in the grand manner and written in the neo-Victorian mode with verve and eloquence." (p. 83) She was indulging in what the French termed *high vulgarization* for the general reader, because at the turn of the nineteenth century, the sweeping analysis of the type H.P.B. could provide played an important role in bringing knowledge, however skewered, into middle-class living rooms. The pattern her work followed consisted of a mumbling about science, lost documents, artifacts and deep learning that slid off into unanswerable questions and speculations. But as Dr. Cantor points out, "there are special uses to be derived from persuasive expressions of marginality in interpretation. First, these more marginal perceptions provide a breeding ground for revisionist and novel perceptions at a later time and in often updated and revised form a generation or two later move from the periphery to the centre of impact and intellectual dominance." (376) H.P.B., by Dr. Cantor's definition, might also be styled a *relativist* in claiming that "ideas and images lack intrinsic value and stability and are mere reflections of group will,

state power and personal psychology.” (163) Thus she was able to make “social deterministic interpretations...of literature as products of class interests . . .” (164) in that her perceptions were not subordinated to the authority of cultural tradition, but derived from her own feelings.

Long overdue in Theosophical historical retrospect is a social history of the Society itself using many of the same historiographical tools that accomplished academics have brought to bear to reveal the past. We have seen the beginnings of such study with such seminal work as Dr. Gregory Tillett has done with C.W. Leadbeater in his book, *The Elder Brother* (1982). No damage was done by its appearance, for true believers at least in this area tend to come from the same background with scant education, the underprivileged and the disenfranchised who will always seek to unite if only in defense of their own ignorance. The social amalgamation of some sort of a middle class of like values seems to continue up to the present.

H.P.B. was very much a product of the Victorian era, and as Professor Cantor remarks, “Victorian culture made its contribution to discovery of the medieval world by the founding of research institutes, by the building up of libraries and the organization of archives, and by the publication of medieval records.” (28) And indeed H.P.B. was able to benefit from such knowledge as was then coming to light. But she was also an exponent of the worst features of the age—“its love of huge entities, vulgarly simple models, hastily generalised and overdetermined evolutionary schemes” (29)—that made it unsuitable for doing lasting work in interpreting the themes she broached. One might settle for a view of H.P.B. as a late Romantic in that she replaced a negative view of early history with another steeped in idealism, spirituality and a certain heroism that revolved round figures like

Savonarola, who represented a challenge to authority. But this superficial kind of inquiry owed to the Romantic lack of learning and instruments of research, and was almost exclusively based on mere ideological projection. Thus it seems that what H.P.B. sought to promote were revised value systems very much in consonance with prevailing Victorian tradition and mostly tailored to fit prescribed patterns and beliefs of sponsors raised in Church of England households to give us *history à la mode*.

The Theosophical experience had its counterpart in appreciation of medievalism, for it represents a safe escape into a kind of idealized past that never was, and goes even farther afield with exploration into Hindu and Buddhist tradition, though not sufficiently clarified to satisfy knowledgeable Hindus or Buddhists into believing that theosophical interpretation has correctly understood what it seeks to explain. The main characteristic of European social history, writes Professor Cantor, is its constancy, the aristocratic, high familial domination of society that continued even past the Industrial Revolution. The nobility produced not only warlords but scholars, poets, artists, and religious leaders. (22) H.P.B. was a scion of a noble family after a fashion and however bowdlerized her versions of the past, she can be said to have carried on the torch while still emitting a great deal of smoke.

Throughout this book, the reader comes to understand that the medieval age in reality lacked the quiet and introspection with which it is all too frequently and mistakenly associated. Civil wars and ideological feuds abound. There is even a macabre charm to the notion that the plague of the Black Death, in helping to keep the population of western Europe stable and allaying the kind of uncontrollable growth “that enfeebled the

mandarin culture of China, its sole competitor for becoming the foundation of the modern world" (369), played a salutary role in world affairs, possibly begging comparison with the AIDS threat of today. Obviously, people still find a message of social salvation and personal satisfaction from medieval studies because they draw emotional sustenance from them. Professor Cantor believes that nobody pays attention to political "isms" nowadays as value systems, but rather endure them as ways of social existence and instruments for physical survival. Is it heartening to think that we can yet rely on medievalism as the cultural structure of a compelling value system in the century ahead mostly because there is a built-in vulnerability to alternative systems?

Well, possibly. It isn't certain that our author is the last hoarse man proclaiming the apocalypse, but what he has to say is mightily convincing on behalf of Western culture. Medievalism constitutes the rock bed of European and American religious thought, art and architecture, the sum and substance out of which we have constantly derived humanistic ideals. There is precious little that has survived physically from the Ancient World, save for an amphitheatre here and a coliseum there and a few architectural styles from the Greeks that have been enshrined. Beyond that, such scientific knowledge and philosophical literature that survive from that period largely owe to the industry of medieval monks steeped in Greek and Arabic around the eleventh century who put them into Latin, and vouchsafed them to us. Here we are speaking only of Western cultural tradition and make no attempt at comparison with Hindu, Buddhist or Confucian tradition or any other of the East. We build on what we have and know, just as all other cultures do. And there may come a time of greater universality incorporating

ideas and traditions of East and West but at present we are watching and waiting.

**Robert Boyd**

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## **HELENA P. BLAVATSKY OU LA REPOSE DU SPHINX**

By Noel Richard-Nafarre. Privately published. Available from Editions Adyar, Paris. Pp. 639. 190 francs.

In addressing the need for a new biography of H.P. Blavatsky in French, Noel Richard-Nafarre has made a valuable contribution to Theosophical literature. His book provides an engaging narrative of her adventurous career, far better structured than recent biographies in English. For example, Jean Overton Fuller's *Blavatsky and her Teachers* covers the first 42 years of H.P.B.'s life in 32 pages, while Richard-Nafarre devotes 244 pages to the same period. Although the author relies overwhelmingly on standard Theosophical sources, he makes their contents available to readers long deprived of access to many of them. He also responds persuasively to René Guénon's attacks on H.P.B., which have been extremely influential in France. In these respects, he has earned the appreciation of students of H.P.B. worldwide. When one considers that his highly readable and informative book was written in only nine months, it must be recognized as a formidable achievement. The book also deserves praise for quality printing and illustration.

However, to make a significant contribution to scholarship, a biographer must carefully study all relevant publications, identify points disputed by previous writers, and try to reach fair, objective

resolutions. This requires further research in sources not drawn upon by one's predecessors, and a mind open to new discoveries. Richard-Nafarre approaches H.P.B. with the closed mind of a True Believer, relentlessly defending the Faith with considerable invective against "denonciateurs." The Faith, as conveyed in this biography, is that H.P.B. was completely innocent of any charges ever made against her by anyone. Such one-pointedness is reflected in inadequate research; the bibliography lists only 76 sources. Jean Overton Fuller, in a book half as long, cites more than twice as many, while Marion Meade's *Madame Blavatsky: the Woman Behind the Myth*, no paragon of objective research, draws on 300 sources for a book somewhat shorter than Richard-Nafarre's.

A number of errors betray the speed with which the book was written, e.g. Archibald and Bertram Keightley are consistently called "Keithley," while H.P.B.'s husband Michael Betanelly becomes "C. Betanelly." Haste and partisanship are all too evident in many loose ends left unexplained, most crucially in the author's treatment of H.P.B.'s stories about her Master Morya. Central to his narrative is the version found in her letters to A.P. Sinnett. These portray Morya as a Rājput visiting London around 1851 when he met H.P.B., who from that moment became his occult disciple, guided by him for the rest of her life. A Buddhist, he later resided near Shigatse, Tibet, where H.P.B. was his student for much of the late 1860s. However, three previous accounts by H.P.B. agree that she met a Master in London around 1851 but give radically different versions of him and of subsequent events. An 1877 letter to her Aunt Nadhyezhda describes him as a Nepalese Buddhist residing in Ceylon, with whom H.P.B. had recently renewed contact after

a letter received in New York telling of his visit to America as a Buddhist missionary three years earlier. *Caves and Jungles of Hindustan* describes him as a Rājput named Gulab-Singh who governs a small rāj in central India and follows the Hindu religion; a letter received in the 1870s in New York from the Master himself is cited as his first contact with H.P.B. since their London meeting. But she wrote to Prince Dondoukoff-Korsakoff that this first letter from Gulab-Singh was received in Odessa, ordering her to go to India, where he directed her travels by correspondence for more than two years; she never saw him in person until summoned from New York to meet him in Japan. While Richard-Nafarre refers to all these sources, he never mentions any discrepancies, thus evading the challenges of explaining them. Evasion is also found in selective use of Albert Rawson's testimony on H.P.B.'s adventures in Egypt. Rawson reported being in Paris and New York with her in the early 1850s, and was involved in the early days of the Theosophical Society. Richard-Nafarre ignores this evidence of his role in her life, presumably because it conflicts with other sources he prefers.

Unexpected questions about use of sources arise with the failure to cite my book *In Search of the Masters* (hereafter referred to as *ISM*), in either footnotes or bibliography. Richard-Nafarre tentatively identifies the Master Serapis Bey as Paolos Metamon, and sketches H.P.B.'s links to Cagliostro via Egyptian Masonry, presenting both as products of his own research. These topics were explored at length in *ISM*, referring to the same sources now cited by Richard-Nafarre, but this could be mere coincidence. Harder to explain away is his discussion of H.P.B.'s great-grandfather, Prince Paul Dolgorouki, in which footnotes 10-12 on pages 59-60 are identical to notes 14, 16

and 17 from pages 12 and 13 of *ISM*. First, in an exact translation of a quote from *HPB Speaks* about Dolgorouki's library, only H.P.B. is cited but used the identical words quoted in *ISM* indicates the actual source. This is followed by a reference to A.E. Waite on Dolgorouki's links to Masonry, identical to an *ISM* citation; yet, Waite's book does not appear in the bibliography. Third is the translation of most of an *ISM* quote from H.P.B.'s *Collected Writings* about a Saint-Germain manuscript. All three footnotes are identical, but Richard-Nafarre takes credit for the research and the inference of connections among the passages. One can only wonder how many secondary sources are thus concealed, and what motivates such behavior.

This biography's scholarly credibility is undermined by sectarian bias and a lack of thorough, objective research and documentation. Nonetheless, its literary merits and the need it addresses suggest the desirability of a future edition in which the more serious omissions are remedied.

**Paul Johnson**

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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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*Theosophical History* (ISSN 0951-497X) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by James A. Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 U.S.A.) The journal consists of eight issues *per* volume: one volume covering a period of two years. The journal's purpose is to publish contributions specifically related to the modern Theosophical Movement, from the time of Madame Helena Blavatsky and others who were responsible in establishing the original Theosophical Society (1875), to all groups that derive their teachings—directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly—from her or her immediate

followers. In addition, the journal is also receptive to related movements (including pre-Blavatskyite Theosophy, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and the philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg to give but a few examples) that have had an influence on or displayed an affinity to modern Theosophy.

The subscription fee for the journal is \$14.00 (U.S., Mexico, Canada), California residents, please add 7.75% or \$1.09 sales tax to this amount), \$16.00 (elsewhere), or \$24.00 (air mail) for four issues. Single issues are \$4.00. All inquiries should be sent to **James Santucci**, *Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.)*. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Fullerton, California. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to James Santucci (*Theosophical History*), Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480

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\* \* \* \* \*

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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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# Editor's Comments

## In this issue

Professor Joscelyn Godwin's research in English archives have uncovered some startling documents dating back to the 1870s. In the last issue he introduced one such document of a highly controversial nature (more about this below). In the present issue Professor Godwin presents a hitherto unpublished letter from H. P. Blavatsky to Rev. William Stainton Moses, dated 16 November 1875. Unearthed in the Library of the United Grand Lodge of England, Freemasons' Hall (London), the letter is important because it reveals her Theosophical views exactly at the time of the founding of the Theosophical Society (17 November). The date of this letter is confirmed by her closing remarks: "To night is the inauguration [*sic*] meeting of our Theosophical Society and Oldcott [*sic*] is busy with his address for he is elected President and poor me corresponding secretary of the society . . ."

A number of illuminating articles also appear in the current issue, two of which were first presented at the International Theosophical History Conference (ITHC) last year. The first, "The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society" by John Cooper, is based on material not accessible to public scrutiny. This Society, in a period of "indrawal" since 1935, claimed a number of distinguished Theosophists over the course of its activity—the Sanskritist Charles Johnston, Dr. Archibald Keightley, and "Jasper Niemand" (Julia Campbell Ver Planck)—and produced one of the more noteworthy magazines of

the Theosophical Movement, *The Theosophical Quarterly*.

The second article, "Theodor Reuss as Founder of Esoteric Orders," is the second part of at least six articles that its author, P.R. König, has prepared for the journal: the first part appearing in IV/3. This article is primarily a presentation of original source material containing biographical information on Reuss and his activities within the OTO (Order of Oriental Templars) and related organizations.

Readers no doubt are familiar with John Oliphant's highly-acclaimed account of Edward Arthur Wilson in his book, *Brother Twelve: The Incredible Story of Canada's False Prophet* (reviewed in IV/2). His article, "The Teachings of Brother XII," was presented in summary form at the ITHC. Unlike the book, Mr. Oliphant has added sources and provides further information on E.A. Wilson's teachings, which are strongly Theosophical in character.

The publication of Sylvia Cranston's *H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement* has been recognized as this year's major publishing event by Theosophists in 1993. For this reason, the journal will be publishing two reviews: one by Dr. John Algeo, the other by the author of a previous biography on H.P.B. (*Blavatsky and Her Masters*), Jean Overton Fuller. The next issue will also include a third review by Robert Boyd.

## For What Purpose?

The *Book Notes* section contains a review of poet, literary critic, and Blakean scholar Kathleen Raine's *Autobiographies* by Robert Ellwood. Those interested in Dr. Raine's insights may wish to obtain the Spring 1992 issue of *Gnosis*, containing therein an interview conducted by its editor-in-chief Jay Kinney with Dr. Raine entitled "Imagination and the Sacred" (pages 50 to 55). Also included in the same section is John Clifford Holt's *Buddha in the Crown*, a book chosen for review because of the unusual circumstances in which the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara has developed in the ethos of Sri Lanka.

Paul Johnson's review of Noël Richard-Nafarre's *Helena P. Blavatsky ou la réponse du Sphinx* resulted in a lengthy retort by Mr. Richard-Nafarre. This, and Mr. Johnson's rejoinder, are included herein.

An announcement by Leslie Price regarding the discovery of documents in the India Office on the possibility of Madame Blavatsky being a Russian spy appears in the *Communications* section. This is a major discovery that reveals no direct evidence that H.P.B. was in fact a spy. But such a suspicion seems to be confirmed by a letter supposedly written by H.P.B. herself to the Director of the Third Section. Therein, she offered her services to the Russian government. The letter in question was published (in Russian) in *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 6 (1988): 111-12 and partially translated in Maria Carlson's "*No Religion Higher Than Truth*": *A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia, 1875-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 214, note 6. It is obvious that a careful study of both the India Office material and Russian letter must be conducted before any definite conclusions can be ascertained.

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A document appearing in the last issue of *Theosophical History* (IV/4-5) summarizing E. Gerry Brown's account of H.P. Blavatsky's attempt to commit acts of psychic murder against Brown and his family no doubt will be upsetting to Blavatskyphiles. Indeed, one correspondent sent a lengthy reply expressing his displeasure over its publication. Although the letter will appear in the next issue with Professor Godwin's response, the document's iconoclastic nature demands a more immediate clarification of the editor's opinions and motives for its inclusion in the journal. Readers may remember that in the IV/1 issue of *Theosophical History* I set forth on the editorial page my conviction that the journal's purpose was to consider Theosophical history (with an emphasis on history) in an impartial and scholarly manner. Historical journals by nature must exhibit complete freedom of expression within the purview of their areas of investigation. For this reason, it is my firm belief that to deny publication of an article or document based upon the biases of either the editors or the journal's audience would convert the journal into a theologically- or dogmatically-oriented publication. Some may wish to see more discretion as to what appears or what not appears in the journal, but if we mean by discretion the avoidance of any controversial topic or opinion that disclaims one's received assumptions about an individual or event, then surely whatever credibility the journal possesses as an open forum for the free exchange of ideas has been lost. To be sure, articles and documents will appear that will offend some person or group. Come what may, historians, at least the camp to which I subscribe, do not presume to judge the dramas or actors of the past.

I would rather follow the example of Herodotus or Thucydides—both of whom were for the most part non-judgmental—rather than a Livy or a Tacitus, the latter stating that history's main goal was to "rescue merit from oblivion." Although the noted Oxford philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin observed in his *Historical Inevitability* (Oxford, 1954, 52-53) that the "invocation to historians to suppress even that minimal degree of moral or psychological evaluation . . . seems to me to rest upon a confusion of the aims and methods of the humane studies with those of natural science," for what purpose should the historian impose his own judgment? Analysis and interpretation are, it is true, part and parcel of historical investigation; making moral judgments, however, are established on views that have little or no historical basis, therefore, not, in my opinion, part and parcel of the historical method. Justice Holmes once remarked, "I prefer champagne to ditch-water, but I see no reason to suppose the cosmos does."

The inductive process and moral judgements, however, are very often confused in the arts and sciences, history included. As a case in point, time and time again reviewers praise or condemn books on the sole basis of agreeing or disagreeing with the thesis of the book. This approach offers no insight into the book's worth; what it does do is to reveal the bias(es) of the reviewer.

The historical method, in my view, involves the elimination of moralistic judgments but retains interpretive judgments based on inductive methods. The two should not be confused any more than the method of that other Holmes, Sherlock, being mistaken for a moral judgment rather than solutions based upon material evidence.

As an history journal, *Theosophical History*

retains three specific roles: (1) the publication of articles that attempt to shed light on the past, (2) the publication of documents for the purpose of expanding the data base, (3) and a forum for the free and open exchange of ideas. *Apropos* the second purpose, who can deny that the augmentation of *primary* material can only help the historian? To paraphrase Veronica Wedgwood, the historian unlike any other writer is constrained by the documentation available. Such a limitation should caution the historian not to overstep the bounds of prudent interpretation. If not, what is purported to be a historical narrative becomes more like docudrama, a phenomenon that is emerging in studies on current affairs and in biographies to an increasing degree.

Now to the document in question. If it is true that the chief objection to its publication is to place H.P.B. in a bad light, then such an objection is but a reflection of a dogmatic or ideological attitude that has no place in this journal. If the suspicion centers on the *motives* of either Professor Godwin or myself—namely, to deliberately present H.P.B. in a bad light—such an allegation could not be further from the truth as our publishing records will attest. Our overriding concern was twofold: to add to the bank of documents to which historians can turn in order to present a more complete account of the times, and to attempt to identify the writer of the document. In addition, it was also our desire to initiate an informed discussion regarding the circumstances surrounding the writing of the document. This is, after all, one of the roles of the journal.

Of immediate concern, however, is the connection of this document with Brown's relations with Olcott and Blavatsky around 1875 and early 1876 (I thank Ted Davy, former editor of the *Canadian Theosophist* for reminding me of Michael

Gomes' important article, "Studies in Early American Theosophical History: I. Elbridge Gerry Brown and the Boston 'Spiritual Scientist'" (*Canadian Theosophist*, 69/6 [Jan.-Feb. 1989: 121-129 and 70/1 [Mar.-Apr. 1989]: 14-17). Brown's journal, *The Spiritual Scientist*, was heavily supported by H.P.B. and Olcott to the tune of perhaps \$631 if the amount written in the second volume of H.P.B.'s Scrapbook is correct. The journal was obviously of crucial importance to the two founders of the Theosophical Society for publicity purposes. Indeed, in June of 1875 Serapis (as pointed out by Professor Godwin) wished for Brown to be the third member of a Triad that was to advance the cause of the Lodge (of the Masters) in America (Gomes: 121-22). By the beginning of 1876, however, a falling out between Brown on the one hand and Olcott and H.P.B. on the other occurred. In the Scrapbook containing the 1875 circular "Important to Spiritualists," H.P.B. annotates: "Several hundred dollars, out of our pockets were spent on behalf of the Editor [Brown], and he was made to pass through a minor 'diksha.' This proving of no avail—The Theosophical Society was established. The man might have become a POWER, he preferred to remain an ASS . . ." (Gomes: 123) What was the reason for this abrupt change in attitude of the Editor? Could our document shed any light on the sudden turn of events? Perhaps Brown's initial importance prior to the founding of the Society led to the document portraying H.P.B. in an overbearing and imperious manner because so much was at stake. What were her reasons for being so adamantly opposed to the marriage? Who was his future wife, who is described as "one of the most sensitive and perfect mediums I [the interviewer] have known . . . ." On a mundane matter, when were they married? This would obviously pinpoint the time

that these events occurred. Can we assume that much of the description was embellished? If so, what does this tell us about the Browns? Or about H.P.B.'s attitude toward Spiritualistic phenomena? A careful reading of the document suggests caution in accepting every statement *verbatim*. It is obviously written for the consumption of a Spiritualist audience and not the general public. Consequently, Brown going into detail about the number of spirit entities involved in the assaults, his conversations with them and his eventual winning the spirit band over to his side would naturally be accepted by Spiritualists. In conclusion, the document is significant, not so much because of the reference to H.P.B. attempting psychic murder on the Browns; more significantly, it gives us some insight into the personal life and personality of E. Gerry Brown, his relations with Olcott and H.P.B., and the times in which he lived. The document therefore is a fairly significant contribution to our knowledge of a generally unknown player in early Theosophical history. If it induces the historian to investigate his life, then the document will have served its purpose.

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# Book Notes

**AUTOBIOGRAPHIES.** By Kathleen Raine. London: Skoob Publishing 1991. Pp. x + 372. £12.99. Distributed by Gazelle Book Services Ltd., Falcon House, Queen Square, Lancaster LA1 1RN England.

This rambling but often evocative and intensely interesting autobiography of one of the most fascinating figures in modern literature, the poet and Blakean scholar Kathleen Raine, may be of particular interest to studies of Theosophical history. Although not a Theosophist, Raine was influenced by that tradition; she moved in some of the same circles and explored some of the same philosophical terrain as Theosophists of her era. For many years she edited the journal *Temenos*, an important venue of traditional spiritual learning.

The present volume really combines three previously published autobiographical writings: *Farewell Happy Fields* (1973), a bittersweet recollection of childhood in a respectable but stifling lower middle class Methodist home, and her idealistic first love; *The Land Unknown* (1973), the story of a gifted and desperately searching student at Cambridge in the late 1920s, including her brief conversion to Roman Catholicism; and *The Lion's Mouth* (1977), the narrator's life as a maturing writer finding her own voice, hewing fervently to it, and at the same time engaging in her monumental studies of Blake and his sources in the esoteric tradition. As she writes, "The one thing I

had retained from my upbringing on the Romantic Poets and the Protestant religion was an absolute belief in the inner light of inspiration as the one sure guide." Indeed, in her wide ranging quest for wisdom she found and registered the line from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which says, "It is better to perish in one's own law [*dharmā*]; it is perilous to follow the law of another."

Yet in this quest for the personal voice Raine, unlike certain others, realized that individual expression is only enhanced when it resonates with the deepest wisdom known to others. She was led to finally believe that a master key to wisdom was in fact contained in a particular tradition, one very much related to the sources of Yeats and Blake. She came to that awakening first in reading René Guénon, whose works "profoundly changed my outlook; for in Guénon I first found clearly defined that 'knowledge absolute' of which every metaphysical tradition is an expression." The stance of the "Neo-Traditionalism" of Guénon and his followers is in some (though not all) significant points comparable to Theosophy's view of the "ancient wisdom." It is of telling interest that, setting foot on this pilgrimage, Raine "now sought for wisdom not in Academe but in Watkin's bookshop"—Mr. Watkin's "theosophical bookshop in Cecil Court—that University Library of lost knowledge—became for me, as for others before and since, a shrine of wisdom." Worshipping at this shrine, "little by little, I found how great is that literature of exact spiritual

knowledge, unheeded by literary critics and literary historians alike,” and she became convinced, as she sought to demonstrate in her great work *Blake and Tradition*, that this poet and others, did “possess this knowledge and [spoke] that royal language.”

More recently Kathleen Raine has published another autobiographical volume, *India Seen Afar*, based on journeys to India and explorations of its culture. All these works can be highly recommended. Her wandering and wordy style, and her outspoken (and sometimes unfashionable) opinions, may exhilarate some readers and put off others—which will no doubt bother Kathleen Raine not at all. One distinctly senses that she writes what she wants to write for those who want to read it, and that’s that. But she is a person definitely worth knowing, both in her own right and for the illumination she casts on the modern fate of wisdom in the theosophical lineage.

### **Robert S. Ellwood**

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### **BUDDHA IN THE CROWN: AVALOKITEŚVARA IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITIONS OF SRI LANKA.**

By John Clifford Holt. New York and Oxford:  
Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. xii + 269. ISBN  
0-19-506418-6. \$39.95.

Sri Lanka is correctly regarded as a bastion of Theravāda Buddhism, but there is abundant evidence that Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism was also present on the island. One significant piece

of evidence for this is the presence of icons of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Mahāyāna teaching indeed appeared in the more receptive Abhayagiri monastery in Anurādhapura as early as the third century C.E., during the reign of Vohārika Tissa (224-236 C.E.), but it was not until the eighth century that sculptures of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, appeared on the island, some three hundred years after the emergence of his cult in the northern Indian city of Mathurā.

What occurred after Avalokiteśvara’s introduction in Sri Lanka is of special interest to Professor Holt, a noted scholar of Theravāda at Bowdoin College. Specifically, his main concern is that of religious assimilation. Such assimilation involves an understanding of the relationship between *laukika* and *lōkōttara*—This-Worldly and Other Worldly, mundane and supra mundane, conditionally- and unconditionally-oriented—that is so prominent in Sinhala Buddhism, aptly expressed in political terms in the following expression: “The country (*laukika*) exists for the sake of the religion (*lōkōttara*).” It is within this framework that the symbolism of Avalokiteśvara is understood: ascetic determinism and altruistic compassion expressing the *lōkōttara* category, royal power the *laukika*.

An examination of the iconographical evidence suggests that there was a shift from *lōkōttara*- to *laukika*-orientation from the Early Medieval period (eighth century C.E.), at which time he was viewed more as an ascetic, to the Late Medieval period of Kandyen culture (thirteenth to fifteenth C.E.) when he takes on more of a royal demeanor in the form of the national “guardian” deity Nātha Dēviyō. In Chapter Four, Holt emphasizes the assimilation of Avalokiteśvara to Nātha and his subsequent transformation to *laukika*

concerns once the Mahāyāna identity of the Bodhisattva was forgotten, thus converting him more into a “boon-conferring, protective, and regional deity” (104) after being incorporated into the Sinhala Buddhist sociopolitical cosmos during the Gompola period (1341-1415).

Holt’s thesis regarding this assimilation is quoted as follows:

. . . It is my contention that the Mahāyāna identity of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Kandyan up-country was eventually forgotten over the centuries as he became more and more identified as a *laukika*-oriented, boon-conferring, protective, and regional deity. Concomitantly, his name was shortened simply to Nātha, a general term of currency in south India meaning “protector” that aptly describes his active *laukika* role to his devotees. In the fourteenth century . . . he was incorporated into the religion of the court as the result of his local importance as a regional up-country deity as well as his newly recognized importance in the legitimation scenario of Bodhisattva/god/king kingship. That is, the cult of Avalokiteśvara was revived in Sinhala circles during the fourteenth century due to the twin pressures of imported international Buddhist theories of royal legitimation on the one hand, . . . and by virtue of the fact that the Sinhala cult of Avalokiteśvara had devolved into the local cult of Nātha in the Kandyan region. Both currents converged during the latter part of the fourteenth century to form the bases of the Nātha cult.

In what is perhaps the most important—and intriguing—chapter of the book, “The Mythicization of History” (Chapter 5), the author sets out to examine how Avalokiteśvara-transformed (Nātha Dēviyō) becomes reoriented to a more *lōkōttara*-profile in the myth *Nātha*

*Deviyange Tābime Upata*, recounting Nātha Dēviyō’s defeat at the hands of the foreign upstart Piṭiye (now considered a *baṇḍāra*-class deity, so one of twelve ranked below the four national deities and certainly more *laukika* in nature), whose entrance and dislocation of Nātha is further narrated in the *Doḷaha Dēviyangē Kāvi* (“The Poem of the 12 Gods”). Holt gives a masterful presentation of how these myths explain not only Nātha’s elevated, *lōkōttara* status but also the socioeconomic events that surround the immigration of the Indian Tamils to the Kandyan cultural region (137) and the domestication of jungle lands for rice paddy cultivation. (138)

Avalokiteśvara’s re-elevation to *lōkōttara* status now makes it possible for his eventual identification with the Buddha-to-be, Maitreya (Maitrī). (133) His association and later identification with Maitreya and Maitreya’s subsequent demythologizing transformation in contemporary Sri Lanka at the hands of “Buddhist modernists” and reformers are the subject of the concluding chapter. The dangers of the Avalokiteśvara/Nātha/Maitrī cult of being eclipsed by the modernists’ efforts to create Pāli canonical Buddhism among the laity on the one hand and the resurgence of the “spirit religion” on the other are also briefly placed in perspective.

All in all, this is an important book for a number of reasons, the most obvious being the assimilation of a Mahāyāna Bodhisattva with a Sinhala national deity and with the Buddha-to-be. More significant, perhaps, is the author’s integration of local and popular concerns, with what is usually described as the Other-Worldly or *nibbanic* form of Buddhism. In this regard, Holt adds to a small but increasing body of works that are slowly redirecting Buddhist studies from transnational to national issues.

**James Santucci**

# Communications

## An announcement from Leslie Price

*Associate editor Leslie Price reports that a number of documents were discovered in the Oriental and India Office Collections (British Library on the subject of Madame Blavatsky being a Russian spy. Mr. Price wrote the following note accompanying the documents:*

The documents attached are part of the material found in the investigation of the India Office Library started in March 1993, and are being made available before publication to interested scholars. You may cite and quote from them in your work, but you are asked not to publish them without agreement from those preparing them for publication. They are Tony Hern of London, who found them, and Paul Johnson of the United States who is following up transatlantic references. Blavatsky Trust of London paid for and owns the original photocopies. Arrangements for full publication will be discussed with James Santucci, Editor of Theosophical History and with the Trust.

The main documents are a report from the British Consul in New York in 1879 rejecting the idea that Madame Blavatsky was a Russian agent; and a report from the Ottoman minister in Washington, shortly before, suggesting that she was.

*The documents include a letter from the Turkish Imperial Legation in Washington dated 24 December 1878, dispatches dated 4 February 1879 from Constantinople, 28 February 1879 from the Foreign Office (two in number), 8 May 1879, 10 May 1879, 3 June 1879 (3) and 3 July 1879.*

An announcement regarding their eventual publication will be included in the next issue.

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## A Reply to Mr. Paul Johnson's Review of N. Richard-Nafarre's "Helena Blavatsky ou la Réponse du Sphinx."

Paul Johnson's kind remarks about the qualities he recognizes in my biography of Helena Blavatsky are soon followed by harsh judgments concerning the credibility of my deontology which I cannot let pass without an appropriate answer.

Mr. Johnson's first reproach is of an epistemological nature. He points out to a lack of a discussion which should have stemmed, according to him, from the confrontation of all the matters at issue concerning the sources of H.P.B.'s life through all the previous writers. This lack of reference is analyzed by Mr. Johnson as the result

of “*baste*,” and he concludes to “*a lack of thorough, objective research and documentation*” undermining my “*biography’s scholar credibility*.”

On the one hand, the fact that I do not refer directly to some “*points discussed by previous writers*” and, consequently, do not mention them, does not signify I did not know about them. If I did not find it convenient to retain these ideas in a very synthetical work, it is only because I was not convinced of the credibility or interest of the materials they provide.

Thus, I wish to make it clear that, as I duly declared in my introduction, my purpose has never been to produce a biography which could be “*a significant contribution to scholarship*.” My only purpose was to propose to a large public a synthesis, in a narrative mode, referring exclusively to the *first-hand* and *direct* sources available, that is to say those of direct witnesses. All these sources are stated and should allow the reader to control and judge by himself about the credibility of my standpoint, which I explain in notes most of the time. Extended discussions about the theses of each previous author was not conceived as a necessary part of a *popular work* written without any pretension of being a “*scholar*” contribution and of adding new materials founded on “*sources not drawn upon by one’s predecessors*.” This is certainly the limit of my work—a very deliberate limit indeed.

This standpoint gives to Mr. Johnson the impression that I am a “*true believer defending the faith*.” This may be the result of my final frame of mind which Mr. Johnson is perfectly right to contest but that I maintain: all testimonies or considerations of the “*witnesses*” and commentators having known *Helena Blavatsky*—would they be friends or enemies—founded my convic-

tion of H.P.B.’s “*innocence*.” This is by no means a pre-established faith. I have just become gradually convinced of H.P.B.’s credibility.

A biography must certainly be founded on historical documents, but it should also rely on a *minimum* of psychology as an unavoidable subjective part. In the case of H.P.B., genuine sources are nothing but *testimonies*, all other data being nothing but speculations related in a more or less clever manner to the subject, like Mr. Johnson’s hypothesis. The fact that I emphasized Rawson’s role less than Mr. Johnson preferred, however, may be taken up as a point of discussion.

The point of contention between two parties will always be the credibility of the testimonies. But to deny the credibility of H.P.B. about her Masters, and this is her most intimate spiritual order of conviction and also when she deals with her close companions, is to make her an impostor and these fellows stupid simpletons or liars being party to a mystification. It is exactly what Mr. Johnson does, although he denies it at length.

Hence, on the subject of the identification of H.P.B.’s Masters, particularly of the “*Mabatma Morya*,” I did not discuss all the “*discrepancies*” of his manifold masks for a reason I believed I had made clear: we have to consider the evidence that H.P.B. gave to her relatives and friends “*information*” which is nothing but an accumulation of inextricable “*blinds*” (concerning the data of the *Dondakoff-Korsakoff letters*, I share the suspicion of Mrs. J. Overton Fuller and refer to her arguments). Moreover, it is vain trying to get some information about these *personages* from other people than those taking a share of the daily and *spiritual intimacy of H.P.B.*—Olcott the first (who met the Masters) and certainly not from her sisters or other family members whom she tries, from the

very beginning, to mislead on this subject.

It must also be emphasized that my aim has never been to *identify* the Masters (as Mr. Johnson pretends to do) but simply to make clear H.P.B.'s *relationship* with them, whoever they are.

So, if my work appears to my critic as "*one-pointedness*," I can return the compliment since his way of thinking is a constant denigration of any other source than those giving credibility to his version of facts—Mr. Johnson's propensity is to elude, and even to leave unquoted the positive testimonies (of direct witnesses) in order to be able to adopt a diametrically opposed point of view relying on indirect sources he more or less arbitrarily links with the subject.

