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Theosophical History (ISSN 0951-497X) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by James A. Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 U.S.A.) The journal consists of eight issues *per* volume: one volume covering a period of two years. The journal's purpose is to publish contributions specifically related to the modern Theosophical Movement, from the time of Madame Helena Blavatsky and others who were responsible in establishing the original Theosophical Society (1875), to all groups that derive their teachings—directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly—from her

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

The subscription fee for the journal is \$14.00 (U.S., Mexico, Canada), California residents, please add 7.75% or \$1.09 sales tax to this amount), \$16.00 (elsewhere), or \$24.00 (air mail) for four issues. Single issues are \$4.00. All inquiries should be sent to **James Santucci**, *Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.)*. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Fullerton, California. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to James Santucci (*Theosophical History*), Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480

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

* * * * *

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

The final copy of all manuscripts must be submitted on 8 ½ x11 inch paper, double-spaced, and with margins of at least 1 ¼ inches on all sides. Words and phrases intended for *italics* output should be underlined in the manuscript. The submitter is also encouraged to submit a floppy disk of the work in ASCII or WordPerfect 5 or 5.1, in an I.B.M. or compatible format. If possible, Macintosh 3 ½ inch disk files should also be submitted, saved in ASCII ("text only with line breaks" format if in ASCII), Microsoft Word 4.0–5.1a, or WordPerfect. We ask, however, that details of the format codes be included so that we do not have difficulties in using the disk. Should there be any undue difficulty in fulfilling the above, we encourage you to submit the manuscript regardless.

Bibliographical entries and citations must be placed in footnote format. The citations must be complete. For books, the publisher's name and the place and date of the publication are required; for journal articles, the volume, number, and date must be included, should the information be available.

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

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

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

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Editor's Comments

In this issue

Two articles are included in the present issue: one from a new contributor, the other by the author of *In Search of the Masters*. The first by Dr. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, a Professor of history at Fordham University in New York City, is on a topic that has received considerable interest over the past few years, "The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture: An Historical Perspective." Originally delivered at a conference of identical name at Fordham University in 1991 and also at the International Seminar, "Le défi magique: Spiritisme, satanisme, occultisme dans les sociétés contemporaines," in 1992, the paper is part of an introduction to a forthcoming volume containing the papers of the aforementioned Fordham conference. Paul Johnson's article, "Secret Messages from Colonel Olcott," maintains that two letters from Henry S. Olcott to H.P. Blavatsky provide clues to the Masters' identities. Originally presented at the International Theosophical History Conference in 1992, this article continues his search for the true identity of the Masters, which was the subject of his book, *In Search of the Masters*. A new version of the book, incidentally, is now being reprinted by SUNY (State University of New York) press. The expected publication will most likely be in 1994.

The Parliament of the World's Religions was recently held in Chicago (28 August to 4 September) unbeknownst, it would appear, to the mass media, which chose to largely ignore the event. We are therefore pleased to include Michael

Gomes' report on the Parliament focusing on the Theosophical presentations.

A column entitled "Scholarly Research" is being initiated in this issue in order to inform readers of research being undertaken both within and outside academe. All researchers are invited to submit an abstract of the work that they are currently undertaking.

Because of the reaction that was received from the publication of "The Haunting of E. Gerry Brown: A contemporary document" (IV/4-5), I have decided to publish in full W. Dallas TenBroeck's communication in this issue, since it does reflect the views of those who find fault with the document and who also question the intent of Dr. Godwin and myself. My editorial in IV/6-7 was instigated by this letter although from the more general perspective of defining the purpose of *Theosophical History*. One positive result that came out of Mr. TenBroeck's communication was the disclosure of the source of the document in Joscelyn Godwin's response.

Although two reviews of Sylvia Cranston's *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement* appeared in the last issue, the importance of this biography to Theosophists demands more than usual attention. Therefore, a third review, this by Robert Boyd, is included in order to convey opinions from three differing perspectives.

One closing remark on this issue. Because of

the length of the communications in this issue, the "Book Notes" section, not included herein, will appear in the next issue.

The next issue will also contain P.R. König's "Veritas Mystica Maxima," the third part of his ongoing series on the OTO, Joscelyn Godwin's "Colonel Olcott Meets the Brothers: An Unpublished Letter" (a letter from H. S. Olcott to C.C. Massey), and Kazimierz Tokarski's "Wanda Dynowska-Umadevi: A Biographical Essay."

The Blavatsky-Judge Letters

In Vol. IV/4-5, Michael Gomes announced that sixteen letters from H.P. Blavatsky to William Quan Judge retained at the Andover-Harvard Divinity School Library have recently been opened to the public. These as well as a few other letters from H.P.B. have recently come into my possession. Plans are now being made to publish them over several issues due to their length. Since the letters are somewhat difficult to read because of the handwriting and the ink bleeding through the paper (the letters were written on both sides of the sheet), this will necessitate additional time for transcribing and proofing the letters. It is my hope that the first letter will be published by the April, 1994 issue.

Theosophical History: Occasional Papers

*Ammonius Saccas and His
Eclectic Philosophy as Presented by
Alexander Wilder*

The third volume of the "Occasional Papers" series, Dr. Jean-Louis Siémons' *Ammonius Saccas and His Eclectic Philosophy as Presented by Alexander Wilder*, is scheduled to be published by May, 1994. By coincidence, John Cooper commented in a letter published in the July 1992 issue that this study would be very well-suited for the series, to which I heartily agree. Dr. Siémons is a well-known and respected French scholar and lecturer of Theosophy and the theosophical tradition. Having first been made aware of his research through Leslie Price, the former editor of the journal, it was my good fortune and great pleasure to finally meet with Dr. Siémons in December 1992 at the VIIIth Annual Conference of *Politica Hermetica* (IV/4-5: 111f.) in Paris. His investigations deserve wider circulation in the English-speaking world, and it is to Leslie Price's great credit that *Theosophia in Neo-Platonic and Christian Literature (2nd to 6th Century A.D.)* was published by the Theosophical History Centre in London in 1988. In the present work, Dr. Siémons discusses the author of *The Eclectic Philosophy* (1869) and the person responsible for editing and indexing the *Isis Unveiled*, Alexander Wilder, one of the early Vice-Presidents of the Theosophical Society (1878). What were Wilder's sources for his study on Ammonius Saccas and Neo-Platonism? Who was Ammonius Saccas, and what do we know about him? These are the questions that are examined in this study.

Ammonius Saccas and His Eclectic Philosophy as Presented by Alexander Wilder will be released in May 1994. Those interested in ordering the publication should send a check or international money order in U.S. dollars to James Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634 U.S.A.) payable to Theosophical History. British sterling

may also be used in payment. Checks or money orders in British sterling should be made out to Dr. Joscelyn Godwin and send to Dr. Godwin c/o the Department of Music, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY 13346-1398 (see **Subscribers to the U.K.** below). The **pre-publication price** (postmarked prior to 31 April) is \$12.00 (£8.00); the full **publication price** of \$15.00 (£10.00) will take effect on 1 May 1994. For air mail, please add \$4.00 (£2.75). California residents, please add 7.75% sales tax (\$0.92).

Response to John Cooper

Apropos John Cooper's letter (July 1992, IV/3) taking issue with my editorial (in IV/2) on the scope of inquiry for *Theosophical History*, in particular the scope of pre-Blavatskian theosophical movements and teachings, Mr. Cooper proposes a somewhat more limited range of studies than I suggested for inclusion in the journal. He argues that if limits are not placed on the topics, the range of studies would be so broad as to lead the journal astray from its stated goals. This is quite true, but having given his suggestion careful consideration, it is my opinion that the journal remain open to *all* theosophical studies, whether pre- or post-Blavatsky. In my role as editor, I am becoming more aware of the research that is currently being undertaken in what may be termed in its broadest sense the theosophical field. It would be perhaps somewhat arbitrary and unwise to discourage publication of articles simply because they do not fit the particular mold established by Mr. Cooper. Besides, it is my firm opinion that only a full understanding of theosophy in all its permutations will lead to a greater

understanding of Theosophy. Much more research remains before we fully understand the meaning of the term 'theosophy' and of those movements and schools that are labeled 'theosophical'. It is therefore better to err on the side of inclusivity rather than exclusivity.

Come what may of this slight difference of opinion, the reality for the present is that most of the articles and communications that are submitted are Theosophical in nature and will most likely continue to be for the foreseeable future.

Publications of Interest

Associate Editor Karen-Claire Voss wishes the readers to know of two important publications in the field of esoteric studies. The information forwarded from her is as follows.

ARIES (Association pour Recherche de l'Information sur l'Esotérisme). Directeurs: †Jean Paul Corsetti, Roland Edighoffer, Antoine Faivre. Membership in the Association includes notification of colloquia, which it sponsors, as well as a subscription to its quarterly journal, **ARIES**. To join send a check for \$35 (U.S.), payable to Joscelyn Godwin (in charge of North American membership; **ARIES** has no U.S. bank account). His address: Music Department, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY 13346.

Hermes is the newsletter of the Hermetic Academy, a professional society for scholarly research into the esoteric. Founded in 1982, the Hermetic Academy is a related scholarly organization of the American Academy of Religion. An annual subscription to the newsletter (3-4 issues)

is \$7.00 for those residing in North America. Checks should be made payable to The Hermetic Academy and sent to Prof. James B. Robinson, Dept. of Philosophy and Religion, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0501.

Subscription Rates

The good news is that subscriptions will remain the same, except for two changes. First, I would like to encourage subscribers to renew for the equivalent of one volume (eight issues) rather than the usual practice of renewing every four issues. This saves on paperwork and the expense of converting non-American currency into dollars. There will be a slight decrease in rates for subscribers who choose to renew for eight issues. The rates for eight issues are as follows:

- \$26** (for U.S. subscribers)
- \$30** (elsewhere, surface mail)
- \$45** (air mail: Europe and Asia)

The second change is the sales tax that must now be added onto the price of subscriptions for California residents only. A 7.25% sales tax was added by the California Legislature for all magazines and journals. Orange County, out of which *Theosophical History* is headquartered, imposed an additional .50% tax on top of the 7.25% making for a total of 7.75%. Although the sales tax was absorbed by me for the past year, expenses make it incumbent that they now be added onto the subscription fee. California residents are therefore requested to add \$1.08 to the \$14 subscription fee (for four issues) or \$2.01 to the \$26 fee (for eight issues).

Subscribers from the U.K.

