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THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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EDITOR

James A. Santucci
California State University, Fullerton

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Joscelyn Godwin
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Institute for the Study of American
Religion
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Leslie Price
Former Editor, *Theosophical History*

Gregory Tillett
Macquarie University

Karen Voss
San Jose State University

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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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:

Dr. James A. Santucci
Department of Religious Studies
California State University
Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.)
FAX: 714-449-5820 or 714-773-3990
TELEPHONE: 714-773-3727

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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.¹

¹I 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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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° 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 VIIIth 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 XVIIIth 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 XVIth and the XVIIIth centuries, and
- b) a referential corpus specific to the XIXth 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 XVth century with the confluence of several currents: Kabala, Paracelcius, Cornelius Agrippa, etc. and ending at the close of the XVIth 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 XVIIIth 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 12th 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 archive¹ 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*.²

Elbridge Gerry Brown³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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

¹ The archive permits this publication, but wishes to remain unidentified.

² H.P. Blavatsky's first letter to Stainton Moses will be published in the next issue.

³ 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.

⁴ *BCW*, I, 95.

⁵ 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 ^{over}

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.¹ 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.²

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.³ 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*.⁴ Also during the 1930's, the *Wilson Library Bulletin*

² Bowman, *The Year 2000*, 121.

³ 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.

⁴ Sylvia E. Bowman, *Edward Bellamy* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 14; Arthur E. Morgan, *Edward Bellamy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), ix.

¹ 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.⁵

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.⁶

One of the factors for the early successes and growth of Nationalism is the influence of Theosophy.⁷ 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.”⁸

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

⁵ Morgan, *Bellamy*, x.

⁶ “California Nationalist Directory,” *Weekly Nationalist*, 21 June 1890: 8.

⁷ Morgan, *Bellamy*, 260.

⁸ 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."⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

The idea of the brotherhood of humanity translates into a number of practical applications in the society presented in *Looking Backward*.

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 57-58.

¹¹ 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."¹²

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."¹³

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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ In his work on socialism in Massachusetts, Henry Bedford characterizes the Nationalists of Massachusetts as "respectable reformers of the middle class or

¹² Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 157-158; 165-166.

¹³ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 53.

¹⁴ Morgan, *Edward Bellamy*, 247-251, 263, 285.

¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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

¹⁶Henry 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 . . .”

¹⁷H.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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

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

¹⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, 1 July 1889, 4. The Principles of Nationalism were first published in the May 1899 issue of *The Nationalist*.

¹⁹ Morgan, *Bellamy*, 263.

of 1889.²⁰ 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.²¹

Nationalism in Los Angeles

The formulation of the First Nationalist Club of Los Angeles seemed to follow along the pattern previously described by Morgan.²² Initially, the

²⁰ Morgan notes that the literary and theoretical preoccupation of the original club also contributed to the formation of the second club. (Morgan, *Bellamy*, 253.)

²¹ Morgan, *Bellamy*, 275.

²² 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.²³ 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.²⁴ 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."²⁵ He bases his conclusions on an unreferenced memoir by Abbott B. Clark, who is labeled the "sole surviving California Theosophist of those days."²⁶ 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*."²⁷ 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.²⁸ A similar problem is apparent in Clark's observations about Los Angeles. Little mention is made in the *California Nationalist* or

²³ *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 1890, 5.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ Morgan, *Bellamy*, 265-267.

²⁶ Morgan, *Bellamy*, 266.

²⁷ Morgan, *Bellamy*, 266.

²⁸ MacNair, *Bellamy*, 204.

the *Weekly Nationalist of Theosophy*.²⁹ 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.³⁰

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

²⁹It 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.

³⁰"Two Isms Together," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January 1890, 6; "Nationalistic," *Tribune*, 27 January 1890, 8.

³¹True, 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.³¹

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.³²

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.³³

³² *Los Angeles Times*, 15 January 1890, 4.

³³ *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.³⁴ 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

³⁴ *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.

³⁵ “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.”³⁵ 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.³⁶

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

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.

³⁶ *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.³⁷

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.³⁸ As the coming elections grew nearer, the Nationalist support of the the Peoples’ Party increased. In fact, one local editor equated Nationalism with populism.³⁹

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.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The study of the relationship between nation-

³⁷ “News From The Clubs,” *New Nation*, 7 February 1891, 34.

³⁸ “Report from A. R. Hinkley,” *Porcupine*, 27 June 1891, 3.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ 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.⁴² 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.⁴³ In 1890, the Nationalization of Labor Society was formed, with later chapters appearing throughout Britain, with Theosophists making up a portion of the membership.⁴⁴ The *Nationalization News*, a monthly published by the Nationalization of Labor Society, merged, interestingly, with the *Brotherhood*, edited by J. B. Wallace.⁴⁵ While *Looking Backward* was extremely popular in Australia and contributed to the creation of the Labour Party in Australia, studies on the relationship

⁴² 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.