The thesis of this author is certainly sustained by highly sophisticated (and remarkably well-documented) *suggestions*, however, they are never *demonstrations* but an incredible "house of cards" in which involuntary inconsistencies are as numerous as in H.P.B.'s deliberate play of "hide and seek." H.P.B.'s spiritual stature appears to me exclusive of any mean-spirited conspiracy like the one she is confined to by the inappropriate "demonstrations" of Mr. Johnson.

On the other hand, I must reply to this author's more severe allegation that I used his book without mentioning my source! I consider it a duty to answer on this point.

My nine months' research—following many years of study on the doctrine though I am not a Theosophist—was completed and my book was *ready for printing* when I was told by M. Jean-Christophe Faure about Paul Johnson's book (in September 1991); two months later, my friend Robert Amadou also told me about it. At that time, I was only able to have a short glimpse of the content of *In Search of the Masters*. I highly

deplore it that I was not informed of the publication of this book, published privately (like mine) and quite unknown in France. Among the people I questioned about the bibliography, nobody ever gave me the information on time. In September, it was too late to incorporate some more material to my book.

Yet, it is perfectly true that, as I was writing the corrections of my text, I realized that a reference to *Dolgorouky's* occult environment (Waite's *Masonic Encyclopædia* and the quotation of *St. Germain's* manuscript in the *Collected Writings*) could be inserted in the third chapter. After a due verification, I felt I could refer to the first hand source. The quotation about the *Dolgorouky's* papers in *H.P.B. speaks* was mine though. *Apart from that, I absolutely deny any other "borrowing" of the research of Mr. Johnson than these two references.* My own idea of H.P.B.'s connections with *Cagliostro's* tradition stemmed out of my personal reading of Gerard Galtier's book and of our conversations about the influence of Egyptian rites in occult practises in the nineteenth century.

So, why did I refrain from quoting Mr. Johnson's book in my bibliography when I am indebted to him for *two* references? It appeared to me that adding some short lines upon a subject I had looked into in such a superficial way when I could so easily refer to available direct sources, was not absolutely relevant. This bibliographical reference did not seem possible for another reason: my bibliography is *exclusively composed of sources I have used at length and carefully studied*, (thus my whole book is indebted to the work of Mrs Mary K. Neff whom I quote at length). So, I could not include a book the content and the credibility of which I had not verified yet and, above all, that I had not used (apart from the two data provided by a glimpse at it).

I can easily understand the suspicion of Mr. Johnson and, for this “Kiddle incident,” as I am not a “Mahatma,” I do apologize. As I have now read Mr. Johnson’s book, I can assure him that the future edition of my biography will make mention of it and Mr. Johnson may be sure that I will probably confront some of his (incredible) conclusions with mine. Maybe an appendix could take René Guénon’s place in an English version (this is not a promise).

Noël Richard-Nafarre

**Paul Johnson responds:**

*An apology prefaced by a series of attacks, and followed by the threat (not a promise) of more to come, suggests a certain insincerity; nevertheless, I accept it. Since Mr. Richard-Nafarre’s opinion of my book is irrelevant to the subject at hand, I will confine my remarks to his own. Two implications of his letter deserve comment. First, in arguing that the book’s scholarly limitations are intentional, he seems to suggest that it is therefore exempt from criticism on that score. But in a journal devoted to scholarly investigation of theosophical history, any reviewer would be remiss not to emphasize research and documentation. Whether the book’s weaknesses are deliberate or accidental is beside the point. Second, Richard-Nafarre’s explanation of his use of bibliographic citations has alarming implications. Plagiarism is the use of another’s words, research or ideas without acknowledgment. But as a matter of principle, Richard-Nafarre cannot cite his sources unless their “content and credibility” are “verified” and he has used them extensively. He clearly rejects any interpretation of H.P.B. that dissents*

*from Theosophical orthodoxy as “incredible.” This implies that plagiarism is always justified by any suspicion that the victim might be a heretic, or by the source having provided only a little information. It doesn’t take a Mahatma to see how unethical this is.*

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# From the Archives

## H. P. BLAVATSKY WRITES TO “M.A., OXON.”: An unpublished letter

Presented by Joscelyn Godwin

This letter from H. P. Blavatsky is preserved in a copy, as part of the “Rosicrucian Miscellanea” manuscript in the Library of the United Grand Lodge of England, Freemasons’ Hall, London. Compiled by Francis G. Irwin and his son, Herbert Irwin, and dated 1878, this manuscript contains transcriptions of letters, extracts from books, notes on Freemasonry and alchemy, and miscellaneous jottings.<sup>1</sup>

The present letter seems to have been H.P.B.’s first approach to “M.A., Oxon.,” the nom-de-plume of the Rev. William Stainton Moses (1839-1892), who was in regular correspondence with her and Olcott during their American period. Moses had been a curate, but was now a teacher of English at University College School, London. He was a writing medium whose main control was called “Imperator +,” and one of the most active figures in the more intellectual circles of Spiritualism, contributing frequently to *The Spiritualist* before founding his own journal, *Light*, in 1881.

Moses may first have become aware of H.P.B. on 13 February 1874, when *The Spiritualist* of London published J. M. Peebles’ article “A Seance

on the Great Pyramid.”<sup>2</sup> This stated that “Mme. Blavatsky, assisted by other brave souls, formed a society of spiritualists in Cairo about two years since. They have fine writing mediums, and other forms of the manifestations. They hold weekly *seances* during the winter months. Mme. Blavatsky is at present in Odessa, Russia. The lady whose husband keeps the Oriental Hotel [=Emma Coulomb], is a firm Spiritualist.”<sup>3</sup> *The Spiritualist* also carried H.P.B.’s very first English publication,<sup>4</sup> a defence of the Eddy Brothers; and a report of Olcott’s intention to publish a book based on his newspaper accounts of the Chittenden phenomena and his meeting there with H.P.B.<sup>5</sup> Moses thereupon wrote to his friend Epes Sargent in Boston, offering to introduce Olcott’s book (*People of the Other World*, published April 1875) to English Spiritualists. As a result, he heard from Olcott himself on 10 April 1875. Their letters of the following months, of which Moses published

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<sup>2</sup> The article was taken from *The Banner of Light* of 10 January 1874.

<sup>3</sup> *The Spiritualist* IV (13 Feb. 1874): 98.

<sup>4</sup> “Mediumship of the Eddy Brothers,” in *The Spiritualist* V (25 Dec. 1874): 306; same as her *New York Graphic* letter of 30 Oct. 1874; see *BCW* I, 29-34.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spiritualist* VI (1 Jan. 1875): 3-6.

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Mr. John Hamill, Librarian and Curator of the Library and Museum of the United Grand Lodge of England, for permission to publish this material.

long extracts in *Light* after H.P.B.'s death, show Olcott filled with enthusiasm for the new explanation of the Spiritualist phenomena as the work of Elementaries, and for the study of ancient books as containing the key to them. Evidently Moses wrote to H.P.B. herself during the summer; and this is her reply.

Begun on the eve, and completed on the very day of the Theosophical Society's inauguration (17 November 1875), this letter gives an unequalled insight into H.P.B.'s studies and erudition at the time. It is a pity that the copyist slipped up, apparently running on to another paragraph (or page) without noticing it, just as H.P.B. begins to write about Buddhism. Otherwise, to judge from the retention of all her mis-spellings and ungrammaticisms, he has been faithful to the lost original. I have made no editorial changes (not even correcting her use of quotation marks), so as to preserve an exact record of her command of written English. Students of the period may be interested to read another recent discovery, H.P.B.'s first letter to Moses' friend Charles Carleton Massey, published in *Light*, 113/1 (Spring 1993): 19-26. *The Occult Observer* 2/2 (Autumn 1992): 27-28, carries a short analysis of another item in the Irwins' manuscript, "Queen Victoria and the crystal." An important letter from Olcott to Massey from the same source, in which he describes an otherwise unrecorded visit from two Masters (one of whom is named), will follow in the next issue of *Theosophical History*.

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[88] New York, November 16, 1875

My dear Sir,

I feel guilty indeed towards you. I have

received your first letters, on a visit to Professor Corson and wife at Ithica Cornell University, and was so busy at the time that I had actually no time to acknowledge your favor—I did not wish to make of it merely an interchange of polite ceremonies, for my object in writing you, was to give you all the information that was in my power, and having my book to attend to at the time busy in the university library<sup>6</sup> I felt unable to collect two ideas—now I just received your second letter and the pangs of smitten conscience proved so powerful that I intend to devote you this day and so will give all I *can*—There are certain subjects which I am not at liberty to mention—neither will you ask me to give you on them any information—

Before I begin answering your questions I beg leave to take Sir Lt. Bulwers part<sup>7</sup>—He was an [89] Adept and kept it secret—first for fear [*sic*] ridicule—for it seems that [*sic*] the most dreaded weapon in your nineteenth century—and then because his vows would not allow him to express himself plainer than he did—he might have supped on pork chops for all I know—and perhaps they were underdone—but no chops either raw or reduced to cinders will prevent you if ever you are initiated to see the *Dweller of the Threshold*—and the Dweller is far from being a welcome or agreeable visitor I can assure you—

You offer me a good many questions—and if necessary I will answer them all—but will you

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<sup>6</sup> Corson's account of H.P.B.'s visit shows her as a recluse, shut up in his house all day (see Michael Gomes, *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement* [Wheaton: TPH, 1987], pp.112-113). But future biographers should note that she began her research for *Isis* in the Cornell University Library.

<sup>7</sup> Evidently Moses had asked some question concerning Bulwer Lytton and the "Dweller of the Threshold" described in *Zanoni*.

understand me? not that I doubt your intelligence but I doubt two things first my ability to express them—and second the aptitude of any one in this world to understand tail when he has no idea of a head—learning must come gradually—you have to learn the A.B.C. before you can spell, and spell before you can read fluently—and though you may read fluently you may understand what you read in the wrong way—and be worse off than ever—

[90] I am ready to stake my life—though it is not worth much for me—that the most illiterate of our fakeers knows *practically* more than all of your Tyndal's [*sic*] and Huxleys<sup>8</sup> put together—he will not be able to give a theoretical description of a fire mist—as the former does but he may teach Mr Tyndal what things were created out of the fire mist—what it is good for—and how he could produce it perhaps on a small scale—without any paraphernalia [*sic*] of science and useless apparatus—Brahim yoggi [*sic*] will not loose [*sic*] his time by splitting his brains over the probable evolution of our race—but he will take you to an aperture in a dark room and tell you “see for yourself”—

Then Mr Darwin or Wallace may perhaps *see* how at the beginning of time “the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters” in total darkness *for us*—in Divine self-radiancy for Himself—Mr Darwin might discover perhaps the chaos of the ancients—our modern ether *the first matter*—for it was existent before man—

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<sup>8</sup> Professor John Tyndall had made a scathing attack on Spiritualism and its believers in his Presidential Address to the British Association at Belfast in August, 1874. Coming from such an eminent scientist, it was circulated throughout Europe and caused high emotions. Thomas Huxley's antipathy to Spiritualism, likewise, is well known. H.P.B.'s allusions to “fire mist” are pointed, since Tyndall was the greatest living authority on radiant and other forms of heat.

This is the En Soph—from his outward aspect [91] the darkness before the *light*—the Orphic night “O Night thou blackness of the golden stars”<sup>9</sup> out of this darkness the Invisible remote Maker or Chaos, all things that are in this world come out as of a primal source, the Matrix as the Caballists call it—

Nature has two extremes between the two there is a middle substance or nature—man in his natural state is in this middle nature—where lurk the elementary future men of the Earths (plural if you please) rude sketches of men from different planets—you do not suppose we are the only inhabitants on an inhabited planet do you?

From this elementary state man must recede to one extreme or the other either corruption in his grave where he rots away, or to a spiritual glorious condition now listen well—the human earthly body must change ie die, for death is the transformation of the body to a more perfected shape materially and the man properly has nothing to do with it—towards the end of his life—but the inner man—the real one (not his mask) is not so well off as [92] his body—for whilst the latter is an irresponsible matter or substance—gets through various transformations always becoming more perfect—the spiritual man is either translated like Enoch or Elias to the higher state, or falls down lower than an elementary again—

There is an evolution and Darwin is right but not as he understands it—if science searched *both ways* as the Chaldean primeval sages did, she would be better off—there's an evolution for spiritual nature as for the material one—when prof Draper says in his “conflict” “theres no such thing as a sudden creation”—a sudden strange appearance, but there is a slow metamorphosis a slow development from a pre-existent form—”

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<sup>9</sup> This line is quoted from Orphic Hymn no.3, “To Night.”

this great scientist only repeats what Hermes Trismegistus (or Enoch or Abraham for the [*sic*] are all one) said many thousand years before him—and he learned it from the lips of nature herself—for “He walked with God.”

Remember what Orpheus “De verbo sacro” nemo illus, nisi chaldaeo de sanguine quiddam progenitus [93] vidit”, and this man descended of the Chaldean blood was Abraham, or Brahma, or Enoch, or Hermes Trismegistus, or Thaut or Thutii [Thutu?—take Higgins Anaclypsis [*sic*]—see what he says of Abraham being Brahma—and he is right so far but not further. \*\*\*

The Bible the Old Testament is a real Cabala and the Apocalypse gives the key it—the same with the Vedas—and the numbers of Pythagoras the same with Appollinus [*sic*] of Tyane and the Apocrypha (sun [*sic*] of them at least, Christianity is a hideous skeleton of paganism and Judaism, with the spirit having fled from it from the first century—this spirit of truth is now manifesting itself in the spiritual phenomena again, but it can never reenter the once abandoned skeleton—

It remains for us to build for him a new Temple—we must first understand the great magical axiom which says “Ex invisibili factum est visibili” [*sic*]

The Spirit moving upon the face of the water [94] is the one that none of us will ever know before we get so purified as to be able to behold her—the Adonai themselves never saw him—and Hermes, or Brahma, or Enoch saw him but through the Adonai—who was himself but a cloud of fire—

The Fire worshippers were no fools they adored the spirit in its only visible form—the chaos or Ether—science goes against theology—for the latter repeating like a parrot a word the meaning of which the clergy do not understand

and so take it literally—theology says that God created all out of nothing.

Does science know better than Theology from whom and how that seed which we call first matter for want of a better name proceeded—“God created out of nothing something” and science grins—yes but that something which proceeded from nothing was created one thing in which all things were contained—every being celestial and Terrestrial, and this first something was but a cloud or darkness—for the latter is matter to [*sic*]—[95] which condensed into matter—and this water or chaos or Ether—is the storehouse of everything in the universe—but you ask science or theology, what was that nothing out of which the first principle the creator of all and everything was made—It is indeed as the Rosicrucians say with “Robertus Fluctibus”<sup>10</sup> nihil quo ad nos.”

Will then [*sic*] let us leave it alone—and not quarrel over it Dionysius expressed it perfectly when he said it is nothing that was created or of those things that are and nothing of that which thou dost call nothing, that is of those things that are not—in thy empty destructive sense. “But by your leave it is a *true thing*—it is that transcendent essence whose *theology* is *negative*, as says Eugenius Philalithes<sup>11</sup> [*sic*]—and was known to the primitive Church, and to Christ or Jesus rather—but is now lost “to know nothing is the happiest life” said Cornelius Agrippa for to know nothing is life eternal.

This nothing is a Cabalistical name for God—and so far church is right unconsciously [96] when she says that everything was created out of nothing—for the universe cannot certainly be an

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Fludd.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Vaughan.

offspring of blind chance all this does not answer your questions—

I did not mean to say to you that Spirits (Elementary) were created out of or by the perpetual and universal motion of cosmic matter—as this used is [*sic*] understood by science but of what might be called the essence of it—Their creation is like our Creation to science a mystery—when you become an adept you will understand it without me teaching you—

Enough that they do exist and are created and can communicate with us a great deal easier than the disembodied men and women or immortal spirits it is easy to understand why the like attracts like ethereal as they are and invisible they are more matter than ourselves—the more terrestrial the more sinful we are—the more we attract these material beings created out of this cosmic matter—but over [97] which substance “the Spirit who moved on the face of the water” did not spread his Divine Ether as yet—thus conferring on them immortality the Adonai and Elohim—did not present them to Him to breath [*sic*] in their nostrils the breath of Immortal Life—they are of the middle nature of which I spoke above—

A man is a Trinity like the essence of God when man dies, as soon as he dropped off his body which must decay and so become more perfect his Spiritual or sidereal body takes place of his old Terrestrial body—and a new still more Ethereal envelope is given him—to cover the Divine ray of his Augoeides his soul or the real self—who waits during his endless transmigrations until he becomes absorbed in God or nothing—

This part of himself the Augoeides<sup>12</sup> is the Cabalistic nothing, or a particle of God—for being a particle and not the whole (for how can the endless [98] and boundless be a whole)? It is not

the less divine for it—it is not the less God—as a flame borrowed from a light a candle if you like will not diminish if you ignite at this mother flame, millions and myriads of other flames—

The sublime Hindoo doctrine of Emanation and absorption was never rightly understood Buddhism [*sic*] is an Eastern religion [*evidently the copyist has omitted something here*] and only give it vital life—or rather resurrect it in the Elementary foetus and endow sometimes with much of their vices—the astral body of the child—the second person of the Trinity—but with his soul neither elementary or Father or Mother have ought to do.

This Augoeides is a spark of the great fire, the En Soph—the invisible nothing—it is this Trinity in man which puzzle [*sic*] so much the scientist for they [*sic*] can hardly admit of a duality in man—the poor psychologists let alone the Trinity—and thus physiologists and psychologists, and anthropologists all scream [99] annihilation and incomprehensible—and come to a dead stop—whereas if they only studied the Chaldean Book of Numbers<sup>13</sup> the analogies and numbers of Pythagoras, the books of Hermes and so forth they would learn the value of the Hermetic axiom “quod est superius, est sicut ad quod est inferius” as above so is it beneath and vice versa—

I see you ask a good many questions which I cannot answer you—not because as I told you—you would not understand me bye and bye—but it would be useless for you—you would not realise it—I make an experiment if you show me candidly and honestly that you understand all I

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<sup>12</sup> On the Augoeides or “radiant body” - a favorite theme of H.P.B.’s and Serapis’s early writing - and its popularization in English by Bulwer Lytton, see G. R. S. Mead, *The Subtle Body* (London: Watkins, 1919), 75-90.

<sup>13</sup> This must be H.P.B.’s earliest reference to this enigmatic text.

wrote above—I will tell you more—but I cannot begin by the end—now in schin [*Hebrew letter Shin here*] is contained *all* the astral light is the Alpha and Omega—I can tell you so much not more. What you received about elementary spirits, was not intended for you, but for some one who studies already for several years. [100] Col. Olcott asked me to send it to you and I did—copying it as it was from the Treatise or M.S.S.<sup>14</sup>—you are a clairvoyant and have direct communications with spirits—perhaps you may see some of the Brotherhood—I mean the one I belong to—not of Luxor—for Luxor is but an adopted name for the committee—

I think in your first letter which I cannot find at the present moment you tell me of a certain Gentleman who wants to know what lodge I belong—it is certainly not to the Rosicrucians—as I said to every one in the Article to Hiram<sup>15</sup>[*sic*]—It is a secret Lodge in the East perhaps they are the Brotherhood Mejnour speaks about in Zannoni [*sic*]—

Believe me dear Sir that if I do not say more it is not because I do not want to tell you. Col Oldcott [*sic*] knows as little as you do—but he has faith and knows me—he knows I am incapable of deceit or deliberate falsehood—[101] Except receiving a few letters from the Brothers and meeting one or two occasionally—he is utterly in the dark—Judge me by the works I do not by my words.

To night is the inauguration [*sic*] meeting of our Theosophical Society and Oldcott is busy with his

address for he is elected President and poor me corresponding secretary of the society time will show you can always write me to the P.O. box of the society 4335—

I wish you would do me the favour of asking one of your best *spirits* to answer me two or three mental questions—I have stored for him in my head he knows—then I will tell you something very interesting for you.

Truly me,

Truly and faithfully yours

H. P. Blavatsky

What did you think of seeing when you looked so hard out of the opened window in the country. I think [102] it was a Friday or a Saturday morning it was the emanation of the water—did you remark anything

You will find much of what I write in *Magia Adamica* by Eugenius Philalethes. I see you do not understand it rightly—he did not even finish it I explained several passages of it—of the astral light.

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<sup>14</sup> The Irwins' manuscript contains a transcription of this "treatise" following the present letter. Much of it is adapted from Eliphas Levi.

<sup>15</sup> I.e., the article H.P.B. called her "first occult shot": "A Few Questions to 'Hiraf,'" in *BCW*I, 101-19.

# The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society

John Cooper

In the not too distant future the writer intends to compose an outline history of the Esoteric Schools that have manifested themselves within the Theosophical Movement since the formation of the Theosophical Society at New York in 1875. This proposed outline will link what is already known about the history of these Schools with a fairly large amount of previously private material, particularly about those Schools which have been forgotten both by Theosophists and by Theosophical historians.

The present paper is intended to present an outline history of one of these almost forgotten Schools and this paper is based upon the reading of most of the original documents mentioned in it.

However, we must first of all place this School within the framework of the background history. Following several attempts that failed, Madame H.P. Blavatsky, the prime founder of the Theosophical Society and Movement, formed the Esoteric School of Theosophy at London on October 9th., 1888. She was the Outer Head of the School and her Master was regarded as the Inner Head. By 1890 an Inner Group of the E.S.T. was formed. Before H.P.B. died, on May 8th., 1891, the School had been renamed the Eastern School of Theosophy. Following her death a full meeting of the Council of the E.S.T. was held in London on May 27th. Present at that meeting were the members of the London Council who had worked under H.P.B., plus the American Theosophist William

Quan Judge. At this meeting the Council agreed and recorded that

the highest officials in the School for the present are Annie Besant and William Q. Judge . . . and that from henceforth with Annie Besant and William Q. Judge rests the full charge and management of this School.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of the Judge Case the E.S.T. was split into two separate organisations leaving one E.S.T. with Annie Besant as Outer Head integrated with the Theosophical Society with headquarters at Adyar in India and William Q. Judge as Outer Head of the E.S.T. which was composed of members of the Theosophical Society in America, and affiliated Societies in other countries, including England and Australia.

We need to next look at the story of the E.S.T. within America. W.Q. Judge died on the 21st. of March, 1896. At an E.S.T. meeting held on the 29th. March the English Theosophist Ernest Temple Hargrove<sup>2</sup> announced that W.Q.J. had left instructions behind. A pamphlet, dated the 3rd. April,

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<sup>1</sup> See Henk J. Spierenburg and Daniël van Egmond, "The Succession of H.P. Blavatsky: A Documentary History," *Theosophical History* III/7-8 (July-October 1991) for details of the May 27th meeting (206-208).

<sup>2</sup> For a biography of Ernest Temple Hargrove, see *Echoes of the Orient, the Writings of W.Q. Judge*, volume 2. Compiled by Dara Eklund (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1980), 471.

was sent to the E.S.T. members stating that a new Outer Head had been chosen according to directions left by Judge. The name of the new Outer Head was kept secret for a time and was then announced to be Katherine Tingley. All went well



Ernest Temple Hargrove (By permission of the author).

for a time and Katherine Tingley<sup>3</sup> led a world crusade. Hargrove was elected President of the Theosophical Society in America.

By 1898 Hargrove had resigned as President and at the Convention held that year a new Constitution was approved by the members giving Katherine Tingley greatly increased control of the Theosophical Society in America. The Hargrove-led group then held their own Convention and reformed the Theosophical Society in America, retaining some 200 of the original members of the T.S. in America. Hargrove then wrote to Katherine Tingley that

by Order of the Master you have ceased to be the Outer Head of the E.S.T. in the interior and true sense. The Outer Head to follow you has already been appointed by the Master.

It is the history of this Esoteric School that is the subject of this paper. But first a few words about the reformed Theosophical Society in America. The Society inspired by Hargrove changed its name in 1908 to the Theosophical Society with its Headquarters based in New York. It appears that the magazine *Theosophy*, the rebirth of Judge's *The Path*, continued to be edited by Hargrove and that the question and answer magazine *The Theosophical Forum* was edited by Jasper Niemand. However, the major magazine for this organisation was *The Theosophical Quarterly* which was published from July 1903 until October 1938 and was one of the most distin-

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<sup>3</sup> For an outline of the work of Katherine Tingley, see Emmett A. Greenwalt, *California Utopia: Point Loma 1897-1942*. Second and revised edition (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1978)

guished magazines published within the Theosophical Movement.<sup>4</sup>

This Theosophical Society formed branches, held Conventions and remained active until it went into a period of 'indrawal' in 1935. There still remain active and devoted Theosophists who draw their inspiration from this Society and *The Theosophical Quarterly*. In correspondence they have provided me with a large amount of information on the work of their Society which will not be mentioned in this paper. Nor am I thanking them by name as I believe they would prefer to maintain their anonymity. This Society contained among its membership some of the most distinguished Theosophists in the Movement. They included Ernest Temple Hargrove (who died in 1939); Charles Johnston, the Irish Theosophist who was the friend of Yeats and of George Russell (Æ), and who married the niece of H.P.B. and also provided translations of several Eastern classics; Dr. Archibald Keightley, who assisted H.P.B. in the editing and production of *The Secret Doctrine*; and his wife, the former Julia Campbell Ver Planck who was best known as Jasper Niemand, the author of a number of outstanding Theosophical essays and the recipient of the *Letters That Have Helped Me* from W.Q. Judge. Other prominent members were Professor Henry Bedinger Mitchell and Mr. and Mrs. Clement Acton Griscom. Dr. J.D. Buck was also a member for a few years.

Let us now look at the Eastern School of Theosophy connected with this Society. The first known paper of this School is titled *Subsidiary Paper D* (presumably following on from the

*Subsidiary Papers A, B, and C* as issued by W.Q. Judge). After commenting on the Hierarchy, cycles, the Lodge and on meditation the Paper quotes from a message from a Master dated the 15th of December 1897 and dealing with the importance of the Pledge of the E.S.T. The Outer Head then commented on the importance of the Pledge.

In May 1898 the Outer Head wrote a letter to the members of the School. It was read at an E.S.T. meeting at the time of the Convention held at Cincinnati and was known as the Cincinnati Letter. The Outer Head wrote that

the Masters are both displeased and disappointed with the School as a whole . . . The School will have to submit to a period of silence, of darkness, of discouragement. Only those who can get beyond the outer clouds and reach the inner Light which always is burning will be able to find light during this time . . . when this test of silence is ended . . . the School will be more truly an occult body than ever before; entrance to it will be much more difficult; rigid probations and examinations will be required . . . .

On October 17th., 1898, E.T. Hargrove wrote to the members of the School

Already I have been instrumental in "introducing" the Outer head to the members, I have not yet "introduced" the members to the Outer Head; and this has to be done in due form . . . . This is one way of saying that the School must be organised. Now you already know that the Outer Head will confine himself to aiding those members who appeal to him for guidance in their studies and in their interior development; that he will not attend to the routine work . . . .

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<sup>4</sup> *The Theosophical Quarterly* lasted for 35 volumes. It was started by C.A. Griscom and contained articles mainly by the members of the Society. A series called *Fragments* by Cavé was published from this magazine in three volumes and follow the lines of *Light on the Path*. Again the identity of Cavé is one of the interesting puzzles of this Society.

Based on this initiative a Committee of the School was established to be responsible to the members of the School and to handle its administrative work. The Outer Head did not appoint this Committee as it was established by Hargrove. By December 1898 this Reference Committee of the School was formed. It consisted of A.P. Buchman, J.D. Buck, George M. Coffin, C.A. Griscom, Charles Johnston, Archibald Keightley and William Ludlow.

On the 1st of March 1899 the E.S.T *Aids and Suggestions No. 8* was issued. This followed the previous seven issued by W.Q. Judge. After commenting on the statement made by H.P.B. that no Master would come, or send a messenger to Europe or America after the 31st of December 1899 until after 1975, the paper makes two points:

(1) the members themselves must govern the School as there is to be no leader;

(2) the Outer Head is to remain absolutely unknown to the members of the School.

It would seem that both these requirements were maintained within this School. The School governed itself and the Outer Head did remain unknown and his or her name was never given to the members. Here I should mention that I believe that I know who was the Outer Head but as his or her name is just about unknown to present day Theosophists and as I have no proofs for this statement I prefer to keep this information private for the present.

In *Aids and Suggestions No. 8* the Outer Head wrote that

H.P.B. left in her writings *the entire mass of the Lower Mysteries* with the *Instructions* for a key. To understand this requires training (1)

by living the life, (2) by linking with the Higher Mind (the fire of Kundalini playing on the pineal gland) and by (3) registering on the brain the knowledge thus acquired.

*Aids and Suggestions No. 9* is dated the 17th May, 1899. This document deals with Initiations and stated that the School, as a whole, has passed through an Initiation. It states that the first Initiation of the School was when it passed through the attacks on H.P.B. The second Initiation of the School was "as a psychic body, in the psychic world." The School had now passed through a third Initiation and was, as a School, now

an accepted Chela, of the Masters, and has its proper place and share in the creative work of the Oversoul.

This meant that the School had gained a footing in the causal world and this would bring three powers to the members who can realise themselves on the causal plane. These three powers are:

1. The power to guide his or her own life.
2. The power to draw forth the creative and the divine to become real and immortal selves, self-poised amid infinities.
3. The omniscience and omnipotence of the Eternal.

The real work of the Outer Head is to guide the members to this realisation. Although the trials of the second and third Initiations are not mentioned, it seems probable that the second Initiation was the Judge Case and the third was the split away from Katherine Tingley. The concept of the

School being an accepted Chela of the Masters is mentioned many times in the papers of this School. It was shown as a diagram with the Pre-Chelic condition being pictured with the Lodge of the Masters being in the inner world and the Outer Head, Esoteric School and Theosophical Society in the outer world. After the School is seen as a Chela of the Masters we see the Lodge of the Masters, the Outer Head and the Inner Body of the E.S.T. residing in the inner world and the members of the E.S.T. and of the T.S. residing in the outer world.

In October 1899 a series of examination questions were sent to the members. The Outer Head, in January 1900, responded and stated that the members of the School could be classified into three classes. The first class consisted of the disaffected members who considered the School to be practically dead. For them the cycle had closed and the School had passed on and they were invited to consider resigning from the School. The second class of members were called the intermediate class who "cannot say that they *know* but who have an interior conviction." This class was urged to fight until they knew. The third class consisted of those members who felt the power and the guidance of the Lodge behind them. It is only the members of the third class who have found the Outer Head. Here it is not clear whether the meeting was to be on the inner plane. From the document it is clear that some of these members did meet the Outer Head. As some of the members in their replies to the questions wrote that they felt the School to be dead, the Outer Head made a few comments on the history of the School. As they are the only personal items in the voluminous papers of this School they deserve to be quoted.

First: Mrs. Tingley was Outer Head of the E.S.T. Those who announced that fact, and endorsed her as such, were entirely right in what they did, and carried out the wish of the Master. By the Master was she appointed, and by the Master deposed; the agent (E.T. Hargrove) who made the second announcement [deposing Mrs. Tingley] being as correct in that as he had been in the first. Any other hypothesis is untenable for those who believe that the School is guided by the Masters, for the link would have been broken otherwise, and the School left for a period to its own devices, in other words, deserted. Were this possible, the entire structure crumbles to pieces. Those who object to my remaining "unknown" will have to address themselves to the Master who appointed me, and by whose command that condition exists.

. . . A democratic organisation is essential at this time, when "no Master may come or send;" and when the School, therefore, must govern itself if receiving only interior inspiration.

A special committee was appointed to consider the best ways of teaching Theosophy to the members of the School. Their proposals were approved by the Reference Committee of the School and then by the Outer Head who emphasised that the teachings on the Inner Man should be central to this study. In Sept. 1900 four courses of study were proposed. These proposals were later modified probably along the lines of easing the divisions between the courses. These courses were:

The First Course provided a comprehensive knowledge of Theosophical philosophy by means of studying the exoteric Theosophic works in the light of the E.S.T. *Instructions* 1,2 and 3.

The Second Course taught a more advanced

DIAGRAM OF 1<sup>st</sup> 25 YEARS  
WHEN THE LODGE WORKED  
DIRECTLY IN THE WORLD

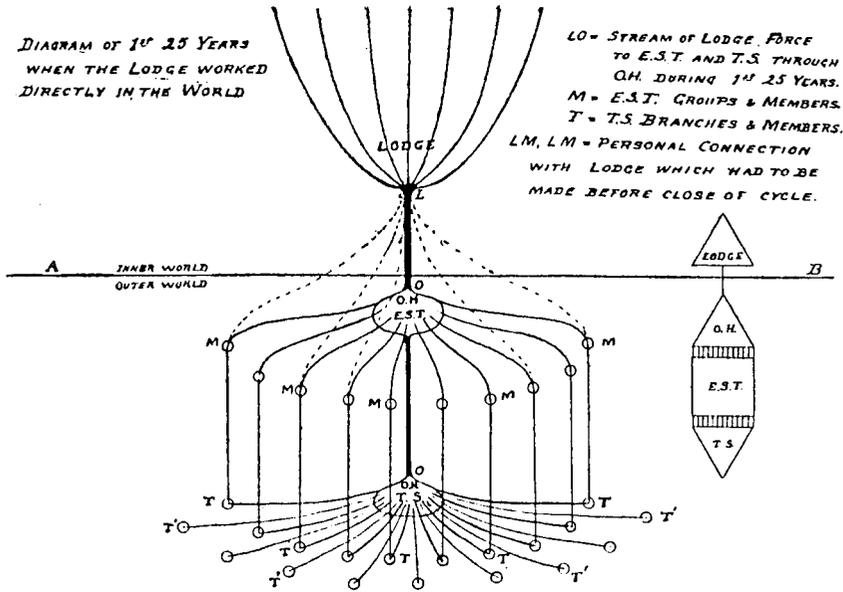


FIG. I.

DIAGRAM AFTER CHANGE  
OF CYCLE  
PRESENT CONDITION

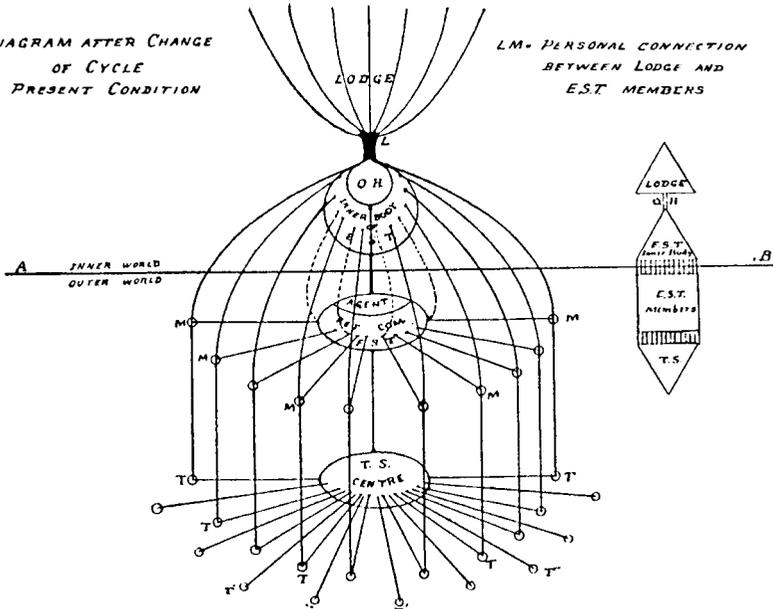


FIG. II

philosophy based upon *The Secret Doctrine* and other metaphysical works with the study being based upon the E.S.T. *Aids and Suggestions*.<sup>4</sup>

The Third Course will use *Instructions* 4, 5 and 6 of the E.S.T. plus other papers to be issued to the School plus some unpublished letters of the Master K.H. The emphasis in this course was to compare the above with the Upaniṣads, Veda, Purāṇas, Bible and other sacred texts.<sup>5</sup>

The Fourth Course was to be based upon the devotional side of Theosophy and was to study *Light on the Path, The Voice of the Silence, Letters That Have Helped Me, Through the Gates of Gold* and other devotional texts. This course was intended to lead to the development of the Inner Man.