Subscribers may now pay for their subscriptions in British sterling. The rate is **£11** (surface mail, four issues), **£20** (surface mail, eight issues), **£16** (air mail, four issues), and **£30** (air mail, eight issues). Please make your check or money order payable to Joscelyn Godwin and send it to

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Miscellany

Some readers might wonder why their subscriptions have expired less than a year after their last renewal. Over the summer, two double issues (IV/4-5, 6-7) have appeared back to back in an effort to make the journal current. Now that it is, four issues will indeed reflect a full year's publication. There are no further plans to bring out double issues, so readers can expect the journal to arrive either during the months of publication (January, April, July, October), or within two or three months of the date of publication for overseas surface postage.

For subscribers to the *Occasional Papers* series, please be aware that the release date of the publication may occur some months following payment. In the event that the pre-publication payment arrive early, receipts will be included with the journal if you are a subscriber.

It is my wish that the printing of all Theosophi-

cal History publications be of the highest quality within the strictures of budget. Should you receive a publication that is in any way defective, please write me immediately for replacement. I would appreciate that the defective copy be eventually returned so that the printer can correct the problem.

Correspondence

From Ted G. Davy (Calgary, Alberta, Canada)

Having occasionally delved into the *Lucifer* version of G.R.S. Mead's translation of *Pistis Sophia*, I was astonished to read Ms. Goodrick-Clarke's assessment that many of the "additional notes" therein are "complete *non sequiturs*" (*TH* IV/4-5: 138). Only one of about 150, and that likely contributed by Mead himself, possibly merits such a description. All the rest, whether his or HPB's, seem to me to be relevant to the text. Admittedly, in a few instances additional research is required to supplement the annotation, but those who expect to be spoon fed are probably not that interested anyway.

It is a great pity that Mead did not publish this extremely useful version—notes, warts and all—in book form. After all, *Pistis Sophia* is not the easiest of ancient scriptures to study, and his two unannotated book editions do nothing to help the struggling reader. The tragedy is that in his later versions some of his alterations ignore or go counter to Mme. Blavatsky's insightful observations on this difficult text. Of the remainder of his changes to his original translation, most on analysis are seen to be insubstantial—merely syntactic improvements or synonym substitutions—whatever he said to the contrary.

An interesting sidelight is that Mead's translation from Schwartz's Latin is remarkably close to the translations direct from the Coptic by Malpas (1927) and Violet MacDermot (1978). This is

surely a credit to the skill of both Schwartz and Mead. (For those interested, a reproduction of Malpas' typescript is available from the Edmonton Theosophical Society, P.O. Box 4587, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6E 5G4.)

One other point: the statement that by 1889 Blavatsky "had moved the whole focus of her attention eastwards" (p. 143) cannot be supported by facts. A survey of her numerous articles from that year until her death in 1891 clearly shows that the majority owe as much or more of their inspiration to the western as to the eastern tradition, although in most instances the universal aspect predominates as always.

This criticism is not meant to detract from an otherwise interesting paper. For all his weaknesses, G.R.S. Mead did much good work, and deserves to be remembered for it.

From Geoffrey Farthing (Surrey, England)

On page 35 of the April number of *Theosophical History* [1992] you mention Annie Besant and Leadbeater as having been the authors of publications directly derived from H.P.B.'s writings. As far as Annie Besant was concerned, this was so in her early writings, but with the advent of Leadbeater and as a result of his joint clairvoyant investigations with her into occult chemistry, when they discovered what they called the four etheric states

of physical matter, all their writings departed materially from those of H.P.B. They introduced the idea of an etheric body composed of the four 'etheric' states of physical matter. On the introduction of this etheric body they dropped from the H.P.B. classification of man's principles both the Astral Body (the Linga Sharira) and Prana, the vital principle. In H.P.B.'s system the principles of man correspond to the planes of Nature and both are sevenfold. In order to preserve the sevenfold scale in terms of the planes A.B. and C.W.L. added planes above Atman (the supreme plane in H.P.B.'s system) two others, Anupadaka and Adi. In the H.P.B. system these two are tattvas and correspond to Atma and Buddhi.

The system adopted by A.B. and C.W.L. vitiated all the tables of correspondence given in *The Secret Doctrine* and in the Papers to her Inner Group of the Esoteric School. Further, the classification used by them could not be applied to the account of the after-death states and processes given us by the Masters in their letters to Sinnett.

A.B. and C.W.L. therefore really introduced a private scheme of Theosophy different from the original, as are those of Alice Bailey and Rudolf Steiner. It is true that Annie Besant became heir to the Adyar Society as centred on Adyar but she did not carry on H.P.B.'s teachings and further allowed such happenings as association with the Liberal Catholic Church, the Co-Masonic Movement and the idea of Krishnamurti being a world Teacher to become part of 'Theosophy.' This could never have happened under H.P.B.

I am mindful of the fact that *Theosophical History* does not concern itself with the nature of the theosophical teachings but in the light of what I have just said I think that Annie Besant and Leadbeater should be given a small 't' when they are referred to as theosophists. This will undoubt-

edly offend the majority of members of the Adyar branch of the Society but it ought to be noticed.

Incidentally, the justification for there being no etheric body as described by A.B. and C.W.L. is that the states of matter they call etheric do not exist in the free state in the physical world (whatever they may do in the Astral where Leadbeater 'saw' them). There could therefore be no 'body' composed of them.

It has long been recognized that the Theosophy of C.W. Leadbeater and Mrs. Besant was not identical with H.P.B.'s teaching. My use of the terms Theosophy/theosophy, Theosophical/theosophical, Theosophist/theosophist or theosopher was based purely on whether the organization or individual had a formal, direct relationship with H.P.B.'s teachings or not. In other words, my definition was based on the notion of community, not "theology," "doctrine," or "teachings." Since Mrs. Besant was the President of the Theosophical Society (Adyar), it would not have made much sense to exclude her from the Theosophical community, despite one's opinions of her teachings. The drawback to the criterion of "orthodoxy" is that it would lead to endless and ultimately unfruitful arguments regarding the definition of a true Theosophist. Such an approach would be similar to the attempts of some fundamentalist Christians who have defined and demarcated true Christianity to exclude many, if not most, individuals who consider themselves Christians, or the attempt to resolve the question of whether the whole of the Mahāyāna tradition should be considered true Buddhism since its sūtras did not contain the words of the historical Buddha.

From *W. Dallas TenBroeck* (Calabasas Park, California)

Re.: EDITOR'S COMMENTS, p. 102, Col. 1, para 3, and,

Re.: E. Gerry BROWN, Editor, *The Spiritual Scientist*, Boston. Article by Jocelyn Godwin titled: "The Haunting Of E. Gerry Brown: A Contemporary Document" (p. 115f.)

I have been a student of the writings of Mme. H.P. Blavatsky for over 50 years. These *writings* are called the modern: THEOSOPHICAL PHILOSOPHY, that is: THEOSOPHY. THEOSOPHY is separate from the life of Mme. Blavatsky.

The life, acts, treatment, in public and in private by Mme. Blavatsky of individuals does not, in my esteem constitute a way of rating the value of THEOSOPHY, the name given to those teachings. In my opinion they have to be carefully studied as a separate subject. There is a popular tendency to avoid seeing this distinction. Mme. Blavatsky stated in several places that she did not want to be considered a "revealer," or an "authority." She desired that THEOSOPHY, as a philosophy, stand on its own merits.

Concerning Mme. Blavatsky as a personage, I have watched the publishing of biographies, and the rise and fall of innuendoes, interpretations, reports of gossip, "*on dits*," allegations of this and that, pro and con her life and dealings with persons, and the things that she may or may not have done; and, then, the advancing of explanations and the demonstrating of the shallowness if not the untruth of such earlier made calumnies or allegations.

Every time a new one surfaces we have a nine-days wonder. It would, perhaps be a good idea (to

save everyone's time and sanity) for someone to prepare comparative columns, listing on one side the allegations, suppositions or charges, and the "sources" from where those responsible, recorded them. Opposite these could be placed such refutations as have been advanced and their "sources," so that comparison could be made easy in the future.

Why could we not do the same thing for THEOSOPHY: the philosophy? We could place its main tenets seriatim, and opposite them such serious refutation with credit to the person advancing it, and sources, as can be found.

This might afford us all a common base from which to evaluate fresh material, or, in the constantly growing montage/collage, assign to a rightful place, person and time such fresh revelations as may surface.

Concerning this article by J. Godwin, I think it only fair to say:

1. H.P.B.'s "personal life" has nothing to do with THEOSOPHY, the philosophy. Your journal deals with THEOSOPHICAL **HISTORY**. I would deem that the lives and doings of persons connected with the Theosophical Movement have a secondary place. Strictly speaking, these are ancillary to THEOSOPHY and have no bearing on the presentation of it, as such. Is *Theosophical History* going to deal with THEOSOPHY as a philosophico-scientific presentation of a view of the Universe, as well as the history of the study of its concepts and tenets, their proof or disproof? And, the impact they have had on individuals, leaders of mankind, and socio-ecological concepts since they were put forth? This aspect of research might present interesting vistas of exploration.

Most biographical work on or around HPB, as

personality, or personage, deals with that living being, and rarely with the *philosophical or scientific worth* of her work. This is yet to be seriously discussed, and appraised in detail by academia, although there are signs that there is notice of the impact of Theosophical ideas on social values and trends in the world.

I observed that in the first issue of *The Theosophist*, issued in Bombay in October 1879, HPB addresses these two issues in the opening articles: "What Is Theosophy?" and "What Are The Theosophists?" We could, I believe, use these as a starting point for an effort to codify these separate matters.

It is perhaps significant, that she identifies those as becoming of primary importance. Apart from her many letters and a few articles to the press, these are the first articles she addresses to her students after publishing *Isis Unveiled* (1877), which book was dedicated to the members of the Theosophical Society for them to study.

Many derogatory allegations have been made about the *personal life of H.P.B.*, in the hope, perhaps, that these may discredit by association the *principles that THEOSOPHY offers*. In the just published, well documented biography of Mme. Blavatsky by Sylvia Cranston, under the title *H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky* (Tarcher/Putnam), all those calumnies that had so far been leveled and published have been laid to rest.

Past experience shows that if, in polemics, it is not possible to discredit by strictly scholarly means a position set forth for consideration, should enough doubt be cast on the personal integrity of the individual presenting it, a "doubt," or the conclusion may be planted in some minds that there is serious reason to question the quality or nature of the *ideas newly presented*. It is a kind

of "smear campaign."

2. It is unfortunate that HPB is no longer alive, and able to deal with such allegations, calumny, etc., directly. Although not considered in the best of taste, being somewhat cowardly, or advisable as a practice, it is easy (and usually safe) to write ill of those who are "dead," as they are no longer able to give the lie to those who do so. Nor are they able to show how wrong a judgment might be.