⁴³ Peter Marshall, "A British Sensation," in Bowman, *Bellamy Abroad*, 86.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 97-99.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 99.

⁴¹ 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.⁴⁶ *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.⁴⁷ 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."⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰

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

⁴⁶ See Robin Gollan, "The Australian Impact," in Bowman, *Bellamy Abroad*, 119-136.

⁴⁷ See Herbert Roth, "Bellamy Societies of Indonesia, South Africa and New Zealand," in Bowman, *Bellamy Abroad*, 231-257.

⁴⁸ Bowman, *Bellamy Abroad*, 385.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 388.

⁵⁰ *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.”⁵¹ And so they are.

⁵¹ Bernard Moses, “Social Transformation,” *The Overland Monthly* (June 1890): 565.

MEAD'S GNOSIS: A THEOSOPHICAL EXEGESIS OF AN ANCIENT HERESY

Clare Goodrick-Clarke¹

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



¹Clare Goodrick-Clarke read English Language and Literature at The University of Birmingham and studied the influence of Platonism on the English Reformation for her M.A. She is now the Publisher of IKON Productions Ltd, an independent publishing house specializing in religion and the history of ideas. This paper was originally given at the Mead Symposium convened by the Temenos Academy in London in May 1992.

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*² 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*³ 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."⁴

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

² 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]

³ A. P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (London: Trübner & Co, 1883).

⁴ 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."⁵ 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

⁵ 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*.⁶

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."⁷

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*⁸ into English, and to compile a summary of Gnostic

⁶ *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.

⁷ G. R. S. Mead, "The Quest" - Old and New: Retrospect and Prospect, *The Quest* 17/3 (April 1926): 289-307 (p. 296).

⁸ *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*⁹ 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."¹⁰ and he has been dismissed as a "pseudo-scholar" on the other.¹¹ 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."¹² 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"¹³, 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-

⁹ G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (London and Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900).

¹⁰ H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings 1890-1891*. Volume XIII (Wheaton, Ill: Theosophical Publishing House, 1982), 395.

¹¹ James Webb, *The Flight from Reason* (London: Macdonald & Co, 1971), 178.

¹² W. B. Crow, *A History of Magic, Witchcraft & Occultism*. Second edition (London: Abacus, 1972), 130.

¹³ 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*,¹⁴ and the edition of the *Upanishads*¹⁵ he translated and published in 1896.

¹⁴ R. S. Mead, *The World-Mystery* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1895).

¹⁵ *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*.¹⁶ 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*."¹⁷ 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."¹⁸

¹⁶ *Lucifer*, the principal London-based journal of the Theosophists, was retitled *The Theosophical Review* from the beginning of volume 21 in September 1897.

¹⁷ G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 152.

¹⁸ G. R. S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia*. Second edition (London: J. M. Watkins, 1921), xx.