An examination paper was sent to members. The Examining Board, on the 1st of May, 1901, sent to the members their comments on the answers received. The earlier portion of the examination paper asked for definitions for the Theosophical Movement, Theosophical Society and the E.S.T. The members of the School were also asked to explain the relationships between

these three. Then followed questions on general Theosophical philosophy. Two of the questions were

What are the Tattvas?

When does true self-consciousness begin? In what principle is the consciousness of the ordinary man centered?

The last question in the paper was No. 18:

What do you understand the Inner Man to be? What are the effects of thought and action on the Inner Man?

The answer to this question, as given by the Examining Board was described as

The most valuable contribution which has been made to E.S.T. literature for many years. It marks a distinct advance in what the Masters permit to be disclosed, for the truth about the Inner Man is one of the most closely guarded secrets of occultism.

*Aids and Suggestions* No. 14, dated the 11th of June, 1902, dealt at length with the Inner Man. It referred to "The Elixir of Life"<sup>6</sup> Judge's "The

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<sup>4</sup> *Aids and Suggestions* as issued by W.Q. Judge are in *Echoes of the Orient*, vol. 3. Compiled by Dara Eklund (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> I understand that *Instructions* 1-6 plus possibly other material was issued to members of this School. I have not seen it. *Instructions* 1-5 are included in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1889-1890*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume XII (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1980), 513-713. *Instruction* 6 contains some of the Inner Group material plus other matter. See H. J. Spierenburg, *The Inner Group Teachings of H.P. Blavatsky* With a short historical introduction by J.H. Dubbink (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1985), 138.

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<sup>6</sup> "The Elixir of Life" has been reprinted many times, particularly as the first article in *Five Years of Theosophy*. The author was Godolphin Mitford, who wrote as Mizra Murad Ali Beg. For a brief biography, see *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1883-1884-1885*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume VI (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1989), 241-44. There is a rumour that he was a member of the famous Mitford family, but I have found no reference to him in the standard biography of the family.

Culture of Concentration,”<sup>7</sup> certain of the notes from *The Voice of the Silence* and *The Dream of Ravan*<sup>8</sup> to explain a process that resulted in the

creation of a permanent individual vehicle for the occupation of the Soul or Higher Ego.

A seven year Report on the work of the School was given at a meeting held on the 30th of April, 1905, on the occasion of a T.S. Convention. Here it was stated that the School had moved from the phase of Instruction under H.P.B. and W.Q. Judge to that of Discipline under the present Outer Head.

The last document that I have from this School is called *Aids and Suggestions* No. 18, dated the 7th of December, 1907, from New York. This document deals with the study of *Instructions* 1,2 and 3 and states that while

*Instruction* 1 sets forth the broad truths as to the Inner Man, and *Instruction* 2 shows the Inner Man as the child of the Logos, *Instruction* 3 lays down the conditions in which the growth of the Inner Man may favourably proceed.

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<sup>7</sup> “The Culture of Concentration” will be found in *Echoes of the Orient*, volume 1. Compiled by Dara Eklund (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1980), 64-73.

<sup>8</sup> *The Dream of Ravan* is a portion of the *Jñāneśvarī*, a Marāthi poem written in the 12th century A.D. by Jñāneśvar. It is referred to by H.P.B. in her Preface to *The Voice of the Silence*, where she calls it the *Dnyaneshwari*, “a superb mystical treatise in which Krishna describes to Arjuna in glowing colours the conditions of a fully illumined Yogi.” H.P.B. says it is a Sanskrit work, whereas it was written in the Marthi language of Western India. A translation was published in two volumes in 1967 by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. of London. A better translation is *Jñāneswar’s Gitā* by Swami Kripananda (Buffalo: State University of New York, 1989).

This is all the information that I have on this School that is relevant to this paper. The material that I have is contained in almost 400 pages of teachings on cycles, meditation and other aspects of the Esoteric Philosophy. The question remains: what happened to this School? I do not know the answer. However I suspect that it too may have gone into a period of ‘indrawal’ *i.e.* from active work; when their Society entered that phase in 1935. This would mean that the School itself (if we recall the diagram mentioned earlier) had entered into the inner world, to remain there and to be contacted by its members only by rising to that plane and finding the School, the Outer Head and the Masters within themselves.

This School warrants detailed analysis. Here I would make only three comments:

- 1) The stress on the democratic process in the management of this School.
- 2) The emphasis on the need for the thorough study of Theosophy and the inauguration of a graded study course based initially, upon Theosophic texts and then on the Sacred Books of the East and West.
- 3) The position of the Outer Head meant that the members of the School could only make contact with him or her by means of interior development and not by asking for orders from an outer superior.

This leads me to my final point. Papers such as this indicate the need for systematic study of all the developments that have resulted from the initial Theosophical inspiration in 1875. This might result in a more broadly based understanding of Theosophy and, possibly, answers to many Theosophical puzzles. For example the teachings

on the Inner Man mentioned earlier can be correlated to the Nirmāṇakāya and Saṃbhogakāya doctrines of both Yogācāra Buddhism and Theosophy and also with the teachings of Harold Waldwin Percival, editor of *The Word* magazine.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *The Word* (New York): volumes 1-25 (Oct 1904 - Sept. 1917).

# Theodor Reuss as Founder of Esoteric Orders (Part II of the OTO)

Peter-Robert König<sup>1</sup>

Despite our attempt to draw a chronological picture of events, we must omit almost all consideration of the personality of Carl Kellner (1851-1905), the ideological founder of the OTO. In our forthcoming book on the OTO-Phenomena a comprehensive biography will be given for the first time by the Austrian researcher Josef Dvorak.

The present article consists mostly of quotations of historical materials only slightly annotated. Editorial comments are inserted in brackets so that the reader can understand the historical context. A few additional comments and bibliographical notes will be found in the footnotes.

We start with a biographical overview of Theodor Reuss 1855-1923), published in 1936 in the “völkisch” Jew-baiting pamphlet “Der Judenkennner.” It is republished here in order to show the feelings against secret societies as they existed at that time. Anti-Semitic attacks are omitted.

A more detailed biography of Reuss was written by Ellic Howe and Helmut Moeller under the title “Theodor Reuss” in *Ars Quatuor Coronati* 91 (1978). The same authors wrote a somewhat confusing version in German as “Merlin Peregrinus” (Würzburg, Königshausen and Neumann, 1986). The present article contains some material which

has never before been published.

## The Grandfather of the Anthroposophical Society

*Der Judenkennner* 6 (5 February 1936):

Karl Theodor Reuss was born in 1855 in Augsburg . . . .He attended the Gymnasium, was apprenticed as a druggist but soon got an education as a professional opera singer. As such he contacted [*in 1883*] Richard Wagner and his protector King Ludwig II of Bavaria. Suddenly his career came to an end when Reuss lost his voice (there was a rumour that he had syphilis). . . .As regular correspondent of several major newspapers he went to London where, [*on 9 Nov. 1876*], he was initiated in the German-speaking “Pilger-Loge” Nr. 238 . . . [*and expelled in 1881*].

In 1878 he was sent by the *Times* (London) as a well-paid war-reporter to the Balkans and in 1882 he went to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 1880 Reuss spent a longer period in his home country, in Munich. Together with descendants of the “Order of the Illuminati” he attempted a revival of this anti-government order originally founded by Professor Adam Weishaupt of Ingolstadt . . . .

We find Reuss again in the year 1885 in London, in the executive committee of the

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<sup>1</sup>This is the second in a series of articles by Mr. König on the personalities and branches of the OTO, the first of which appeared in *Theosophical History* IV/3.

anarchist “Socialist League.” . . .

[His *first*] pamphlet, “The Matrimonial Question,” was not warmly received.<sup>2</sup> . . . On May 10 he was expelled from the “Socialist League” because of defamatory actions.” . . .

The unveiling of his activities as a spy for Germany through the anarchists of London forced the traitor to leave England.

In 1888 Reuss re-appeared in Berlin and joined the actor Leopold Engel in order to re-found the “Order of the Illuminati.” . . .

The German Grand Lodges firstly ignored Reuss and his allies . . . Only when Reuss in 1900 propagated his own “Johannislogen” under his business enterprise “Grosse Freimaurerloge für Deutschland” did the “most honorable Grandmasters” become furious against the unfair competitor. As a result, in 1901 Leopold Engel separated from Reuss, accusing him of fraud . . . the majority of the members of the “Order of the Illuminati” stayed with Reuss, while Engel tried to run his “Weltbund der Illuminaten”<sup>3</sup> independently from all the other Grand Lodge offices . . . .

*Der Judenkenner* 7 (12 February 1936):

Within [*the Memphis-Misraim*] Reuss collected the most reliable members into one particular group; the Order of the Oriental Templars (OTO) . . . .

One can detect the spirit of the [*pertinent*] Church<sup>4</sup> from what is written in one of

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<sup>2</sup> Reuss allegedly used the same ideas about women in his “Aufbauprogramm der Gnostischen Neo-Christen OTO” (Bad Schmiedeberg, 1920), reprinted in the German magazine *AHA* 2 (Bergen/Dumme, 1992): 13-17.

<sup>3</sup> The history of Leopold Engel’s Orders will be discussed in a future article.

<sup>4</sup> The Gnostic Catholic Church will be discussed in a future article as well.

their brochures: “The Israelites would not have to give up a lot in order to belong to us . . . the Gnostic Church supports the parliamentary-liberal republic” (*Le Réveil des Albigeois*, No. 1, 1900<sup>5</sup>).

The first head [*of the OTO*] . . . was not Reuss, but the Vienna manufacturer Dr. Karl [*sic*] Kellner . . . .

In 1905 Reuss was living in Hamburg. In the summer of 1906 [24 June] he went to Munich . . . in order to initiate some “Novizen” in the secrets of the Order of the Templars. These “Novizen” were so disgusted by these “revelations”<sup>6</sup> that they alerted the police to arrest the libertine Reuss, who only just escaped arrest while dining in the hotel “Metropol,” and fled to his crony John Yarker in England . . . .

In Germany, sorting out the business of the Order became rather complicated after General Grandmaster Reuss’ ignominious retreat. Although Herr A.P. Eberhardt of Leipzig had already received the leadership of the “Johannislogen” on 11 November 1906, Reuss kept the higher degrees for himself until 1909. Now he transferred authority to his most faithful squire, Dr. Carl Lauer of Ludwigshafen.<sup>7</sup>

Only the highest floor of his headquarters, Memphis-Misraim or OTO, was still rentable. A suitable tenant was found in . . . Doctor Rudolf Steiner, who acquired the complete firm [*collection of orders*] in the winter of 1906/07 for the trifling sum of 1500 Marks. Steiner himself always told his faithful (followers) that the highest degree of his masonic system should be only the lowest degree of another occult system on whose peak was . .

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<sup>5</sup> The magazine of Jules Doinel’s Gnostic Church.

<sup>6</sup> The “mutual touching of the phalli as yoga-meditation.” *Wiener Freimaurer Zeitung* 9/10 (October 1929): 26.

<sup>7</sup> Lauer published his *Andreas-Blätter* from 1908.

. . . a “*Rex summus maximus*.”<sup>8</sup>

*Der Judenkennner* 8 (19 February 1936):

In order to support himself in London, Reuss founded there a “High School of Hermetic Sciences.” . . . At the end of 1913 he settled in Paris.

Six months after Reuss settled down in Basel, war broke out.

After the war Reuss stayed another two years in Basel [*Der Judenkennner* now mentions E.T. Kurtzahn, a leading member of the Gnostic Church, in connection with Reuss since 1922.<sup>9</sup>]

Reuss removed his residence to Munich . . . where he became an employee of the municipal travel agency. He still held his OTO meetings [for example, with Arnold Krumm-Heller<sup>10</sup>]. Krumm-Heller nowadays [1936?] still spreads his cancer as an agent in Rosicrucian societies in Brazil. We beg all our friends to watch his activities closely and to report to us.

Brooding over new plans to stultify Aryan scientists, Reuss died in 1923 in his 68th year in Munich.

[*Translated*]

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<sup>8</sup>This title perhaps refers to the X<sup>o</sup>, the administrative degree of the OTO which rules over the members of the pertinent country: *Rex Summus Sanctissimus*. The X<sup>o</sup> members vote for the election of the O.H.O.

<sup>9</sup>The events that took place between 1916 and 1920 will be dealt with in a future article.

<sup>10</sup>The Theosophist Krumm-Heller was such an interesting personality that he and his order, *Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua*, will be dealt with *in extenso* in the forthcoming book on the OTO-phenomena as well as in a future article.

## TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS

### FIRST FOUNDATION DOCUMENT

In the name of the secret Aeropagus of the Order of the Illuminati . . . it is decided that from January 1900 onwards that right will be re-asserted to found Freemasonic lodges, as was done by its founder Adam Weishaupt.

The Secret Aeropagus of the Order of the Illuminati hereby delivers to his member of the Order, Dr. Theodor Reuss, the sole right to found and enlighten Freemasonic lodges of the Scottish Rite of Ancient and Accepted Masonry . . . Dresden, 1. Dimeh [?] 1900 . . . [signed:] Theodor Reuss, Leopold Engel.

[*Transcript from Oriflamme*, July 1914: 7-8<sup>11</sup>. This paper allegedly was written on 6 May 1901, translated.]

### MARTINIST ORDER<sup>12</sup>

With the present paper, Theodor Reuss of Berlin is authorised to represent the Order under the office/title of Special Inspector with seat in Berlin . . . 24 June 1901 . . . [signed:] Papus [*Gerard Encausse*]<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>*Oriflamme* was the name of a magazine of the aforementioned fringe-masons which started in January 1902. First an organ for Memphis-Misraim it soon became the voice of the OTO. Citation from *Oriflamme* (Berlin and London, July 1914): 7.

<sup>12</sup>A French masonic esoteric organisation founded in the 18th century.

<sup>13</sup>That summer Papus allegedly initiated the Tzar of Russia into Martinism. See James Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1976), 168.

[*Transcript of the original, translated*]  
**SWEDENBORG RITE OF  
FREEMASONRY**

Be it known by these Presents, that our worthy Brother Theodor Reuss a Master Mason who has signed his name in the Margin thereof, was duly elevated on the 25th day of July AD 1901 . . . to the Degrees of Enlightened Sublime and Perfect Freemason in the Emanuel Lodge and Temple No. 1 of London [England]...this 26th day of July AD 1901 . . . [signed]: William Wynn Westcott]

[*Transcript of the English/German original*]

## CONSTITUTION

The Illustrious Patriarch Grand Conservators of the Rite, constituting the Sovereign Sanctuary of Antient and Primitive Masonry, in and for the continent of America, duly convoked by the Most Ill. Sov. Grand Master General, Harry J. Seymour, acting by authority vested in him by Letters Patent granted him by the Executive Chiefs of the Rite, sitting at the East overlooking the Valley of Paris, France, on the 21st day of the Egyptian month Tibi, answering to the 21st day of July 1862, E.V. . . . duly and constitutionally established the Sovereign Sanctuary in, and Grand Lodge for Great Britain and Ireland, with the M. J. Brother John Yarker, as Sovereign Grand Master General, the same was duly inaugurated personally by . . . Harry J. Seymour on the 8th day of October, 1872, at London.

The said Sovereign Sanctuary in and Grand Lodge for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, after careful and deliberate discussion, have ordained and decreed that a Lodge and Temple of Antient and Primitive Masonry [*Svedenborg Rite*] be constituted and established in Germany. This

Lodge and Temple [*is*] to be known as the Holy Grail Lodge and Temple No. 15 . . .

Brother Freemasons who wish to enter the Lodge "Holy Grail," kindly address Grand Chancellor Max Rahn . . . or Grand Treasurer General August Weinholtz . . . or Grand Conservator and Custos Leopold Engel or Herr Franz Held . . .

[*Transcript from the German/English first issue of Oriflamme in January 1902*<sup>14</sup>]

THE SPIRITUAL FATHER of the re-organised Order of the Oriental Templars<sup>15</sup> was the late Sovereign Honorary General Grandmaster of Germany and Great Britain, Brother Dr. Carl Kellner, 33°, 90°, 96°, X° . . . In 1895 Dr. Kellner's idea could be realised . . . But at that time no results were achieved since Dr. Reuss still was busy with the re-activation of the Order of the Illuminati whose leading personalities were not agreeable to Dr. Kellner.

When the final split between Br. Reuss and his pupil Leopold E[ngel] took place in June 1902, Br. Kellner immediately established contact with Br. Reuss and initiated the Charta for the Memphis and Misraim Rites for Germany, because he considered those 90°-95° as suitable for his idea of a sort of "masonic academy." The Rosicrucian, esoteric doctrines of the "Hermetic Brotherhood of Light"<sup>16</sup> were only for the few initiated ones of the occult inner circle and ran parallel with

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<sup>14</sup>First issue of *Oriflamme* without number, page 1 of a leaflet in *Die Übersinnliche Welt*, January 1902.

<sup>15</sup>In 1906 Reuss published an English and a German version of *Allgemeine Satzungen des Ordens der Orientalischen Tempeler O.T.O.* with the so-called OTO-Lamen: Divine Eye, Descending Dove and Chalice. On page 3 Reuss spoke of a "re-organised" society.

<sup>16</sup>See Joscelyn Godwin, "The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor," in *Theosophical History* III/5 (January 1991): 137-148.

the highest degrees of Memphis-Misraim and those “Initiates” constituted the secret core of the Order of the Oriental Templars.

Nobody can become an “Initiate” of the O.T.O. who has not received the three “St. John”—degrees of regular Freemasonry.

[*Theodor Reuss*,<sup>17</sup> translated]

FROM THE EAST OF THE SUPREME GRAND COUNCIL OF THE SOVEREIGN GRAND INSPECTOR GENERAL of the 33rd and last degree of the Ancient and Accepted Rite of Freemasonry in and for Great Britain & Ireland . . . Know Ye that we the undersigned Sovereign Grand Inspector General do hereby certify, acknowledge and proclaim, our Ill. Brother Theodor Reuss of Berlin to be an Expert Master Mason, Secret Master, Perfect Master, . . . Grand Elect Knight Kadosh, 30°, Grand Inquisitor Commander, 31°, Prince of the Royal Secret, and a Sov. Gd. Inspector Gen. 33° . . .

Signed and delivered by us Sovereign Grand Inspector General of the thirty-third and last Degree with the Seal of our said Supreme Council affixed in the Valley of Manchester this . . . 24th day of September A.D. 1902. John Yarker 33° . . .

[*Transcript of the English original*]<sup>18</sup> 1902 is the year at which Reuss always hinted as the year when he should have received “his” *Charta* authorising him to found lodges etc. in Germany. No original of that Charter has yet appeared: only several transcripts— and all give the same day as the above *Charta*: 24 September 1902.]

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<sup>17</sup> Jubilee-Issue of *Oriflamme* (Berlin and London, 1912): 15f. In July 1914 Reuss again took up the subject in reply to A.P. Eberhart’s *Winkellogen Deutschlands* (Leipzig,: Verlag Bruno Zechel, 1914).

<sup>18</sup> On 29 November 1910, Aleister Crowley received an almost identical paper from the same source: John Yarker.

We . . . do . . . issue . . . this our Warrant empowering our Illustrious and Enlightened Brothers: Theodor Reuss 33°, 90°, 96° to act as Most Illustrious Sovereign Grand Master General, Franz Hartmann 33°, 90°, 95°, Thrice Illustrious Grand Administrator General, [etc.] with power to appoint [*sic*] the other necessary officers of a Sovereign Sanctuary etc. to be held in the Valley of Berlin or other German city, aforesaid by the name and title of the Sovereign Sanctuary 33°-95° in and for the Empire of Germany . . . [following the authority to found lodges, chapters and to give all degrees] 24. day of Sept. 1902 E.V . . . John Yarker 33°, 90°, 96° Gr. Master Gen. ad vitam . . .

[*Transcript from Oriflamme of January 1911*]<sup>19</sup>. There is a German translation in “*Der Cerneau-Ritus*”<sup>20</sup> where other degrees were given: Theodor Reuss: 33°, 90°, 95°; Franz Hartmann: 33°, 90°, 96°. The “*Konstitution, Statuten und Formulare*” (Berlin, 1903) on page 6 cites the same text as above but leaves out the pompous title of Franz Hartmann.]

## HISTORICAL ISSUE OF ORIFLAMME, 1904

Peace, Tolerance and Truth . . . Manchester, London, Vienna and Berlin on the 27th December 1903. Dr. Carl Kellner, 33°, 90°, 96°, S. [A] Honorary General Grandmaster for Great Britain and Germany . . . Theodor Reuss, 33°, 90°, 96° ad vitam General Grand Master for

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<sup>19</sup> *Oriflamme*, Nr. 1 (January 1911): 4f.

<sup>20</sup> W.C. Achard, “*Der Cerneau-(Neuyork 1807) Ritus*” (Zürich 1925), 18f.

the German Empire.

[*Translated. The question arises whether all those writers have ever seen any original.*]<sup>21</sup>

33° AND LAST DEGREE SUPREME COUNCIL . . . SOVEREIGN GRAND INSPECTOR GENERAL — Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Masonry sitting in the Valley of New York, where abideth Peace, Tolerance and Truth: From the Grand Orient of 'IERODOM<sup>22</sup>, at New York . . . I, Max Scheuer 33° by the authority in me vested as Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander, do appoint the Most Illustrious Brother Theodor Reuss Sovereign Grand Inspector General, Thirty-third degree, Deputy as Representative of the Supreme Council of the United States of America, its territories and dependencies, to the Supreme Council of the Grand Orient of Germany, Thirty-third degree Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite . . . this twenty-first day of Sivan A.M. 1663 [?] Max Scheuer 33° . . . [Transcript of the English original]

IN THE NAME OF THE GRAND ORIENT OF THE SCOTTISH RITE AND THE RITES OF MISRAIM AND MEMPHIS . . . Hereby let it be known that . . . John Yarker . . . based upon the Charta of the Sovereign Grand Orient of France dated 21. July 1862 signed by Harry J. Seymour gave the right to Brother Theodor Reuss, 33°, 90°, 96°, Dr. Franz Hartmann, 33°, 95°, Heinrich Klein, 33°, 95° and their allies to constitute a Sovereign Sanctuary for the Ger-

man Empire and the authority to give all degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite 33°, of the Oriental Rite of Misraim 90° and the Rite of Memphis 95°, from the first 33° (90°-95°) up to the last degree and to found and enlighten Symbolic Lodges, Chapters, Senates, Councils and Grand Councils in Germany . . . [followed by the founding of Orient "Phoenix zur Wahrheit" in Hamburg]

Signed and delivered this present Charta . . . 1st day of month July 1904 E.V. John Yarker 33°, 90°, 96° G.M.G. of Gr. Britain + Ireland Theodore Reuss 33°, 90°, 96° General Grandmaster for the German Empire ad Vitam.

[*Transcript of a photocopy of the original, translated*]

HEREBY LET IT BE KNOWN . . . John Yarker, 33°, 90°, 96° Sovereign General-Grandmaster ad Vitam of the Antient and Primitive Rite of Masonry, of the Scottish rite, Ancien et Accepté 33° (Cerneau-Neuyork 1807) and of the Oriental (Egyptian) rite of Misraim . . . has given to . . . Theodor Reuss 33° 96° a charta to constitute a Sovereign Sanctuary in the German Empire . . . 24th day of the month June 1905.

[*Transcript in "Vademekum für Lichtsuchende,"*<sup>23</sup> translated.<sup>24</sup>]

EDICT: We, Albert Karl Theodor Reuss, 33°, 90°, 96°, Sovereign General-Grandmaster ad Vitam of the Order of the united Rites of Scottish, Memphis- and Misraim- Freemasons in and for the German Empire, Sovereign

<sup>21</sup> *Oriflamme* (Berlin, 1904): 19. Also in "Konstitution, Statuten und Formulare des Gross-Orient" (Berlin, 1903), p. 3, but herein Kellner is mentioned only as a 33°! On page 5, Reuss is mentioned as: "Ritter des kaiserl. ottomanischen Medschidje-Ordens." Since there is no proof whether Kellner ever became a Freemason, regular or irregular, all those grades and titles remain doubtful.

<sup>22</sup> Original in Greek letters.

<sup>23</sup> Published by the Symbolic Grand Lodge of the Scottish Rite in Germany, 1916.

<sup>24</sup> A.P. Eberhart, "Winkellogen Deutschlands," (Leipzig, 1914), 108, the same text but with the additional initiates Franz Hartmann 33°, 95° and Heinrich Klein (d. 1913) 33°, 95°.

General-Grand-Commander, Absolute Grand-Sovereign, Sovereign Pontiff, Sovereign Master of the Order of the Oriental Templar-Freemasons, Magus Supremus Soc. Frat. R.C.S.I. 33°, Termaximus Regens and so on, hereby declare that we separate three freemasonic rites and declare those independent.

From 24 June 1907 onwards the following orders will be under our jurisdiction: Supreme Council of Scottish, Antient and Accepted 33° Rite for the German Empire.

General-Grand-Council (90°) of the Egyptian rite of Misraim. Sovereign Sanctuary (95°) of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis

...

Theodor Reuss, 10. Sept. 1906<sup>25</sup>

[*Translated*]

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<sup>25</sup> *Oriiflamme*, Nr. 2, Munich (July-December 1906): 49f.

# THE TEACHINGS OF BROTHER XII

John Oliphant

In the latter part of 1926, with the publication in London, England, of a modest pamphlet, Theosophists in Great Britain, the United States and Canada became aware that the Masters of Wisdom—the same Masters who had allegedly inspired Madame H.P. Blavatsky a half-century earlier in her work of founding the Theosophical Society—had inaugurated a new spiritual work in the world. The pamphlet which made this startling announcement was entitled *A Message from the Masters of the Wisdom in 1926*, sold for threepence, and contained an outline of this new Work, which it claimed had been given through the agency of a new Messenger of the Great White Lodge, a *chela* who identified himself as Brother XII.<sup>1</sup>

The publication of *The Message* and the subsequent formation of the Aquarian Foundation by Brother XII marked the beginnings of a drama that would last for over seven years, cause intense controversy in the occult world, drastically affect the lives of countless people, and come to be deservedly regarded as one of the strangest

episodes in the history of modern occultism. The central figure in this drama was a slight, soft-spoken English sea-captain named Edward Arthur Wilson, whose life and activities remain to this day, in large part, shrouded in mystery. Who was he and what were his teachings?

Brother XII was born Edward Arthur Wilson in Birmingham, England, on July 25, 1878, the son of a minister in the Catholic Apostolic Church. Although little is known about his early life beyond what he reveals in his own writings, Wilson was apparently apprenticed as a youth on a Royal Navy windjammer training ship, where he acquired the skills by which he would earn his living as a mariner for most of his life. During his travels around the Earth, he studied world religions, and prepared himself for the spiritual work which he felt would be his destiny. According to his own account, he was in contact with the spirit world from an early age:

From early childhood, I have been in touch with super-physical things, and have often received visitations from highly developed beings. . . . At first I thought that these were “Angels,” but as I grew older and received teaching, I learned of the Masters and Their work for humanity. . . . This direct contact continued all through my life from time to time, but it was not until much later that I

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Arthur Wilson used the name “The Brother, XII,” “Brother XII,” “XII,” or simply “The Brother” interchangeably. Technically speaking, “The Brother, XII” is the correct formal usage. Wilson was also generally referred to as “Brother Twelve.”

learned the reason for these experiences and the teaching that was given me.<sup>2</sup>

In 1912, Wilson joined the American section (Adyar) of the Theosophical Society. Membership records place him in California, giving addresses in San Diego, Ocean Beach, and San Francisco, c/o Maxwell & Company, Papeete, Tahiti. He is also said to have once held an “official or semi-official”<sup>3</sup> position with the Society. As a number of references in his writings make clear, he was active in the T.S. for many years<sup>4</sup> and had obviously made a profound study of the writings of Madame Blavatsky.

On October 22, 1924, while staying in the South of France, Wilson had a vision which indicated to him that his mission was about to begin. Lying in his bed one evening, he suddenly became aware of an extraordinary stillness. His window was wide open, but the usual night noises were silenced; there was not a rustle of a leaf, nor any movement of the air. He then became aware that he was about to hear a Voice, so he lay still and listened:

Immediately, I had the sensation of looking down an immense vista of Time, a roofless corridor flanked with thousands and thousands of pillars. I seemed to be looking into both Time and Space at once.

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<sup>2</sup> The Brother, XII (Edward Arthur Wilson), *Foundation Letters and Teachings* (Akron, Ohio: The Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 43-44.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Barley makes this statement in a written summary of his experiences with Wilson (document in possession of author). Unfortunately, he gives no particulars.

<sup>4</sup> In *Foundation Letters and Teachings*, Wilson writes: “I have heard (and reported) scores of lectures *about* Brotherhood . . .” (33).

Then, from an immeasurable distance, came the Voice, faint but very clear and wonderfully sweet; it conveyed a sense of unutterable majesty and power. The bed shook, the room wherein I lay was shaken, and the very air throbbled and vibrated. I listened to the Voice, filled with a sense of its immense and awful distance. It said:-

“THOU WHO HAST WORN THE DOUBLE CROWN OF UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT, OF THE HIGH KNOWLEDGE AND THE LOW, HUMBLE THYSELF. PREPARE THY HEART, FOR THE MIGHTY ONES HAVE NEED OF THEE. THOU SHALT RE-BUILD, THOU SHALT RESTORE. THEREFORE, PREPARE THY MIND FOR THAT WHICH SHALL ILLUMINE THEE.”

A cold wind blew down that enormous aisle of pillars; somewhere in the endless distance, lights seemed to move; then from above my head, the light flooded me so that the distance and the vistas were dissolved. Then the light faded and I lay still, filled with a sense of wonder and a great reverence.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of this vision, Wilson experienced a marked expansion of his normal consciousness. He became aware that his mission was, in part, to restore the ancient truths which lay at the heart of the Egyptian Mysteries. He also realized that individuals with whom he had worked in past lives would be drawn to him. In a letter to an associate written at this time, he makes the statement: “I have to tell you that the moment when you [and I] meet in this knowledge and for the purpose of discussing it, will be the moment *for which forty centuries have waited.*”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

In September, 1925, in Genoa, Italy, Wilson began to receive via automatic writing a manuscript which he later published as *The Three Truths*. He claimed that during the writing of it, “for hours at a time and for days in succession, I was rapt right out of the body.”<sup>7</sup> *The Three Truths* expressed the essence of Brother XII’s teachings in its assertion that humanity was about to undergo a revolutionary change in consciousness:

Humanity as a whole is about to take a step forward in Race-consciousness. With this day and generation *there commences the preparatory work for a new Race*—the race of the future.<sup>8</sup>

That race was the sixth sub-race of Theosophical teaching, a race whose members would have conscious recall of their past lives, and who would be more evolved spiritually. The emergence of this new race would be accompanied by both geological and political upheavals; the sixth sub-race would be born out of the chaos and destruction that would accompany the decline of modern civilization.

*The Three Truths* was a commentary in both poetry and prose upon three truths which were considered fundamental to Theosophical teaching: the unity of all life, the immortality of the soul, and the law of karma. Brother XII stated that these truths would form the spiritual basis upon which the new order would be built, and that their widespread realization by mankind would constitute the evolutionary expansion of consciousness necessary for humanity to successfully enter the new era.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>8</sup> Brother XII (Edward Arthur Wilson), *The Three Truths* (London, England: The Chalice Press, 1927), 39.

# THE THREE TRUTHS

A SIMPLE STATEMENT OF THE  
FUNDAMENTAL PHILOSOPHY  
OF LIFE



AS DECLARED AND SHOWN TO  
“**BROTHER XII**”  
(the personal Chêla of a Master)

THE CHALICE PRESS  
18 ERSKINE RD., LONDON, E.17

Title page of *The Three Truths*. The Egyptian ankh, flanked by the Roman numerals IX and XII, appeared on the title page of Brother XII’s books and was the symbol of the Work. (By permission of the author.)

After completing *The Three Truths* in February, 1926, Wilson received the document which would become the manifesto of the new spiritual movement. It was entitled *A Message from the Masters of the Wisdom in 1926*, and outlined the plans of the Great White Lodge for a new spiritual

work in the world. Wilson learned that he had been chosen to be the Lodge's Messenger; hereafter he used the name "Brother XII," which signified that he was the personal *chela* of the XIIIth Brother in the Great White Lodge.

The basic teaching of *The Message* was that of Universal Brotherhood, but this important Theosophical precept took on compelling urgency and meaning given the impending destruction of the present order. The Work announced by *The Message* would be an "Ark of Refuge"<sup>9</sup> in which all that was true in existing teachings would be preserved, and into which the Masters would pour a new measure of knowledge and power. The immediate purpose of the Work was to provide individuals with the training and encouragement necessary for them to achieve spiritual enlightenment. The second part of the Work was the training of succeeding generations:

The children who by their karma will be drawn to parents who are linked up with this present Work belong to a group of highly evolved egos who are now beginning to come into incarnation. They must be kept free from karmic ties or links connecting them with the old and dying order. They will be the Thinkers and the Leaders in that new order which shall arise from the ashes of the old.

At the time of their birth they will be free from karmic links with existing nations. They are of two classes: (1) those who have had a very long Devachan (2000 years or more) and are therefore unconnected with the Christian era, and (2) those whose bodies perished during the recent European war, and who have therefore balanced the account of their respective national karmas. This is one reason

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<sup>9</sup> E.A. Wilson, *The Message*, reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation* (Akron, Ohio: The Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 5.

why so many "advanced" people lost their lives during the recent war.<sup>10</sup>

There would be a constant influx of these egos from the present time until approximately 1975:

Those who are now children, or who are born within the next few years, will be the parents of that army who will be in their very early prime in 1975. It is these, the grandchildren of our present day, who will have the chief part in the great Work that ushers in the year Two-thousand.<sup>11</sup>

Many of these incarnating souls were adepts, who would bring with them vast stores of knowledge supposed to have been lost with the earlier races of humanity. Under the guidance of the Masters, they would form on the physical plane the nucleus of the coming sixth sub-race. The plans of the Masters involved the formation of "Centres of Safety,"<sup>12</sup> where actual colonies would be founded and the coming type evolved. The Work was also a form of preparation for "HIM WHO IS TO COME,"<sup>13</sup> an Avatar or divine Being who would appear on Earth in the closing years of the century to found and stabilize the sixth sub-race.