3. The burden of response then falls on those of HPB's admirers who feel a sense of gratitude to her for the knowledge she offered, which has changed their way of looking at life, and opened fresh vistas in viewing the Universe, its inner and causative side, some of its external phenomena, and goals that such views open to aspiring humankind, that otherwise, might have remained closed for a long time to them.

4. Such response has to fall into two areas:

1. That of direct refutation involving documents that are available and can be produced, having at least the same authenticity and veracity as those that are damaging to her reputation. Conceivably, not all the writings on or about such a person as "H.P.B." have, even now, been found, correlated or finally assembled. Secondarily, demanding that any documents or statements advanced be supported by more than hearsay and innuendo. Of this, however, later.

2. That of refutation by character and by context. This is more difficult to secure attention to, and indisputable proof for.

It requires the historian/evaluator to under-

stand and apply to all cases involving Mme. Blavatsky the rules and laws of Occultism. A primary rule is: no true Occultist may use any of the powers that he/she may have secured to hurt, damage or compel anyone to a course which they have not chosen of their own free-will. If this rule should be violated in the least extent, all “*occult*” power automatically withdraws from the individual, who then becomes incapable of further employment of those forces. [H.P.B. makes this clear in several of her articles and books, as a *sine-qua-non* condition.]

[This is an “aside” that has just occurred to me:

This study of “Occultism” could conceivably be a third vista for study, derived from HPB’s THEOSOPHICAL presentations. It could open a fresh page in the study of the “invisible” side of Nature, the correlative and inter-relative aspect of all living beings. Our perceptions, in general, have always been on the fringe of this, but no systematic work has yet been done to conclusively prove, or disprove so-called “phenomena” of a “psychic,” or a “spiritual” kind. In Duke University there was much work done on the powers of pre-cognition, mental telepathy, etc. I also recall a couple of books dealing with research in the past 20 or 30 years behind the “Iron Curtain” in Russia on psychic “powers.”

In *Isis Unveiled*, in *The Secret Doctrine*, and elsewhere scattered in HPB’s many articles, are clues and hints taken from history and prehistory, as well as events contemporary to her (100+ years ago), as to the nature, laws and production of these curious events. If major Universities (such as Princeton) can create “Anomaly Departments” for the study of phenomena, occurrences, findings, and events which fall outside accepted theory and hypothesis, (such as Fractiles and the

“Chaos Theory”) then a study of this nature should surely receive more careful attention from the educational sciences.]

Getting back to J. Godwin’s article:

In this case, had it been true that Mme. Blavatsky attempted to influence, compel, or take away the free-will of either Mr. or Mrs. Brown, and in any way to hurt them, or the child that was to be born, it would thenceforth preclude any further contact between her and “**White**” **Occultism** [the Occultism of the Unity of Life]. The “Adepts, or Mahatmas,” would no longer be able to work with her, and the progress of their work through her would be impossible. [Some of their statements in *Mahatma Letters* show clearly what the requisites for such contact with Them is.]

This did not happen, as we may see for ourselves by a study of her articles, *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Key To Theosophy*, and *The Voice Of The Silence*. These were all published after 1878 and display a high moral tone. They also state that in true Occultism this moral quality is the only key to *progress and ultimate success*. [Since the correspondence between the Mahatmas and Mr. A.P. Sinnett and Mr. A.O. Hume began late in 1880, *after* the Brown events, and H.P.B. served as amanuensis, it is amply clear she did not violate this *occult* rule. A reading in those letters shows this. —[Published under the title: *The Mahatma Letters*, edited by Trevor Barker]

Anyone who has studied the nature and stated purpose of Theosophy and its literature, primarily made available to us through Mme. Blavatsky’s authorship, can assure himself that at no time has any abuse been sanctioned.

Such allegations are treated as false by those who accept and apply these rigorous ethical tests. [It is however, appreciated that this may be no

proof to an historian or an archivist who has set other criteria, and have to rely on documents alone, and on the fairness, and accuracy of the views of such writers as make them. Unless they are also students of the *philosophy of Theosophy and apply the touchstone of the moral requirements of "White" Occultism*, they will not be able to voice an opinion on such a subject in those terms.]

In this case it is to be regretted that Mr. Brown did not leave a signed document. This report, if true, Mr. Stainton Moses, Col. Bundy, Mr. C.C.Massey and Mr. Henry Sidgwick, are presumed to be the persons who became aware of it; or were actually in receipt of it (?). They are now dead and unable to clarify the suppositions arising in J. Godwin's mind.

Since this is not the first case of *unprovable and baseless allegations* that have been advanced against the life of HPB, it might be a constructive move to set up for use hereafter some standards of acceptability and credibility. Once adopted, fresh "evidence" may become acceptable, if it falls within reasonable, established parameters, which distinguish facts from guesses and fancies.

I would like to suggest:

1. That all new evidence be invariably accessible to properly qualified and responsible individuals in original, or in legally certified copy. Concealed sources are suspect, regardless of who vouches for them.

2. That addresses, names, dates, progress of events, sources and other data concerning these be available to all, and not concealed for any reason.

3. That a signature or positive identification of

a handwriting as having emanated from a traceable source witnessed by the provider be legally certified if originals cannot be had or seen.

4. That they be adequately supported by dates, events, the names of persons corroborating them, who have had an established existence in the Theosophical or some other "movement," and who actually state that they were aware of the event, and how they came into possession of such documents.

This could go far to identify guesses and wild suppositions as to their possible synchronism, proximation or accessibility to individuals active in the Theosophical or other movements which can only be traced by guesses on the basis of incomplete documentation, or facts still to be verified.

Words such as: "might," "possibly," "I believe," "it seems reasonable," etc., are evidence that, in its present state the material shows lack of secure historical preparedness, and therefore, if presented now, it requires an extensive use of surmises and other phrases of inexactitude which the author, being aware of such shaky ground, uses as a shield from the consequences of future blame. [For almost a century, for example, the *Society for Psychological Research* in England shielded itself behind its position that the "Hodgson Report on the Theosophical Society," was only *preliminar*, and therefore it was not involved in any final responsibility. But it did publish it, and other matter, in derogation of Mme. Blavatsky's life (not of THEOSOPHY), showing the prejudiced position of those managing its affairs. This has been lately reversed and a formal apology was issued in 1986 by Mr. Harrison, for that Society to the memory of "H.P.B."]

The serious student of History can well hesi-

tate. An event may be reported, or a document advanced might later prove to be a forgery, or worse, an interpolation, designed to confuse and destroy the historical exactitude that impartial scholarship so much desires to uphold. History and gossip can hardly be called good bedfellows.

Those who desire to destroy an individual's reputation have been known to indulge in such procedures, confusing to the unwary, but detectable by sound scientific research, which can vitiate those strict procedural exactitudes that support sound academic work, which is always subject to rigorous review. [This particular "finding" does not, in its presentation, seem to stand up to these questions from the way it is worded.]

You will, I hope, excuse the length of this letter, as I believe it so important to your work and the value it will have in the future in providing insight into the Theosophical Movement of our times.

It is necessary to dwell at some length on this question of allegations, suppositions, and "what ifs" because there is no end to them. The space you allow Joscelyn Godwin in *Theosophical History* has the following elements I find missing:

1. That archive which serves as source and repository for it desires continued anonymity (This is suspect—are we being asked to trust *on faith* an unverifiable source? At this rate any source may be invented or quoted to which the reader is denied access ! Why?);

2. "the document was filed in proximity to a note from Colonel Bundy, Editor of the Chicago *Religio-Philosophical Journal* . . ." (How is "proximity" defined? Why such inexactitude? If unverifiable, why is it added?);

3. I note that further research in the Bundy archives at the University of Illinois "might" clarify the matter (Why was it not clarified one way or the other before this publication? Is it still possible to clarify this now, and if so clarified, what degree of additional proof does this advance on an unsigned paper from a concealed source?), and that

4. "*possibly* this document was among the enclosures mentioned."

(Only someone could mention this as an additional, unverified possibility, which now, would be *quite unverifiable*, if they had some reason to further bolster an impossible situation?). (See pp. 115-6.)

I could be led to conclude that there is evidence of some haste to rush a questionable and unverifiable opinion into print, even if some question marks have been attached to it. Of what real good is this?

Why, did the individuals then alive (Bundy, Moses, Sidgwick, et al) and involved, not make mention at *that time* (c. 1876-78) of *these writings and allegations*? Did they chose not to for a good reason? The allegation of the use by H.P.B. of "black magic" made by Brown, would at that time, be one of the most damaging of all allegations to Mme. Blavatsky's reputations and teachings.

Mme. Blavatsky, being alive then, could have answered or explained (and it would not sound, as it does now, like gossip or calumny!). On the other hand, if the persons mentioned had read them, something of their knowledge and valuation of the Browns, and Mme Blavatsky, may have enabled them at that time to use their discretion and suppress them as improbable, if not false; or, possibly, they viewed them as the ravings of a

person who had become psychologically unbalanced and was not able to determine the source of the “possession” of Mrs. Brown, who was a medium, and as such, irresponsible when in a trance, because of *her passivity*. I can well see that such a report would have been filed for any future verification that might arise, but as it did not, and was not advanced, of what current value is it?

Readers of *Isis Unveiled* will be able to determine that such “possession” as described, was by “elementaries” (see *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 141, 310, 318-321, 332, 325-6, 342-3, 362-367, 447-8, 493-5, 616, II, p.595). Those who, because of prejudice, place no value on Theosophical explanations about the invisible forces and dangers hidden in the “psychic” realm of Nature will find this proof inadequate to them. If the Mrs. Brown to be, was known by H.P.B. to be a *medium*, and if she also knew of the nature and quality of Mr. Brown’s personality, I can well surmise that she could have warned him in no uncertain terms, of the dangers he was inviting by marrying the lady he was in love with.

If he was one of those who was drawn to H.P.B. “Occultly,” it is quite possible that she spoke directly to him in terms which an Adept might use to his pupil, or a Brother to a brother; which, a person in love, could deeply resent; and who might later on, use and magnify in his recollection into something distorted by the antagonism evoked in himself. (If one reads certain passages in Bulwer-Lytton’s *Zanoni*, or his: *A Strange Story*, one may come across passages that substantiate the explanation I hazard above.)

Joscelyn Godwin replies:

The archive is in the College of Psychic Studies, 16 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2EB. Permission for this disclosure has now been given by the

President, Mr. Dudley Poplak. My other suggestions were intended to help fellow historians who might be able to pursue the matter further. I decided that their interest was better served by publishing Brown’s interviewer’s statement, with a facsimile, than by its suppression. The bare fact that Gerry Brown made such a statement to an interviewer, no matter what became of it later, seemed to me worthy of record.