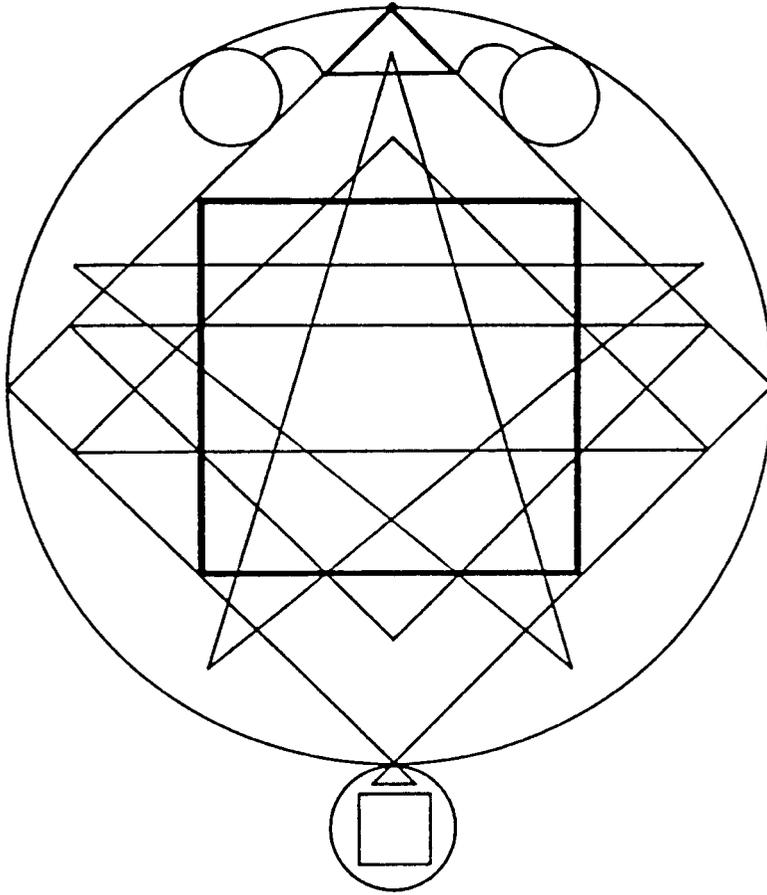


Figure 1 shows the Pleroma according to Valentinus (2nd c. AD), reproduced in the *Pistis Sophia* commentary, *Lucifer 6* (1890): 237f. The chart represents the hierarchies of creation proceeding from the Godhead. The larger circle represents the Pleroma (fullness or completion; the unmanifested or invisible 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.

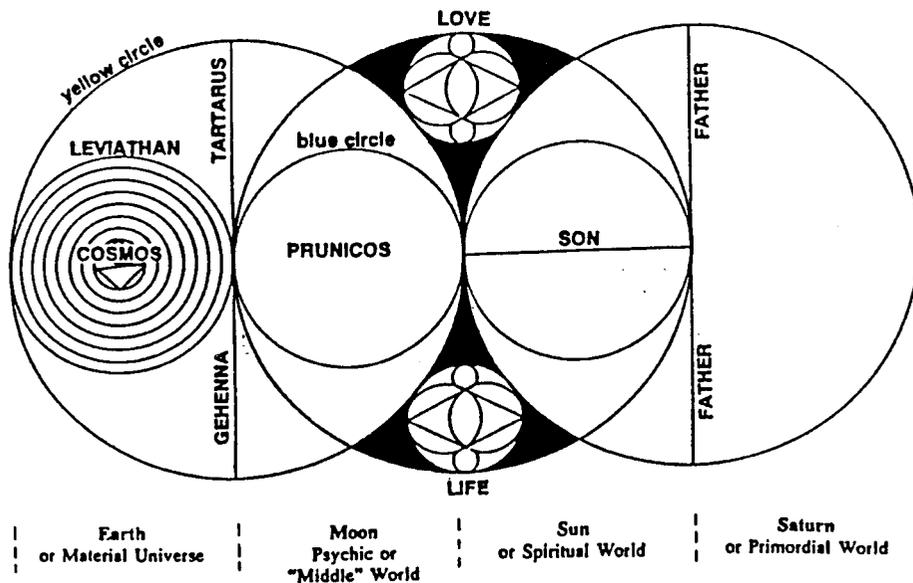
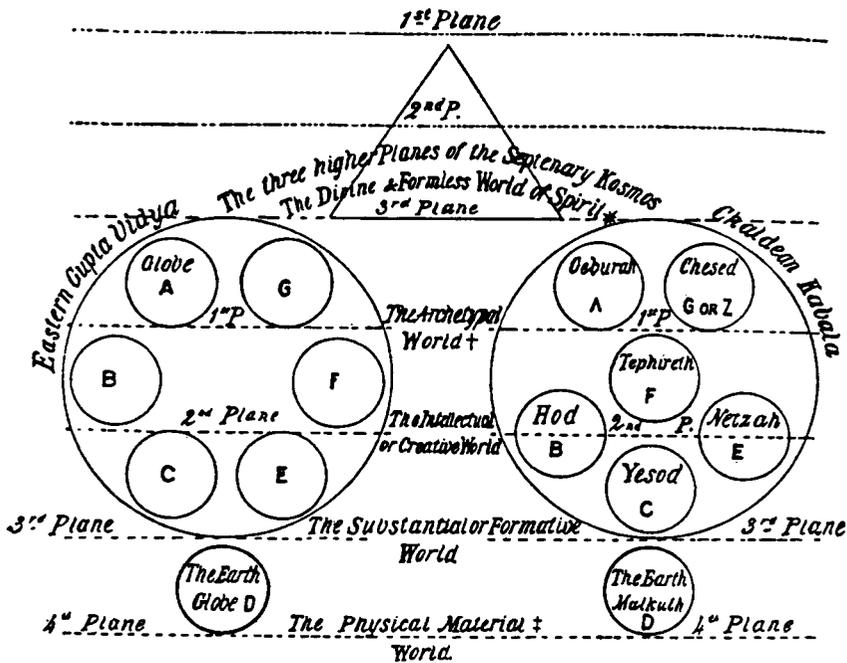