The Work announced by *The Message* was directly concerned with the coming Age of

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "Additional Information Concerning The Message of the Masters," reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation* (Akron, Ohio: The Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 14.

<sup>13</sup> "General Letter No. 1 of The Aquarian Foundation," reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation* (Akron, Ohio: The Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 19.

Aquarius, a period that would last for approximately two thousand years: “The Message given is the first Trumpet-blast of the New Age, and the Standard we set up is the Standard of the new Order.”<sup>14</sup> *The Message* itself would act as a touchstone: those persons who had an affinity with the Work would be drawn to it by a process of “spiritual self-selection.”<sup>15</sup> *The Message* concluded:

THE MESSAGE IS EVERYTHING, THE PERSONALITY OF THE MESSENGER IS NOTHING. ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE MESSAGE ITSELF, ALL MUST STAND OR FALL.<sup>16</sup>

Because the purpose of the Work was to lay the foundations of the Aquarian Age, the Masters had decided that their Work would be known in the world as The Aquarian Foundation. Only those persons who were “spiritually linked to one another and to the Masters by the bond of *service given in other lives*”<sup>17</sup> would be drawn to it:

Those who have a part in it belong spiritually and psychically to a future day and generation; they have been chosen in past Ages and are dedicated to a definite end and aim. They are the nucleus of nations yet unborn, a little band chosen and selected by the Great Ones, the hope and seed of the future—they form collectively THE AQUARIAN FOUNDATION.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “Additional Information Concerning The Message of the Masters,” reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> *The Message*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>17</sup> “General Letter No. 1 of The Aquarian Foundation,” reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Foundation Letters and Teachings*, 92.

In London, England, Brother XII became a prominent figure with the publication of an article in *The Occult Review* entitled “The Shadow.”<sup>19</sup> Written under the pseudonym “E.A. Chaylor,” it attributed the cause of the world’s unrest to an abnormal pressing outwards of the forces of the astral world into the physical—a *psychic extrusion*.<sup>20</sup> The article claimed that the determined efforts of Spiritualists to communicate with entities of the astral world had worn the veil which normally separated these two realms perilously thin; at the same time, thousand of evil and malicious astral entities were concentrating their efforts upon demolishing such protecting barriers as still remained, so that they could force an entrance into the physical world. The article concluded with a prophetic vision, which Wilson claimed to have received in full waking consciousness, of the destruction of Europe. In a letter written from Genoa at the time of his vision, Wilson graphically described the horrors that were about to overwhelm humanity:

The flood of evil which is even now so unmistakably rising will be manifested on all three planes. Physically, it will take the shape of national wars, anarchy, bloodshed, and Bolshevism. All restraints being removed, the passions of men will be loosed; private murder will be a common-place and go unavenged; every kind of foul excess will flourish unchecked. On the mental plane, the thoughts and inventions of men will be placed at the service of demons and will be used for the wholesale destruction of humanity. Those who perish will be more fortunate than those who remain.

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<sup>19</sup> E.A. Chaylor (pseudonym), “The Shadow,” *The Occult Review*, XLIII/6 (June 1926).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

Psychically, the prospect is more terrible even than this. There will shortly come about what I can only describe as the breaking of a dam. All the evil forces and powers of the lower astral worlds will burst the barriers which have hitherto restrained them. They will shortly flood this physical world in such a tidal-wave of horror as no living generation has seen. To find its parallel one must go back to the closing periods of the great Atlantean epoch.<sup>21</sup>

The editor of *The Occult Review*, Harry J. Strutton, considered Wilson a gifted natural seer and gave his blessing to the new spiritual movement. Notable individuals who joined the Aquarian Foundation included the English astrologers Alfred Barley and his wife Annie Lewton Barley,<sup>22</sup> and Sir Kenneth MacKenzie of Tunbridge Wells. Wilson is also alleged to have known, or been associated with, such prominent individuals as Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Eddington, Sir Neville Chamberlain, Sir Herbert Austin, and the South African statesman Jan Smuts. The circumstances and details of his association with these men remains a matter for investigation.

The excitement with which Brother XII's *Message* was greeted was no doubt related to the widespread feeling of disenchantment which existed at the time among many Theosophists with the leadership of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater. The Society's promotion of Jiddu Krishnamurti as the vehicle for the coming World Teacher was a matter of intense controversy. And to many, the "Neo-Theosophy" epitomized in the teachings of C.W. Leadbeater was incompatible

with the original teachings given out by Madame Blavatsky. Brother XII was highly critical of the T.S., claiming that with the death of H.P.B., and later of a few of her close personal associates, the Masters had severed all connection with the Society:

The Society has been irreparably discredited through its self-appointed leaders depending upon the mediumistic pronouncements of certain psychics, one of whom has been described as "standing upon the threshold of divinity."<sup>23</sup>

We are told that the Christ is to incarnate almost immediately in the body of one who has been schooled by these psychic "Bishops." Unsavoury psychism is palmed off on credulous followers for spiritual powers and insight; ancient records, plagiarized and distorted, are camouflaged as independent psychic research. A new and constantly increasing supply of "Initiates" and "Arhats" are turned out as needed.<sup>24</sup>

Brother XII made the intriguing assertion that the Catholic Apostolic Church into which he was born, and which had its origins in Scotland in 1825,<sup>25</sup> was intended by the Masters of Wisdom to be a major spiritual movement for the revival of Christendom, one which would have prepared the way for the later work of H.P. Blavatsky. The Church failed in this purpose, with the result that

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<sup>23</sup> Brother XII, "Things We Ought To Know," reprinted in *F.L. & T.*, 146. It is not known in which periodical this article originally appeared.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Members of this Church were more commonly known as "Irvingites," after the Church's charismatic leader, Edward Irving.

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<sup>21</sup> *Foundation Letters and Teachings*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> The Barleys were close associates of Alan Leo; Alfred Barley was the sub-editor of *Modern Astrology* from 1903-1917.

when H.P.B. came a half-century later in 1875, the work of preparation was yet to be done, and for the most part “the truth she taught fell on stony ground.”<sup>26</sup> In spite of her achievements, the world had not been ready for her message:

In the year 1875, H.P. Blavatsky headed a great movement for the regeneration of spiritual life and principles. The ideal of Universal Brotherhood was held up before all nations. Men were shown their common origin and the unity of their true interests. They were implored to cease from campaigns of mutual hatred and injury, and to make peace. The Message was rejected and the Messenger practically hounded to her death. The old games of international murder and lying and land-grabbing went on unchecked. Commercial immorality increased to an extent unknown before. Class hatreds became more embittered and Science multiplied the engines of death and destruction.<sup>27</sup>

Brother XII claimed that the rejection of H.P.B.’s teachings had resulted in the capitalistic war in South Africa, the atrocities in the Belgian Congo, and the culminating horrors of World War I. The Society she had nurtured had been split into divided and warring factions. The Work announced by *The Message* continued the cycle that had commenced in 1825 with the Catholic Apostolic Church, and carried forward Madame Blavatsky’s pioneering work. Brother XII stressed: “You who prize the philosophy of H.P.B., I bid you cleave to it, for it is Truth; cleave to the Principles, the great root-ideas it expressed, and upon which it is built.”<sup>28</sup> He told the members of

the Aquarian Foundation that they could not go back to Blavatsky—they had to go *forward* to Blavatsky:

I tell you of my own certain and personal knowledge, our Brother H.P.B. is not behind you, buried in the “eighties” where you would enshrine her. H.P.B. is ahead of you, working in this very Cause of which I am a Messenger, and working twenty-four hours a day; not yet physically but none the less effectively.<sup>29</sup>

In a General Letter issued on January 15, 1927, Brother XII announced that he planned to go to North America to inaugurate the work of the White Lodge there, since it was the place where the sixth sub-race would develop. He told the members of the Foundation that the Center chosen by the Manu (Vaivasvata) to be the cradle of the coming sixth sub-race was neither Mexico nor California, but Southern British Columbia, and that it would be not only the center of the present Work, but “THE center of spiritual energy and knowledge for the whole continent of North America—for the whole world in the not distant future.”<sup>30</sup> In February, 1927, after arranging to meet his wife, Elma Wilson, and the Barleys in British Columbia at a later date, Brother XII sailed from Southampton for Montreal.

After speaking to various Theosophical Lodges in Eastern Canada, Brother XII travelled by train to British Columbia, where he established the headquarters of the Aquarian Foundation on a 126-acre piece of picturesque waterfront property at Cedar-by-the-Sea, seven miles south of the colliery town of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island.

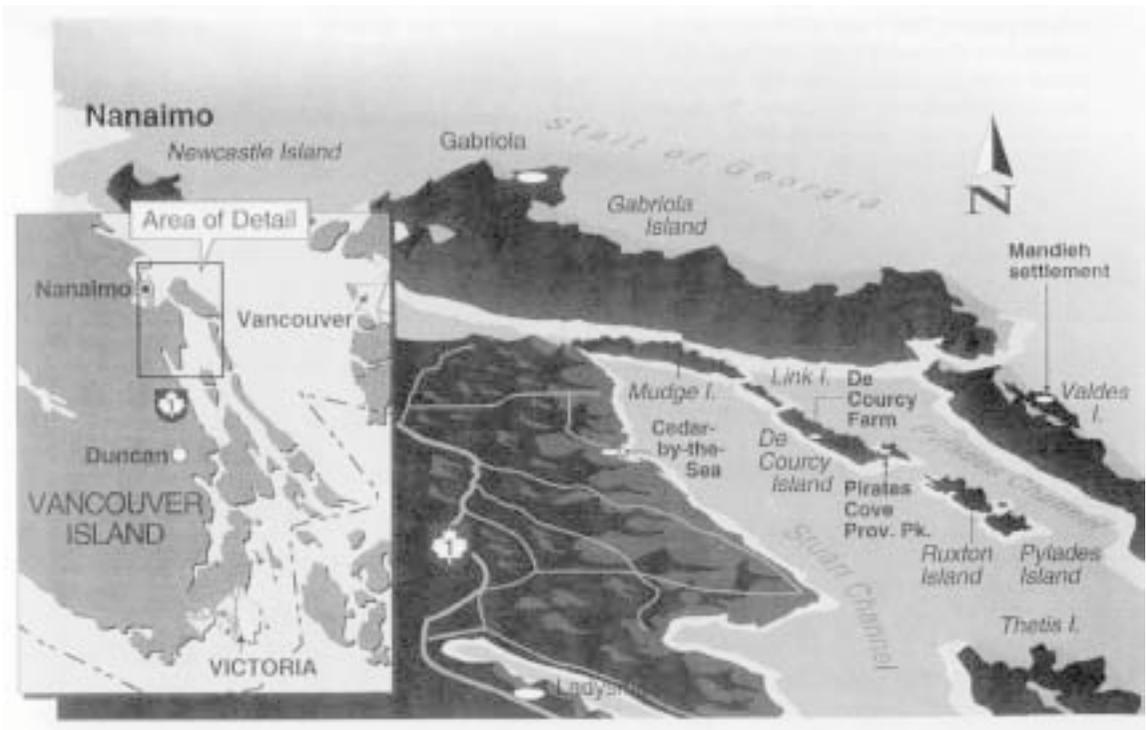
<sup>26</sup> “Things We Ought To Know,” 145.

<sup>27</sup> “The Shadow,” reprinted in *F.L. & T.*, 153.

<sup>28</sup> *F.L. & T.*, 67.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> General Letter dated 15 January 1927, reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation*, 31.



Rob Struthers

Vancouver Island, British Columbia (Canada): the area of Brother Twelve's activity. (Reproduced from *Beautiful British Columbia*. By permission of the artist, Rob Struthers.)

The Foundation was incorporated as a Society under the Societies Act of British Columbia on May 16, 1927. In addition to Brother XII, the seven Governors of the Society included Joseph Benner, owner of the Sun Publishing Company and author of *The Impersonal Life*; Will Levington Comfort, an American novelist and frequent contributor to *The Saturday Evening Post*; Coulson Turnbull, an astrologer from Santa Cruz and author of *The Solar Logos* and *The Divine Language of Celestial*

*Correspondences*; Maurice Von Platen, a retired Chicago manufacturer; Edward Lucas, a prominent Vancouver attorney; and Phillip Fisher, son of a wealthy family in Birmingham, England. This inner group was intended by Brother XII to be the vessel which the Masters would fill with their power and knowledge:

Those who compose it will form collectively the Chalice into which the life of the Master

will be poured. The Water of Life will take its colour from the vessel which contains it. That vessel must be clean, utterly free from the stain of selfishness or of ambition. Its purity must be most jealously guarded.<sup>31</sup>

On July 25, 1927, the first annual general meeting of the Aquarian Foundation was held at Cedar-by-the-Sea, with the seven Governors in attendance. According to Brother XII, there were twelve groups in the Great White Lodge that were specifically concerned with the evolution of humanity and the planet. Each of these twelve groups would function through an incarnated physical body, so that there would eventually be twelve men, in the literal human sense, who would become focal points for the expression of the energy of the Lodge upon the Earth. Brother XII claimed that seven of those twelve groups had taken, and were presently using, human physical bodies. Those seven groups were acting through the Governors of the Aquarian Foundation. As a result of the meeting that day, he stated, the consciousness of the six other Governors would be raised and extended, so that they would become conscious instruments of the Lodge. The meeting was an historic occasion for which the Earth had waited for thousands of years: "Later, when men come to understand its true significance, the twenty-fifth day of July in the year 1927 shall be commemorated for long ages to come."<sup>32</sup>

The work of the Aquarian Foundation had two distinct aspects: spiritual and political. Brother XII believed that politics represented the responsibility of the individual for his or her part in the life of the State. He was critical of other occult groups

that were not actively seeking to change social conditions:

The work to be done by and through the Groups is entirely practical—it is *the work of making over this every-day world*, of bringing about those conditions which will make possible the incoming of the children of the new Race. Being a practical work, it can only be done by employing practical methods. To affirm that the world is yours by a species of divine right, and because you are a part of the "Great All" does not make it so. This may be an exhilarating pastime in itself, but it will not clean up a civil ulcer like Chicago, or help restrain the thirst for national banditry as exemplified by the recent policies in Nicaragua.<sup>33</sup>

Brother XII claimed that the root cause of the lack of brotherhood in the world was an unjust and corrupt economic system. The great mass of mankind was in the grip of a cruel industrial autocracy which treated its workers not as human beings with souls to be developed, but as wage slaves hardly more important than the machines they tended. The economic serf of modern industry spent his or her entire life in bondage, trying to escape the spectre of poverty and starvation, living and dying without realizing his or her full capacities and powers as a human being. This oppression was increasing as the rich became richer and the poor, poorer. Brother XII cited as an example the conditions in New York City:

In New York, the centre of wealth, fashion and social gaiety on this continent, two-thirds of the school children are physically defective and 25 percent of them come to school

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<sup>31</sup> *F.L. & T.*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> "From The Brother, XII," *The Glass Hive*, September, 1927, 8.

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<sup>33</sup> Aquarian Foundation Instruction No. 5 (January 1928): 2.



The Governors of the Aquarian Foundation, July 25, 1927. Left to right: Joseph S. Benner (front), Baron Maurice Von Platon (rear), E.A. Wilson (front), Phillip J. Fisher (rear), Will Levington Comfort, Edward Lucas, and Coulson Turnbull. (By permission of the author.)

suffering from hunger and malnutrition. The General Bakery Company, which supplies the greater part of New York with bread *has increased the value of its investments sixty-seven thousand five hundred percent (67,500%) in nine years*, and only two years

ago its president paid two hundred thousand dollars for a box at the opera. "Thou shalt not steal."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Arleux (pseudonym), "Brotherhood," *The Chalice* (April 1928): 34.

Brother XII's politics were based upon his belief that a grand design had existed throughout history to enslave the masses: "Is the financial world the product of the servants of God, or the children of Mammon?" he asked. "What is there that is not controlled, directly or indirectly, near or afar, by the hidden hand of finance?"<sup>35</sup> The real rulers of the world, he claimed, were the servants of the Antichrist, and they controlled everything—from the price of bread to the policies of nations. "No president is ever elected, or king crowned, no treaty ever signed, or army moved, unless it be at the bidding, or at least with the knowledge and consent, of this unseen power which controls prince and president and peasant alike."<sup>36</sup>

Brother XII claimed that the world's wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few powerful men, the directors of the Jewish banking houses that controlled the huge financial mergers that were taking place at the time. He accused these men of plotting to control world capital and manipulate international politics in order to achieve their goal of setting up a world dictatorship. It would be headed by a man Brother XII identified as a member of the Rothschild family living in Paris. He told the Foundation members that they were about to witness the final battle of Biblical prophecy—the Armageddon: "At this moment, men are rapidly approaching the most terrible struggle in the history of mankind upon this planet—a struggle for the control of all the resources of the planet itself."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "From The Brother XII at Nanaimo, B.C.," *The Glass Hive* (June 1927): 8.

<sup>36</sup> "The Aquarian Foundation," *The Chalice* (December 1927): 8.

<sup>37</sup> "From the Brother XII at Nanaimo, B.C.," *The Glass Hive* (June 1927): 9-10.

In January, 1928, Brother XII traveled to Washington, D.C. to lobby support for a Third Party in the United States. He met with U.S. congressmen, including Alabama senator Thomas James Heflin, whom he asked to be his Third Party candidate for president. He also formed an organization called the Protestant Protective League, an anti-Catholic coalition which was dedicated to the defeat of the Democratic candidate Alfred Smith, the first Roman Catholic to be nominated for president. Brother XII claimed that Smith was a tool of the Roman Catholic Church, and that if he were elected, the United States would be torn apart by a bloody religious war. If, on the other hand, the Republican candidate Herbert Hoover were elected, the complete and utter financial demoralization of the United States would follow. The people didn't have a real choice: "Elect Hoover, and you will be plundered in a thousand ways. Elect Smith, and freedom will become only a memory in the land."<sup>38</sup> Brother XII hoped to rally the nation behind his Third Party, and achieve the biggest political upset in the history of the United States. At the second annual general meeting of the Aquarian Foundation, held on July 5, 1928, he declared: "*I expect to select, and will select, the man who is to be the next President of the United States, and also the next Vice-President.*"<sup>39</sup>

Following the general meeting, Brother XII left Seattle by train to attend the Third Party convention in Chicago. During the trip, he met a woman named Myrtle Baumgartner, the wife of a physician in Clifton Springs, New York. The two

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<sup>38</sup> The Brother, XII, *The End of the Days* (Nanaimo, B.C. : The Chalice Press, 1928), 85.

<sup>39</sup> Text of address of Brother XII, 5 July 1928, in possession of author.

took the “Sixth Initiation”<sup>40</sup> together, during which it was revealed to them that they would have a child who would become Brother XII’s successor and the World Teacher in or about 1975. Brother XII was also alleged to have claimed that he was the reincarnation of the Egyptian god Osiris, that Myrtle was the reincarnation of Isis, and that their child would be the reincarnation of Horus. By the time the train reached Chicago’s Union Station, Myrtle Baumgartner had conceived the child that the couple believed would become the future World Teacher.

In letters that Myrtle wrote to her husband explaining her relationship with Wilson, she describes meeting him years earlier in her dreams. Since then, she had conducted a nocturnal out-of-body relationship with him that had become the entire focus of her life. The initial contact occurred in a dream she’d had in St. Louis:

I awoke with the firm conviction that somewhere the true one was awaiting me, and in my mind’s eye I had a very clear picture of his appearance. At intervals I dreamed of him again. Then in 1922 came my long and wonderful Egyptian dream—and this same man again figured prominently in the dream. I knew that I never really loved anyone but *him*—but it never occurred to me that he was on earth in physical embodiment. From 1922 onward, the contact in night consciousness was almost constant. My dream life became my real life, and while I had my outer life and my outer love and outer duties, they truly

seemed a means to an end—a ladder upon which I must climb to stand upon the mountain top with *him*.<sup>41</sup>

Myrtle added that she knew that the man she met nightly was her “Beloved,” because “there was between us a rhythmic electric bliss when in each other’s presence that simply left one spell-bound—and which when once experienced left absolutely no room for doubt. When you have come into the presence of that one once, you will never again wonder—you will *know*.”<sup>42</sup>

Wilson claimed that Myrtle Baumgartner was a fellow Initiate who had taken a feminine embodiment so that the two could teach the occult laws governing human relationships in the new era. “For many years past, *we have worked together on inner planes*, but the time has come when we must work as one, outwardly and in the life of the physical world,” he explained to the members of the Foundation. “We have to teach by example and action, not only by words. We have to *live the life*, and that means to show men and women what the true marriage relationship is, as distinguished from the conventional and the false.”<sup>43</sup> He denied that the relationship was a matter of an ordinary personal attraction, and quoted a passage from *When the Sun Moves Northward* to convey the sacredness of the union:

To be powerful enough to attain an association with a companion on the physical as well as on the psychic plane means that the divine part of the man has been able to unfold a petal

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<sup>40</sup> Brother XII allegedly passed the Fifth Initiation on July 25, 1927, at Cedar-by-the-Sea, an attainment he celebrated in his poem “Greeting,” printed in *F.L. & T.* (187). In a *Vancouver Daily Province* article, “Weird Occultism Exemplified in Amazing Colony at Cedar-by-Sea” (28 October 1928), several disciples discussed Brother XII’s Sixth Initiation with reporter Bruce McKelvie.

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<sup>41</sup> Letter from Myrtle Baumgartner to Edwin Baumgartner, 13 September 1928, 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Brother XII, November 1928 General Letter, 2.

of its lotus flower and to permit its sweetness to become a fragrance that can reach the outer sense. For this so wonderful thing must come from on high; it means that two initiates are fated or permitted to meet upon earth—a marvel in an aeon.<sup>44</sup>

Brother XII's affair with Myrtle Baumgartner caused a crisis in the Aquarian Foundation. His wife Elma felt bitterly betrayed, while other members of the Foundation were scandalized by Wilson's flaunting of the marriage vow, feeling that the affair marked a dangerous descent into the lawlessness of "free love." In defense of his actions, Brother XII wrote an article in *The Chalice* in which he argued that there were three kinds of marriage, each corresponding to a different state of consciousness. He claimed that he and Myrtle had consummated the highest type of marriage possible—the marriage of two Initiates, a marriage which was undertaken for a specific purpose and over which the Church and State had no authority:

In such a case, physical union is undertaken deliberately and for the express purpose of providing a particular kind and quality of physical vehicle for *a known type* of incoming soul. The question of sexual gratification does not enter into such a union at all—it is, in effect, a dedication, the payment of a debt to that soul for whose benefit the act is undertaken.

When the purpose of such a union has been accomplished, there is no obligation for its indefinite perpetuation; that is a matter which

must be decided by the individuals concerned—no third party has any shadow of right to interfere in this decision, or to dictate it. Such a marriage as this is concerned exclusively with spiritual verities—its physical aspects are merely incidental.<sup>45</sup>

Brother XII's attack on conventional marriage created a further split in the Aquarian Foundation. Additional conflict arose when he deposited a \$25,000 donation, given by a wealthy socialite named Mary Connally of Asheville, North Carolina, to his own bank account, rather than to the general funds of the Foundation. The Governors felt that Wilson was acting in violation of the constitution of the Society and charged him with misappropriating the money. Mary Connally made a last-minute dash across the continent, and testified in court that she had given the money to Wilson for him to do with as he saw fit. The case was dismissed.<sup>46</sup>

In a General Letter that Brother XII issued to the membership, he defended himself against the various charges that had been made against him, and claimed that he had not deviated from the original plan of the Lodge:

The first stage of this Work was individual—I alone gave *The Message*, built up the outer organization, and gave the subsequent teachings and instructions you have received. Those writings are my witness—a living witness that will endure long after those who try to destroy it are forgotten. My work will live.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 3. (Brother XII quoted from the last part of Chapter IV, pages 69-70 of a London, 1923, reprint edition of *When the Sun Moves Northward*. He did not identify the publisher of this particular edition.)

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<sup>45</sup> Brother XII, "Marriage," *The Chalice*, September, 1928, 14.

<sup>46</sup> On November 28, 1928, on the recommendation of Chief Justice Aulay M. Morrison, the Grand Jury at the Nanaimo Fall Assizes returned a verdict of "No Bill" against Wilson.

<sup>47</sup> Brother XII, November 1928 General Letter, 2.

At the same time, he also answered the charge that he had claimed that he and Myrtle Baumgartner were the reincarnations of the Egyptian deities Osiris and Isis:

I never made such a statement. Osiris-Isis are living Principles in nature, not personal god and goddess. In the Mysteries, they symbolized this very principle of Duality of which the modern world is entirely ignorant. The worship of Osiris-Isis was really a study of, and an understanding of, the dual aspect of the spiritual Monad, inseparable from manifestation in form. To that extent, every person is an "incarnation" of one or other of these dual Principles. But there are few today who have any knowledge of the "dual law," and it is our work to restore, in part, that knowledge to mankind. The "divine child" Horus symbolized the concrete brain-knowledge of those truths, which are "born" into the world of men as the result of a knowledge of the Dual Law which governs the union of the Osiris-Isis Principles in nature.<sup>48</sup>

Brother XII explained that his teachings were for disciples, not for the masses. There was a wide difference between the disciple and the rank-and-file of humanity, so there had to be a corresponding difference in the laws which governed these two differing stages of growth:

What is Law? Law is the aggregate of the CONDITIONS of sentient existence in A GIVEN FIELD of consciousness. There is one law for the animal, another for man, one law for the savage, another for the intellectual; there is the Law of the disciple, and the Law of the Initiate, and the Law of the Adept or perfected

man. Law is not a rule of conduct but a condition of existence, and it varies with the range of consciousness.<sup>49</sup>

Despite his explanations, Brother XII's credibility in the eyes of the disciples was undermined by the fact that many of his predictions had *not* come true. In her attempt to bear the child who would become the future World Teacher, Myrtle Baumgartner had suffered not one, but *two* miscarriages. Rejected by Brother XII and divorced by her husband, she suffered a mental breakdown. In addition, the American populace had not responded to Brother XII's political appeals, and both the Third Party and the Protestant Protective League had proved to be conspicuous failures. It was clear that Brother XII's grandiose political plans would never be realized. The Governors of the Foundation felt that they had good reason to doubt Brother XII's divine sanction.

The one individual Brother XII trusted the most was Robert England, the Foundation's Secretary-Treasurer, who had worked with him daily for fourteen months. Now England also broke with Wilson. In his letter of resignation, England told Wilson that he had come to the conclusion that "The Brother XII is no longer working in or through the body and faculties of Edward A. Wilson,"<sup>50</sup> and that "the Master's consciousness was gradually withdrawn during the period from the latter part of January to about the first day of July of this year, 1928."<sup>51</sup> England accused Wilson

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<sup>49</sup> Brother XII, Additional Paper No 1, December, 1928, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Robert England to Edward Arthur Wilson, undated, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3.

of being concerned only with “the getting of money and a place,”<sup>52</sup> and said that the many attacks he had made upon individuals in his published writings, and in private letters, had shown him that “there was none of the love in you or the compassion an Adept of the White Lodge should and would show. . . for his chelas.”<sup>53</sup>

Brother XII denied that there had been any personal failure on his part. He accused the Governors of treachery, disloyalty, and an utter breaking of faith, but said that he made no complaint: it was the lot of everyone who undertook the thankless task of helping humanity.<sup>54</sup> He said that he had anticipated these same events two years earlier, when he had written a letter explaining what aspiring to *chelas* meant:

It means the certainty of being misjudged and condemned by those who should be, or perhaps were your friends. You will be accused of ambition, of desire for power or place, or of scheming to obtain money by doubtful means. You are “suspect,” and you must be content to remain so. It means disappointment, failure on failure, plans wrecked through the treachery, or the selfishness, or the inefficiency of others. Time and again your work will be torn down, and you must patiently and painfully rebuild it.<sup>55</sup>

By the end of 1928, Brother XII’s career seemed to be over. The six other Governors had petitioned the British Columbia government to cancel the charter of the Foundation, and many

members had resigned because of the crisis. H.N. Stokes, editor of *The O. E. Library Critic*, observed: “It appears certain that the Brother XII has signed his own death warrant, and as he alone was the supposed link between the Masters and the White Lodge, the affair will go to pieces and leave not a wrack behind.”<sup>56</sup>

But Brother XII continued with his work. He told the Foundation members that the crisis was a test, and that those who remained loyal to the cause would go forward into the next phase of the Work: “Learn to regard this Society known as the Aquarian Foundation for what it is; it is now but the chrysalis, the soon-to-be-empty shell. You who issue from it shall shortly emerge into a world of sunlight, of spiritual consciousness hitherto unknown to you.”<sup>57</sup>

With a further donation from Mary Connally of \$10,000, Brother XII purchased the DeCourcy group of islands. The three islands, comprising 669 acres, along with 400 acres on Valdes Island and the original property at Cedar-by-the-Sea, brought the size of the colony to almost 1,200 acres. Brother XII called the new settlement the Brothers’ Center. He claimed that it would be the actual physical location where certain great souls would incarnate, bringing a new spiritual impulse to mankind and giving instruction to the selected individuals who would take part in the restoration succeeding the break-up of the existing order. He likened the collapse of the Aquarian Foundation to the failure of certain aspects of H.P.B.’s work:

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> November 1928 General Letter, 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Foundation Letters and Teachings*, 66.

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<sup>56</sup> “The Brother XII Bubble Bursts,” *O.E. Library Critic* (December 1928).

<sup>57</sup> Brother XII, General Letter, 12 November 1928, 2.

The one modern authority on these matters whom we entirely endorse is H.P. Blavatsky. . . . The work inaugurated by [her] towards the end of the nineteenth century was thwarted by the strife for position and leadership on the part of those who followed her, and by the lack of understanding in the majority. This later effort—The Aquarian Foundation—has also been brought to APPARENT shipwreck from the same causes; jealousy, selfishness and unscrupulous greed have made those who have worked against us an easy prey to the enemies of mankind—the dupes of those who oppose us.<sup>58</sup>

An important factor determining the selection of candidates for the new colony was the birthchart. Brother XII believed that “the nativity is the chart of the Soul,”<sup>59</sup> and stressed that the candidate had to have brought over the needed qualifications from a former life, as there wasn’t time to develop them in the present one. The prospective applicant had to be willing to renounce personal possessions and to entirely abandon the life of the outer world:

True discipleship means a life dedicated to the service of humanity; it is diametrically opposed to the preferences of the personal self. No compromise between these two is possible. Therefore, the first requirement is THE SURRENDER OF PERSONAL POSSESSIONS, an actual not a theoretical surrender. If the disciple is truly dedicated, it follows that all he has is included in the dedication of himself. This is the first requirement and it constitutes at once a safeguard and a test which the insincere will be unable to face.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> “The Brothers’ School,” reprinted in *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother* (London, England: L.N. Fowler & Co., 1930), 210-11.

<sup>59</sup> Brother XII, Additional Paper No 1 (December, 1928): 3.

Brother XII declared that not one in millions would be able to fulfill the conditions for admission to the Brothers’ Center: “The real occultist is born, just as is the musical genius, the artist, or the Teacher.”<sup>61</sup> He explained that the souls of the sixth sub-race who would be born as children to colony members would be raised in an environment conducive to their development, away from the spiritually devastating conditions of the outside world: “The effects of eighteen or twenty years of ordinary training are so terrible from a spiritual standpoint that they permanently disable all but those rare souls, the born Servers of the Race, and even these are hindered to a degree.”<sup>62</sup>

Beginning in January, 1929, Brother XII issued a monthly letter to the disciples, the purpose of which was to help them make the transition to a higher state of consciousness. The first requirement of the disciple was that he or she be reborn in a spiritual sense. Once this spiritual birth had taken place, the enclosing walls of personal concerns would have forever fallen away, and the disciple could live consciously in the world of spirit:

Love, emotion, experience, life itself, all these will be seen in a newer and truer perspective; you will view and understand them from the mountain peaks of reality instead of, as heretofore, from the weary and flattened plains of illusion. Life for you will no longer mean the few brief and perhaps empty years which lie within the span of one short incarnation, for you have now entered consciously into a life

<sup>60</sup> “The Brothers’ School,” *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*, 215.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

that is endless and eternal, you have only to realize the fact.<sup>65</sup>

This same spiritual birth was taking place in the life of the race, Brother XII explained. An epochal change was being wrought in the field of human consciousness:

This our Era is both the ending and the beginning of an Age; all who are born in it are part of it, are factors in the total sum, grains weighed in one or other of its scales. *It is a period of birth for the Race as a whole*—humanity may no longer be carried in the womb of ignorance and darkness; the hour of birth is upon them. It is not a Saviour of men that shall be born, but Man himself.<sup>64</sup>

Brother XII stated in the letters that the present work had commenced thousands of years earlier in ancient Egypt with the pharaoh Akhenaten, and that the Restoration of the Mysteries, which was a part of the present Work, was the fruit of that pharaoh's earlier efforts. He gave the disciples an Invocation which he said had originated in Akhenaten's reign, and which he claimed he'd recovered at 5:00 A.M. on April 27, 1926. Members of the group repeated the Invocation daily, each morning upon arising and at night before going to bed.

### **The Invocation of Light**

O Thou Who bringest the Dawn,  
Who renewest the Day without ceasing,  
Whose splendour is the Brightness of the Morning;

Fountain of Life and Source of Light Eternal,  
Increase in us Thy Knowledge and Thy Strength.

Thou Who shinest in the East,  
Who showest the West Thy glory,  
And art supreme in the high heaven;  
Thou fillest Thy Houses with Light,  
And Thy Mansions with hidden Power.  
Thou sustainest the Seven Lords,  
The Shining Ones Who keep Thy Path,  
And we, who serve Thee through Their Ray,  
O Light ineffable.

Increase in us Thy Wisdom and Thy Power,  
Dwell Thou in us, as we are One in Thee.<sup>65</sup>

Brother XII claimed that the present work was also linked to the Middle Ages through the work of the Knights Templar and their associate Orders. He believed that he had been a member of the Knights of Malta in one of his past lives, and that he had formerly known Roger Painter, the Florida poultry dealer who was Brother IX, as Jean de Valette, after whom the capital of Valetta in Malta was named.<sup>66</sup>

Brother XII also claimed that many outstanding religious figures from the past were part of the Work:

Remember that the physical embodiments of a Regent are practically continuous, and that many notable lives or historical characters are, in reality, but the work of the one life or Consciousness. I will give you an instance—Moses, Samuel, Daniel, John the Baptist, and Saint Paul were physical embodiments of THE REGENT OF THE MANU. Note how the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 52.