Mr. TenBroeck has gratified me by initiating the analysis that this document calls for. I find his explanation, which blames the haunting on Brown and his mediumistic wife, more plausible than a literal reading. Perhaps the London Theosophists came to a similar conclusion. In any case, the skeptics among HPB’s enemies could not have used the document, because to take it seriously would have been to credit her with psychic powers.

Communications

Theosophy At The Chicago Parliament Of The World's Religions

Michael Gomes

As the handful of Theosophical dignitaries joined the processional opening the Parliament of the World's Religions August 28th, attention was diverted to the entrance of the pagan contingent in colorful costumes. This image would stay with me over the next seven days of the Parliament for it seemed to illustrate the position of Theosophy in relation to the growth of the new religious movements of this quarter of the century.

At the original World's Parliament of Religions held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair, Theosophists were granted a separate Congress on Sept. 15-17, 1893. A hundred years later, Theosophy was incorporated into the sessions of the 1993 Parliament along with the programs relating to the concerns of the major religions. Theosophical presentations were held on four consecutive days, Aug. 31- Sept. 3, during which time four panels were given on the "Theosophic Worldview" and "Theosophy and Critical Issues."

The initial "Worldview" panel, with Kirby Van Mater of the Theosophical Society, Pasadena, Nandini Iyer of the United Lodge of Theosophists, Santa Barbara, and myself, opened the program for Aug. 31st, and like the succeeding Theosophical panels lasted two hours. The moderator for this session was Dr. Anton Lysy of the Theosophical Society in America, Wheaton, Ill., who played a large part in gaining Theosophical representation at the Parliament. He opened the presentation which dealt with "Sacred Wisdom Through the Ages" by quoting extensively from the pre-

senters at the 1893 Theosophical Congress. Kirby Van Mater defined the Theosophic Worldview in terms of the three objects of the T.S.; Nandini Iyer traced the development of Theosophical ideas through India, Egypt, China, Japan, Greece, Central America, Africa, to H.P. Blavatsky. I dealt with the restatement of these ideas by the modern Theosophical movement.

In the afternoon I spoke on "The Theosophical Congress at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions," contrasting the subjects focused on by the original Parliament with the concerns of the Theosophists. This was followed by addresses of a half an hour each by Grace F. Knoche, Leader of the Theosophical Society, Pasadena, and Radha Burnier, President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar. Using the line from Keats, "On the Shores of Darkness there is light," Miss Knoche depicted the paradox of the human condition, while Mrs. Burnier dealt with "Human Transformation and the Future of Religion."

The next morning I was delayed getting to the second Theosophic Worldview session with John Cocker, Carolyn Van Horn, and Adam Warcup, by stopping at the talk given by the Ven. M. Wipulasara Maha Thera, General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, whose guest I had been in Calcutta. By the time I reached the Theosophic presentation they were discussing what to do to promote brotherhood. I also missed most of the afternoon session for Sept. 1st of "Theosophy and Critical Issues" on the environment by going to

hear George Stephanopolous, Senior Advisor to President Clinton, who was to speak along with his father, the Rev. Robert Stephanopolous of New York, on “The Problematic of ‘Church’/State Relations,” but after a long wait the session was canceled because the sponsor, the Orthodox Christian Council, had decided to withdraw from the Parliament because of the presence of the pagan groups.

Jay Williams’ talk, “Skepticism, Faith and the World’s Religions,” sponsored by the Theosophical Society in America, later that afternoon proved to be one of the most interesting presentations I attended at the Parliament. His topic was skepticism as a mechanism leading to faith, and the discussion that followed was lively, beginning with the President of the America Humanist Association stating, “I disagree with so much that you’ve said, that it’s hard to know where to begin.”

The third presentation of the Theosophic Worldview did not begin till 2 p.m., on Sept. 2nd, so I used the morning to attend a short talk by Pervin J. Mistry, whose byline I had seen occasionally in Theosophical journals. Her subject was “The Collision of Religion and Society,” but she ended up dealing with women’s biological cycles and their blood secretions, which she said was harmful, so I left. I looked in the room down the hall holding “What is Wicca?” to catch a glimpse of Starhawk, the famous witch who popularized the subject in America with her best-seller some years ago, but the crowd got too dense and the venue had to be moved to a larger room; anyway, Starhawk did not appear. I also looked in at “A New Dharma for the West—The Westernization of Buddhism” long enough to hear one of the American monks state “We will be meditating not on the mountain top, but in the market place.”

Dying for a place to sit down I found the Theosophically sponsored program “Why do we die?” hosted by Alan Donant and Nancy Coker of the T.S. Pasadena, a subject summed up by Mr. Donant as “Why do we die is a question we have to ask ourselves daily and what do we die from?”

At the afternoon “Worldview” session Joy Mills, Will Thackara, and Rob McOwen posed the question of what is spirituality, but I could not stay long enough to hear the answer as I wanted to attend J. Gordon Melton’s “New Religious Movements and Interfaith Dialogue” which was delivered to a packed room. He defined these movements as part of the “transnational global culture” that has developed out of the new urban centers and recommended that the term cult be dropped in addressing them as it was a denigrating word.

At 5 p.m. I heard Ananda Wickremeratne of Sri Lanka speak on Angarika Dharmapala, a Theosophist who represented Buddhism at the 1893 Parliament and whom I have written on. Dr. Wickremeratne’s delivery dealt not so much with Dharmapala but with the perception of the man, and as he suggested about Western approaches, “some of these paradigms should be used carefully in the Asian context.”

The final Theosophic Worldview presentation was at 10 in the morning of Sept. 3, but this conflicted with a talk on the Victorian Broad Church which I wanted to hear. Instead I found a presentation being given on *A Course in Miracles* as “Christianity ‘Born Again’ for a New Age.” I stayed through it to hear the next speaker, Dr. Robert Ellwood, on “The New Religions as Social Movements,” which he defined as “traditional religion working out their own agenda.” An important point that he brought forward was that as the 1893 Parliament gave legitimization and visibility to the Hindu and Buddhist groups, so the

same result could be expected for the new religious groups that participated at this Parliament. I returned to the Worldview presentation in time to hear a paper read by Carey Williams on behalf of Sylvia Cranston on H.P. Blavatsky.

The final segment of “Theosophy and Critical Issues” that afternoon with Carolyn Van Horn and Douglas A. Russell, seemed to sum up the Theosophical approach in dealing with social issues, which was to develop good character. Dr. John Algeo spoke later that day on “Language and Religion” relating the function of both to connect, yet pointing out that both which have the capacity to unite have been used to divide.

Due to conflicts in scheduling I was not able to get to the Theosophically sponsored talks by Geddes MacGregor, Stephan Hoeller, Ravi Ravindra, Joy Mills, and Catherine Wessinger. In spite of a plethora of selections to choose from—some forty talks being given simultaneously during any hour—Theosophists mainly attended the Theosophical presentations. These occasions provided the only chance for interaction among themselves that many Theosophists have had. At the same time many of the ideas that had been identified as Theosophical were being echoed in more socially relevant contexts by the newer religious groups. As heads had turned during the opening processional to the flamboyant presenters, so the attention of the Parliament was drawn to groups as diverse as the native Americans and Wicca. The Theosophical presentation at the Parliament offered Theosophists the chance to show that while their message had become widespread, their organizational existence was still of relevance.

Progress on the Blavatsky Letters and Other Matters or Why I am Not Replying to Correspondence

An Apologia pro Vita Sua by John Cooper on July 12, 1993

In one week I begin teaching at the University of Sydney with my usual course on “The Gnostic Tradition” plus a new course on “Buddhism Beyond India.” This latter course will consist of 26 hours of lectures plus the usual additional responsibilities such as tutorials, essay exams and face to face meeting with students. So until the beginning of November I will be more than busy with lectures. The “Buddhism Beyond India” course covers the philosophies of Nagarjuna as expounded in the Madhyamaka School and that of Aryasanga and Vasubandhu of the Yogacara School and then explores the development of Buddhism in China, Japan, Tibet and the West of the 19th and 20th centuries. As far as I know this course has not been taught in this country before and the lecture preparation is entailing much of my time.

I had hoped to finalise the collected letters of H.P. Blavatsky before teaching commenced. This has not been possible for a number of reasons. The main one is that material needed for the completion of the first volume has not as yet arrived. This includes a batch of Russian letters promised for the beginning of 1993 and new material recently discovered in the India Office Archives which should help to date some of the problem letters and, possibly, reveal new letters.

The first volume will contain some 300 letters and concludes when HPB and Olcott arrive at Adyar at the end of 1882. Nearly all the letters have been annotated. Also included are a few rare

letters from other writers which provide background details such as the letter written by Emma Coulomb to a Ceylon newspaper praising HPB.

An introductory essay on Western Occultism remains to be written as does an amount of background material. Therefore, instead of the material being ready by August, as previously stated, it will not be available until the end of this year.

At the same time I am writing a brief history of the Theosophical Society in Australia, which needs to be drafted by the beginning of next year and is a preliminary to my doctoral dissertation on the history of Theosophy in Australia.

Scholarly Research

A suggestion from Ted G. Davy of Calgary suggesting a column in which researchers could state their interests and/or appeal for information confirmed my impression of such a need. Researchers both within and without the universities—including students working on Ph.D. dissertations, faculty scholars investigating theosophical topics, and unaffiliated researchers are invited to submit their interests and appeals.

Abstract of Michael Ashcraft's Ph.D. Dissertation

I am a Ph.D. student in Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. My dissertation is on the Point Loma Theosophical community, focusing on the Tingley years from 1900 to 1929. My thesis is that the Theosophists at Point Loma were unique in American history in their blending of Victorian cultural values of the middle classes with Theosophy. I believe that this process can be observed in several areas of their community life, including the gender roles and relationships, and the ways that they affirmed their class and national identities. I am using their many periodicals, other publications, and archival information to substantiate, clarify, and elaborate on this thesis. Also, I am relying upon the information generously provided me by persons who lived at Point Loma during and after the Tingley period. Although I have presented portions of my research at professional meetings, those in atten-

dance usually have not known very much about Theosophy and could not provide as much constructive feedback as I would like. Aside from those whom I have already met in Theosophical organizations, I am also looking for other persons who might be interested in talking with me by phone or corresponding with me (either by U.S. mail or computer mail), who could provide fresh insight about life at Point Loma. I am also interested in contacting persons who can help me clarify the differences between Theosophy as it was understood and expressed at Point Loma, and Theosophy as it has been articulated and experienced in other times and places. If you can be of any assistance in helping me produce a fair and just account of this unique community in Theosophical and American history, I would like to hear from you. I may be contacted at the following addresses:

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Charlottesville, VA 22903

E-mail: wma5k@uva.pcmail.virginia.edu

From Raymond Head (Oxfordshire, England)

Do you or any of your readers of [*Theosophical History*] know anything about an Austrian Theosophist called Oskar Adler (1874-1955)? He was a great friend of the composers Schoenberg,

Webern and Berg among many others. They considered him to have had a great influence on their lives. It was Adler who convinced Schoenberg to become a composer. Adler is known to have been a Theosophist in Vienna, but he was also a doctor, a remarkable violinist and an original astrologer. In 1939 he fled to London with his wife Paula, where he died in 1955. He lectured widely on esoteric subjects and in 1950 he published five massive volumes on astrology in Vienna. But he remained in contact with friends who had fled to America, like the Orensteins in Hawaii, Dr. Paul Sicher who became a Professor of Medicine at Chicago, and Arnold Schoenberg in Los Angeles.

