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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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

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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 4.0C or earlier version, WriteNow 2.0 or WordPerfect 2.01 or earlier version. 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

One of the purposes of *Theosophical History* is to include informative articles on organizations related to the Theosophical Movement. Dr. Godwin's "The Brotherhood of Light" (III/3) and the "Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor" (III/5) provide examples of nineteenth centuries organizations that conform to this criteria. Mr. Draï's article on a recently organized "theosophical monastic order" is the subject of one of the articles presented herein, "The Paracelsian Order." Situated in Dulzura (Southern California) not far from the Mexican border on a vast tract of land known as the Madre Grande Monastery, the Order regards itself as a "religious monastic, healing, and teaching order" whose aim is to "help bring in A New Age." (*The Paracelsian Handbook*)

The author, John H. Draï, is currently abbot of the Paracelsian Order and prior of Madre Grande Monastery. He is the editor of *The Zohar* and the author of the *Hebrew-Egyptian and Numerical Index* as published with James R. Skinner's *The Source of Measures* (published by Wizard's Bookshelf). His indices are included in each of the twelve volumes of *Esoteric Instructions* (Point Loma Publications). Mr. Draï has also contributed several articles to the *Eclectic Theosophist* (San Diego, California). He is represented in the *First Symposium of Secret Doctrine Studies* (Wizard's Bookshelf).

The second article, "Boris de Zirkoff and the *Blavatsky Collected Writings*," written by his close associate, Dara Eklund, adds valuable information on both the man and his work. For those

who are familiar with the *Collected Writings* but know little of how they came to being, this article should prove to be most revealing.

Dara Eklund is uniquely qualified to comment on Boris de Zirkoff and his *magnum opus*. After meeting Mr. de Zirkoff in 1951, she soon became his assistant researching and proof-reading for the *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*. After Mr. de Zirkoff's death in 1981, two volumes (numbers 14 and 15) of the *Collected Writings* have since been published. (A complete bibliographical listing of the set follows Miss Eklund's article.) During her early years with Mr. de Zirkoff, she found the time to receive B.A. and Master of Library Science degrees at U.C.L.A. in 1956 and 1963 respectively. Besides her work in the *Collected Writings* series, Miss Eklund has also compiled a three volume edition of the writings of William Quan Judge, entitled *Echoes of the Orient* (Point Loma Publications). At present, she is working on a revised index together with her husband, Nicholas Weeks, for the entire *Collected Writings* series (including the *Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*).

Reprinting old newspaper articles can sometimes shed added light on the principals in the Theosophical Movement. With this in mind, the well-known article that appeared in the *New York World* (26 March 1877), "A Lamasery in New York," is herein printed in full together with the newspaper's editorial on its contents.

Finally, a review of Ann Braude's fascinating account of Spiritualism and its relation to the women's rights movement appears in the final portion of the journal. The book, *Radical Spirits*, is a worthy addition to academic studies of the Spiritualist Movements or aspects thereof.

### Book Notes

A selection of the writings of the British philosopher and Neo-Platonic mystic Paul Brunton (1898-1981) appeared in 1990 under the title *Paul Brunton: Essential Readings*. Selected and edited by Joscelyn Godwin with Paul Cash and Timothy Smith, excerpts include passages gleaned from his books *A Search in Secret Egypt* ("A Night Inside the Great Pyramid"), *A Search in Secret India* ("Meetings with Indian Sages: Sri Shankaracharya and Sri Ramana Maharshi"), and *The Quest of the Overself* ("The Overself in Action"). Selections from his posthumously published notebooks include discussions on "The Teacher," "From Mysticism to Philosophy," "The Sage," and the "World-Mind and Mind." The collection serves as an excellent introduction to the Brunton's philosophy. The book is published by the Thorsons Publishing Group (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 2RQ, England) as a Cruxible paperback.