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<sup>65</sup> The only known surviving copy of this Invocation was given to the author by Alice Rudy, a former member of the colony.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from E.A. Wilson to Mary Connally, 27 June 1929.

qualities of leadership and judgement characterize them all alike, how they arraign the evils of their day, how they exhort, drive, compel, build and rebuild, and in the end—establish. Moses said, “Ye are the Seed of Abraham”; St. Paul said, “Ye are children of one Household” (Hierarchy); and I say unto you—“Ye are members of one Brotherhood.” It is the same teaching and the same Work.<sup>67</sup>

Brother XII told the disciples that they formed the nucleus of that new order which would rise, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the old. He used the expression “City of Refuge” to describe the colony, and predicted that within a very short time it would become a center of safety in the midst of chaos. To every Foundation member, he sent a “Card of Recognition” that was inscribed: “Labour in this Vineyard, and thou shalt eat of its fruit. Build thou the City of Refuge; it shall hide thee in the Day of Adversity.”<sup>68</sup>

Brother XII’s monthly letters were published in England by L.N. Fowler & Company under the title *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*. The reviewer for *The Occult Review*<sup>69</sup> was intrigued by the contents of the book, particularly by Brother XII’s outline of what he called the “Dual Law,” in which he wrote that near the end of the life-history of the Monad, the two complementary souls who had originally comprised the Monad before it divided would be drawn to each other and by “*the fusion of a dual CONSCIOUSNESS*”<sup>70</sup> be able to do a great spiritual work together. The reviewer speculated that this was the process at

work in partnerships like the one between Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland.

After the departure of Myrtle Baumgartner, Brother XII entered into a relationship with a woman named Mabel Skottowe, who arrived at the colony from Pensacola, Florida, where she and Roger Painter had been Divisional Secretaries of the Aquarian Foundation. The 39-year-old Mabel, who had taught school in the Canadian prairies after emigrating with her family from England, left Painter to become Brother XII’s mistress. He put her in charge of supervising the colony on a day-to-day basis, and told the disciples that she was his co-worker, with authority equal to his own. “She is my eyes, she is my ears, she is my mouth,” he declared. “Her orders are my orders. Whatever she says, you are to take as coming from me.”<sup>71</sup> Mabel, who used the initial “Z” as her occult name, was called “Madame Zee” by the disciples. She and Wilson apparently participated in some kind of private marriage, legally changing their names in 1931 to Amiel de Valdes and Zura de Valdes.<sup>72</sup>

Brother XII and Mabel Skottowe may have collaborated on a manuscript entitled *The Law of Cycles and of Human Generation*, the authorship of which was ascribed to “Two Brothers of the Twelfth Hierarchy.”<sup>73</sup> The book explained how the same forces which had caused the downfall of ancient civilizations were operating in the present day. It also examined the occult laws governing

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<sup>67</sup> *Unsigned Letters*, 148.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>69</sup> Leon Elson, *The Occult Review* (September 1930): 207.

<sup>70</sup> *Unsigned Letters*, 182.

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<sup>71</sup> *Mary W.T. Connally v. Amiel de Valdes and Zura de Valdes*, The Supreme Court of British Columbia, Nanaimo, B.C., 26 April 1933, transcript of proceedings, 20.

<sup>72</sup> Wilson changed his name by deed poll on 23 March 1931; Mabel Skottowe changed her name by deed poll exactly six months later on 23 September 1931.

<sup>73</sup> Advertisement in *Unsigned Letters*, 230.

human conception and physical birth. Although advance orders for the book were taken, it isn't known whether or not *The Law of Cycles and of Human Generation* was ever published.

Brother XII and Mabel were away from the colony for most of 1930, returning from England on November 15, 1930, on Brother XII's sailboat, the *Lady Royal*. The final stage in the life of the colony now began. In many respects, Wilson seemed like a different man. He kept himself separate from the disciples, and also ignored his wealthy patron, Mary Connally. "Apart from seeing him about half-a-dozen times, for perhaps five minutes at a time, I never saw him, or talked to him, or had any conversation with him," she recalled. "As far as the personnel were concerned, he absolutely ignored me as completely as if I didn't exist."<sup>74</sup>

On December 21, 1930, Mary was abruptly removed from her comfortable house at Cedar and taken to Valdes Island, where she was put to work chopping wood, cooking, cleaning, scrubbing floors, and carrying heavy loads on her back to the various cabins on the island. Mary was placed under the supervision of Leona Painter, who was instructed to make her work as hard as possible, with the result that Mary performed all of her tasks at high speed and under constant pressure. The wealthy socialite pushed herself to exhaustion in the belief that the constant work and physical privation was a form of initiation which would strengthen her soul and prepare her to take a step forward into higher consciousness.

Herbert Jefferson, a commercial artist from Toronto who spent six months at the colony, later explained the rationale behind this treatment of the disciples:

All these jobs he gave us to do were tests. He'd say, 'Now, you'll be tested. I'll give you something to do which may appear to be hard for you or unreasonable, but this is my way of testing you. When you come through with flying colours, then you've passed your initiation and you're ready for further work.'<sup>75</sup>

For three months, Mary Connally toiled relentlessly on Valdes Island. When she was informed that she had failed the test, she was devastated. Returning to Cedar, she was given the job of cultivating a three-acre field. She worked seven hours a day, plowing and harrowing the field. "I thought it was a test," she recalled, "just to see if I could make good, if there was anything in this world that would hold me back in this work I had come here for—the freeing of humanity from its shackles."<sup>76</sup>

Again, according to some arbitrary standard apparent only to Brother XII, Mary failed the test. She was thereafter considered to be unsuitable for the Work, and was permanently downgraded in the community. The fact that Brother XII appeared to have finished with her may have been because she had no more money to give him.<sup>77</sup> The hard physical labor took its toll on Mary's health. When she later sought damages in court,

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<sup>75</sup> Interview by Imbert Orchard with Herbert Jefferson, 29 January 1966.

<sup>76</sup> Transcript of Connally v. Amiel de Valdes, 25.

<sup>77</sup> Mary had hoped to receive \$250,000 from a lawsuit she had brought against the Southern Railroad Company in which she claimed that the smoke and cinders from the railroad's shops in Asheville, North Carolina, had damaged the property value of her Biltmore Forest estate, "Fernihurst." On August 11, 1929, in the U.S. district court in Washington, D.C., she was awarded one cent damages.

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<sup>74</sup> Transcript of Connally v. Amiel de Valdes, 18.

she testified: “The damage to my physical body is something that cannot be paid for.”<sup>78</sup>

In spite of the harsh conditions at the colony, the disciples believed that the hardships they endured were dictated by Brother XII’s zeal for the spiritual welfare of the community. Before they had arrived at the Brothers’ Center, they’d been warned in advance: “The activities of the Great White Lodge can be summed up in one word—WORK. This work is endless, never-ceasing . . . Those who come to us will be expected to support our Work and our Cause TO THE UTTERMOST.”<sup>79</sup> For the most part, the disciples continued to regard Brother XII as “the representative—the incarnation almost—of this new brotherhood movement, which we believed was in the process of being established.”<sup>80</sup>

By dint of their unremitting labor, the colonists created a prosperous and self-sufficient community in which they had everything they needed to survive the Great Depression and prepare themselves for the coming collapse of the social order. Although there was little formal teaching at the community—Brother XII had written that the Brothers’ Center was not a school of classrooms or of books, but a school for the soul<sup>81</sup>—there was definitely an emphasis upon the esoteric. A disciple named Alice Rudy recalled:

They gave you what they called your “inner name.” It was the name of your Higher Self.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>79</sup> “Additional Paper,” reprinted in *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*, 227.

<sup>80</sup> Alfred Barley document, 15.

<sup>81</sup> This remark is from Brother XII’s February 1929 letter to the disciples. The paragraph in which it occurs was omitted from the letter published in *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*.

Ramathiel or Serathiel, or whatever. My inner name was Niadi. Zee told me, “Never voice it out loud, but if you ever need help, call on this name!”

They told me I was a young soul—only about a 3,500-year-old soul, which isn’t very old. Alfred Barley was an old soul. He told me he’d never left the earth at some deaths—he just came right back again into a new body. Roger Painter was Simon Peter in a past life, and XII was supposed to have been the Apostle Paul.

He didn’t want anyone reading. One time, he saw me reading something, and he said to Zee, “What’s she reading? *Take it away from her!* I don’t want her reading *anything!*”<sup>82</sup>

Early in 1932, police and immigration officers landed on DeCourcy Island to investigate the complaints of a disgruntled former colony member. The incident triggered Brother XII’s paranoia. He purchased rifles and ammunition, and ordered the disciples to build forts surrounding his headquarters. The colonists took turns doing guard duty, and in some cases even fired warning shots at vessels that strayed too close to the island. If a government vessel approached, Brother XII fled into the woods. After awhile, however, he became tired of running. “Let them come!” he told the disciples. “I’m not hiding anymore!”<sup>83</sup>

As the year progressed, conditions at the colony rapidly deteriorated. In some instances, the disciples were made to work twenty-hour shifts in the fields. They were also subject to the constant haranguing of Madame Zee, who seemed to take delight in tormenting various members of

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<sup>82</sup> Interview by author with Alice Rudy, 12 January 1981.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

the colony. Arms upraised, she would stamp up and down in front of anyone who incurred her displeasure, calling down “the Power”<sup>84</sup> to smite the wretched object of her wrath. The disciples were even placed on rations: a slice of brown bread with a spot of jam and one teaspoonful of tea to twenty gallons of water was a typical daily ration that almost defies belief.<sup>85</sup>

Brother XII himself exhibited increasingly erratic behavior. Often the most trivial incident would trigger an explosive rage. A misunderstanding over the purchase of a power-saw caused him to mercilessly berate Roger Painter, who was cutting wood at the time:

And like a flash, he came at me, and cursed me for everything under the sun, and called me a dirty low-down sneak, and said that I had undermined him. And he talked with me there for three solid hours, and called me every name under the sun.”<sup>86</sup>

Mary Connally, who had given her fortune to Brother XII in the belief that he was the instrument of the Masters—only to be cruelly rejected by him, later explained:

He did not fail until he came back from Europe. And when he came back, he started fooling us fast, until he smashed up everything that was capable of being smashed. It

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<sup>84</sup> Madame Zee’s behavior was described by Bruce Crawford during the courtcase *Barley v. Amiel deValdes*, held in Nanaimo on 27 April 1933, and reported by Bruce McKelvie in “Black Magic, Gold and Guns Feature Strange Cult Case,” *The Victoria Colonist*, 28 April 1933.

<sup>85</sup> Reported by Alexandrine Gibb in “Brother Twelve,” *The Toronto Star Weekly*, 20 May 1933.

<sup>86</sup> Transcript of *Barley v. Amiel de Valdes*, 27 April 1933, 3.

took him one year and six months to absolutely demolish everything.<sup>87</sup>

The disciples wondered if Brother XII’s return voyage from England, during which he and Zura had almost died at sea when the *Lady Royal* was blown far off course, had perhaps rendered the two of them insane. “We often wondered if they didn’t put on a show for us, especially at full moon,” Annie Barley recalled. “It was either that they were insane people or that they were taking drugs.”<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of life in the colony was the fact that the disciples believed that if they didn’t do exactly as Brother XII told them, they would lose their souls. “When he told us that we had failed in the Work,” Leona Painter testified, “why, we were lost for aeons of time—and that would put you through intense agony.”<sup>89</sup>

A further reference to this destruction of the soul is made in a letter Alfred Barley wrote to a woman named Regina LaCarte. Seeking to free her from “mental enslavement,” Barley speaks of an “insidious bondage which, if persisted in, ends in total darkness and disintegration of the soul, until its atomic parts are so scattered that it takes aeons and aeons of time for it to rebuild its constituent parts.”<sup>90</sup>

The disciples lived in an atmosphere of growing dread. Isolated on a remote island, forbidden to communicate with the outside world, forced to work long hours in terrible conditions, and psy-

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<sup>87</sup> Transcript of *Connally v. Amiel de Valdes*, 26 April 1933, 9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>90</sup> Letter from Alfred Barley to Regina LaCarte, 30 October 1930.

chologically terrorized by a man they believed had the power to destroy their souls, their dream of living in an utopian community had turned into a nightmare. As Bruce Crawford observed: “I wasn’t there long until I found out I wasn’t in a brotherhood of love, but in a brotherhood of hell.”<sup>91</sup>

There were no further teachings from Brother XII, who appeared indifferent to the fate of the land-working slaves who toiled ceaselessly under the vigilant scrutiny of his harsh mistress, Madame Zee. Driven to the breaking point, the disciples finally revolted, demanding a meeting with him and an explanation of the intolerable conditions at the colony. This challenge to his authority caused Brother XII intense rage, and he proceeded to remove the disciples from DeCourcy Island, taking them in his tugboat, the *Kbuenaten*, two and three at a time, to Cedar-by-the-Sea. On June 5, 1932, the banished disciples held a meeting at Cedar and resolved to continue the Work without him.

Mary Connally and Alfred Barley subsequently brought court actions against Brother XII to recover the money they had contributed to the colony. In his statement of defence, Wilson denied all of the allegations made against him:

In answer to the whole of the Statement of Claim herein this Defendant says that the books and other writings of this Defendant honestly set forth the opinions and beliefs of this Defendant upon the present material and spiritual condition of civilization and of its future; that the present financial crisis and economic stringency, the unprecedented and alarming condition of world-wide unemploy-

ment, the chaotic condition of international relations, are a manifestation of the disintegration of our present civilization and have been foretold by this Defendant in his books and writings since 1925; that the Defendant’s said books and other writings were, as they purport to be, written under the overwhelming inspiration of spiritual forces, and were only intended for those whose consciousness of spiritual realities would permit them to read with understanding.<sup>92</sup>

The most sensational testimony of the trial was Roger Painter’s disclosure that Brother XII and Madame Zee had attempted to kill their enemies with black magic. In rituals held at midnight in the cabin of the *Lady Royal*, Brother XII would summon the etheric body of his victim into his presence:

He would stand him up there in his imagination, and he would then begin his tirade, cursing and damning that spirit, and then going down this way with his hand, and that way, cutting what they call the etheric, which is the finer body, from which the physical gets its life. The operation was supposed to—that is, the physical organism, as I understood it from him, the physical organism would gradually become depleted and die.<sup>93</sup>

The disciples won their cases, but Brother XII and Madame Zee had already fled, leaving the colony in ruins and disappearing with an estimated \$400,000, which Wilson had accumulated during his seven-year reign as Brother XII.

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<sup>92</sup> Statement of Defence of Amiel de Valdes, 2 February 1933, 8.

<sup>93</sup> Transcript of Barley v. Amiel de Valdes, 7. Apparently none of the individuals Brother XII targeted for assassination died as a result of this procedure.

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<sup>91</sup> “Mary Connally Given Judgement Against Brother Twelve,” *Nanaimo Herald*, 27 April 1933.



Clinique du Chânet (Neuchâtel, Switzerland). Wilson was a patient here in November, 1934, under the care of Dr. Roger Schmidt. His death in Neuchâtel remains a matter of speculation. The clinic is now a police training academy. (By permission of the author.)

Returning to England via Montreal, Brother XII and Mabel Skottowe lived in seclusion for a year in Devonshire, before departing for the continent. Wilson's health appears to have been failing, for he sought medical attention in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, from Dr. Roger Schmidt, who had been his personal physician at the colony in British Columbia. Wilson died at 19 Rue des Beaux-Arts at 9:00 p.m. on November 7, 1934. The death certificate, which was signed by Dr. Schmidt,

listed the cause of death as angina pectoris. Wilson was fifty-six-years-old. He died penniless, leaving no record of the fortune he had amassed. Mabel Skottowe left Neuchâtel upon his death and disappeared without a trace, with the exception of the occasional sighting reported over the years.

There is a possibility that Brother XII's death in Switzerland may have been a hoax. In July of 1936, Wilson's lawyer, Frank Cunliffe, acting on

instructions from Mary Connally, made a special trip to San Francisco. Going on board an ocean liner docked in the harbor, he rendezvoused with a mysterious individual to whom he gave a briefcase containing a large amount of cash. Cunliffe's son Donald was a witness to the transaction, and reports that the man matched Brother XII's description exactly. When asked to describe him, he recalled:

There was an impression of whiteness about him. His hat was white—his clothes were white—his shoes were white. Everything about him was white. And these gleaming eyes! This man *lived!* He was vibrant! I met Churchill once—a totally dissimilar person—but the same kind of electric energy seemed to flow through him.<sup>94</sup>

A year later, Frank Cunliffe received a trans-Atlantic telephone call via Gibraltar from the same man, whom the operator identified as a Mr. Wilson. After the call, Cunliffe all but confirmed to his son Donald that the man was, in fact, Brother XII, and added uncharacteristically, "I hope he goes to hell!"<sup>95</sup>

Over time, the disciples of Brother XII gradually dispersed, starting new lives for themselves elsewhere. Mary Connally remained in British Columbia, living on DeCourcy Island, which had been awarded to her by the court. The Barleys and Roger Painter moved to Marysville, Washington, where they bought a berry farm and continued to live a communal life. The disciples each drew their own meaning from the experience.

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<sup>94</sup> Interview by author with Donald M. Cunliffe, 6 April 1978.

<sup>95</sup> Letter from Donald M. Cunliffe to Don Clark, 12 February 1974.

"Hereafter, I'm not taking orders from no-one," Bruce Crawford declared. "I'm just gonna listen to my Higher Self."<sup>96</sup>

Why had Brother XII changed? That was the great mystery. In an editorial in *The Occult Review*,<sup>97</sup> Harry J. Strutton, who had known Wilson in England for a year before he left for British Columbia, wrote that he had detected in his character from the very beginning, a latent wildness and instability which was so disconcerting that certain persons, whom Strutton did not identify, had attempted to have him certified as insane. Strutton felt that Wilson's very success was his undoing, and that he had succumbed to egomania in a rapidly accelerating fall from grace, until he had become "a monarch of mere tinsel, bereft of the power of the Lodge."<sup>98</sup>

Strutton remarked that although it was impossible to agree with every detail of Brother XII's teachings, his earlier books had breathed sincerity and charm: "Judged merely by his writings, Brother XII was an inspiration to renewed endeavour, to more unselfish service."<sup>99</sup> He told readers that they should mourn Wilson's failure, rather than condemn him: "And may the experience of the thousands who came under his influence strengthen their determination, rather than deter them from seeking the true 'City of Refuge'—the peace within, rather than any organized Centre on the physical plane."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Interview by author with Alice Rudy, 12 January 1981.

<sup>97</sup> "Brother XII Loses His Way," *The Occult Review*, LVII/6 (June, 1933).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

In response to Strutton's editorial, the disciples offered their own answers to the mystery of why Brother XII had changed. Edward Conrow believed that an explanation for Brother XII's apparent failure was to be found in the Master Morya's statement that all action in life is dual, and that unless one was prepared for the negative consequences of a positive action, one would be "caught in the toils of the negative action."<sup>101</sup> Brother XII had neglected to take the necessary precautions, hence the ignoble end to what might have been an important spiritual work.

Another correspondent, identified only by the initials F.G.B., wrote that Brother XII reminded them of the character Narada in the Hindu pantheon, of whom H.P.B. had written in *The Secret Doctrine* that the adversity he brought upon individuals was for the purpose of hastening their progress and evolution. F.G.B. stated that there were those who believed that Brother XII had acted consciously in that role.<sup>102</sup>

Alfred Barley concurred with Strutton's observations about the value of Brother XII's writings, and his deep sincerity in the early days. Barley felt that the disciples had learned a salutary lesson, and that Brother XII's "fatal course of action in direct contravention of everything he had written shall result in having educated us into a realization of those truths which before had been but words on paper."<sup>103</sup>

Brother XII remains an enigmatic figure. Had he been able to retain his psychological stability, and conduct the affairs of the Aquarian Founda-

tion more skillfully, he might be recognized today as an important religious figure. But as he himself observed, the path of Initiation is a quaking one to travel, and success is the exception rather than the rule.<sup>104</sup> For all of his genuine insight and awareness, he ended up betraying the trust of those persons who sought him out as a Teacher.

A careful study of Brother XII's writings has led this writer to the conclusion that he was a true mystic, who wrote eloquently of what he had experienced, and without the intent to deceive credulous followers—although there were undoubtedly times when he used his powers of rhetoric to purposefully manipulate people to his own advantage. Many who were associated with him were struck by the magic of his words, and impressed by the evidence of his inspiration. Brother XII's teachings, notwithstanding his extreme political beliefs, are a contribution to the literature of the occult and a persuasive argument in themselves for his statement, "My work will live."<sup>105</sup>

For all of the conflict, moral ambiguity, and deception that characterized Brother XII's life, there is an authority and a clarity to his writings that sets them apart from the drama of clashing personalities that swirled about him. He strove to make real to his disciples his perception of a transcendent reality beyond the *maya* of the everyday world and the ordinary self. Truth itself did not change, he wrote, only the forms into which it was poured, and through which it was imperfectly expressed from age to age:

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<sup>101</sup> *The London Forum*, October, 1933, 270. *The Occult Review* changed its name to *The London Forum* in September, 1933.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>104</sup> *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*, 142-44.

<sup>105</sup> Brother XII, November 1928 General Letter, 2.

Only the Wise may know the mystery of the Cycle; birth, growth, maturity, decay, death—which is but birth into another section of the Cycle—so turns the wheel. He who imagines the last word spoken, the final revelation made, is yet far from *the beginning* of Wisdom. It is only with these or similar thoughts in mind that we may hope to approach the Mysteries. Such thoughts must flow into the mind unconsciously and without effort; their Source is in That which is above mind and below it, and from Which mind itself is born—the worlds of Reality, the Gateway to the Temple of the Mysteries. Man is born of woman, lives out the fret of life and passes on. Nations rise and fall, creeds blossom and decay, Teachers and Messengers arise, serve and pass to further service. Men are left with three things—the tradition of the past, the hope of the future, and the work of today. The last is the sum and substance of the other two. Only Eternal Truth endures. Creeds and religions are but the man-projected shadows of Its light. From It all comes, to It all returns—It is at once the Source, the Sustenance, the Goal.<sup>106</sup>

Brother XII leaves a legacy of mystery, a complex and contradictory life that is still far from being fully understood. The discovery of new information about him which will further illuminate his character, and a detailed and comprehensive analysis of his writings, will assist future researchers in assessing his role and significance in Theosophical history.

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<sup>106</sup> Aquarian Foundation Instruction No. 10, June, 1928, 4.

# Book Reviews

## **H.P.B.: THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND INFLUENCE OF HELENA BLAVATSKY, FOUNDER OF THE MODERN THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT.**

By Sylvia Cranston. New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons (A Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book), 1993. Pp. xxiv + 648. \$30.00 (\$39.00 in Canada). ISBN 0-87477-688-0.

In these days, when authors (in the U.K. anyway) are used to being relentlessly hectored by their publishers to reduce the length of their books so as to bring down the costs of paper, typesetting and printing, to permit selling at an affordable price, it is amazing to see appear a biography of Blavatsky of this length. Either Putnams of New York are very much more generous than is usual in the expense to which they are willing to go, or this publication has been silently subsidised.

The length being such, I had expected to find in it everything that is known about the life of H.P.B. This is not the case. Pains have been taken to include everything known of her ancestry and childhood, but from the time of her leaving her husband, there are big cuts in the account given of her early years. Metrovitch is cut down to this:

In April of 1862 H.P.B. attended the Tiflis Opera House to see Gounoud's *Faust* which only four years earlier had had its world premiere in Paris. Two of the leading singers

at this Tiflis production, Agardi and Teresina Mitrovitch or Metrovitch, were very good friends of HPB. Teresina played the part of Marguerite and her husband—a famous basso of the time—played the part of Mephistopheles.

True, but in a full biography one would have expected to read rather more of her strange and dramatic relations with Agardi Metrovitch, which started twelve years earlier, with her stumbling over him on the ground one night in Constantinople as he lay wounded by political enemies, through her later having to intervene to prevent his execution for political activities, to end with her having, together with Lydia Pashkoff (whose name does not appear in this biography), to bury him at night on a lonely beach at Alexandria, after he had finally been politically assassinated, because no church would allow his internment in its ground. This is the high stuff of drama. Why has it all been left out? I suspect, because of the rumours that made him the father of the child she at one time took about, and which he helped her to bury. Even if one does not believe Metrovitch to have been the father of this child, and I do not (I think it was the child of a female relation of her husband, Nikifor Blavatsky), something, I feel, ought to have been said of it. The child is not mentioned at all. I incline to think that Metrovitch was not her lover; but even without his being so,

he was a very important person in her life, her companion, support—and burden—in much.

Then, when Olcott comes in, we are not told that he was a divorced man with two children, or even that he had been married. This is not because the author did not know. During the time that both our biographies of Blavatsky were separately in progress, Leslie Price put Cranston and myself in touch, and I asked her, as an American, to what office in the USA I should apply for Olcott's divorce papers. She replied by sending me photocopies of the papers in full, showing that the suit was filed against him, before he ever met Blavatsky, in respect of his visit to a New York house of prostitution. She gave me her opinion, which I share, that one need not conclude that Olcott was in the habit of resorting to prostitutes; it could be that it was his wife who wanted her freedom and that he, to spare her reputation, agreed to pose as the guilty party. I used this gratefully in my book, but why does nothing about it appear in hers?

After the appearance of my book, *Blavatsky and Her Teachers*, Cranston wrote to me asking if I would share with her the diagrams described but not reproduced in it, made for me by Dr. Margaret Little to show the relative positions of womb, bladder, urethra and vagina in (a) a healthy woman, (b) a woman in whom the womb was prolapsed, but not so seriously as to prevent childbearing, and (c) so seriously prolapsed as to press down on the bladder, causing the troubles from which H.P.B. suffered and not only occlude the vagina, impeding intercourse but allow no space in which a foetus could develop, this being Dr. Little's understanding of the medical certificate written out for H.P.B. by Dr. Leon Oppenheimer, a distinguished gynecologist of the time. I had to explain to Cranston that the set

of diagrams made by Dr. Little had been lost in the offices of East-West and that when I mentioned this to Helen Gething, of the Theosophical Publishing House in England, which was co-publishing my book with East-West, she said she was not sorry they had been lost as they would have been too upsetting for Theosophical readers to view. I was surprised Theosophical readers should be assumed so shockable, and, to avoid troubling Dr. Little a second time, made for Cranston a set of sketches myself, from memory of hers, signing the set, "J.O.F. after M.L." This I fully expected to appear in Cranston's book. It does not. Neither is there any mention of the medical certificate or even of the medical examination.

Since Sylvia Cranston was not herself too prudish to be interested in these matters, can it be that their omission was required by the United Lodge of Theosophists, to which I believe she belongs, if perhaps, it was they who were subsidising this monumental publication?

More difficult to understand is the complete omission of the Master Serapis (important particularly in relation to Olcott) and of the Master Hilarion.

To pass from what is left out to what is in, no pains are spared to substantiate H.P.B.'s having been in Tibet. Amongst the many documents I saw in photostat was a letter from Hartmann printed in *The Theosophist* of March 1887 in which he told of experiments he had made with a German woman who had been a servant to his parents but whom he had discovered to possess psychic powers. He had handed her letters from several people whom she was able correctly to describe to him, then one which had mysteriously appeared on his desk at Adyar, and which he supposed to have come from one of their Adept teachers: the woman began to describe a place...

a building... of certain characteristics which, when he passed them on to H.P.B., then at Ostende, she thought slightly confused yet relating to the temple of the Panchen Lama at Shigatse. The copy made by Hartmann of a drawing made by the woman of part of the roof of the temple, with writing, did not look to me specially significant, and after some deliberation I left it out of my book because I thought that those people who doubted H.P.B.'s own word that she had been in Tibet would not be convinced of it by the vision of a clairvoyant, as reported by Hartmann. H.P.B. had suggested to Hartmann that he might further test the woman by asking her to draw the mantra *Om tram ab bri hum* to be found on some temple mirrors, but the article in *The Theosophist* did not reproduce the drawing made in compliance with this suggestion. Now, Cranston reproduces (on her p. 95) the woman's response, from *The Path*, in which it was printed in January 1986. This I had not seen before, and it contained what I immediately recognised as Tibetan characters—for I did, some time ago, take a course in the Tibetan language. I did not pursue it much beyond the alphabet and construction of simple sentences as my motivation was not to read original Tibetan texts but merely to check up on the Tibetan words used by H.P.B. in *The Voice of the Silence*, but I saw in front of me now, in five squares, Tibetan characters, four of which I had learned laboriously to copy: (1) L or LA, (2) Y or YA, (3) R or RA, (4) was a squiggle I could not identify, but (5) must be B or BA. The squiggles above these looked genuine though I could not decipher them. Now, I read (p. 95-96) that Cranston exhibited then to Wesley Needham, keeper of the Yale University's Tibetan collection, an expert in the language. He was able to read off the top group as the mantra proposed as a test by H.P.B., and the

larger symbols, within the five squares, as *Lam*, *Yam*, *Ram*, *Kham*, and *Vam*, the names of the five *Dhyāni Buddhas*. Many of the consonants written in Tibetan are not sounded and that may explain the missing "m"s at the ends of these names, unless Tibetans sometimes just leave them off. The alphabet heading my Tibetan lessons gives no character for either *V* or *F*, but *B* (bi-labial) and *V* (labio-dental) are very close phonetically, and some languages, such as Spanish, have a sound which is actually in between them, and it may be the same here.

I do think it very remarkable that this woman was able to draw the mantra suggested by H.P.B. and add five other significant names, and though it was apparently from holding the materialised Adept's letter she was able to do this, it does strengthen the credibility not only of the Mahatma Letters but of H.P.B.'s link with Tibet. Only, one has to take Hartmann's word for all this, nothing was done under test conditions and it is not stated whether, like the first inferior drawing, this was Hartmann's copy of the woman's or the woman's own. One has to have an initial good will to accept this as what it appears to be. Granting that, it has weight.

On a lighter note, Cranston has a nice piece about H.P.B.'s detractor, William Emmette Coleman (p. 381-2). He who accused her of plagiarism, particularly in the sense of lifting classical quotations from the works of modern authors in such a way as to give the impression she had read the classics for herself, was himself accused of just this offense by one W.E.C. Burr, who complained that a booklet by himself was the unacknowledged source of quotations from Latin, Greek and other authors as though Coleman had read them all for himself. This gave me so much pleasure that I looked for the date of Burr's publication, but

unfortunately neither this nor the source reference are given. Perhaps Cranston could still supply them. The significance is that if it appeared before Coleman's attack on H.P.B. it may have been to get his own back that he taxed someone else with a fault with which he had been taxed, but if after, it would be karma.

In a general sense, one can say that Cranston's aim seems to have been not so much to enter into the personal life of H.P.B., for which there are fuller sources, but to exhibit the impact of her teaching on the world of today, particularly with regard to science. She notes that Blavatsky's assertion that "the atom is divisible" has found more than ample confirmation in the work of physicists, who think now in terms of waves and energies. This century has seen the strife of two rival theories of cosmogenesis, the "steady state" of Fred Hoyle and "big bang" of Martin Ryle. "Big bang" or "open universe" is doom-laden, since it has everything flying away from the point of the one explosion, ultimately to lose itself; but now there is a new idea, that it can somehow turn back on itself and return to its point of origin, re-gather. Like all of us who have followed the great debate as well as the layman can, she notes that the latter theory, of the "oscillating universe" is practically that of the Manvantaras and Pralayas of The Secret Doctrine, and she shares (p. 453) all our excitement that Sir Stephen Hawking, having started in the first, "Big Bang" or "open universe" theory seems to be moving, perhaps already moved, into the second.

Incidentally, under the heading "Quantum Mechanics," difficult enough for most of us anyway, the obstacles to our comprehension have been compounded by a printer's error on p. 434, line 24, where we read: "He [Max Plank] also posited that an electron ... made a quantum leap,

and expression frequently used..." I believe "and" was meant by the author to read "an."

Cranston also takes us through the arts. She is right to claim H.P.B.'s work as the inspiration of the Irish Literary Renaissance, spearheaded by Yeats and Æ, but I question the claim of T.S. Eliot. He mentions Blavatsky but was very Church of England in his attitude. Under painters, she is right to claim Kandinsky and Mondrian, both of whom professed their inspiration from H.P.B., but it seems to me stretching a point to include Gauguin, who, though he seems to have read Schuré, remained at least nominally Catholic.

Cranston's purpose is to show H.P.B. to us as the "Mother of the new age." It is a noble design.

One very small point. In the Index on reads, "Grant, Joan, 507f." There is no reference to Joan Grant there or anywhere. There must have been one, deleted from the text after it was set in page-proof, a deletion from the Index having been forgotten to be made at the same time. Such things easily happen, especially in a big work.

**Jean Overton Fuller**

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**Review on *H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement***

**1. BLAVATSKY AND HER BIOGRAPHIES.**

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was a controversial woman in her lifetime. Associated with Spiritualism, she alienated the Spiritualists by insisting that their phenomena had quite a different cause from what they supposed. She accused both orthodox scientists and orthodox religionists of a like nar-

row-minded bigotry. Living at a time when Europeans had only scorn for what Kipling called “lesser breeds without the Law,” she affirmed that many ancient peoples and non-Europeans knew more than European philosophy dreamt of. She inspired intensely loyal followers, but badgered and bullied her closest friends and associates with emotional outbursts. Famed as a producer of phenomena, she was branded by a report submitted to the Society for Psychical Research as “one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history” (*Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 3 [1885]: 207).

But there was another side to her. She had a knowledge of arcane matters that amazed all who knew her, and sources for that information that no one else understood. She was generous, open-hearted, humorous, and insightful in her dealings with others. She was charismatic, a woman with magic eyes. She anticipated scientific theories that are only now starting to be recognized by science (as she predicted they would be). She inspired artists, poets, and musicians to introduce new forms of art expressing a new consciousness. She is the chief source for a wide variety of alternative spiritual movements in our own time, ranging from Western Buddhism to the full range of New Age ideas. She has been vindicated in the publications of the Society for Psychical Research by a centennial study showing that its original report was biased, unscientific, and unworthy of the standards usually upheld by that body.

If she was controversial during her life, she has remained so more than a hundred years after her death. Responses to her were polarized in the nineteenth century, and remain so today. Biographical treatments are mostly of two types. One consists of sympathetic biographies, written mainly by Theosophists who accept — to varying de-

grees — the claim she made about herself, namely, that she had been sent by wiser and more evolved human beings in order to make available certain information that humanity once knew but had lost sight of and particularly to form a community to spread that information and in other ways to carry on the work of the wise and evolved individuals who had sent her. Sympathetic biographies assume that what she said about her life can generally be believed (allowing for inevitable mistakes of memory and the emotional exaggeration that was part of her nature).

Other books about HPB are skeptical biographies beginning with the premise (often unacknowledged) that Blavatsky’s claim about herself cannot be true since there is no Inner Tradition, developed and passed on by highly evolved members of our species who serve as our guardians and teachers. Skeptical biographies treat everything she said about herself as doubtful unless it can be supported by independent testimony. They typically look for dishonorable explanations of her actions. They are sometimes openly hostile treatments — debunking exposés. They are sometimes works of personal fantasy in which the author explains Blavatsky’s real motives and purposes, as the author has imaginatively reconstructed them.