Readers with information on Oskar Adler may contact Mr. Head directly. His address is The Firs, 10 Worcester Road, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire OX7 5XX, England.

The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture: An Historical Perspective

Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal¹

Occult beliefs and doctrines were a major element in Russian intellectual, cultural, and even political life between 1890-1925. A faith-healer, Grigorii Rasputin, controlled the royal family and through them, Russia, from 1905 to December 1916. Literature, painting, music, and theater were permeated with ideas and images drawn eclectically from various Western occult doctrines and from long-standing indigenous beliefs and practices. The veritable explosion of interest in the occult is related to what Nietzsche has described as the death of a myth, the belief-system of a

society and culture. Confused, disoriented, and even frightened, many Russians turned to the occult for new meaning and guidance in a rapidly changing world. In recent years, due to the collapse of another myth (communism), the occult is again prominent in Russia. Works banned for most of the Soviet era have been reprinted and widely circulated, along with newer occult doctrines. This paper will chart the most important occult beliefs and doctrines of the 1890-1925 period and place them in historical perspective.

Occultism in Russia was part of a larger cultural tradition that was philosophically reinforced from within. Russian Orthodoxy did not discourage personal mystical experience; it tolerated gnostic speculations by clerical and lay theologians alike which would have been condemned as heresy in the Roman Catholic Church. Gnostic elements became embedded in Eastern Orthodox theology in the 6th century and were reinforced in the 16th century by the thought of the German mystic, Jacob Boehme, which was popular in the Orthodox seminaries. Boehme also influenced Russia's greatest philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, sometimes called "the last Gnostic," and through Soloviev, the art and thought, including lay theology, of the early 20th century. On the popular level, the *dvoeverie* (dual faith) combined pagan pantheism with Christianity. Pagan rituals

¹This is excerpted from my Introduction to the volume, now in preparation, of selected papers from the conference "The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture," Fordham University, June 26-29, 1991, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Research Programs (an independent federal agency), and Fordham University. Additional funding provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, the Institute of Modern Russian Culture, IREX (an independent federal agency supported in part by federal funds), and the Soros Foundation. These agencies are not responsible for the content or findings of this conference.

This paper was also presented to the International Seminar, "Le défi magique: Spiritisme, satanisme, occultisme dans les sociétés contemporaines," sponsored by CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions, Torino) and CREA (Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Anthropologiques de l'Université Lumière-Lyon 2), held in Lyon from April 6 to 8, 1992. Dr. Glatzer Rosenthal is Professor of history at Fordham University in the Bronx, New York.

designed to assure a good harvest, prevent harm, restore health, or harm an enemy, survived well into the 20th century. The basic distinction of the *dvoeverie* was not between good and evil, but between clean and unclean. In Medieval and Early Modern Russia, people of all classes turned to witches and sorcerers to prevent “spoiling,” ward off the “evil eye,” and cast spells on enemies and rivals. As late as the 16th century, the oath of loyalty to the Tsar included the renunciation of sorcery. The peasant’s universe was populated by all sorts of nature spirits, e.g. *rusalki* (mermaids), wood sprites, creatures who inhabited house and barn, and had to be propitiated. Peasant nannies regaled their charges, the children of the more privileged, with folk beliefs and legends. The writings of Pushkin, Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Sologub, and, surprisingly, Chekhov, contain many examples of occult images and themes, especially of the “unclean force.” These beliefs were not part of a coherent system but their emphasis on invisible forces and other worlds created a mind-set receptive to the sophisticated occult doctrines that developed later on.

As Western occult systems were introduced into Russia from the late 18th century on, their structures and forms were adapted to indigenous predispositions, needs, and movements, including political protest. During the reign of Catherine the Great, masonic lodges were founded by Nikolai Novikov (1744-1818). As elsewhere in 18th century Europe, Russian masons stressed a personal morality that went beyond external adherence to religious law. Masons were expected to cultivate the divine in themselves and to strive for self-perfection. In Russia, where civil liberties were unknown, the secrecy of the masonic lodges facilitated discussion of controversial issues. That very secrecy led Catherine the Great to

regard the lodges as covers for political sedition. Frightened by the French Revolution and by rumors that her son and heir Paul was associated with the masons, she suppressed the lodges and arrested Novikov. Masonry revived, however, in the reign of Alexander I. Some scholars claim that Alexander himself was a member of the Lodge Astrea, where he and persons close to him discussed projects for reforming Russia, including the abolition of serfdom. But Alexander too, became frightened and turned against the masons in 1812. Even so, the principles of free-masonry inspired the leaders of the unsuccessful Decembrist Revolt of 1825 for a constitutional regime in Russia. The extent to which members of the lodges took the occult teachings seriously, however, differed greatly. For some, occult language and rituals were a means of organization and contact, for others much more.

Interest in the occult by the elite was confined to a few circles, but the cultural climate was changing. The fading appeal of the official Orthodox Church, the spiritually unsatisfying atheism and positivism of the intelligentsia, the inability of science to answer questions such as what happens after death, cultural disintegration, and the association of rationalism and materialism with the West, combined to create a climate of personal confusion and religious quest which was receptive to the occult. New occult systems attracted many serious and dedicated adherents from among the intellectual and artistic elite. Spiritualism, for example, had been introduced into Russia in the 1860s by A.N. Aksakov (1823-1903) and A. N. Butlerov (1828-1903), both University Professors. By the 1870s, it was attracting so many adherents (seances were even held at the royal court), that a special commission, headed by the famous chemist Dmitri Mendeleev, was named,

in 1874-75, to test its claims to be a true science. By 1881, Spiritualists were able to form their own Journal *Rebus* (1881-1917; the title is the same in Russian); it featured articles on spiritualism, astrology, palm-reading, mystical freemasonry, vegetarianism, homeopathic medicine, Theosophy, and experiments in psychic research. The spiritualist seances were not open to the public, but invitations were not difficult to obtain. At certain points in their lives, the famous philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, his brother Vsevolod Soloviev, and the symbolist poet Valery Briusov, were interested in spiritualism. Tolstoi ridiculed the aristocracy's passion for spiritualism; *Anna Karenina* includes a scene describing a medium.

In the 1890s, the dislocations—psychological, cultural, socio-economic—inherent in the government's drive for rapid industrialization created a sense of spiritual and cultural crisis, which was further intensified by the Revolution of 1905. Some Russians who wished to deepen, supplement, or reinterpret Russian Orthodoxy, became interested in the mystery religions of pagan antiquity, yoga, Buddhism, and the Jewish Kabbala. Vladimir Soloviev was particularly interested in the latter; through him, the Kabbala, albeit in poorly understood or even distorted form, became part of the general legacy of the Russian occult. Russian writers and artists who visited Paris, learned about French *fin de siècle* occultism, and introduced it into Russia. Particularly important as disseminators of occult ideas were the symbolists, a group of artists and writers who believed that this world is but a symbol of a higher reality and that the artist's intuition and imagination is the way to reach it. Andrei Bely described "The Magic of Words" (title of a 1909 essay); Konstantin Bal'mont hailed "Poetry as Enchantment." These were not metaphors; sym-

bolist writers believed that through the word, the artist/magus literally creates the world. They hoped to direct the process of change. The philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev wrote about the role of mysticism and magic in the new creative era he believed was unfolding.

The western occult systems of Theosophy and Anthroposophy were particularly attractive to artists and intellectuals seeking a new unifying principle, a way to reconcile religion, art, and philosophy. Theosophy, developed by the Russian born Elena Blavatskaia (1831-1891), provided a structured world view which could also accommodate other forms of mysticism, while its claim to be a world religion, to unite Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, meant that there was no need to renounce Christianity. Blavatskaia's statement, "as God creates, so can man create," appealed to artists and writers who hoped to design a new reality in their own image. Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy regarded the birth of Jesus as the central event of cosmic evolution (his answer to Darwin), but in other respects anthroposophy and Theosophy were quite similar. The symbolist poet Andrei Bely, the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, the priest Pavel Florensky, were all interested, at one time or another, in these doctrines, partly as a means to supplement or revitalize Christianity.

Early twentieth century Russia also witnessed a spurt of interest in magic and Satanism. An article in *Rebus* on "Petersburg Satanists" (1913, no. 8) claimed that the capital was full of "Satanists, Luciferians, fire-worshippers, black magicians, and occultists." The author saw them everywhere: among the court pages, in the medical academies, in the schools, and in the elegant salons of high society. The darker side of Russian occultism was frequently associated with drugs, suicides, confi-

dence games, and an occasional Black Mass. The symbolist poets Valery Bruiusov and Aleksandr Dobroliubov reputedly experimented with black magic and drugs. Incidentally, Dobroliubov returned to Orthodoxy in 1905 and became a monk, a path similar to that followed by the French writer, J.K. Huysmans, author of the “decadent” novel *Against the Grain*. Several foreign occultists such as Czeslaw von Czinski were told to leave Russia and never return.

Interest in the occult cut across political divisions. There are clear occult elements in the poetry and plays of the young Anatole Lunacharsky, future Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment. Indeed, as late as 1919, when he was already Commissar, he wrote an occult play, “Vasillisa the Wide,” that was intended to be part of a trilogy. Maxim Gorky the famous writer, associate of the “left Bolsheviks,” and future friend of Lenin’s, was interested in contemporary psychological studies of thought transfer, as a possible means of influencing the masses. Alexander Bogdanov, a leading ideologue of “left Bolshevism,” was influenced, as was Gorky, by Wilhelm Ostwald’s (1853-1932) “energeticism,” a theory which interpreted all aspects of matter in terms of energy or transformations of energy. In some respects, “energeticism” was a scientific interpretation of occult phenomenon (invisible forces or powers that are present, if not manifest, in the real world), the theory stimulated “left Bolshevik” hopes of tapping the latent energy of the masses. Gorky’s novel *Confession* (1908) includes a scene in which the focused energy of the assembled crowd raises a paralyzed girl.