Figure 2 shows the Ophite diagram as reconstructed in Andrew Welburn, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (Edinburgh, 1991), 69. Here a left-right axial hierarchy contrasts with the vertical descent of the Valentinian Pleroma. The Ophite diagram was first discussed by Origen, *Adversus Celsum* (vi, 30) 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."¹⁹ 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."²⁰ ". . . 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."²¹ 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,²² but which be-

came evident to me upon acquiring even a slight acquaintance with the chief doctrines of Indian theosophy²³. . . . 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.²⁴

In *Isis Unveiled*, H. P. Blavatsky argues that there could plausibly be "a direct Buddhistic element in Gnosticism,"²⁵ 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."²⁶ 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*.²⁷ 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."²⁸

²³ C. W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, second edition (London: David Nutt, 1887), xiv.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, xv.

²⁵ *IU* II, 321.

²⁶ C. W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, ix.

²⁷ Vsevolod Soloviev, *A Modern Priestess of Isis* (London: Longmans & Co, 1895).

²⁸ G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 144.

¹⁹ H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, two vols (New York: J. W. Bouton, 1877), I, 436.

²⁰ *IU* I, 583.

²¹ *IU* I, 585.

²² 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 Society²⁹ 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."³⁰ 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."³¹ 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."³²

Also in 1891, Mead wrote an article on "Theosophy and Occultism."³³ 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

³⁰ Ibid., 479.

³¹ Ibid., 477.

³² Ibid., 478.

³³ *Lucifer* 9 (September 1891-February 1892): 106-112.

²⁹ Published in *Lucifer* 8 (March - August 1891): 477-80.

they may confer - is a Theosophist.”³⁴ 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.”³⁵ 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.”³⁶ 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.”³⁷ This is not quite enough though; “he must be something more than merely *good*; he must be *wise*”³⁸; and he must also be learned because: “a man cannot be really just if he is ignorant.”³⁹ 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.”⁴⁰

³⁴ Ibid.: 106.

³⁵ Ibid.: 106.

³⁶ Ibid.: 108.

³⁷ Ibid.: 106.

³⁸ Ibid.: 106.

³⁹ Ibid.: 107.

⁴⁰ 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.”⁴¹ 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”⁴², and on founding *The Quest* he decided that “‘Esotericism’ and ‘occultism’ were to be eschewed as corrupting rather than helpful.”⁴³ 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

⁴¹ Ibid.: 110.

⁴² 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.

⁴³ 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.”⁴⁴ 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.”⁴⁵ 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

⁴⁴ “The Gnosis of the Mind” in *The Complete Echoes from the Gnosis* (Hastings: Chthonios Books, 1987), 14.

⁴⁵ *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.”⁴⁶ Certainly he thought they were “centuries before their time”⁴⁷ 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.”⁴⁸ 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.”⁴⁹ In *Pistis Sophia*, Mead says of its compilers, “It is clear that they loved and worshipped Jesus with an ecstasy of devotion and exaltation.”⁵⁰

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-

⁴⁶ G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 112.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁴⁸ “The Gnosis of the Mind” in *The Complete Echoes of the Gnosis* (Hastings: Chthonios Books, 1987), 13.

⁴⁹ Quoted in G. A. Gaskell, *Gnostic Scriptures Interpreted* (London: C. W. Daniel & Co, 1927), 10.

⁵⁰ *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-view⁵¹; 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?

xlvii.

⁵¹ 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 Poggi¹

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”² groups which had come

¹Isotta 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.’”

²According 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.³ 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,”⁴ 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.⁵ 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.”⁶ 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

³ Bernardino del Boca, *Iniziazione alle Strade Alte* (Turin, Italy: Bresci, 1985), 106f.

⁴ Bernardino del Boca, *Il Segreto* (Turin: Bresci, 1986), 208.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁶ 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.”⁷ 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.⁸

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.”⁹ 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.”¹⁰ 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

⁷ *Il Segreto*, 149.

⁸ *Che Cos'è l'Età dell'Acquario*, 77.

⁹ Bernardino Del Boca, *Il Servizio* (Turin: Bresci, 1988), 224.

¹⁰ 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*,¹¹ 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,"¹² 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

¹¹ Bernardino del Boca, *Guida Internazionale dell'Età dell'Acquario* (Turin: Bresci, 1975).

¹² 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.”¹³

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,

¹³ 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)¹⁴, and Crystals.

¹⁴ 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”).¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶ The energies of the invisible world, as represented by the shrine of the *phi*, landed in Italy.

¹⁵ *Iniziazione alle Strade Alte*, 15.

¹⁶ *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

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