What we lack for Blavatsky is a neutral, scholarly, critical biography that seeks to assess the nature of her life and work and its consequences, without promotion or deflation, but with understanding. Given Blavatsky’s character and claim, and the controversy that surrounded her from her childhood, an impartial, critical biography is probably an impossible dream. So we must content ourselves with sympathetic biographies that are not credulous or hagiographical and with skeptical biographies

that are not vicious or polemical.

The newest life of Blavatsky, *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*, by Sylvia Cranston, is clearly a sympathetic biography. It is also, however, decently free of credulity and hagiography. It is, without a doubt, the best biography of HPB thus far to have been written, and is likely to remain the best for some time to come. It is not a perfect biography — that is a set with null membership — but it is a very good one, indeed, an excellent one.

Blavatsky's teachers recognized her flaws and failings, but they used her as their messenger because she was the best available. That may seem like a backhanded compliment, but it is a realistic assessment and, all things considered, not an evaluation to be ashamed of. Much the same can be said of this biography. It has its flaws and failings, but it is the best available, and that is no mean compliment. It is the best biography to give the general reader who wants to know about Blavatsky, and it is the most up-to-date, reliable, and well-documented life of this extraordinary woman.

2. **CONTENTS: THE LIFE.** In addition to the usual front matter, the book contains a helpful Chronology (pp. xiii-xv) of the chief events, year by year, in Blavatsky's life. The back matter includes a useful Bibliography (pp. 617-28) and an Index (pp. 629-48). The body of the work consists of seven parts of diverse length covering HPB's life and influence. The parts are divided into relatively short chapters, from 5 to 17 in each. The first six parts are biographical mainly, covering the major known events of her life, although they also include summaries of some of her main teachings. The seventh chapter treats her influ-

ence on Western Culture during the century after her death.

Part 1, "Life in Russia" (pp. 1-38), takes us through her family background and birth in 1831 to her flight from marriage and Nikifor Blavatsky in 1849. At the age of 18 she became a remittance woman and world traveler. Part 2, "World Search" (pp. 39-60), covers her 1849-1857 crisscross wanderings in the Near East, Europe (including London, where she first met her teacher in the flesh), America, and India. In the last country she showed she was her author-mother's daughter by writing a series of Russian articles later translated and published as *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*.

Part 3, "Maturing Years" (pp. 61-109), treats her 1858 return to Europe and Russia, where she amazed her relatives and friends with displays of paranormal abilities. Then followed more travels in the Near East and Europe, where she had some connection with Garibaldi and the Battle of Mentana in 1867. After that, she went to Tibet for a period of special training. Then she journeyed via the Middle East, Russia, and Paris, to New York in 1873, where her destiny awaited her.

Part 4, "America — Land of Beginnings" (pp. 111-187), traces the opening public phase of Blavatsky's life. Her first 42 years had been training and preparation. Now she was to begin applying herself and teaching. She had been sent to America, and once there, she recorded in her diary in July 1875:

Orders received from India direct to establish a philosophic-religious Society & choose a name for it — also to choose Olcott.

The choosing of the name is described in a traditional story, reported in this volume as follows (p. 145):

The selection of a name for the society was difficult. Turning the pages of a dictionary, [Charles] Sotheran came across *Theosophy*, which was unanimously adopted.

The adoption of the term *Theosophy* may have been the kind of chance event suggested by that story, but Cranston also provides evidence that nine months before the Society was inaugurated Blavatsky was already using the term as a designation for the system of ideas she was to promote. On 16 February 1875, HPB had written Hiram Corson of Cornell University as follows (pp. 117-18):

My belief is based on something older than the Rochester knockings, and springs out from the same source of information that was used by Raymond Lully, Pico della Mirandola, Cornelius Agrippa, Robert Fludd, Henry More, etc., etc., all of whom have ever been searching for a system that should disclose to them the 'deepest depths' of divine nature and show them the *real tie which binds all things together*. I found at last — and many years ago — the cravings of my mind satisfied by this theosophy.

Whatever the origin of the name, Blavatsky set about producing the movement's first textbook, *Isis Unveiled*, and held her salon at the Lamasery on Forty-seventh Street and Eighth Avenue in New York City. In mid 1878, she became an American citizen and in the following December left with Olcott for India, never to return to the United States.

Part 5, "Mission to India" (pp. 189-284), deals with the central and stormiest part of her public life. Arriving in Bombay in 1879, she founded *The Theosophist* magazine and helped A. P. Sinnett to begin the influential correspondence of *The Ma-*

*hatma Letters*. The headquarters of the Society were moved to Adyar, Madras, in 1882. HPB was there for only a little more than a year, leaving for Europe in early 1884 with Olcott. While they were away, the Coulomb Conspiracy broke and the Hodgson investigation was made. She returned to Adyar late in the year, but left permanently early in 1885.

Part 6, "Horizons Open in the West" (pp. 285-419), covers the last and most literary phase of Blavatsky's life. In 1885 she settled into Würzburg to work on *The Secret Doctrine*, moving to Ostende the following year and to London the next year, where *Lucifer* was launched as her personal vehicle. In 1888 the *SD* was finally completed and published, and Blavatsky founded her Esoteric School. In 1889, she published *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Voice of the Silence*, and the following year she established the European headquarters of the Society in London. These final events appear to be an energetic effort by her to recapture her central role of directing the fortunes of the Society, which she had lost after the Coulomb Conspiracy and the Hodgson Report. She died on 8 May 1891.

Such a bare-bones outline abysmally fails to do justice to the complexities of HPB's life or to the richness of detail in which this book describes it. It also does nothing to capture the person who was HPB, intelligent and full of earthy humor, as in this exchange between her and a young aspirant:

"Madame," she said, "what is the most important thing necessary in the study of Theosophy?"

"Common sense, my dear."

"And Madame, what would you place second?"

"A sense of humour."

“And third, Madame?”

At this point patience must have been wearing thin.

“Oh, just MORE common sense!”

3. **CONTENTS: THE INFLUENCE.** Part 7, on “The Century After” (pp. 422-554), is in some ways the most valuable section of the book. It treats Blavatsky’s direct influence on the culture of the hundred years following her death and also her anticipation of later ideas and practices. These subjects are dealt with to some extent in the earlier biographical parts, for example, in pages 191-98, “The Awakening of the East,” on the impact of Theosophy upon Buddhism in Sri Lanka and upon Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. As early as the second issue of *The Theosophist* in 1879, Blavatsky was writing about the need for conservation of natural resources in a way that makes her a proto-ecologist (pp. 205-6). The summary (pp. 349-60) of the core of *The Secret Doctrine* is a masterful statement of the essentials of that big book.

The 12 chapters of Part 7 make clear, however, that Theosophy has impinged on twentieth-century culture to an extent far beyond the size of the Society’s membership or direct influence. The concepts of Theosophy did indeed, as William Quan Judge quoted HPB’s prediction, “affect and leaven the whole mind of this century” (p. 423).

The 1893 Parliament of Religions, whose centennial is being celebrated this year, was one of the first evidences of her influence after her death. But more remarkable are the ways in which she anticipated scientific theories of later times: in physics, the divisibility of the atom, the vibratory nature of matter, and the convertibility of mass and energy. In *The Secret Doctrine* (2:672) she talked about “atomic energy” as an expression on our plane of consciousness of the universal Vital

Principle. Cranston observes that “HPB appears to have been the first to use this expression so common today” (p. 437). That is correct; in the twenty-volume *Oxford English Dictionary*, there are 285 instances of the expression *atomic energy*. The earliest is from 1906, 18 years after HPB’s use.

In biology, Rupert Sheldrake’s hypotheses of Formative Causation and morphic resonance are consonant with Blavatsky’s concept of the Akashic Records and Astral World. And Thomas Huxley’s assertion of the existence of three ultimates in the universe — matter, force, and consciousness — sounds remarkably like HPB’s three schemes of evolution. Cranston has assembled (pp. 430-62) a remarkable set of parallels between current scientific thinking and the view of the universe in the *SD*.

Literature has also reflected directly and indirectly the influence of Theosophy, including both some of the greatest writers of our time and some minor ones: William Butler Yeats, George Russell (Æ), James Joyce, Jack London, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Thornton Wilder, and L. Frank Baum. In the visual arts, Theosophy was a critical influence on Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian — two of the greatest names in nonobjective art — as well as on others like Paul Klee and Paul Gauguin. In music, Gustav Mahler, Jean Sibelius, and Alexander Scriabin resonated to Blavatsky.

Cranston traces the importance of Theosophy to the introduction of Buddhism to the West, especially through Christmas Humphreys. Following one of her favorite themes, she explores contemporary interest in reincarnation and relates it to Theosophy. The most serious academic investigator of reincarnation has been Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia; Cranston has uncovered the fact that his interest in the subject was first sparked as a child by reading

Theosophical books in his mother's library (p. 509).

Cranston also draws suggestive parallels between Theosophy and the work of persons like Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, and Sigmund Freud, as well as pointing out the incontrovertible fact that Blavatsky is the mother of all New Age movements, however much superficiality and "glamour" (in the words of David Spangler) characterize some of them. Near-death and out-of-the-body experiences, so prominently reported in recent times, are another parallel she points to.

Cranston's biography was written and published at a good time for interest in Blavatsky. Her last chapter concerns the revival of interest in HPB in her homeland, after the fall of the Soviet state and Russia's recent opening to the West and to ideas that had no official existence for the long stretch of intellectual and spiritual censorship in that land. But even in the West, there are indications that Blavatsky may be coming into her own and that her Theosophy has an opportunity to achieve the results she expected of it. If so, this biography is a good basis for making HPB more widely known.

4. **EVALUATION.** Like all books, this biography has both strengths and weaknesses. Its considerable strengths include the following:

a. The book is exhaustively researched and documented. In preparation for it, all of Blavatsky's writings (nearly ten thousand pages) were examined. Most of Blavatsky's letters, which were gathered by Boris de Zirkoff and are now being edited by John Cooper for publication as three volumes in the Collected Writings format, were used. A large amount of new material in Russian was translated for use in this volume. No other biography has had the wealth of information on which this book is based. The notes and bibliog-

raphy documenting these sources fill pages 557-628.

b. Cranston has discovered new evidence that corrects some of the imaginative and hostile biographies of the past, many of which tell us more about the psychology of the biographers than they do about the biography of HPB. For example, Marion Meade, whose book has a claim to be the most irresponsible biography ever written of HPB, fantasized a relationship of "deep hostility" between little Helena and her mother, energized by a kind of Electra complex. Cranston has found Russian letters and accounts from the nineteenth century that show a loving and caring relationship and no trace of the antagonism invented by Meade (12-13).

c. This biography adheres to the known facts of HPB's life and takes seriously the opinions of those who knew her best. Skeptical biographies attempt to fill in the missing bits with explanations that fit a theory and dismiss the views of HPB's colleagues as unreliable witnesses.

d. The tone of the book is upbeat and positive, focusing on what contemporary readers want and need to know about the founder of the Theosophical movement, and eschewing any obsession with ancient quarrels and recriminations.

d. The book deals with HPB's ideas and teachings as well as with the facts of her life. As Cranston correctly observes, Blavatsky's life cannot be understood apart from her ideas about Theosophy. This is thus an intellectual biography rather than a soap opera.

e. The last part of the book, in treating the influence of HPB during the century following her death, accurately sees her relevance to our time. She is not a figure from Madame Tussaud's wax museum, but a living force.

f. The prose is clear and simple, in an admirably plain style. It is a highly readable book.

g. The structure of the book is easy to follow. A great book, it has been said, is a great evil. Certainly long books are intimidating to the reader. This is a long book, but its organization in parts and short chapters makes it unusually reader-friendly.

h. The author's approach is admirably unsectarian. Because Theosophy today is divided among a number of separate organizations, those events toward the end of HPB's life that impinge on later institutional differences need to be handled impartially and fairly. They are.

The fantasy writer Ursula LeGuin remarked in one of her novels that to light a candle is to cast a shadow. All virtues have corresponding weaknesses. The weaknesses of this book include the following:

a. The treatment of HPB's life is episodic. The short chapters give an impression of isolated incidents, and a strong plot line is lacking. This weakness is the other side of the virtue of following the known facts faithfully. A coherent, well-plotted biography is often heavily fictionalized.

b. The full depth of HPB's personality is not revealed in this book. There is a lack of character development, of portraiture. The picture we get of her is not well-rounded. This too is the reverse side of a virtue — that of auctorial modesty, by which the biographer does not impose her interpretation of Blavatsky's personality and character on her readers.

c. This biography plays down the role of phenomena in HPB's life, a role often highlighted by other biographies. The phenomena are acknowledged, but given a minor place in her life story. Looked at in one way, that is a virtue. HPB's phenomena were a means, not an end — they were certainly of minor importance compared to her teachings, in her own opinion and in later

history, and emphasis on the phenomena is largely irrelevant to Theosophy today. Yet during Blavatsky's lifetime, the phenomena certainly were crucial for her reputation, both favorable and otherwise. It is doubtful that she would have garnered the attention she did without bells, teacups, and other such things.

d. More seriously, certain problems in the record of Blavatsky's life are ignored. Meade, for example, has HPB bearing a deformed child, Yuri, about 1862, the child dying in 1867. Meade's account is heavily laced with her addiction to fictionalizing, but a critical biography cannot omit such factual details as underlie even highly fictional interpretations.

e. Trivially, the book contains the inevitable typographical errors. Most are unimportant, but a few should be noted as of factual importance. Thus on p. 114 (and in the index), the reference to "Fritz Kuhn" as editor of *Main Currents* should be to "Fritz Kunz." And on p. 533, HPB's funeral was, of course, in 1891, not 1881.

5. **CONCLUSION.** *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky* is not the academic, critical biography that is still needed for Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. But it does not pretend to be and should not be judged by the standards appropriate for that sort of book. Cranston's biography is an honest, well-researched, readable, sympathetic treatment of HPB. It is the sort of book Theosophists have long needed to present their view of her to the world. It is a book to give people who ask, "Who was Blavatsky, and what did she do?" It is the best and most authoritative biography of Helena Blavatsky.

**John Algeo**

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## THE CHALCHIUHITE DRAGON: A TALE OF TOLTEC TIMES.

By Kenneth Morris. N.Y.: Tor Books, Tom Doherty Associates, 1992. Pp. 291. \$19.95.

Recently the newspapers quoted Jack Valenti, long-time Hollywood film czar, as saying, "We have a prayer in Texas we always offer up when someone claims to be the repository of All Truth. It goes like this: 'Dear God, let me seek the Truth, but spare me the company of those who have found it.'" Many readers of the book under review here may feel the same way.

Before giving an analysis of the story itself, it would be well to consider the comments of the author himself as to the genesis of the work. It was on Christmas day in 1925 that Katherine Tingley of the Point Loma group suggested to Morris that he write on a pre-Columbian subject. "Then (Hubert Howe) Bancroft became my study; a poor authority, perhaps, but historicity was not the chief aim" Morris wrote in the preface to this tale. H. H. Bancroft's (1832-1918) "historical" accounts of native races in Mexico and the American Pacific states have been long superseded by more authoritative and scientific investigation and are now mercifully relegated to dusty, overlooked shelves in university libraries. The author was well aware of all that, however, which was why he chose to discard Bancroft's original outline dealing with the life of the legendary Quetzalcoatl, so that it was enough for the plot of *The Chalchiuhite Dragon* if "he brought Quetzalcoatl to birth, rearranging things and resifting the legends, endeavoring to see through the crude stories . . . to the spiritual and the beautiful which might be historically possible, too." Morris added that he thought Toltecs were to Aztecs much like the Greeks are to ourselves,

giving a more romantic interpretation to his ideas. Most significantly, he concluded his preface by writing, "the days of a Theosophical propagandist, at least in Wales, are not conducive to continuous literary effort" (*p. ix*) so that a novel on the life of the Mexican Prince of Peace (Quetzalcoatl) was unlikely to be written by his pen. Well, those are his words, aptly summing up the content, and one might say that propagandistic values cannot be stressed enough. Too frequently they mar the simple charm and undeniable appeal of his poetic outlook by repetitive and tiresome moralizing driven home with the force of a sledgehammer when a few light brush strokes would have been subtly sufficient. Had a good editor excised the sonorous clichés, tired metaphors and thunderous platitudes, not to mention the now dated British colloquialisms, the promise of Morris's writing would be more valid.

In the area of children's books (in which Morris excelled), *The Chalchiuhite Dragon* would be the preeminent choice for boys and girls aged 8-12 years, particularly for pre-adolescent Theosophists to awaken their interest in mythology. Indeed, this book is neither a major rediscovery nor even remotely a lost classic, yet one cannot doubt the sincerity of a minor talent. For young readers, the necessary and constant resort to use of the glossary to explain the characters' honorific titles and sites of action may prove a considerable burden at times, but that would be nothing compared to the trial of sorting out the details that piece the narrative together. Somehow the story doesn't flow as well as it might, and one needs a box score to keep up with the characters and the constant change of scenes.

Then what is the story about, written as it is in acutely precious, poetic language? It opens with the arrival of Nopal in Huitznahuacan, capital city

of the kingdom of Huitznahuac, which today might be vaguely situated in southern Mexico somewhere. There he meets Chimalman, the queen, who one day will make him both her husband and king.

She receives the gift of the Chalchiuhite Dragon, a glowing piece of green jade, not much bigger than her thumb, and symbol of Quetzalcoatl, in mysterious fashion, after we have learnt about the birth of that mysterious person recounted in the form of the Mexican creation myth. Nopal then sets out to learn more about the Toltec kingdom of the northern plains (present day area near Mexico City and beyond) and the war-like conduct of the people. In discussing this subject, Morris reveals clearly his anti-Christian (and possibly anti-Catholic) bias all too clearly. But Nopal awaits the rebirth of Quetzalcoatl whereby peaceful arts will be a beacon of hope and ultimately provide a better life for cruder peoples. The narrative bogs down in more tiresome propaganda about discipleship and training by the Master. It occurred to this reviewer that Chimalman probably represented all the virtues of Katherine Tingley, which should surely have been a sop to her vanity. (But then, what are patrons for, if not to have their egos stroked?)

But Toltec (or is it Adyar really?) ambassadors try to persuade Queen Chimalman to join the Toltec League so as to form a world under their leadership, which she rejects. Nopal delivers the gods' message to Chimalman that she may open a path between gods and men, which she does by providing a son for a dying Nopal, which son is to be the reincarnation of Quetzalcoatl who will eventually unite the Toltec and Huitznahuac countries in peace and harmony. She was to trust until her trust became knowledge that opened the path between gods and men. It is truly surprising

that nobody thought up such a vehicle for Annie Besant except that the thought of her in childbirth would have caused consternation in the ranks. Well, so much for fantasy. As for most belief systems, Morris's choice included, they are usually based on faith taken as received truth in the main so that Everyman can feel justified in his biases and personal prejudices. So much also for self-opinionated knowledge palmed off as wisdom and accepted by the unskeptical and unlearned. Back in the 1920s and before, most adherents of this kind were generally found lurking about the dark precincts of the local gas works or occasionally dropping in at revival meetings for spiritual uplift, anywhere that would not overload the brain by serious and sound study of works of reliable scholars.

In the Afterword written by Douglas A. Anderson, a brief and rewarding sketch of Kenneth Vennor Morris's life is given. Born in south Wales in 1879, his mother took him and his brother to London after the failure of the family business. There, he was enrolled in the school at Christ's Hospital from which he graduated in 1895 at the age of sixteen with, we are assured "a thoroughly classical English education." (p. 280)

In 1896, Morris visited Dublin for a few months and met Yeats and George Russell (*Æ*) amongst others. There he joined the T.S. and began contributing publications—poetry, essays, dramas and short stories—which could be found in Theosophical publications over the next forty years. He attracted the notice of K. Tingley, who invited him to join the Point Loma staff, where he arrived in January of 1908 to spend the next twenty-two years. His duties included a professorship of history and literature at Point Loma's Rāja Yoga College. After returning to Wales, he founded seven Welsh Theosophical lodges be-

fore his death in April 1937 owing to a malfunctioning thyroid gland.

Novelist Ursula K. Le Guin, in her 1973 essay on style in fantasy literature, "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie," singles out Morris along with J.R.R. Tolkien and E.R. Eddison as the three master stylists of the genre in the twentieth century, although readers of Tolkien especially, and even Eddison, may be slightly concerned by the comparison.

Meanwhile, don't whatever you do, throw out the works of J. Eric S. Thompson nor even the University of Oklahoma's translation of the epic *Popol Vuh*. More profitable evenings could be spent in their company minus the moralizing and propaganda cum-allegory provided by Morris!

**Robert Boyd**

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History

A Quarterly Journal of Research

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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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Founded by Leslie Price, 1985

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*Theosophical History* (ISSN 0951-497X) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by James A. Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 U.S.A.) The journal consists of eight issues *per* volume: one volume covering a period of two years. The journal's purpose is to publish contributions specifically related to the modern Theosophical Movement, from the time of Madame Helena Blavatsky and others who were responsible in establishing the original Theosophical Society (1875), to all groups that derive their teachings—directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly—from her

or her immediate followers. In addition, the journal is also receptive to related movements (including pre-Blavatskyite Theosophy, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and the philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg to give but a few examples) that have had an influence on or displayed an affinity to modern Theosophy.

The subscription fee for the journal is \$14.00 (U.S., Mexico, Canada), California residents, please add 7.75% or \$1.09 sales tax to this amount), \$16.00 (elsewhere), or \$24.00 (air mail) for four issues. Single issues are \$4.00. All inquiries should be sent to **James Santucci**, *Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.)*. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Fullerton, California. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to James Santucci (*Theosophical History*), Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480

The Editors assume no responsibility for the views expressed by authors in *Theosophical History*.

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## GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

The final copy of all manuscripts must be submitted on 8 ½ x11 inch paper, double-spaced, and with margins of at least 1 ¼ inches on all sides. Words and phrases intended for *italics* output should be underlined in the manuscript. The submitter is also encouraged to submit a floppy disk of the work in ASCII or WordPerfect 5 or 5.1, in an I.B.M. or compatible format. If possible, Macintosh 3 ½ inch disk files should also be submitted, saved in ASCII ("text only with line breaks" format if in ASCII), Microsoft Word 4.0–5.1a, or WordPerfect. We ask, however, that details of the format codes be included so that we do not have difficulties in using the disk. Should there be any undue difficulty in fulfilling the above, we encourage you to submit the manuscript regardless.

Bibliographical entries and citations must be placed in footnote format. The citations must be complete. For books, the publisher's name and the place and date of the publication are required; for journal articles, the volume, number, and date must be included, should the information be available.

There is no limitation on the length of manuscripts. In general, articles of 30 pages or less will be published in full; articles in excess of 30 pages may be published serially.

Brief communications, review articles, and book reviews are welcome. They should be submitted double-spaced.

All correspondence, manuscripts, and subscriptions should be sent to:

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# Editor's Comments

## In this issue

Two articles are included in the present issue: one from a new contributor, the other by the author of *In Search of the Masters*. The first by Dr. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, a Professor of history at Fordham University in New York City, is on a topic that has received considerable interest over the past few years, "The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture: An Historical Perspective." Originally delivered at a conference of identical name at Fordham University in 1991 and also at the International Seminar, "Le défi magique: Spiritisme, satanisme, occultisme dans les sociétés contemporaines," in 1992, the paper is part of an introduction to a forthcoming volume containing the papers of the aforementioned Fordham conference. Paul Johnson's article, "Secret Messages from Colonel Olcott," maintains that two letters from Henry S. Olcott to H.P. Blavatsky provide clues to the Masters' identities. Originally presented at the International Theosophical History Conference in 1992, this article continues his search for the true identity of the Masters, which was the subject of his book, *In Search of the Masters*. A new version of the book, incidentally, is now being reprinted by SUNY (State University of New York) press. The expected publication will most likely be in 1994.

The Parliament of the World's Religions was recently held in Chicago (28 August to 4 September) unbeknownst, it would appear, to the mass media, which chose to largely ignore the event. We are therefore pleased to include Michael

Gomes' report on the Parliament focusing on the Theosophical presentations.

A column entitled "Scholarly Research" is being initiated in this issue in order to inform readers of research being undertaken both within and outside academe. All researchers are invited to submit an abstract of the work that they are currently undertaking.

Because of the reaction that was received from the publication of "The Haunting of E. Gerry Brown: A contemporary document" (IV/4-5), I have decided to publish in full W. Dallas TenBroeck's communication in this issue, since it does reflect the views of those who find fault with the document and who also question the intent of Dr. Godwin and myself. My editorial in IV/6-7 was instigated by this letter although from the more general perspective of defining the purpose of *Theosophical History*. One positive result that came out of Mr. TenBroeck's communication was the disclosure of the source of the document in Joscelyn Godwin's response.

Although two reviews of Sylvia Cranston's *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement* appeared in the last issue, the importance of this biography to Theosophists demands more than usual attention. Therefore, a third review, this by Robert Boyd, is included in order to convey opinions from three differing perspectives.

One closing remark on this issue. Because of

the length of the communications in this issue, the "Book Notes" section, not included herein, will appear in the next issue.

The next issue will also contain P.R. König's "Veritas Mystica Maxima," the third part of his ongoing series on the OTO, Joscelyn Godwin's "Colonel Olcott Meets the Brothers: An Unpublished Letter" (a letter from H. S. Olcott to C.C. Massey), and Kazimierz Tokarski's "Wanda Dynowska-Umadevi: A Biographical Essay."

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## The Blavatsky-Judge Letters

In Vol. IV/4-5, Michael Gomes announced that sixteen letters from H.P. Blavatsky to William Quan Judge retained at the Andover-Harvard Divinity School Library have recently been opened to the public. These as well as a few other letters from H.P.B. have recently come into my possession. Plans are now being made to publish them over several issues due to their length. Since the letters are somewhat difficult to read because of the handwriting and the ink bleeding through the paper (the letters were written on both sides of the sheet), this will necessitate additional time for transcribing and proofing the letters. It is my hope that the first letter will be published by the April, 1994 issue.

\*\*\*

## Theosophical History: Occasional Papers

*Ammonius Saccas and His  
Eclectic Philosophy as Presented by  
Alexander Wilder*

The third volume of the "Occasional Papers" series, Dr. Jean-Louis Siémons' *Ammonius Saccas and His Eclectic Philosophy as Presented by Alexander Wilder*, is scheduled to be published by May, 1994. By coincidence, John Cooper commented in a letter published in the July 1992 issue that this study would be very well-suited for the series, to which I heartily agree. Dr. Siémons is a well-known and respected French scholar and lecturer of Theosophy and the theosophical tradition. Having first been made aware of his research through Leslie Price, the former editor of the journal, it was my good fortune and great pleasure to finally meet with Dr. Siémons in December 1992 at the VIIIth Annual Conference of *Politica Hermetica* (IV/4-5: 111f.) in Paris. His investigations deserve wider circulation in the English-speaking world, and it is to Leslie Price's great credit that *Theosophia in Neo-Platonic and Christian Literature (2nd to 6th Century A.D.)* was published by the Theosophical History Centre in London in 1988. In the present work, Dr. Siémons discusses the author of *The Eclectic Philosophy* (1869) and the person responsible for editing and indexing the *Isis Unveiled*, Alexander Wilder, one of the early Vice-Presidents of the Theosophical Society (1878). What were Wilder's sources for his study on Ammonius Saccas and Neo-Platonism? Who was Ammonius Saccas, and what do we know about him? These are the questions that are examined in this study.

*Ammonius Saccas and His Eclectic Philosophy as Presented by Alexander Wilder* will be released in May 1994. Those interested in ordering the publication should send a check or international money order in U.S. dollars to James Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634 U.S.A.) payable to Theosophical History. British sterling

may also be used in payment. Checks or money orders in British sterling should be made out to Dr. Joscelyn Godwin and send to Dr. Godwin c/o the Department of Music, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY 13346-1398 (see **Subscribers to the U.K.** below). The **pre-publication price** (postmarked prior to 31 April) is \$12.00 (£8.00); the full **publication price** of \$15.00 (£10.00) will take effect on 1 May 1994. For air mail, please add \$4.00 (£2.75). California residents, please add 7.75% sales tax (\$0.92).

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Response to John Cooper

Apropos John Cooper's letter (July 1992, IV/3) taking issue with my editorial (in IV/2) on the scope of inquiry for *Theosophical History*, in particular the scope of pre-Blavatskian theosophical movements and teachings, Mr. Cooper proposes a somewhat more limited range of studies than I suggested for inclusion in the journal. He argues that if limits are not placed on the topics, the range of studies would be so broad as to lead the journal astray from its stated goals. This is quite true, but having given his suggestion careful consideration, it is my opinion that the journal remain open to *all* theosophical studies, whether pre- or post-Blavatsky. In my role as editor, I am becoming more aware of the research that is currently being undertaken in what may be termed in its broadest sense the theosophical field. It would be perhaps somewhat arbitrary and unwise to discourage publication of articles simply because they do not fit the particular mold established by Mr. Cooper. Besides, it is my firm opinion that only a full understanding of theosophy in all its permutations will lead to a greater

understanding of Theosophy. Much more research remains before we fully understand the meaning of the term 'theosophy' and of those movements and schools that are labeled 'theosophical'. It is therefore better to err on the side of inclusivity rather than exclusivity.

Come what may of this slight difference of opinion, the reality for the present is that most of the articles and communications that are submitted are Theosophical in nature and will most likely continue to be for the foreseeable future.

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## Publications of Interest

Associate Editor Karen-Claire Voss wishes the readers to know of two important publications in the field of esoteric studies. The information forwarded from her is as follows.

**ARIES** (Association pour Recherche de l'Information sur l'Esotérisme). Directeurs: †Jean Paul Corsetti, Roland Edighoffer, Antoine Faivre. Membership in the Association includes notification of colloquia, which it sponsors, as well as a subscription to its quarterly journal, **ARIES**. To join send a check for \$35 (U.S.), payable to Joscelyn Godwin (in charge of North American membership; **ARIES** has no U.S. bank account). His address: Music Department, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY 13346.

**Hermes** is the newsletter of the Hermetic Academy, a professional society for scholarly research into the esoteric. Founded in 1982, the Hermetic Academy is a related scholarly organization of the American Academy of Religion. An annual subscription to the newsletter (3-4 issues)

is \$7.00 for those residing in North America. Checks should be made payable to The Hermetic Academy and sent to Prof. James B. Robinson, Dept. of Philosophy and Religion, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0501.

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## Subscription Rates

The good news is that subscriptions will remain the same, except for two changes. First, I would like to encourage subscribers to renew for the equivalent of one volume (eight issues) rather than the usual practice of renewing every four issues. This saves on paperwork and the expense of converting non-American currency into dollars. There will be a slight decrease in rates for subscribers who choose to renew for eight issues. The rates for eight issues are as follows:

- \$26** (for U.S. subscribers)
- \$30** (elsewhere, surface mail)
- \$45** (air mail: Europe and Asia)

The second change is the sales tax that must now be added onto the price of subscriptions for California residents only. A 7.25% sales tax was added by the California Legislature for all magazines and journals. Orange County, out of which *Theosophical History* is headquartered, imposed an additional .50% tax on top of the 7.25% making for a total of 7.75%. Although the sales tax was absorbed by me for the past year, expenses make it incumbent that they now be added onto the subscription fee. California residents are therefore requested to add \$1.08 to the \$14 subscription fee (for four issues) or \$2.01 to the \$26 fee (for eight issues).

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## Subscribers from the U.K.

Subscribers may now pay for their subscriptions in British sterling. The rate is **£11** (surface mail, four issues), **£20** (surface mail, eight issues), **£16** (air mail, four issues), and **£30** (air mail, eight issues). Please make your check or money order payable to Joscelyn Godwin and send it to

Dr. Joscelyn Godwin  
c/o the Department of Music  
Colgate University  
Hamilton, NY 13346-1398 (USA)

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## Miscellany

Some readers might wonder why their subscriptions have expired less than a year after their last renewal. Over the summer, two double issues (IV/4-5, 6-7) have appeared back to back in an effort to make the journal current. Now that it is, four issues will indeed reflect a full year's publication. There are no further plans to bring out double issues, so readers can expect the journal to arrive either during the months of publication (January, April, July, October), or within two or three months of the date of publication for overseas surface postage.

For subscribers to the *Occasional Papers* series, please be aware that the release date of the publication may occur some months following payment. In the event that the pre-publication payment arrive early, receipts will be included with the journal if you are a subscriber.

It is my wish that the printing of all Theosophi-

cal History publications be of the highest quality within the strictures of budget. Should you receive a publication that is in any way defective, please write me immediately for replacement. I would appreciate that the defective copy be eventually returned so that the printer can correct the problem.

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# Correspondence

*From Ted G. Davy (Calgary, Alberta, Canada)*

Having occasionally delved into the *Lucifer* version of G.R.S. Mead's translation of *Pistis Sophia*, I was astonished to read Ms. Goodrick-Clarke's assessment that many of the "additional notes" therein are "complete *non sequiturs*" (*TH* IV/4-5: 138). Only one of about 150, and that likely contributed by Mead himself, possibly merits such a description. All the rest, whether his or HPB's, seem to me to be relevant to the text. Admittedly, in a few instances additional research is required to supplement the annotation, but those who expect to be spoon fed are probably not that interested anyway.

It is a great pity that Mead did not publish this extremely useful version—notes, warts and all—in book form. After all, *Pistis Sophia* is not the easiest of ancient scriptures to study, and his two unannotated book editions do nothing to help the struggling reader. The tragedy is that in his later versions some of his alterations ignore or go counter to Mme. Blavatsky's insightful observations on this difficult text. Of the remainder of his changes to his original translation, most on analysis are seen to be insubstantial—merely syntactic improvements or synonym substitutions—whatever he said to the contrary.

An interesting sidelight is that Mead's translation from Schwartz's Latin is remarkably close to the translations direct from the Coptic by Malpas (1927) and Violet MacDermot (1978). This is

surely a credit to the skill of both Schwartz and Mead. (For those interested, a reproduction of Malpas' typescript is available from the Edmonton Theosophical Society, P.O. Box 4587, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6E 5G4.)

One other point: the statement that by 1889 Blavatsky "had moved the whole focus of her attention eastwards" (p. 143) cannot be supported by facts. A survey of her numerous articles from that year until her death in 1891 clearly shows that the majority owe as much or more of their inspiration to the western as to the eastern tradition, although in most instances the universal aspect predominates as always.

This criticism is not meant to detract from an otherwise interesting paper. For all his weaknesses, G.R.S. Mead did much good work, and deserves to be remembered for it.

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*From Geoffrey Farthing (Surrey, England)*

On page 35 of the April number of *Theosophical History* [1992] you mention Annie Besant and Leadbeater as having been the authors of publications directly derived from H.P.B.'s writings. As far as Annie Besant was concerned, this was so in her early writings, but with the advent of Leadbeater and as a result of his joint clairvoyant investigations with her into occult chemistry, when they discovered what they called the four etheric states

of physical matter, all their writings departed materially from those of H.P.B. They introduced the idea of an etheric body composed of the four 'etheric' states of physical matter. On the introduction of this etheric body they dropped from the H.P.B. classification of man's principles both the Astral Body (the Linga Sharira) and Prana, the vital principle. In H.P.B.'s system the principles of man correspond to the planes of Nature and both are sevenfold. In order to preserve the sevenfold scale in terms of the planes A.B. and C.W.L. added planes above Atman (the supreme plane in H.P.B.'s system) two others, Anupadaka and Adi. In the H.P.B. system these two are tattvas and correspond to Atma and Buddhi.