The Revolution of 1905 resulted in the partial introduction of civil liberties to Russia, including relaxation of the censorship and legalization of organizations such as the Theosophists. Private

quests became public. In some circles the Revolution of 1905 was interpreted as the beginning of the apocalypse that would usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth. Seeking signs and portents of the End, and also trying to orient themselves in a rapidly changing world, people of all classes turned to the occult for direction and guidance. Until 1905, *Rebus* was the only legal journal that dealt exclusively with the occult, though other journals, e.g. *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* (*Problems of Psychology and Philosophy*) and Briusov’s *Vesy* (*Libra*, carried articles and book reviews on the subject and listed meetings and lectures in their chronicles of current events. After 1905, there was a veritable explosion of interest in the occult. Scores of new journals were founded, among them: *Vestnik teosofii* (*Herald of Theosophy*), *Voprosy psikhizma i spiritualisticheskoi filosofii* (*Questions of Psychism and Spiritualistic Philosophy*) *Teosofist* (*Theosophist*), *Izida* (*Isis*), and *Sfinks* (*Sphinx*). The works of French occultists, including Edouard Schuré, Papus [Gerard Encausse] and Eliphas Lévi were translated into Russian. Also translated were the writings of Blavatskaia, Annie Besant, Charles Leadbeater, and, especially after 1911, works of Indian philosophy and religion.

At the same time, intellectuals, seeking to bridge the gulf between themselves and the people, by utilizing folk themes in their work, became fascinated with popular legends and with the rituals and practices of pre-Christian Slavs and the mystical sectarians, all of which included occult elements. Tapping into the immense reservoir of folklore, artists and intellectuals became acquainted with popular beliefs, myths, and unsystematized ideas that are simultaneously archaic and modern, pagan and Christian. In 1904, Dmitri Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius, lead-

ers of the “new religious consciousness,” made a pilgrimage to the sectarians of Svetloe Ozero. Andrei Bely wrote about sectarians in his novel, *The Silver Dove* (1909). Some intellectuals saw in mystical sectarianism survivals of pagan mystery cults and paradoxically regarded the sects as the expression of authentic popular Christianity, because the sectarians rejected the established Church and regarded the Tsar as antichrist. Writers and artists of peasant origin, e.g. the sculptor Sergei Kononkov (future winner of the Lenin Prize), the poets Sergei Esenin and Nikolai Kluev, featured occult images and themes in their work, which was hailed as an authentic expression of the folk spirit. Also important, was the discovery of Siberian shamanism by explorers and political exiles. Shaman stems from the word “to know”. The shaman has supernatural powers; he leaves his own body and proceeds to other worlds in order to learn how to heal this world. Kandinsky and other modernist painters viewed the artist as a kind of shaman, a healer of Russia. Particularly important to *avant-garde* painters of the cubo-futurist and suprematist schools, e.g. Kazimir Malevich, was a mystique of the fourth dimension, symbolized by the cube, according to Claude Bragdon, an American architect and Theosophist, our higher and immortal self, that exists in a world beyond death. Influenced by occult beliefs that material reality is an illusion, *avant garde* painters also tried to develop pictorial means of transcending it. Futurist writers attempt to create a new language, beyond the intellect, *zaum*, literally beyond the mind, which was influenced, partly, by the *Glossolalia* of the mystic sectarians. Yoga and other elements from Oriental religions influenced painters such as Nikolai Roerich and some futurist painters as well. “Dr. Badmaev’s” Tibetan powders, purported to cure all ills, were

in great demand. Theosophy continued to be influential, but variations of it developed. Rudolf Steiner sent an emissary, Anna Mintslova, to Russia in 1908; she was a major influence on Andrei Bely (he was baptized by Steiner in 1912) and, for a time, on Vyacheslav Ivanov. George Gurdjieff (1877-1949) developed his own variant of Theosophy, which included Islamic mysticism (Sufism) in association with Peter Uspensky (1878-1947) a popular Theosophist lecturer and writer. Until recently, their primary impact was in the West (they emigrated after the Bolshevik Revolution), but their formative years were in Russia; there is, however, tremendous interest in them in Russia today. Roerikh is almost a cult figure in some circles.

Occult beliefs and practices played a prominent role at the Imperial Court. The influence on the royal couple of the faith-healer Rasputin is well known. Robert Warth has shown that Rasputin was preceded by a long chain of charlatans and mystics, including a “Baron Phillippe,” from France. In 1902, before Rasputin’s arrival at court, Baron de Rothschild told Serge Witte, then Russian envoy to France, that “great events, especially of an internal nature, were everywhere preceded by a bizarre mysticism at the court of the ruler.” He may have had in mind the popularity of Mesmerism and of charlatans such as Cagliostro in pre-revolutionary France. In any case, Rasputin was the symbol of a malaise that would soon lead to revolution. Mircea Eliade’s observation holds here: “as in all the great spiritual crises of Europe, once again we meet the degradation of the symbol. When the mind is no longer capable of perceiving the metaphysical significance of the symbol, it is understood at levels which become increasingly coarse.”

On the popular level, there was a surge of

interest in the occult. Jeffrey Brooks reports the introduction of the new occult themes into popular literature around 1910/11. Peasants moving to the cities took their superstitions with them; confused in the new situation, dealing with new problems and new choices, they resorted to fortune-tellers, magic, and faith-healers for help and guidance. Demagogues such as Iliodor blamed all the ills of the era on demons, whom he equated with Jews. A consequence of the demonology of the right was the Beilis Case: the frame-up of a Jew, Mendel Beilis for the ritual murder of a Christian child. The association of occultism and anti-semitism can be seen in the writings of the occultist Aleksei Shmakov, who even served as a volunteer attorney for the prosecution, and in Vasily Rozanov's articles on the Beilis Case which were so scurrilous that even the reactionary newspaper *Novoe Vremya* refused to print them.

The Bolshevik Revolution did not end occultism. Indeed, the new regime itself utilized occult motifs in its propaganda. Posters cried "Purge the Unclean!" a clear allusion to traditional beliefs. References to the "many-headed hydra" of reaction similarly connote old folk monsters. Lenin decried vampires and blood-suckers. Trotsky (*Literature and Revolution*, 1923), was certain that Zinaida Gippius, an enemy of Bolshevism, was a witch, but admitted ignorance as to the length of her tail!; he attacked Anthroposophy in the same book. The Russian text of the document which formed the Communist International (Comintern) prohibited former masons from joining the Communist Party, probably because of the threat posed by their secrecy. (Rumor connected leading members of the Provisional Government with the revived masonic movement.) In the villages, peasants continued to resort to faith healing and magic rather than consult doctors. Indeed much

of our knowledge of the occultism of the 1920s stems from Soviet ethnographic expeditions and from the reports of political activists, especially members of the *Komosomol* (Young Communist League), complaining about the prevalence of superstition. To the latter, of course, Christianity itself was a superstition. Yet, even the Bolsheviks were not immune, especially those who grew up in the countryside. During the Civil War, for example, according to a Soviet source, a Commissar confiscated grain from a reputed witch, when she was not at home. After finding out who did it, she confronted and then cursed him. Although a young man, he withered and died within the year!

Occult motifs permeated Soviet culture of the 1920s and became embedded in later Soviet culture. Magic and fantasy are prominent in the writings of Yuri Olesha, Vsevolod Ivanov, Marietta Shaginian, Olga Forsh, Andrei Platonov, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Alexis Tolstoi—many of whom were important in the Stalin era as well. Mikhael Chekhov, nephew of the famous writer, Anton Chekhov, incorporated Anthroposophical motifs into his stage designs in the 1920s. Sergei Eisenstein, the famous film-director, was initiated into the Rosicrucian Order in 1918; his interest in occult rituals and themes is indirectly reflected in his films, especially *Ivan the Terrible*. The writings of Nikolai Ustrialov and the *Smena vekh* (*Change of Landmarks*) group that returned to the Soviet Union in the early 1920s are replete with occult images and allusions, as are the writings of Mikhail Bulgakov, whose famous novel, *The Master and Margarita*, begun in the 1920s, is an esoteric text. Horror films (the Gothic) were popular before the Revolution and remained popular in the 1920s (when private filming was again legalized), even though the Party denounced them as catering to the superstitions of the masses.

Theosophy and Anthroposophy were persecuted after 1922, as part of the general anti-religious campaign initiated that year, but still claimed many adherents, who went under-ground. There are clear suggestions of Anthroposophy in the theories of the Soviet psychologist Aaron Zalkind, who believed that a new man with new organs and new sensibilities was being formed. Later on, failures of the five year plan were blamed on “wreckers and saboteurs,” an industrial version of the peasant belief in “spoiling.”

A neglected, but major source of early Soviet ideology, is the philosophy of Nikolai Fedorov (1828-1903). Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Gorky, and several symbolists and futurists were among his admirers before the revolution, as were certain symbolist and futurist writers, but his greatest influence was after 1917. Fedorov spoke in the language of science, but the major sources of his vision can be traced to the occult and he opposed materialism. Arguing for a kind of “right” to immortality, to be achieved through science, he maintained that the “common task” of humanity was to resurrect its dead fathers. He also advocated colonizing space in order to make room for the enlarged population, controlling the climate, and transforming nature, e.g. irrigating Arabia with icebergs hauled from the Arctic. His visions appealed to Bolshevik worshippers of technology, including Bogdanov, whose ultimately fatal experiments in blood transfusion were inspired, in part, by Fedorov. Soviet writers influenced by Fedorov and/or his disciples include Olga Forsh, Mikhail Prishvin, and Andrei Platonov. In the 1920s, a group of Fedorov’s disciples, “the Cosmists” founded an academy to research his theories. One of their main exponents was K.E. Tsiolkovsky the “father of Soviet space-travel” (1857-1935). Others were V.I. Vernadsky, a scien-

tist and founder of biogeochemistry, A.L. Chizhevsky, a historian of philosophy, and V.N. Chekrygin, a painter. Connected to the Petrograd group of cosmists, which declared immortality to be a “human right,” was Leonid Vasiliev, later the most prominent Soviet parapsychologist. The prominence given to the “conquest of nature,” in the First and Second Five Year Plan and the post World War II attempts to transform the climate of Soviet Asia, reflect, partly, the ideas of Fedorov and his disciples, some of whom reached high positions in the Soviet regime.