The system adopted by A.B. and C.W.L. vitiated all the tables of correspondence given in *The Secret Doctrine* and in the Papers to her Inner Group of the Esoteric School. Further, the classification used by them could not be applied to the account of the after-death states and processes given us by the Masters in their letters to Sinnett.

A.B. and C.W.L. therefore really introduced a private scheme of Theosophy different from the original, as are those of Alice Bailey and Rudolf Steiner. It is true that Annie Besant became heir to the Adyar Society as centred on Adyar but she did not carry on H.P.B.'s teachings and further allowed such happenings as association with the Liberal Catholic Church, the Co-Masonic Movement and the idea of Krishnamurti being a world Teacher to become part of 'Theosophy.' This could never have happened under H.P.B.

I am mindful of the fact that *Theosophical History* does not concern itself with the nature of the theosophical teachings but in the light of what I have just said I think that Annie Besant and Leadbeater should be given a small 't' when they are referred to as theosophists. This will undoubt-

edly offend the majority of members of the Adyar branch of the Society but it ought to be noticed.

Incidentally, the justification for there being no etheric body as described by A.B. and C.W.L. is that the states of matter they call etheric do not exist in the free state in the physical world (whatever they may do in the Astral where Leadbeater 'saw' them). There could therefore be no 'body' composed of them.

*It has long been recognized that the Theosophy of C.W. Leadbeater and Mrs. Besant was not identical with H.P.B.'s teaching. My use of the terms Theosophy/theosophy, Theosophical/theosophical, Theosophist/theosophist or theosopher was based purely on whether the organization or individual had a formal, direct relationship with H.P.B.'s teachings or not. In other words, my definition was based on the notion of community, not "theology," "doctrine," or "teachings." Since Mrs. Besant was the President of the Theosophical Society (Adyar), it would not have made much sense to exclude her from the Theosophical community, despite one's opinions of her teachings. The drawback to the criterion of "orthodoxy" is that it would lead to endless and ultimately unfruitful arguments regarding the definition of a true Theosophist. Such an approach would be similar to the attempts of some fundamentalist Christians who have defined and demarcated true Christianity to exclude many, if not most, individuals who consider themselves Christians, or the attempt to resolve the question of whether the whole of the Mahāyāna tradition should be considered true Buddhism since its sūtras did not contain the words of the historical Buddha.*

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From *W. Dallas TenBroeck* (Calabasas Park, California)

Re.: EDITOR'S COMMENTS, p. 102, Col. 1, para 3, and,

Re.: E. Gerry BROWN, Editor, *The Spiritual Scientist*, Boston. Article by Jocelyn Godwin titled: "The Haunting Of E. Gerry Brown: A Contemporary Document" (p. 115f.)

I have been a student of the writings of Mme. H.P. Blavatsky for over 50 years. These *writings* are called the modern: THEOSOPHICAL PHILOSOPHY, that is: THEOSOPHY. THEOSOPHY is separate from the life of Mme. Blavatsky.

The life, acts, treatment, in public and in private by Mme. Blavatsky of individuals does not, in my esteem constitute a way of rating the value of THEOSOPHY, the name given to those teachings. In my opinion they have to be carefully studied as a separate subject. There is a popular tendency to avoid seeing this distinction. Mme. Blavatsky stated in several places that she did not want to be considered a "revealer," or an "authority." She desired that THEOSOPHY, as a philosophy, stand on its own merits.

Concerning Mme. Blavatsky as a personage, I have watched the publishing of biographies, and the rise and fall of innuendoes, interpretations, reports of gossip, "*on dits*," allegations of this and that, pro and con her life and dealings with persons, and the things that she may or may not have done; and, then, the advancing of explanations and the demonstrating of the shallowness if not the untruth of such earlier made calumnies or allegations.

Every time a new one surfaces we have a nine-days wonder. It would, perhaps be a good idea (to

save everyone's time and sanity) for someone to prepare comparative columns, listing on one side the allegations, suppositions or charges, and the "sources" from where those responsible, recorded them. Opposite these could be placed such refutations as have been advanced and their "sources," so that comparison could be made easy in the future.

Why could we not do the same thing for THEOSOPHY: the philosophy? We could place its main tenets seriatim, and opposite them such serious refutation with credit to the person advancing it, and sources, as can be found.

This might afford us all a common base from which to evaluate fresh material, or, in the constantly growing montage/collage, assign to a rightful place, person and time such fresh revelations as may surface.

Concerning this article by J. Godwin, I think it only fair to say:

1. H.P.B.'s "personal life" has nothing to do with THEOSOPHY, the philosophy. Your journal deals with THEOSOPHICAL **HISTORY**. I would deem that the lives and doings of persons connected with the Theosophical Movement have a secondary place. Strictly speaking, these are ancillary to THEOSOPHY and have no bearing on the presentation of it, as such. Is *Theosophical History* going to deal with THEOSOPHY as a philosophico-scientific presentation of a view of the Universe, as well as the history of the study of its concepts and tenets, their proof or disproof? And, the impact they have had on individuals, leaders of mankind, and socio-ecological concepts since they were put forth? This aspect of research might present interesting vistas of exploration.

Most biographical work on or around HPB, as

personality, or personage, deals with that living being, and rarely with the *philosophical or scientific worth* of her work. This is yet to be seriously discussed, and appraised in detail by academia, although there are signs that there is notice of the impact of Theosophical ideas on social values and trends in the world.

I observed that in the first issue of *The Theosophist*, issued in Bombay in October 1879, HPB addresses these two issues in the opening articles: "What Is Theosophy?" and "What Are The Theosophists?" We could, I believe, use these as a starting point for an effort to codify these separate matters.

It is perhaps significant, that she identifies those as becoming of primary importance. Apart from her many letters and a few articles to the press, these are the first articles she addresses to her students after publishing *Isis Unveiled* (1877), which book was dedicated to the members of the Theosophical Society for them to study.

Many derogatory allegations have been made about the *personal life of H.P.B.*, in the hope, perhaps, that these may discredit by association the *principles that THEOSOPHY offers*. In the just published, well documented biography of Mme. Blavatsky by Sylvia Cranston, under the title *H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky* (Tarcher/Putnam), all those calumnies that had so far been leveled and published have been laid to rest.

Past experience shows that if, in polemics, it is not possible to discredit by strictly scholarly means a position set forth for consideration, should enough doubt be cast on the personal integrity of the individual presenting it, a "doubt," or the conclusion may be planted in some minds that there is serious reason to question the quality or nature of the *ideas newly presented*. It is a kind

of "smear campaign."

2. It is unfortunate that HPB is no longer alive, and able to deal with such allegations, calumny, etc., directly. Although not considered in the best of taste, being somewhat cowardly, or advisable as a practice, it is easy (and usually safe) to write ill of those who are "dead," as they are no longer able to give the lie to those who do so. Nor are they able to show how wrong a judgment might be.

3. The burden of response then falls on those of HPB's admirers who feel a sense of gratitude to her for the knowledge she offered, which has changed their way of looking at life, and opened fresh vistas in viewing the Universe, its inner and causative side, some of its external phenomena, and goals that such views open to aspiring humankind, that otherwise, might have remained closed for a long time to them.

4. Such response has to fall into two areas:

1. That of direct refutation involving documents that are available and can be produced, having at least the same authenticity and veracity as those that are damaging to her reputation. Conceivably, not all the writings on or about such a person as "H.P.B." have, even now, been found, correlated or finally assembled. Secondarily, demanding that any documents or statements advanced be supported by more than hearsay and innuendo. Of this, however, later.

2. That of refutation by character and by context. This is more difficult to secure attention to, and indisputable proof for.

It requires the historian/evaluator to under-

stand and apply to all cases involving Mme. Blavatsky the rules and laws of Occultism. A primary rule is: no true Occultist may use any of the powers that he/she may have secured to hurt, damage or compel anyone to a course which they have not chosen of their own free-will. If this rule should be violated in the least extent, all “*occult*” power automatically withdraws from the individual, who then becomes incapable of further employment of those forces. [H.P.B. makes this clear in several of her articles and books, as a *sine-qua-non* condition.]

[This is an “aside” that has just occurred to me:

This study of “Occultism” could conceivably be a third vista for study, derived from HPB’s THEOSOPHICAL presentations. It could open a fresh page in the study of the “invisible” side of Nature, the correlative and inter-relative aspect of all living beings. Our perceptions, in general, have always been on the fringe of this, but no systematic work has yet been done to conclusively prove, or disprove so-called “phenomena” of a “psychic,” or a “spiritual” kind. In Duke University there was much work done on the powers of pre-cognition, mental telepathy, etc. I also recall a couple of books dealing with research in the past 20 or 30 years behind the “Iron Curtain” in Russia on psychic “powers.”

In *Isis Unveiled*, in *The Secret Doctrine*, and elsewhere scattered in HPB’s many articles, are clues and hints taken from history and prehistory, as well as events contemporary to her (100+ years ago), as to the nature, laws and production of these curious events. If major Universities (such as Princeton) can create “Anomaly Departments” for the study of phenomena, occurrences, findings, and events which fall outside accepted theory and hypothesis, (such as Fractiles and the

“Chaos Theory”) then a study of this nature should surely receive more careful attention from the educational sciences.]

Getting back to J. Godwin’s article:

In this case, had it been true that Mme. Blavatsky attempted to influence, compel, or take away the free-will of either Mr. or Mrs. Brown, and in any way to hurt them, or the child that was to be born, it would thenceforth preclude any further contact between her and “**White**” **Occultism** [the Occultism of the Unity of Life]. The “Adepts, or Mahatmas,” would no longer be able to work with her, and the progress of their work through her would be impossible. [Some of their statements in *Mahatma Letters* show clearly what the requisites for such contact with Them is.]

This did not happen, as we may see for ourselves by a study of her articles, *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Key To Theosophy*, and *The Voice Of The Silence*. These were all published after 1878 and display a high moral tone. They also state that in true Occultism this moral quality is the only key to *progress and ultimate success*. [Since the correspondence between the Mahatmas and Mr. A.P. Sinnett and Mr. A.O. Hume began late in 1880, *after* the Brown events, and H.P.B. served as amanuensis, it is amply clear she did not violate this *occult* rule. A reading in those letters shows this. —[Published under the title: *The Mahatma Letters*, edited by Trevor Barker]

Anyone who has studied the nature and stated purpose of Theosophy and its literature, primarily made available to us through Mme. Blavatsky’s authorship, can assure himself that at no time has any abuse been sanctioned.

*Such allegations are treated as false* by those who accept and apply these rigorous ethical tests. [It is however, appreciated that this may be no

proof to an historian or an archivist who has set other criteria, and have to rely on documents alone, and on the fairness, and accuracy of the views of such writers as make them. Unless they are also students of the *philosophy of Theosophy and apply the touchstone of the moral requirements of "White" Occultism*, they will not be able to voice an opinion on such a subject in those terms.]

In this case it is to be regretted that Mr. Brown did not leave a signed document. This report, if true, Mr. Stainton Moses, Col. Bundy, Mr. C.C.Massey and Mr. Henry Sidgwick, are presumed to be the persons who became aware of it; or were actually in receipt of it (?). They are now dead and unable to clarify the suppositions arising in J. Godwin's mind.

Since this is not the first case of *unprovable and baseless allegations* that have been advanced against the life of HPB, it might be a constructive move to set up for use hereafter some standards of acceptability and credibility. Once adopted, fresh "evidence" may become acceptable, if it falls within reasonable, established parameters, which distinguish facts from guesses and fancies.

I would like to suggest:

1. That all new evidence be invariably accessible to properly qualified and responsible individuals in original, or in legally certified copy. Concealed sources are suspect, regardless of who vouches for them.

2. That addresses, names, dates, progress of events, sources and other data concerning these be available to all, and not concealed for any reason.

3. That a signature or positive identification of

a handwriting as having emanated from a traceable source witnessed by the provider be legally certified if originals cannot be had or seen.

4. That they be adequately supported by dates, events, the names of persons corroborating them, who have had an established existence in the Theosophical or some other "movement," and who actually state that they were aware of the event, and how they came into possession of such documents.

This could go far to identify guesses and wild suppositions as to their possible synchronism, proximation or accessibility to individuals active in the Theosophical or other movements which can only be traced by guesses on the basis of incomplete documentation, or facts still to be verified.

Words such as: "might," "possibly," "I believe," "it seems reasonable," etc., are evidence that, in its present state the material shows lack of secure historical preparedness, and therefore, if presented now, it requires an extensive use of surmises and other phrases of inexactitude which the author, being aware of such shaky ground, uses as a shield from the consequences of future blame. [ For almost a century, for example, the *Society for Psychological Research* in England shielded itself behind its position that the "Hodgson Report on the Theosophical Society," was only *preliminar*, and therefore it was not involved in any final responsibility. But it did publish it, and other matter, in derogation of Mme. Blavatsky's life (not of THEOSOPHY), showing the prejudiced position of those managing its affairs. This has been lately reversed and a formal apology was issued in 1986 by Mr. Harrison, for that Society to the memory of "H.P.B." ]

The serious student of History can well hesi-

tate. An event may be reported, or a document advanced might later prove to be a forgery, or worse, an interpolation, designed to confuse and destroy the historical exactitude that impartial scholarship so much desires to uphold. History and gossip can hardly be called good bedfellows.

Those who desire to destroy an individual's reputation have been known to indulge in such procedures, confusing to the unwary, but detectable by sound scientific research, which can vitiate those strict procedural exactitudes that support sound academic work, which is always subject to rigorous review. [This particular "finding" does not, in its presentation, seem to stand up to these questions from the way it is worded.]

You will, I hope, excuse the length of this letter, as I believe it so important to your work and the value it will have in the future in providing insight into the Theosophical Movement of our times.

It is necessary to dwell at some length on this question of allegations, suppositions, and "what ifs" because there is no end to them. The space you allow Joscelyn Godwin in *Theosophical History* has the following elements I find missing:

1. That archive which serves as source and repository for it desires continued anonymity (This is suspect—are we being asked to trust *on faith* an unverifiable source? At this rate any source may be invented or quoted to which the reader is denied access ! Why?);

2. "the document was filed in proximity to a note from Colonel Bundy, Editor of the Chicago *Religio-Philosophical Journal* . . ." (How is "proximity" defined? Why such inexactitude? If unverifiable, why is it added?);

3. I note that further research in the Bundy archives at the University of Illinois "might" clarify the matter ( Why was it not clarified one way or the other before this publication? Is it still possible to clarify this now, and if so clarified, what degree of additional proof does this advance on an unsigned paper from a concealed source?), and that

4. "*possibly* this document was among the enclosures mentioned."

(Only someone could mention this as an additional, unverified possibility, which now, would be *quite unverifiable*, if they had some reason to further bolster an impossible situation?). (See pp. 115-6.)

I could be led to conclude that there is evidence of some haste to rush a questionable and unverifiable opinion into print, even if some question marks have been attached to it. Of what real good is this?

Why, did the individuals then alive (Bundy, Moses, Sidgwick, et al) and involved, not make mention at *that time (c. 1876-78) of these writings and allegations?* Did they chose not to for a good reason? The allegation of the use by H.P.B. of "black magic" made by Brown, would at that time, be one of the most damaging of all allegations to Mme. Blavatsky's reputations and teachings.

Mme. Blavatsky, being alive then, could have answered or explained (and it would not sound, as it does now, like gossip or calumny!). On the other hand, if the persons mentioned had read them, something of their knowledge and valuation of the Browns, and Mme Blavatsky, may have enabled them at that time to use their discretion and suppress them as improbable, if not false; or, possibly, they viewed them as the ravings of a

person who had become psychologically unbalanced and was not able to determine the source of the “possession” of Mrs. Brown, who was a medium, and as such, irresponsible when in a trance, because of *her passivity*. I can well see that such a report would have been filed for any future verification that might arise, but as it did not, and was not advanced, of what current value is it?

Readers of *Isis Unveiled* will be able to determine that such “possession” as described, was by “elementaries” (see *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 141, 310, 318-321, 332, 325-6, 342-3, 362-367, 447-8, 493-5, 616, II, p.595). Those who, because of prejudice, place no value on Theosophical explanations about the invisible forces and dangers hidden in the “psychic” realm of Nature will find this proof inadequate to them. If the Mrs. Brown to be, was known by H.P.B. to be a *medium*, and if she also knew of the nature and quality of Mr. Brown’s personality, I can well surmise that she could have warned him in no uncertain terms, of the dangers he was inviting by marrying the lady he was in love with.

If he was one of those who was drawn to H.P.B. “Occultly,” it is quite possible that she spoke directly to him in terms which an Adept might use to his pupil, or a Brother to a brother; which, a person in love, could deeply resent; and who might later on, use and magnify in his recollection into something distorted by the antagonism evoked in himself. (If one reads certain passages in Bulwer-Lytton’s *Zanoni*, or his: *A Strange Story*, one may come across passages that substantiate the explanation I hazard above.)

*Joscelyn Godwin replies:*

*The archive is in the College of Psychic Studies, 16 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2EB. Permission for this disclosure has now been given by the*

*President, Mr. Dudley Poplak. My other suggestions were intended to help fellow historians who might be able to pursue the matter further. I decided that their interest was better served by publishing Brown’s interviewer’s statement, with a facsimile, than by its suppression. The bare fact that Gerry Brown made such a statement to an interviewer, no matter what became of it later, seemed to me worthy of record.*

*Mr. TenBroeck has gratified me by initiating the analysis that this document calls for. I find his explanation, which blames the haunting on Brown and his mediumistic wife, more plausible than a literal reading. Perhaps the London Theosophists came to a similar conclusion. In any case, the skeptics among HPB’s enemies could not have used the document, because to take it seriously would have been to credit her with psychic powers.*

# Communications

## Theosophy At The Chicago Parliament Of The World's Religions

Michael Gomes

As the handful of Theosophical dignitaries joined the processional opening the Parliament of the World's Religions August 28th, attention was diverted to the entrance of the pagan contingent in colorful costumes. This image would stay with me over the next seven days of the Parliament for it seemed to illustrate the position of Theosophy in relation to the growth of the new religious movements of this quarter of the century.

At the original World's Parliament of Religions held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair, Theosophists were granted a separate Congress on Sept. 15-17, 1893. A hundred years later, Theosophy was incorporated into the sessions of the 1993 Parliament along with the programs relating to the concerns of the major religions. Theosophical presentations were held on four consecutive days, Aug. 31- Sept. 3, during which time four panels were given on the "Theosophic Worldview" and "Theosophy and Critical Issues."

The initial "Worldview" panel, with Kirby Van Mater of the Theosophical Society, Pasadena, Nandini Iyer of the United Lodge of Theosophists, Santa Barbara, and myself, opened the program for Aug. 31st, and like the succeeding Theosophical panels lasted two hours. The moderator for this session was Dr. Anton Lysy of the Theosophical Society in America, Wheaton, Ill., who played a large part in gaining Theosophical representation at the Parliament. He opened the presentation which dealt with "Sacred Wisdom Through the Ages" by quoting extensively from the pre-

senters at the 1893 Theosophical Congress. Kirby Van Mater defined the Theosophic Worldview in terms of the three objects of the T.S.; Nandini Iyer traced the development of Theosophical ideas through India, Egypt, China, Japan, Greece, Central America, Africa, to H.P. Blavatsky. I dealt with the restatement of these ideas by the modern Theosophical movement.

In the afternoon I spoke on "The Theosophical Congress at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions," contrasting the subjects focused on by the original Parliament with the concerns of the Theosophists. This was followed by addresses of a half an hour each by Grace F. Knoche, Leader of the Theosophical Society, Pasadena, and Radha Burnier, President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar. Using the line from Keats, "On the Shores of Darkness there is light," Miss Knoche depicted the paradox of the human condition, while Mrs. Burnier dealt with "Human Transformation and the Future of Religion."

The next morning I was delayed getting to the second Theosophic Worldview session with John Cocker, Carolyn Van Horn, and Adam Warcup, by stopping at the talk given by the Ven. M. Wipulasara Maha Thera, General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, whose guest I had been in Calcutta. By the time I reached the Theosophic presentation they were discussing what to do to promote brotherhood. I also missed most of the afternoon session for Sept. 1st of "Theosophy and Critical Issues" on the environment by going to

hear George Stephanopolous, Senior Advisor to President Clinton, who was to speak along with his father, the Rev. Robert Stephanopolous of New York, on “The Problematic of ‘Church’/State Relations,” but after a long wait the session was canceled because the sponsor, the Orthodox Christian Council, had decided to withdraw from the Parliament because of the presence of the pagan groups.

Jay Williams’ talk, “Skepticism, Faith and the World’s Religions,” sponsored by the Theosophical Society in America, later that afternoon proved to be one of the most interesting presentations I attended at the Parliament. His topic was skepticism as a mechanism leading to faith, and the discussion that followed was lively, beginning with the President of the America Humanist Association stating, “I disagree with so much that you’ve said, that it’s hard to know where to begin.”

The third presentation of the Theosophic Worldview did not begin till 2 p.m., on Sept. 2nd, so I used the morning to attend a short talk by Pervin J. Mistry, whose byline I had seen occasionally in Theosophical journals. Her subject was “The Collision of Religion and Society,” but she ended up dealing with women’s biological cycles and their blood secretions, which she said was harmful, so I left. I looked in the room down the hall holding “What is Wicca?” to catch a glimpse of Starhawk, the famous witch who popularized the subject in America with her best-seller some years ago, but the crowd got too dense and the venue had to be moved to a larger room; anyway, Starhawk did not appear. I also looked in at “A New Dharma for the West—The Westernization of Buddhism” long enough to hear one of the American monks state “We will be meditating not on the mountain top, but in the market place.”

Dying for a place to sit down I found the Theosophically sponsored program “Why do we die?” hosted by Alan Donant and Nancy Coker of the T.S. Pasadena, a subject summed up by Mr. Donant as “Why do we die is a question we have to ask ourselves daily and what do we die from?”

At the afternoon “Worldview” session Joy Mills, Will Thackara, and Rob McOwen posed the question of what is spirituality, but I could not stay long enough to hear the answer as I wanted to attend J. Gordon Melton’s “New Religious Movements and Interfaith Dialogue” which was delivered to a packed room. He defined these movements as part of the “transnational global culture” that has developed out of the new urban centers and recommended that the term cult be dropped in addressing them as it was a denigrating word.

At 5 p.m. I heard Ananda Wickremeratne of Sri Lanka speak on Angarika Dharmapala, a Theosophist who represented Buddhism at the 1893 Parliament and whom I have written on. Dr. Wickremeratne’s delivery dealt not so much with Dharmapala but with the perception of the man, and as he suggested about Western approaches, “some of these paradigms should be used carefully in the Asian context.”

The final Theosophic Worldview presentation was at 10 in the morning of Sept. 3, but this conflicted with a talk on the Victorian Broad Church which I wanted to hear. Instead I found a presentation being given on *A Course in Miracles* as “Christianity ‘Born Again’ for a New Age.” I stayed through it to hear the next speaker, Dr. Robert Ellwood, on “The New Religions as Social Movements,” which he defined as “traditional religion working out their own agenda.” An important point that he brought forward was that as the 1893 Parliament gave legitimization and visibility to the Hindu and Buddhist groups, so the

same result could be expected for the new religious groups that participated at this Parliament. I returned to the Worldview presentation in time to hear a paper read by Carey Williams on behalf of Sylvia Cranston on H.P. Blavatsky.

The final segment of “Theosophy and Critical Issues” that afternoon with Carolyn Van Horn and Douglas A. Russell, seemed to sum up the Theosophical approach in dealing with social issues, which was to develop good character. Dr. John Algeo spoke later that day on “Language and Religion” relating the function of both to connect, yet pointing out that both which have the capacity to unite have been used to divide.

Due to conflicts in scheduling I was not able to get to the Theosophically sponsored talks by Geddes MacGregor, Stephan Hoeller, Ravi Ravindra, Joy Mills, and Catherine Wessinger. In spite of a plethora of selections to choose from—some forty talks being given simultaneously during any hour—Theosophists mainly attended the Theosophical presentations. These occasions provided the only chance for interaction among themselves that many Theosophists have had. At the same time many of the ideas that had been identified as Theosophical were being echoed in more socially relevant contexts by the newer religious groups. As heads had turned during the opening processional to the flamboyant presenters, so the attention of the Parliament was drawn to groups as diverse as the native Americans and Wicca. The Theosophical presentation at the Parliament offered Theosophists the chance to show that while their message had become widespread, their organizational existence was still of relevance.

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## **Progress on the Blavatsky Letters and Other Matters or Why I am Not Replying to Correspondence**

*An Apologia pro Vita Sua by John Cooper on July 12, 1993*

In one week I begin teaching at the University of Sydney with my usual course on “The Gnostic Tradition” plus a new course on “Buddhism Beyond India.” This latter course will consist of 26 hours of lectures plus the usual additional responsibilities such as tutorials, essay exams and face to face meeting with students. So until the beginning of November I will be more than busy with lectures. The “Buddhism Beyond India” course covers the philosophies of Nagarjuna as expounded in the Madhyamaka School and that of Aryasanga and Vasubandhu of the Yogacara School and then explores the development of Buddhism in China, Japan, Tibet and the West of the 19th and 20th centuries. As far as I know this course has not been taught in this country before and the lecture preparation is entailing much of my time.

I had hoped to finalise the collected letters of H.P. Blavatsky before teaching commenced. This has not been possible for a number of reasons. The main one is that material needed for the completion of the first volume has not as yet arrived. This includes a batch of Russian letters promised for the beginning of 1993 and new material recently discovered in the India Office Archives which should help to date some of the problem letters and, possibly, reveal new letters.

The first volume will contain some 300 letters and concludes when HPB and Olcott arrive at Adyar at the end of 1882. Nearly all the letters have been annotated. Also included are a few rare

letters from other writers which provide background details such as the letter written by Emma Coulomb to a Ceylon newspaper praising HPB.

An introductory essay on Western Occultism remains to be written as does an amount of background material. Therefore, instead of the material being ready by August, as previously stated, it will not be available until the end of this year.

At the same time I am writing a brief history of the Theosophical Society in Australia, which needs to be drafted by the beginning of next year and is a preliminary to my doctoral dissertation on the history of Theosophy in Australia.

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# Scholarly Research

*A suggestion from Ted G. Davy of Calgary suggesting a column in which researchers could state their interests and/or appeal for information confirmed my impression of such a need. Researchers both within and without the universities—including students working on Ph.D. dissertations, faculty scholars investigating theosophical topics, and unaffiliated researchers are invited to submit their interests and appeals.*

## **Abstract of Michael Ashcraft's Ph.D. Dissertation**

I am a Ph.D. student in Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. My dissertation is on the Point Loma Theosophical community, focusing on the Tingley years from 1900 to 1929. My thesis is that the Theosophists at Point Loma were unique in American history in their blending of Victorian cultural values of the middle classes with Theosophy. I believe that this process can be observed in several areas of their community life, including the gender roles and relationships, and the ways that they affirmed their class and national identities. I am using their many periodicals, other publications, and archival information to substantiate, clarify, and elaborate on this thesis. Also, I am relying upon the information generously provided me by persons who lived at Point Loma during and after the Tingley period. Although I have presented portions of my research at professional meetings, those in atten-

dance usually have not known very much about Theosophy and could not provide as much constructive feedback as I would like. Aside from those whom I have already met in Theosophical organizations, I am also looking for other persons who might be interested in talking with me by phone or corresponding with me (either by U.S. mail or computer mail), who could provide fresh insight about life at Point Loma. I am also interested in contacting persons who can help me clarify the differences between Theosophy as it was understood and expressed at Point Loma, and Theosophy as it has been articulated and experienced in other times and places. If you can be of any assistance in helping me produce a fair and just account of this unique community in Theosophical and American history, I would like to hear from you. I may be contacted at the following addresses:

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1612B Cambridge Cir.  
Charlottesville, VA 22903

E-mail: [wma5k@uva.pcmail.virginia.edu](mailto:wma5k@uva.pcmail.virginia.edu)

*From Raymond Head (Oxfordshire, England)*

Do you or any of your readers of [*Theosophical History*] know anything about an Austrian Theosophist called Oskar Adler (1874-1955)? He was a great friend of the composers Schoenberg,

Webern and Berg among many others. They considered him to have had a great influence on their lives. It was Adler who convinced Schoenberg to become a composer. Adler is known to have been a Theosophist in Vienna, but he was also a doctor, a remarkable violinist and an original astrologer. In 1939 he fled to London with his wife Paula, where he died in 1955. He lectured widely on esoteric subjects and in 1950 he published five massive volumes on astrology in Vienna. But he remained in contact with friends who had fled to America, like the Orensteins in Hawaii, Dr. Paul Sicher who became a Professor of Medicine at Chicago, and Arnold Schoenberg in Los Angeles.

*Readers with information on Oskar Adler may contact Mr. Head directly. His address is The Firs, 10 Worcester Road, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire OX7 5XX, England.*

# The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture: An Historical Perspective

Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal<sup>1</sup>

Occult beliefs and doctrines were a major element in Russian intellectual, cultural, and even political life between 1890-1925. A faith-healer, Grigorii Rasputin, controlled the royal family and through them, Russia, from 1905 to December 1916. Literature, painting, music, and theater were permeated with ideas and images drawn eclectically from various Western occult doctrines and from long-standing indigenous beliefs and practices. The veritable explosion of interest in the occult is related to what Nietzsche has described as the death of a myth, the belief-system of a

society and culture. Confused, disoriented, and even frightened, many Russians turned to the occult for new meaning and guidance in a rapidly changing world. In recent years, due to the collapse of another myth (communism), the occult is again prominent in Russia. Works banned for most of the Soviet era have been reprinted and widely circulated, along with newer occult doctrines. This paper will chart the most important occult beliefs and doctrines of the 1890-1925 period and place them in historical perspective.

Occultism in Russia was part of a larger cultural tradition that was philosophically reinforced from within. Russian Orthodoxy did not discourage personal mystical experience; it tolerated gnostic speculations by clerical and lay theologians alike which would have been condemned as heresy in the Roman Catholic Church. Gnostic elements became embedded in Eastern Orthodox theology in the 6th century and were reinforced in the 16th century by the thought of the German mystic, Jacob Boehme, which was popular in the Orthodox seminaries. Boehme also influenced Russia's greatest philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, sometimes called "the last Gnostic," and through Soloviev, the art and thought, including lay theology, of the early 20th century. On the popular level, the *dvoeverie* (dual faith) combined pagan pantheism with Christianity. Pagan rituals

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<sup>1</sup>This is excerpted from my Introduction to the volume, now in preparation, of selected papers from the conference "The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture," Fordham University, June 26-29, 1991, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Research Programs (an independent federal agency), and Fordham University. Additional funding provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, the Institute of Modern Russian Culture, IREX (an independent federal agency supported in part by federal funds), and the Soros Foundation. These agencies are not responsible for the content or findings of this conference.

This paper was also presented to the International Seminar, "Le défi magique: Spiritisme, satanisme, occultisme dans les sociétés contemporaines," sponsored by CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions, Torino) and CREA (Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Anthropologiques de l'Université Lumière-Lyon 2), held in Lyon from April 6 to 8, 1992. Dr. Glatzer Rosenthal is Professor of history at Fordham University in the Bronx, New York.

designed to assure a good harvest, prevent harm, restore health, or harm an enemy, survived well into the 20th century. The basic distinction of the *dvoeverie* was not between good and evil, but between clean and unclean. In Medieval and Early Modern Russia, people of all classes turned to witches and sorcerers to prevent “spoiling,” ward off the “evil eye,” and cast spells on enemies and rivals. As late as the 16th century, the oath of loyalty to the Tsar included the renunciation of sorcery. The peasant’s universe was populated by all sorts of nature spirits, e.g. *rusalki* (mermaids), wood sprites, creatures who inhabited house and barn, and had to be propitiated. Peasant nannies regaled their charges, the children of the more privileged, with folk beliefs and legends. The writings of Pushkin, Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Sologub, and, surprisingly, Chekhov, contain many examples of occult images and themes, especially of the “unclean force.” These beliefs were not part of a coherent system but their emphasis on invisible forces and other worlds created a mind-set receptive to the sophisticated occult doctrines that developed later on.

As Western occult systems were introduced into Russia from the late 18th century on, their structures and forms were adapted to indigenous predispositions, needs, and movements, including political protest. During the reign of Catherine the Great, masonic lodges were founded by Nikolai Novikov (1744-1818). As elsewhere in 18th century Europe, Russian masons stressed a personal morality that went beyond external adherence to religious law. Masons were expected to cultivate the divine in themselves and to strive for self-perfection. In Russia, where civil liberties were unknown, the secrecy of the masonic lodges facilitated discussion of controversial issues. That very secrecy led Catherine the Great to

regard the lodges as covers for political sedition. Frightened by the French Revolution and by rumors that her son and heir Paul was associated with the masons, she suppressed the lodges and arrested Novikov. Masonry revived, however, in the reign of Alexander I. Some scholars claim that Alexander himself was a member of the Lodge Astrea, where he and persons close to him discussed projects for reforming Russia, including the abolition of serfdom. But Alexander too, became frightened and turned against the masons in 1812. Even so, the principles of free-masonry inspired the leaders of the unsuccessful Decembrist Revolt of 1825 for a constitutional regime in Russia. The extent to which members of the lodges took the occult teachings seriously, however, differed greatly. For some, occult language and rituals were a means of organization and contact, for others much more.

Interest in the occult by the elite was confined to a few circles, but the cultural climate was changing. The fading appeal of the official Orthodox Church, the spiritually unsatisfying atheism and positivism of the intelligentsia, the inability of science to answer questions such as what happens after death, cultural disintegration, and the association of rationalism and materialism with the West, combined to create a climate of personal confusion and religious quest which was receptive to the occult. New occult systems attracted many serious and dedicated adherents from among the intellectual and artistic elite. Spiritualism, for example, had been introduced into Russia in the 1860s by A.N. Aksakov (1823-1903) and A. N. Butlerov (1828-1903), both University Professors. By the 1870s, it was attracting so many adherents (seances were even held at the royal court), that a special commission, headed by the famous chemist Dmitri Mendeleev, was named,

in 1874-75, to test its claims to be a true science. By 1881, Spiritualists were able to form their own Journal *Rebus* (1881-1917; the title is the same in Russian); it featured articles on spiritualism, astrology, palm-reading, mystical freemasonry, vegetarianism, homeopathic medicine, Theosophy, and experiments in psychic research. The spiritualist seances were not open to the public, but invitations were not difficult to obtain. At certain points in their lives, the famous philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, his brother Vsevolod Soloviev, and the symbolist poet Valery Briusov, were interested in spiritualism. Tolstoi ridiculed the aristocracy's passion for spiritualism; *Anna Karenina* includes a scene describing a medium.