Destalinization, the discrediting of a long-standing belief-system, created favorable conditions for the occult revival that is apparent in the Soviet Union today. Old beliefs have been rediscovered; underground groups have surfaced, and new strains are prominent on the contemporary cultural scene. Fedorov’s ideas are again in vogue, but this time in a Christian context. Also popular is the occult system of Daniil Andreev, son of the writer Leonid Andreev; conceived while Daniil Andreev was in prison, *The Rose of the World* circulated widely in *samizdat* and was published legally in 1991. Recent publications on occult topics sell out quickly and turn-of-the-century books on the subject command high prices in the used book stores. Publication of long suppressed writers such as the symbolists or Mikhail Bulgakov, means recirculation of the occult ideas that permeate them. Occult themes, often mixed with Christian, appear in the writings of Fasil Iskander, Yuri Trifonov (especially his novel *Another Life*), Eremai Parnov (especially *Throne of Lucifer*), the “village prose” school, the film, *Repentance*, et. al. Recent U.S. press coverage has documented the surge of Soviet interest in the occult. *The New York Times* in an article “Red Stars” (January 11, 1989) reported that *Moskovskaia Pravda* published

Gorbachev's horoscope (he's a Pisces) and on September 10, 1989 ("Around Gorbachev, Centrifugal Forces"), introduced its reader to Dzhuna Davitashvili, the faith-healer who tended Brezhnev and Anatoly Kashpirovsky, whose prime time-TV program (now off the air) included faith-healing at a distance. Attempting to account for this, *The New York Times* editorialized (October 14, 1989) that the "long suppression of religion...has given Russians a particular fondness for the supernatural"; the writer, apparently, is not familiar with the long history of the occult in Russia. On two recent trips to Russia, I found that occult publications were sold everywhere, metro stations, street corners, and so on.

The prominence of the occult in Russia between 1890 and 1925 was related to modernization and socio-political upheaval but cannot be reduced to these alone. That same Russian occultism, and its current incarnations, contains some striking similarities to the "New Age" movement of the contemporary West, where it is related more to unmet spiritual or emotional needs than it is to modernization *per se*. The metaphysical and existential issues that caused, and are causing, many Russians to turn to the occult are among the central issues of our time.

SECRET MESSAGES FROM COLONEL OLCOTT

Paul Johnson

Two published letters from Henry Steel Olcott to H. P. Blavatsky provide long-overlooked clues to the Masters' identities. They are found in the book *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*. To put them in context a letter in the same volume from H.P.B. to Babaji (who called himself D. K. Nath but whose real name was S. Krishnaswami) reveals the issues facing her at the time.

In April 1886, Walter Gebhard, son of the leading Theosophical family of Germany, shot himself in his bedroom. H.P.B. wrote to accuse Babaji of influencing Walter to doubt her honesty, and causing the despair which led to his suicide. She added that the German T.S. "died owing to what you said to Hübbe-Schleiden about the two notes received by him." Calling Babaji's supporters "fools who listen to a *chela* of the Mahatma K.H. and were made to believe that the Master had turned away from me. . . ." H.P.B. concluded that "They will *shake us off both*—most likely when they learn the *whole* truth."¹

What was this whole truth which would have been so damaging? Babaji was accusing H.P.B. of fraudulently producing letters from K.H. when the Master was no longer working in partnership with her. Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden had received two notes from K.H. assuring him of the Master's continued support of H.P.B.'s work, but Babaji convinced him that these were forgeries. Back in

India, T. Subba Row had made similar accusations, calling H.P.B. "a shell deserted and abandoned by the Masters."² His 1886 withdrawal from the T.S. may indeed have been related to its loss of contact with certain Masters. By then, according to the theory I propose in the book *In Search of the Masters*, neither M. nor K.H. was available for Theosophical purposes, due respectively to the death of Maharajah Ranbir Singh and the political concerns of Sirdar Thakar Singh. Subba Row's perception of a void in Mahatmic sponsorship at this time would seem to be verified by two letters Olcott sent H.P.B. in December 1885 and January 1886. The first is marked *Private*:

You remember Subba Row's great project for a national Adwaita Society to be secretly moved by certain Initiates and to be fathered by Sancaracharya, the High Priest, and act in harmony with the Theosophical Society; well it has just been born, rules have been drafted, Sancaracharya's presidency is agreed to by him, some 400 or 500 Pundits alone in this Presidency will join. Money is offered to put up a lecture hall in Madras with Adwaita preachers going all over India. Subba Row means to work it so that it will strengthen existing Theosophical Societies, T.S. branches, and hatch new ones where there are none—so you see he is especially anxious that there should be no new scandals or rows in con-

¹ Blavatsky, H.P., *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1973), 301.

² *Ibid*, 95-6.

nection with the T.S. for fear Sankaracharya (an Initiate) and the whole orthodox party should get frightened and set themselves to break us up.

Now do keep quiet, for God's sake do keep cool—you *know* who Sankaracharya is!!!

We shall get things around after a while so that you can return with honor.³

That H.P.B. knew who Sankaracharya was is apparent from her 1883 article "Theosophy and Spiritism" which cites a letter from the Initiate adept to Subba Row:

. . . we addressed ourselves to the great "Samkaracharya". He is the Pope of India, a hierarchy which spiritually reigns by succession from the first Samkaracharya of the Vedanta, one of the greatest initiated adepts among the Brahmanas . . . the only man in India who possesses the key to all the Brahmanical mysteries and has spiritual authority from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas and whose library is the accumulation of long centuries. Moreover, he is recognized, even by the English, as the greatest authority on the value of archaic manuscripts.⁴

The letter which follows opens with a reference to Senezar Brahmbhashya, the secret sacerdotal language of the Brahmins, an interesting clue for students of *The Secret Doctrine*.

Whatever the good intentions behind the Adwaita Society may have been, it seems never to have gotten off the ground, and before the year was out Subba Row left the T.S. His defection may well have been encouraged by his Master

Sankaracharya deciding that the T.S. was too scandal-ridden to merit their support. This is implied by two letters from Constance Wachtmeister, with whom H.P.B. was living at the time, to A.P. Sinnett, both dated January 1, 1886. In the first, Countess Wachtmeister informs Sinnett that H.P.B. had received her copy of Richard Hodgson's report to the Society for Psychical Research on New Year's Eve. In the second letter, Countess Wachtmeister reports that although H.P.B. wanted to write protest letters immediately, she had advised her to remain calm, as "the scandal must be crushed if possible and at any rate we must not feed the fire."⁵ The Countess continues:

The enclosed [letter from Olcott] will show you the *immense importance* of keeping cool and quiet and crushing the scandal if possible. I need not comment upon the result of such a Presidentship in India as the Sankaracharya—at the head of our whole Society.

As this news was sent from India with the command of the greatest secrecy, Col. O. begs Madame to tell nobody for the present. Her joy was so great however that she told me . . . I have told her that it was only right of her to *tell you* . . .⁶

The joy felt by Olcott and Blavatsky at Sankaracharya's support must have been short-lived, as he appears to have withdrawn that support in the wake of the Hodgson report.

These passages have gone unnoticed although they show H.P.B., Olcott and Wachtmeister explicitly identifying a contemporary historical figure as a Master. As in the case of Swami Dayananda

³ Ibid, 325.

⁴ Blavatsky, H.P., *Collected Writings*, (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1950-1987), Vol. V, 62.

⁵ *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, 270.

⁶ Ibid., 271.

Sarasvati, the withdrawal of Sankaracharya's support shows the insecure, unstable nature of adept sponsorship of the T.S. Such characters have been ignored because they do not fit conveniently with prevailing views of the Masters, which either deny their existence or exalt them as supermen whose support for the T.S. was secure, stable and unanimous.

An equally overlooked passage showing the human side of the Masters appears in another letter from Olcott to H.P.B. written later the same month. At that point, Subba Row's enthusiasm was so great that Olcott proposed a collaboration between him and some Masters of the Egyptian brotherhood:

Subba Row is getting keen on a collation of Indian and Egyptian esoteric philosophy and symbolism He keeps coming here and always asks for books which deal with Egyptian Mythology, etc. Now do this: through Borj, or Twitit B: or Ill: or someone, arrange to organize at Cairo a couple like Subba Row and Oakley, who would keep in regular correspondence with these two, and exchange ideas, questions and answers. . . . Maspero is anxious to make just such a correspondence, but he is too thundering busy. If there were an Oakley there to go at him, hunt up the books he would indicate, and write the letters, enormously good results would follow all around, for Maspero would put it all in his books and Reports, and we would put it into the Th. and books. Would Gregoire d'Elias be any good? I think not. Would Isurenus B. help you?⁷

This passage gives three new names to investigate in the search for the Masters. It is revealing

⁷ Ibid., 326-7.

that Olcott refers to Hilarion (Ill:), Tuitit Bey and Isurenus Bey in such matter of fact terms. But far more useful to researchers are the names of Borj, Maspero, and Gregoire d'Elias.

A search through the Theosophical literature uncovered no Borj, but Olcott's handwriting deceived Trevor Barker on more than one occasion. For example, he takes an obvious reference to Sumangala as "Samanyala," which implies that Olcott's g's are not readily identifiable. A Borg appears in one of the most important of all Mahatma letters, which K.H. made materialize in Olcott's hand when he appeared in his tent outside Lahore in November 1883. It accuses Olcott of being overly suspicious, "sometimes cruelly so—of Upasika, of Borg, of Djual-K., even of Damodar and D. Nath, whom you love as sons."⁸

In the diary she kept in New York, H.P.B. referred to "A letter from Richard and Boag informing of the arrival from Russia of a parcel."⁹ Again, questions of handwriting confuse the issue, giving us three spellings of what would seem to be the same name. But of the variant spellings it becomes apparent that Borg is correct upon examination of Professor Keddie's biography of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani. She writes that "Afghani and a group of his followers first joined an Italian lodge in Alexandria, but were influenced by English Vice-Consul Ralph Borg to join an English lodge, whose numbers reached 300, including many leaders of the nationalist movement of

⁸ Jinarajadasa, C.J., comp., *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, First Series* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973), 40.

⁹ Blavatsky, H.P., *H.P.B. Speaks*. Vol. I (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1950-1951), 151.

1878-1882.”¹⁰ One of the weaker points of *In Search of the Masters* has been the evidence that H.P.B.’s Egyptian Brotherhood was the circle surrounding Afghani in Cairo. This is considerably strengthened by these fragments concerning Borg. *Who Was Who* gives his first name as Raphael; the name Ralph, also found in other recent books, is due to Keddie’s reliance on an Egyptian writer, Mohammed Sabry, who collected eyewitness accounts years after the fact. *Who Was Who* also summarizes Borg’s diplomatic career, spent entirely in Egypt. Beginning as a clerk in Alexandria in 1863, he later went to Cairo where, after serving as Acting Vice-Consul and Consul at various intervals in the 60s and 70s, he became Vice-Consul in 1880. In 1884 he was appointed Consul there which he remained for the rest of his career except an interval in 1895 as Acting Consul-General. He died January 24, 1903.¹¹ At this point the most likely Richard to whom H.P.B. refers seems to be Charles Louis Richard, French Orientalist and author of *Scenes of Arab Life, Mysteries of the Arab People, Inevitable Revolutions in the World and Humanity*, and other books.

No trace of Borg as the author or subject of a book was found in the course of research, but Gregoire d’Elias appears to have been the author of a play published in Seville in 1871. Entitled *Lo Que Tiene Mi Mujer* it is listed as a comic one act play in verse by Gregorio Esteban de Elias. Gaston Maspero (1846-1916) was a French Egyptologist and author of many books on Egypt. Born in Paris of Italian parents, he became Professor of

Egyptology at the College de France in 1874. From 1881 through 1886 and again from 1899 through 1914 he was curator of the Bulak Museum in Cairo and director of explorations in Egypt.¹² H.P.B. visited him at his museum en route back to India from Europe in 1885, and amazed him with her knowledge of ancient Egypt, according to Isabel Cooper-Oakley.¹³

All these characters identified through Colonel Olcott’s secret messages tend to confirm the hypothesis that secret sponsors of the T.S. were corporeal human beings. These overlooked passages undermine the false assumption that the Masters were either supermen in remote ashrams or figments of H.P.B.’s imagination.

¹⁰ Keddie, Nikki, *Siyiyid Jamal ad-Din “al-Afghani”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 100.

¹¹ *Who Was Who, Volume I, 1897-1915*, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1920), 76.

¹² *Cambridge Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 168.

¹³ Ryan, Charles J., *H.P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1973), 168.

Book Review

H.P.B.: THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE & INFLUENCE OF HELENA BLAVATSKY, FOUNDER OF THE MODERN THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT.

By Sylvia Cranston. New York: A Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book, published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1993. Pp. xxiii + 648. ISBN 0-87477-688-0. \$30.00.

We can all welcome Sylvia Cranston's new biography on at least one count in that, to date, it provides something close to a social history of the Theosophical Society. Not completely perhaps, but it is certainly a significant contribution. Why for example, should H.P.B. have come to America in the first place? We are told that 'what drew H.P.B. to the New World in 1851 were the Native Americans (*Indians!*) she had read about in James Fennimore Cooper's novels!' (p. 48) As a twenty year old girl, her imagination must have been fired with stories of settlers gradually moving westward to the Pacific's shore. And later in the 1870's, what kind of a civil society did she find herself in if not that of the post-Civil War era. Wasn't spiritualism as much of a response to that national tragedy in some way as it may also have been after the First and Second World Wars in Europe? Very little comment has been made in this regard in relation to the founding of the T.S., and it should be.

Although a great deal of huffing and puffing, especially the latter, has been written about the upper class social backgrounds of the Society's

founders, what about its more common adherents, those without fortunes for H.P.B. to squander in her travels or who would put up with her tantrums while providing her shelter? Along with the late Monty Woolley as 'The Man Who Came to Dinner', and Gurdjieff and other gurus who bedeviled their hapless hosts, H.P.B. succeeded in dominating a devoted few who remained at her side, done of course in the name of the Masters through whom she was the channel. Again, all belief must be taken on faith no matter for what cause, or reason.

But what of the social history of the time that caused people to look beyond conventionalisms, to drop out of society if even for a while. Cranston points out the march of materialism brought on by Darwinian science, as have other Theosophical writers, but does not focus on the economic chaos of the last quarter of the 19th century. Thus, Theosophy and Socialism may have more in common than most people may willingly acknowledge. Both have served, at least temporarily in the long span of history, as correctives to the unfinished business of the industrial revolution, somehow outside the purview of more established religions. But not surprisingly really since Western tradition has largely regarded those who would support them financially or otherwise as signally blessed by heaven. (That goes for the T.S. too).

In this massive volume, which might be less weighty if several gratuitous testimonials were

omitted, the careful reader will note that although many well-known scientists and philosophers of the last hundred years and more have been erstwhile paper members of the T.S., their appreciation of and adherence to Theosophical principles and ideas have appeared to be highly selective. William Butler Yeats felt that “[f]or the literary man wandering in T.S. Eliot’s wasteland or between [Matthew] Arnold’s two worlds, theosophy has been a favorite resort . . . ,” (p. 465) and, “[b]esides the devotees who came to listen and to turn every doctrine into a new sanction for the puritanical convictions of their Victorian childhood, cranks came from half Europe and from all America” (p. 467) Even Christmas Humphreys opted out “[i]n 1926 . . . on the ground that in our view [T.S.] activities were encrusted with peripheral organizations to the exclusion of the great teaching given to Madame Blavatsky by the masters of Tibet.” (p. 500) How indeed would H.P.B. have reacted to Krishnamurti, the Liberal Catholic Church and Leadbeater’s antics, not to mention those of Annie Besant, ‘that regular Demosthenes in skirts’ as H.P.B. called her former Fabian Socialist successor? Whether H.P.B.’s biases and those of her successors would have coincided remains a matter of conjecture. But then when was Theosophy ever a playground for Freethinkers?? One cannot escape the conclusions arrived at by Peter Washington in his account of Theosophy and the emergence of the Western guru [Madame *Blavatsky’s Baboon*], recently published in London by Secker and Warburg, that spiritual leaders were often bitter cynics, and their followers, especially Theosophists, were ‘the neurotic, the hysterical, the destructive and the down-right mad’. (Has the reader visited Adyar during the last fifteen years?) Strange, though, how H.P.B. could inveigh against

Christianity and yet demonstrate her belief in the Russian Orthodox Church in writing from Paris, “Probably it is in my blood...I certainly will always say: a thousand times rather Buddhism, a pure moral teaching, in perfect harmony with the teachings of Christ, than modern Catholicism or Protestantism. But with the faith of the Russian church I will not even compare Buddhism. I can’t help it. Such is my silly inconsistent nature.” (p. 249) Something like the reverse of Humphrey Bogart’s definition of a tough guy, rather ‘all hard on the outside but mushy at the core.’

H.P.B. thought the use of phenomena to attract public attention was necessary, but if scientific facts were of the greatest value (and on some days she felt they were), what then, beyond the memory of phenomena, e.g., apported flowers or teacups or charming tunes from nowhere, together with the Masters’ letters, remains with a student of H.P.B. today? Cranston assures us we’ll find out about scientific truths that have yet to be accepted in a pending publication by Reed Carson entitled “Blavatsky’s Foreknowledge of Twentieth Century Science,” assumed to be extrapolated from *Isis Unveiled* and other works. Doubtless many T.S. members and others await such a work that will serve to prune the undergrowth twined about their philosophy.

Moreover, what do we learn from this book about H.P.B. that we don’t know already from other sources? Surely that will depend on how many books, old and new, the reader has collected over the years and which source he or she swears by as truth. Do we know that H.P.B.’s mother discovered Buddhism when accompanying her husband to the Kalmuck area of Astrakhan in 1836 over which he had been placed as trustee? Of character sketches of H.P.B. there are a-plenty, and who would seem to have contributed most to

the preservation of H.P.B. as legend? Let us nominate A.P. Sinnett, for H.P.B. was extremely shrewd at selecting a worthy press agent. True, she supplied Sinnett with information about her personal life and travels “thirty years after their occurrence, when verification was difficult” (p. 50) and if there is any room for scepticism, let’s not forget that clouds still hang round the early life of Christ, too. The best treasure hunt of all might net one the lost (?) diaries of Sinnett, but then Theosophists never want to discuss that issue, and probably for good reason. H.P.B. ‘conveniently seemed to forget significant details concerning her past such as dates and places’ but apparently was never at a loss when called upon to let her imagination run riot. Can’t research still be done on unresolved matters of vital interest?

By turns vague and teasing in regard to such psychic ability as she had, H.P.B. was any newspaper editor’s heaven-sent gift. Trouble was that a hundred years ago, the crowd of people H.P.B. gathered round her were ‘ladies’ and ‘gentlemen’ not inclined to try to verify facts at length but rather at face value assuming a sense of *noblesse oblige*. There were no radios or other news-gatherers able to check facts, nevertheless society folk might find some titillation in the events. What a pity that a worthy scholar such as Alexandra David-Neel was a less flamboyant personality, although she received her T.S. diploma in London on 7 June 1892.

In sum, H.P.B. had an extraordinary life during the 19th century simply because hers was the type of personality that few could challenge. She had been everywhere and spoke with authority, and her passport alone could have validated some of the doubtful assertions. Who else had the money or time to negotiate such experiences except appointed government officials in far off outposts

of empire whose diaries frequently corroborated her stories. And of personal contradictions, so what if she smoked cigarettes but was a teetotaling vegetarian? Sorry, she wouldn’t be accepted by the Society she helped found if she applied for membership today. Isn’t it monetary contributions that pave the way more helpfully of late?

Cranston noticeably makes a pitch for H.P.B.’s prominence as an early Women’s Libber which makes some sense in view of male dominance in 19th century society. Think over please the kind of men she attracted. They may have dominated but they don’t all come across as strong personalities in themselves because most were government civil servants and other hirelings whom she subordinated at her own will. Olcott was thought gullible by many even though he was a trusted servant of the Lincoln administration after the American Civil War.

Long after putting this book down, there was one paragraph that stuck in the mind of the reviewer, namely that of Elizabeth Hunt in ‘A Reminiscence of HP Blavatsky in 1873’ that appeared in the December 1931 *Theosophist*, to wit:

I never looked upon Madame as an ethical teacher. For one thing she was too excitable; when things seemed wrong to her, she could express her opinion about them with a vigor which was very disturbing. I never saw her angry with any person or thing at close range. Her objections had an impersonality about them. In mental or physical dilemma, you would instinctively appeal to her, for you felt her fearlessness, her unconventionality, her great wisdom and wide experience and hearty goodwill— her sympathy with the underdog. (p. 116)

That is all still needed in the T.S. today, but who or rather which personality can provide it?

She kept all her wisdom in the family, sometimes a family of Atrides, and with so many years of experience at the game, hers was truly a tough act to follow. It would be interesting to know how many Society members favour returning to H.P.B.'s original platform and how many prefer that of her successors. A real decision seems needful now but has everybody the will to even try.

Robert Boyd