In the 1890s, the dislocations—psychological, cultural, socio-economic—inherent in the government's drive for rapid industrialization created a sense of spiritual and cultural crisis, which was further intensified by the Revolution of 1905. Some Russians who wished to deepen, supplement, or reinterpret Russian Orthodoxy, became interested in the mystery religions of pagan antiquity, yoga, Buddhism, and the Jewish Kabbala. Vladimir Soloviev was particularly interested in the latter; through him, the Kabbala, albeit in poorly understood or even distorted form, became part of the general legacy of the Russian occult. Russian writers and artists who visited Paris, learned about French *fin de siècle* occultism, and introduced it into Russia. Particularly important as disseminators of occult ideas were the symbolists, a group of artists and writers who believed that this world is but a symbol of a higher reality and that the artist's intuition and imagination is the way to reach it. Andrei Bely described "The Magic of Words" (title of a 1909 essay); Konstantin Bal'mont hailed "Poetry as Enchantment." These were not metaphors; sym-

bolist writers believed that through the word, the artist/magus literally creates the world. They hoped to direct the process of change. The philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev wrote about the role of mysticism and magic in the new creative era he believed was unfolding.

The western occult systems of Theosophy and Anthroposophy were particularly attractive to artists and intellectuals seeking a new unifying principle, a way to reconcile religion, art, and philosophy. Theosophy, developed by the Russian born Elena Blavatskaia (1831-1891), provided a structured world view which could also accommodate other forms of mysticism, while its claim to be a world religion, to unite Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, meant that there was no need to renounce Christianity. Blavatskaia's statement, "as God creates, so can man create," appealed to artists and writers who hoped to design a new reality in their own image. Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy regarded the birth of Jesus as the central event of cosmic evolution (his answer to Darwin), but in other respects anthroposophy and Theosophy were quite similar. The symbolist poet Andrei Bely, the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, the priest Pavel Florensky, were all interested, at one time or another, in these doctrines, partly as a means to supplement or revitalize Christianity.

Early twentieth century Russia also witnessed a spurt of interest in magic and Satanism. An article in *Rebus* on "Petersburg Satanists" (1913, no. 8) claimed that the capital was full of "Satanists, Luciferians, fire-worshippers, black magicians, and occultists." The author saw them everywhere: among the court pages, in the medical academies, in the schools, and in the elegant salons of high society. The darker side of Russian occultism was frequently associated with drugs, suicides, confi-

dence games, and an occasional Black Mass. The symbolist poets Valery Bruiusov and Aleksandr Dobroliubov reputedly experimented with black magic and drugs. Incidentally, Dobroliubov returned to Orthodoxy in 1905 and became a monk, a path similar to that followed by the French writer, J.K. Huysmans, author of the “decadent” novel *Against the Grain*. Several foreign occultists such as Czeslaw von Czinski were told to leave Russia and never return.

Interest in the occult cut across political divisions. There are clear occult elements in the poetry and plays of the young Anatole Lunacharsky, future Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment. Indeed, as late as 1919, when he was already Commissar, he wrote an occult play, “Vasillisa the Wide,” that was intended to be part of a trilogy. Maxim Gorky the famous writer, associate of the “left Bolsheviks,” and future friend of Lenin’s, was interested in contemporary psychological studies of thought transfer, as a possible means of influencing the masses. Alexander Bogdanov, a leading ideologue of “left Bolshevism,” was influenced, as was Gorky, by Wilhelm Ostwald’s (1853-1932) “energeticism,” a theory which interpreted all aspects of matter in terms of energy or transformations of energy. In some respects, “energeticism” was a scientific interpretation of occult phenomenon (invisible forces or powers that are present, if not manifest, in the real world), the theory stimulated “left Bolshevik” hopes of tapping the latent energy of the masses. Gorky’s novel *Confession* (1908) includes a scene in which the focused energy of the assembled crowd raises a paralyzed girl.

The Revolution of 1905 resulted in the partial introduction of civil liberties to Russia, including relaxation of the censorship and legalization of organizations such as the Theosophists. Private

quests became public. In some circles the Revolution of 1905 was interpreted as the beginning of the apocalypse that would usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth. Seeking signs and portents of the End, and also trying to orient themselves in a rapidly changing world, people of all classes turned to the occult for direction and guidance. Until 1905, *Rebus* was the only legal journal that dealt exclusively with the occult, though other journals, e.g. *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* (*Problems of Psychology and Philosophy*) and Briusov’s *Vesy* (*Libra*, carried articles and book reviews on the subject and listed meetings and lectures in their chronicles of current events. After 1905, there was a veritable explosion of interest in the occult. Scores of new journals were founded, among them: *Vestnik teosofii* (*Herald of Theosophy*), *Voprosy psikhizma i spiritualisticheskoi filosofii* (*Questions of Psychism and Spiritualistic Philosophy*) *Teosofist* (*Theosophist*), *Izida* (*Isis*), and *Sfinks* (*Sphinx*). The works of French occultists, including Edouard Schuré, Papus [Gerard Encausse] and Eliphas Lévi were translated into Russian. Also translated were the writings of Blavatskaia, Annie Besant, Charles Leadbeater, and, especially after 1911, works of Indian philosophy and religion.

At the same time, intellectuals, seeking to bridge the gulf between themselves and the people, by utilizing folk themes in their work, became fascinated with popular legends and with the rituals and practices of pre-Christian Slavs and the mystical sectarians, all of which included occult elements. Tapping into the immense reservoir of folklore, artists and intellectuals became acquainted with popular beliefs, myths, and unsystematized ideas that are simultaneously archaic and modern, pagan and Christian. In 1904, Dmitri Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius, lead-

ers of the “new religious consciousness,” made a pilgrimage to the sectarians of Svetloe Ozero. Andrei Bely wrote about sectarians in his novel, *The Silver Dove* (1909). Some intellectuals saw in mystical sectarianism survivals of pagan mystery cults and paradoxically regarded the sects as the expression of authentic popular Christianity, because the sectarians rejected the established Church and regarded the Tsar as antichrist. Writers and artists of peasant origin, e.g. the sculptor Sergei Kononkov (future winner of the Lenin Prize), the poets Sergei Esenin and Nikolai Kluev, featured occult images and themes in their work, which was hailed as an authentic expression of the folk spirit. Also important, was the discovery of Siberian shamanism by explorers and political exiles. Shaman stems from the word “to know”. The shaman has supernatural powers; he leaves his own body and proceeds to other worlds in order to learn how to heal this world. Kandinsky and other modernist painters viewed the artist as a kind of shaman, a healer of Russia. Particularly important to *avant-garde* painters of the cubo-futurist and suprematist schools, e.g. Kazimir Malevich, was a mystique of the fourth dimension, symbolized by the cube, according to Claude Bragdon, an American architect and Theosophist, our higher and immortal self, that exists in a world beyond death. Influenced by occult beliefs that material reality is an illusion, *avant garde* painters also tried to develop pictorial means of transcending it. Futurist writers attempt to create a new language, beyond the intellect, *zaum*, literally beyond the mind, which was influenced, partly, by the *Glossolalia* of the mystic sectarians. Yoga and other elements from Oriental religions influenced painters such as Nikolai Roerich and some futurist painters as well. “Dr. Badmaev’s” Tibetan powders, purported to cure all ills, were

in great demand. Theosophy continued to be influential, but variations of it developed. Rudolf Steiner sent an emissary, Anna Mintslova, to Russia in 1908; she was a major influence on Andrei Bely (he was baptized by Steiner in 1912) and, for a time, on Vyacheslav Ivanov. George Gurdjieff (1877-1949) developed his own variant of Theosophy, which included Islamic mysticism (Sufism) in association with Peter Uspensky (1878-1947) a popular Theosophist lecturer and writer. Until recently, their primary impact was in the West (they emigrated after the Bolshevik Revolution), but their formative years were in Russia; there is, however, tremendous interest in them in Russia today. Roerikh is almost a cult figure in some circles.

Occult beliefs and practices played a prominent role at the Imperial Court. The influence on the royal couple of the faith-healer Rasputin is well known. Robert Warth has shown that Rasputin was preceded by a long chain of charlatans and mystics, including a “Baron Phillippe,” from France. In 1902, before Rasputin’s arrival at court, Baron de Rothschild told Serge Witte, then Russian envoy to France, that “great events, especially of an internal nature, were everywhere preceded by a bizarre mysticism at the court of the ruler.” He may have had in mind the popularity of Mesmerism and of charlatans such as Cagliostro in pre-revolutionary France. In any case, Rasputin was the symbol of a malaise that would soon lead to revolution. Mircea Eliade’s observation holds here: “as in all the great spiritual crises of Europe, once again we meet the degradation of the symbol. When the mind is no longer capable of perceiving the metaphysical significance of the symbol, it is understood at levels which become increasingly coarse.”

On the popular level, there was a surge of

interest in the occult. Jeffrey Brooks reports the introduction of the new occult themes into popular literature around 1910/11. Peasants moving to the cities took their superstitions with them; confused in the new situation, dealing with new problems and new choices, they resorted to fortune-tellers, magic, and faith-healers for help and guidance. Demagogues such as Iliodor blamed all the ills of the era on demons, whom he equated with Jews. A consequence of the demonology of the right was the Beilis Case: the frame-up of a Jew, Mendel Beilis for the ritual murder of a Christian child. The association of occultism and anti-semitism can be seen in the writings of the occultist Aleksei Shmakov, who even served as a volunteer attorney for the prosecution, and in Vasily Rozanov's articles on the Beilis Case which were so scurrilous that even the reactionary newspaper *Novoe Vremya* refused to print them.

The Bolshevik Revolution did not end occultism. Indeed, the new regime itself utilized occult motifs in its propaganda. Posters cried "Purge the Unclean!" a clear allusion to traditional beliefs. References to the "many-headed hydra" of reaction similarly connote old folk monsters. Lenin decried vampires and blood-suckers. Trotsky (*Literature and Revolution*, 1923), was certain that Zinaida Gippius, an enemy of Bolshevism, was a witch, but admitted ignorance as to the length of her tail!; he attacked Anthroposophy in the same book. The Russian text of the document which formed the Communist International (Comintern) prohibited former masons from joining the Communist Party, probably because of the threat posed by their secrecy. (Rumor connected leading members of the Provisional Government with the revived masonic movement.) In the villages, peasants continued to resort to faith healing and magic rather than consult doctors. Indeed much

of our knowledge of the occultism of the 1920s stems from Soviet ethnographic expeditions and from the reports of political activists, especially members of the *Komosomol* (Young Communist League), complaining about the prevalence of superstition. To the latter, of course, Christianity itself was a superstition. Yet, even the Bolsheviks were not immune, especially those who grew up in the countryside. During the Civil War, for example, according to a Soviet source, a Commissar confiscated grain from a reputed witch, when she was not at home. After finding out who did it, she confronted and then cursed him. Although a young man, he withered and died within the year!

Occult motifs permeated Soviet culture of the 1920s and became embedded in later Soviet culture. Magic and fantasy are prominent in the writings of Yuri Olesha, Vsevolod Ivanov, Marietta Shaginian, Olga Forsh, Andrei Platonov, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Alexis Tolstoi—many of whom were important in the Stalin era as well. Mikhael Chekhov, nephew of the famous writer, Anton Chekhov, incorporated Anthroposophical motifs into his stage designs in the 1920s. Sergei Eisenstein, the famous film-director, was initiated into the Rosicrucian Order in 1918; his interest in occult rituals and themes is indirectly reflected in his films, especially *Ivan the Terrible*. The writings of Nikolai Ustrialov and the *Smena vekh* (*Change of Landmarks*) group that returned to the Soviet Union in the early 1920s are replete with occult images and allusions, as are the writings of Mikhail Bulgakov, whose famous novel, *The Master and Margarita*, begun in the 1920s, is an esoteric text. Horror films (the Gothic) were popular before the Revolution and remained popular in the 1920s (when private filming was again legalized), even though the Party denounced them as catering to the superstitions of the masses.

Theosophy and Anthroposophy were persecuted after 1922, as part of the general anti-religious campaign initiated that year, but still claimed many adherents, who went under-ground. There are clear suggestions of Anthroposophy in the theories of the Soviet psychologist Aaron Zalkind, who believed that a new man with new organs and new sensibilities was being formed. Later on, failures of the five year plan were blamed on “wreckers and saboteurs,” an industrial version of the peasant belief in “spoiling.”

A neglected, but major source of early Soviet ideology, is the philosophy of Nikolai Fedorov (1828-1903). Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Gorky, and several symbolists and futurists were among his admirers before the revolution, as were certain symbolist and futurist writers, but his greatest influence was after 1917. Fedorov spoke in the language of science, but the major sources of his vision can be traced to the occult and he opposed materialism. Arguing for a kind of “right” to immortality, to be achieved through science, he maintained that the “common task” of humanity was to resurrect its dead fathers. He also advocated colonizing space in order to make room for the enlarged population, controlling the climate, and transforming nature, e.g. irrigating Arabia with icebergs hauled from the Arctic. His visions appealed to Bolshevik worshippers of technology, including Bogdanov, whose ultimately fatal experiments in blood transfusion were inspired, in part, by Fedorov. Soviet writers influenced by Fedorov and/or his disciples include Olga Forsh, Mikhail Prishvin, and Andrei Platonov. In the 1920s, a group of Fedorov’s disciples, “the Cosmists” founded an academy to research his theories. One of their main exponents was K.E. Tsiolkovsky the “father of Soviet space-travel” (1857-1935). Others were V.I. Vernadsky, a scien-

tist and founder of biogeochemistry, A.L. Chizhevsky, a historian of philosophy, and V.N. Chekrygin, a painter. Connected to the Petrograd group of cosmists, which declared immortality to be a “human right,” was Leonid Vasiliev, later the most prominent Soviet parapsychologist. The prominence given to the “conquest of nature,” in the First and Second Five Year Plan and the post World War II attempts to transform the climate of Soviet Asia, reflect, partly, the ideas of Fedorov and his disciples, some of whom reached high positions in the Soviet regime.

Destalinization, the discrediting of a long-standing belief-system, created favorable conditions for the occult revival that is apparent in the Soviet Union today. Old beliefs have been rediscovered; underground groups have surfaced, and new strains are prominent on the contemporary cultural scene. Fedorov’s ideas are again in vogue, but this time in a Christian context. Also popular is the occult system of Daniil Andreev, son of the writer Leonid Andreev; conceived while Daniil Andreev was in prison, *The Rose of the World* circulated widely in *samizdat* and was published legally in 1991. Recent publications on occult topics sell out quickly and turn-of-the-century books on the subject command high prices in the used book stores. Publication of long suppressed writers such as the symbolists or Mikhail Bulgakov, means recirculation of the occult ideas that permeate them. Occult themes, often mixed with Christian, appear in the writings of Fasil Iskander, Yuri Trifonov (especially his novel *Another Life*), Eremai Parnov (especially *Throne of Lucifer*), the “village prose” school, the film, *Repentance*, et. al. Recent U.S. press coverage has documented the surge of Soviet interest in the occult. *The New York Times* in an article “Red Stars” (January 11, 1989) reported that *Moskovskaia Pravda* published

Gorbachev's horoscope (he's a Pisces) and on September 10, 1989 ("Around Gorbachev, Centrifugal Forces"), introduced its reader to Dzhuna Davitashvili, the faith-healer who tended Brezhnev and Anatoly Kashpirovsky, whose prime time-TV program (now off the air) included faith-healing at a distance. Attempting to account for this, *The New York Times* editorialized (October 14, 1989) that the "long suppression of religion...has given Russians a particular fondness for the supernatural"; the writer, apparently, is not familiar with the long history of the occult in Russia. On two recent trips to Russia, I found that occult publications were sold everywhere, metro stations, street corners, and so on.

The prominence of the occult in Russia between 1890 and 1925 was related to modernization and socio-political upheaval but cannot be reduced to these alone. That same Russian occultism, and its current incarnations, contains some striking similarities to the "New Age" movement of the contemporary West, where it is related more to unmet spiritual or emotional needs than it is to modernization *per se*. The metaphysical and existential issues that caused, and are causing, many Russians to turn to the occult are among the central issues of our time.

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# SECRET MESSAGES FROM COLONEL OLCOTT

Paul Johnson

Two published letters from Henry Steel Olcott to H. P. Blavatsky provide long-overlooked clues to the Masters' identities. They are found in the book *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*. To put them in context a letter in the same volume from H.P.B. to Babaji (who called himself D. K. Nath but whose real name was S. Krishnaswami) reveals the issues facing her at the time.

In April 1886, Walter Gebhard, son of the leading Theosophical family of Germany, shot himself in his bedroom. H.P.B. wrote to accuse Babaji of influencing Walter to doubt her honesty, and causing the despair which led to his suicide. She added that the German T.S. "died owing to what you said to Hübbe-Schleiden about the two notes received by him." Calling Babaji's supporters "fools who listen to a *chela* of the Mahatma K.H. and were made to believe that the Master had turned away from me. . ." H.P.B. concluded that "They will *shake us off both*—most likely when they learn the *whole* truth."<sup>1</sup>

What was this whole truth which would have been so damaging? Babaji was accusing H.P.B. of fraudulently producing letters from K.H. when the Master was no longer working in partnership with her. Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden had received two notes from K.H. assuring him of the Master's continued support of H.P.B.'s work, but Babaji convinced him that these were forgeries. Back in

India, T. Subba Row had made similar accusations, calling H.P.B. "a shell deserted and abandoned by the Masters."<sup>2</sup> His 1886 withdrawal from the T.S. may indeed have been related to its loss of contact with certain Masters. By then, according to the theory I propose in the book *In Search of the Masters*, neither M. nor K.H. was available for Theosophical purposes, due respectively to the death of Maharajah Ranbir Singh and the political concerns of Sirdar Thakar Singh. Subba Row's perception of a void in Mahatmic sponsorship at this time would seem to be verified by two letters Olcott sent H.P.B. in December 1885 and January 1886. The first is marked *Private*:

You remember Subba Row's great project for a national Adwaita Society to be secretly moved by certain Initiates and to be fathered by Sancaracharya, the High Priest, and act in harmony with the Theosophical Society; well it has just been born, rules have been drafted, Sancaracharya's presidency is agreed to by him, some 400 or 500 Pundits alone in this Presidency will join. Money is offered to put up a lecture hall in Madras with Adwaita preachers going all over India. Subba Row means to work it so that it will strengthen existing Theosophical Societies, T.S. branches, and hatch new ones where there are none—so you see he is especially anxious that there should be no new scandals or rows in con-

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<sup>1</sup> Blavatsky, H.P., *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1973), 301.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 95-6.

nection with the T.S. for fear Sankaracharya (an Initiate) and the whole orthodox party should get frightened and set themselves to break us up.

Now do keep quiet, for God's sake do keep cool—you *know* who Sankaracharya is!!!

We shall get things around after a while so that you can return with honor.<sup>3</sup>

That H.P.B. knew who Sankaracharya was is apparent from her 1883 article "Theosophy and Spiritism" which cites a letter from the Initiate adept to Subba Row:

. . . we addressed ourselves to the great "Samkaracharya". He is the Pope of India, a hierarchy which spiritually reigns by succession from the first Samkaracharya of the Vedanta, one of the greatest initiated adepts among the Brahmanas . . . the only man in India who possesses the key to all the Brahmanical mysteries and has spiritual authority from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas and whose library is the accumulation of long centuries. Moreover, he is recognized, even by the English, as the greatest authority on the value of archaic manuscripts.<sup>4</sup>

The letter which follows opens with a reference to Senezar Brahmbhashya, the secret sacerdotal language of the Brahmins, an interesting clue for students of *The Secret Doctrine*.

Whatever the good intentions behind the Adwaita Society may have been, it seems never to have gotten off the ground, and before the year was out Subba Row left the T.S. His defection may well have been encouraged by his Master

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 325.

<sup>4</sup> Blavatsky, H.P., *Collected Writings*, (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1950-1987), Vol. V, 62.

Sankaracharya deciding that the T.S. was too scandal-ridden to merit their support. This is implied by two letters from Constance Wachtmeister, with whom H.P.B. was living at the time, to A.P. Sinnett, both dated January 1, 1886. In the first, Countess Wachtmeister informs Sinnett that H.P.B. had received her copy of Richard Hodgson's report to the Society for Psychical Research on New Year's Eve. In the second letter, Countess Wachtmeister reports that although H.P.B. wanted to write protest letters immediately, she had advised her to remain calm, as "the scandal must be crushed if possible and at any rate we must not feed the fire."<sup>5</sup> The Countess continues:

The enclosed [letter from Olcott] will show you the *immense importance* of keeping cool and quiet and crushing the scandal if possible. I need not comment upon the result of such a Presidentship in India as the Sankaracharya—at the head of our whole Society.

As this news was sent from India with the command of the greatest secrecy, Col. O. begs Madame to tell nobody for the present. Her joy was so great however that she told me . . . I have told her that it was only right of her to *tell you* . . .<sup>6</sup>

The joy felt by Olcott and Blavatsky at Sankaracharya's support must have been short-lived, as he appears to have withdrawn that support in the wake of the Hodgson report.

These passages have gone unnoticed although they show H.P.B., Olcott and Wachtmeister explicitly identifying a contemporary historical figure as a Master. As in the case of Swami Dayananda

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<sup>5</sup> *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, 270.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 271.

Sarasvati, the withdrawal of Sankaracharya's support shows the insecure, unstable nature of adept sponsorship of the T.S. Such characters have been ignored because they do not fit conveniently with prevailing views of the Masters, which either deny their existence or exalt them as supermen whose support for the T.S. was secure, stable and unanimous.

An equally overlooked passage showing the human side of the Masters appears in another letter from Olcott to H.P.B. written later the same month. At that point, Subba Row's enthusiasm was so great that Olcott proposed a collaboration between him and some Masters of the Egyptian brotherhood:

Subba Row is getting keen on a collation of Indian and Egyptian esoteric philosophy and symbolism . . . . He keeps coming here and always asks for books which deal with Egyptian Mythology, etc. Now do this: through Borj, or Twitit B: or Ill: or someone, arrange to organize at Cairo a couple like Subba Row and Oakley, who would keep in regular correspondence with these two, and exchange ideas, questions and answers. . . . Maspero is anxious to make just such a correspondence, but he is too thundering busy. If there were an Oakley there to go at him, hunt up the books he would indicate, and write the letters, enormously good results would follow all around, for Maspero would put it all in his books and Reports, and we would put it into the Th. and books. Would Gregoire d'Elias be any good? I think not. Would Isurenus B. help you?<sup>7</sup>

This passage gives three new names to investigate in the search for the Masters. It is revealing

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 326-7.

that Olcott refers to Hilarion (Ill:), Tuitit Bey and Isurenus Bey in such matter of fact terms. But far more useful to researchers are the names of Borj, Maspero, and Gregoire d'Elias.

A search through the Theosophical literature uncovered no Borj, but Olcott's handwriting deceived Trevor Barker on more than one occasion. For example, he takes an obvious reference to Sumangala as "Samanyala," which implies that Olcott's g's are not readily identifiable. A Borg appears in one of the most important of all Mahatma letters, which K.H. made materialize in Olcott's hand when he appeared in his tent outside Lahore in November 1883. It accuses Olcott of being overly suspicious, "sometimes cruelly so—of Upasika, of Borg, of Djual-K., even of Damodar and D. Nath, whom you love as sons."<sup>8</sup>

In the diary she kept in New York, H.P.B. referred to "A letter from Richard and Boag informing of the arrival from Russia of a parcel."<sup>9</sup> Again, questions of handwriting confuse the issue, giving us three spellings of what would seem to be the same name. But of the variant spellings it becomes apparent that Borg is correct upon examination of Professor Keddie's biography of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani. She writes that "Afghani and a group of his followers first joined an Italian lodge in Alexandria, but were influenced by English Vice-Consul Ralph Borg to join an English lodge, whose numbers reached 300, including many leaders of the nationalist movement of

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<sup>8</sup> Jinarajadasa, C.J., comp., *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, First Series* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973), 40.

<sup>9</sup> Blavatsky, H.P., *H.P.B. Speaks*. Vol. I (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1950-1951), 151.

1878-1882.”<sup>10</sup> One of the weaker points of *In Search of the Masters* has been the evidence that H.P.B.’s Egyptian Brotherhood was the circle surrounding Afghani in Cairo. This is considerably strengthened by these fragments concerning Borg. *Who Was Who* gives his first name as Raphael; the name Ralph, also found in other recent books, is due to Keddie’s reliance on an Egyptian writer, Mohammed Sabry, who collected eyewitness accounts years after the fact. *Who Was Who* also summarizes Borg’s diplomatic career, spent entirely in Egypt. Beginning as a clerk in Alexandria in 1863, he later went to Cairo where, after serving as Acting Vice-Consul and Consul at various intervals in the 60s and 70s, he became Vice-Consul in 1880. In 1884 he was appointed Consul there which he remained for the rest of his career except an interval in 1895 as Acting Consul-General. He died January 24, 1903.<sup>11</sup> At this point the most likely Richard to whom H.P.B. refers seems to be Charles Louis Richard, French Orientalist and author of *Scenes of Arab Life, Mysteries of the Arab People, Inevitable Revolutions in the World and Humanity*, and other books.

No trace of Borg as the author or subject of a book was found in the course of research, but Gregoire d’Elias appears to have been the author of a play published in Seville in 1871. Entitled *Lo Que Tiene Mi Mujer* it is listed as a comic one act play in verse by Gregorio Esteban de Elias. Gaston Maspero (1846-1916) was a French Egyptologist and author of many books on Egypt. Born in Paris of Italian parents, he became Professor of

Egyptology at the College de France in 1874. From 1881 through 1886 and again from 1899 through 1914 he was curator of the Bulak Museum in Cairo and director of explorations in Egypt.<sup>12</sup> H.P.B. visited him at his museum en route back to India from Europe in 1885, and amazed him with her knowledge of ancient Egypt, according to Isabel Cooper-Oakley.<sup>13</sup>

All these characters identified through Colonel Olcott’s secret messages tend to confirm the hypothesis that secret sponsors of the T.S. were corporeal human beings. These overlooked passages undermine the false assumption that the Masters were either supermen in remote ashrams or figments of H.P.B.’s imagination.

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<sup>10</sup> Keddie, Nikki, *Siyiyid Jamal ad-Din “al-Afghani”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 100.

<sup>11</sup> *Who Was Who, Volume I, 1897-1915*, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1920), 76.

<sup>12</sup> *Cambridge Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 168.

<sup>13</sup> Ryan, Charles J., *H.P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1973), 168.

# Book Review

## **H.P.B.: THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE & INFLUENCE OF HELENA BLAVATSKY, FOUNDER OF THE MODERN THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT.**

By Sylvia Cranston. New York: A Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book, published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1993. Pp. xxiii + 648. ISBN 0-87477-688-0. \$30.00.

We can all welcome Sylvia Cranston's new biography on at least one count in that, to date, it provides something close to a social history of the Theosophical Society. Not completely perhaps, but it is certainly a significant contribution. Why for example, should H.P.B. have come to America in the first place? We are told that 'what drew H.P.B. to the New World in 1851 were the Native Americans (*Indians!*) she had read about in James Fennimore Cooper's novels!' (p. 48) As a twenty year old girl, her imagination must have been fired with stories of settlers gradually moving westward to the Pacific's shore. And later in the 1870's, what kind of a civil society did she find herself in if not that of the post-Civil War era. Wasn't spiritualism as much of a response to that national tragedy in some way as it may also have been after the First and Second World Wars in Europe? Very little comment has been made in this regard in relation to the founding of the T.S., and it should be.

Although a great deal of huffing and puffing, especially the latter, has been written about the upper class social backgrounds of the Society's

founders, what about its more common adherents, those without fortunes for H.P.B. to squander in her travels or who would put up with her tantrums while providing her shelter? Along with the late Monty Woolley as 'The Man Who Came to Dinner', and Gurdjieff and other gurus who bedeviled their hapless hosts, H.P.B. succeeded in dominating a devoted few who remained at her side, done of course in the name of the Masters through whom she was the channel. Again, all belief must be taken on faith no matter for what cause, or reason.

But what of the social history of the time that caused people to look beyond conventionalisms, to drop out of society if even for a while. Cranston points out the march of materialism brought on by Darwinian science, as have other Theosophical writers, but does not focus on the economic chaos of the last quarter of the 19th century. Thus, Theosophy and Socialism may have more in common than most people may willingly acknowledge. Both have served, at least temporarily in the long span of history, as correctives to the unfinished business of the industrial revolution, somehow outside the purview of more established religions. But not surprisingly really since Western tradition has largely regarded those who would support them financially or otherwise as signally blessed by heaven. (That goes for the T.S. too).

In this massive volume, which might be less weighty if several gratuitous testimonials were

omitted, the careful reader will note that although many well-known scientists and philosophers of the last hundred years and more have been erstwhile paper members of the T.S., their appreciation of and adherence to Theosophical principles and ideas have appeared to be highly selective. William Butler Yeats felt that “[f]or the literary man wandering in T.S. Eliot’s wasteland or between [Matthew] Arnold’s two worlds, theosophy has been a favorite resort . . . ,” (p. 465) and, “[b]esides the devotees who came to listen and to turn every doctrine into a new sanction for the puritanical convictions of their Victorian childhood, cranks came from half Europe and from all America . . . .” (p. 467) Even Christmas Humphreys opted out “[i]n 1926 . . . on the ground that in our view [T.S.] activities were encrusted with peripheral organizations to the exclusion of the great teaching given to Madame Blavatsky by the masters of Tibet.” (p. 500) How indeed would H.P.B. have reacted to Krishnamurti, the Liberal Catholic Church and Leadbeater’s antics, not to mention those of Annie Besant, ‘that regular Demosthenes in skirts’ as H.P.B. called her former Fabian Socialist successor? Whether H.P.B.’s biases and those of her successors would have coincided remains a matter of conjecture. But then when was Theosophy ever a playground for Freethinkers?? One cannot escape the conclusions arrived at by Peter Washington in his account of Theosophy and the emergence of the Western guru [Madame *Blavatsky’s Baboon*], recently published in London by Secker and Warburg, that spiritual leaders were often bitter cynics, and their followers, especially Theosophists, were ‘the neurotic, the hysterical, the destructive and the down-right mad’. (Has the reader visited Adyar during the last fifteen years?) Strange, though, how H.P.B. could inveigh against

Christianity and yet demonstrate her belief in the Russian Orthodox Church in writing from Paris, “Probably it is in my blood...I certainly will always say: a thousand times rather Buddhism, a pure moral teaching, in perfect harmony with the teachings of Christ, than modern Catholicism or Protestantism. But with the faith of the Russian church I will not even compare Buddhism. I can’t help it. Such is my silly inconsistent nature.” (p. 249) Something like the reverse of Humphrey Bogart’s definition of a tough guy, rather ‘all hard on the outside but mushy at the core.’

H.P.B. thought the use of phenomena to attract public attention was necessary, but if scientific facts were of the greatest value (and on some days she felt they were), what then, beyond the memory of phenomena, e.g., apported flowers or teacups or charming tunes from nowhere, together with the Masters’ letters, remains with a student of H.P.B. today? Cranston assures us we’ll find out about scientific truths that have yet to be accepted in a pending publication by Reed Carson entitled “Blavatsky’s Foreknowledge of Twentieth Century Science,” assumed to be extrapolated from *Isis Unveiled* and other works. Doubtless many T.S. members and others await such a work that will serve to prune the undergrowth twined about their philosophy.

Moreover, what do we learn from this book about H.P.B. that we don’t know already from other sources? Surely that will depend on how many books, old and new, the reader has collected over the years and which source he or she swears by as truth. Do we know that H.P.B.’s mother discovered Buddhism when accompanying her husband to the Kalmuck area of Astrakhan in 1836 over which he had been placed as trustee? Of character sketches of H.P.B. there are a-plenty, and who would seem to have contributed most to

the preservation of H.P.B. as legend? Let us nominate A.P. Sinnett, for H.P.B. was extremely shrewd at selecting a worthy press agent. True, she supplied Sinnett with information about her personal life and travels “thirty years after their occurrence, when verification was difficult” (p. 50) and if there is any room for scepticism, let’s not forget that clouds still hang round the early life of Christ, too. The best treasure hunt of all might net one the lost (?) diaries of Sinnett, but then Theosophists never want to discuss that issue, and probably for good reason. H.P.B. ‘conveniently seemed to forget significant details concerning her past such as dates and places’ but apparently was never at a loss when called upon to let her imagination run riot. Can’t research still be done on unresolved matters of vital interest?

By turns vague and teasing in regard to such psychic ability as she had, H.P.B. was any newspaper editor’s heaven-sent gift. Trouble was that a hundred years ago, the crowd of people H.P.B. gathered round her were ‘ladies’ and ‘gentlemen’ not inclined to try to verify facts at length but rather at face value assuming a sense of *noblesse oblige*. There were no radios or other newsgatherers able to check facts, nevertheless society folk might find some titillation in the events. What a pity that a worthy scholar such as Alexandra David-Neel was a less flamboyant personality, although she received her T.S. diploma in London on 7 June 1892.

In sum, H.P.B. had an extraordinary life during the 19th century simply because hers was the type of personality that few could challenge. She had been everywhere and spoke with authority, and her passport alone could have validated some of the doubtful assertions. Who else had the money or time to negotiate such experiences except appointed government officials in far off outposts

of empire whose diaries frequently corroborated her stories. And of personal contradictions, so what if she smoked cigarettes but was a teetotaling vegetarian? Sorry, she wouldn’t be accepted by the Society she helped found if she applied for membership today. Isn’t it monetary contributions that pave the way more helpfully of late?

Cranston noticeably makes a pitch for H.P.B.’s prominence as an early Women’s Libber which makes some sense in view of male dominance in 19th century society. Think over please the kind of men she attracted. They may have dominated but they don’t all come across as strong personalities in themselves because most were government civil servants and other hirelings whom she subordinated at her own will. Olcott was thought gullible by many even though he was a trusted servant of the Lincoln administration after the American Civil War.

Long after putting this book down, there was one paragraph that stuck in the mind of the reviewer, namely that of Elizabeth Hunt in ‘A Reminiscence of HP Blavatsky in 1873’ that appeared in the December 1931 *Theosophist*, to wit:

I never looked upon Madame as an ethical teacher. For one thing she was too excitable; when things seemed wrong to her, she could express her opinion about them with a vigor which was very disturbing. I never saw her angry with any person or thing at close range. Her objections had an impersonality about them. In mental or physical dilemma, you would instinctively appeal to her, for you felt her fearlessness, her unconventionality, her great wisdom and wide experience and hearty goodwill— her sympathy with the underdog. (p. 116)

That is all still needed in the T.S. today, but who or rather which personality can provide it?

She kept all her wisdom in the family, sometimes a family of Atrides, and with so many years of experience at the game, hers was truly a tough act to follow. It would be interesting to know how many Society members favour returning to H.P.B.'s original platform and how many prefer that of her successors. A real decision seems needful now but has everybody the will to even try.

**Robert Boyd**

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