Pilgrimage to the East for spiritual enlightenment has been a popular activity for well over a century, judging from the many accounts of that have appeared in print over the years. A recent book adds to this catalogue of accounts. Entitled *Turning East. New Lives in India: Twenty Westerners and Their Spiritual Quests* (N.Y.: Paragon House, 1989) and edited by Malcom Tillis and Cynthia Giles, the book includes personal accounts of spiritual seekers from the U.K., Europe, and the U.S. For those who have travelled to India

in the past few years, one cannot help but notice the sizable number of Western travellers in the major airports and bus terminals involved in such activity. *Turning East* gives these often faceless travellers a personality, identity, and a humanity. It should prove interesting reading for those who themselves plan to embark on a quest or who simply wish to know the intentions of such seekers.

### Adjustment of Subscription Rates

As mentioned in the previous issue, the subscription rates for *Theosophical History* will be adjusted beginning with the July 1991 (III/7) due to increased expenses. The new rates are as follows:

U.S. and Canada	\$14
Overseas (surface)	\$16
Air mail (outside the	
U.S. and Canada)	\$24
Price per issue	\$4

Subscribers outside the U.S. may pay in their own currency should conversion prove to be too burdensome. We simply ask that the amount equal as closely as possible the U.S. rate.

### International Theosophical History Conference

Plans to hold the International Theosophical History Conference on the former site of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society's headquarters at Lomaland, now the Point Loma Nazarene College from 12 - 14 June 1992 are almost completed. Registration and

Accommodation Forms were included in the III/4 issue. Should you require additional forms or information, please write to James Santucci, Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480.

### ***Light***

Apropos the note that appeared in the third number of *Theosophical History*, former editor Leslie Price has advised me that *Light* is currently published by the College of Psychic Studies (16 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2EB) and is edited by Brenda Marshall. Quoting from its pages, *Light* “exists for the reasoned and courteous examination of all aspects of spiritual and psychic exploration and experience.”

Three issues appear yearly at £6.00 (U.S.\$16.00) for British residents and £7.00 (U.S.\$18) overseas. Single copies are £1.75.

# Correspondence

*From Mr. William Laudahn (Ojai, California)*

...In your review of Krishnamurti books [*Truth is a Pathless Land* by Ingram Smith and *Krishnamurti: The Reluctant Messiah* by Sidney Field, both in III/3] you were bold enough to question his “profundity.” In the early days, he was considered on the dull side. His brother [Nityananda] was the bright one. But, now he is called a “philosopher.” How about that? He himself often wondered why the same people came returning to his “talks,” when he always said about the same thing. Although I never noticed it, he must have “it.”

Great, also, is the article by Dr. Godwin where he quotes from the Luxor Brothers [Fratres Lucis]. They were on the scene giving advice before the Masters from Tibet appeared. Some good advice they imparted was that “the doctrine of transmigration is an error” and that “modern Reincarnation is a fantasy.” So, their teachings varied radically from the later revelations. In the chapter on Reincarnation in the first vol[ume] of *Old Diary Leaves*, Col. Olcott observed that there are many orders and degrees of “Masters.” So, we are free to pick and choose. In this area, I prefer the “H. B. of L [*sic*, the Brotherhood of Light].”

I am impressed that Reincarnation was *not* presented at the inception of the T.S. in 1875. Furthermore, H.P.B.’s article on “What Is Theosophy” (Oct. 1879) failed to mention the subject. Reincarnation appeared [around] 1880 or 1881, when it was revealed in a “Mahatma Letter” from a Tibetan Adept. (In Letter LVII, pg. 329, it is

written “that you were possessed of the Oriental views of reincarnation...first pointed out to you on July 5th at Bombay...” Certain experts have concluded that the year is 1881 & suggest checking Letter IX on pg. 38, which they claim was dispatched on July 5, 1881. Among the “experts” was Virginia Hanson.)

As one can gather from this, I am not a keen defender of Reincarnation. I find the subject to be rather a drag. Why should anyone with any sense want to come back to this stupid world? Of course, it could be worse, and it is with many people in many areas. This pattern has always been so—and will continue. They say that we are here for “experience” and to learn “Lessons.” But, in 099 cases out of 100 what does this experience and these lessons amount to? At their best, the old mystics did not want to return, they wanted to advance to the Absolute, where there is no ending...

# The Paracelsian Order

John Drais

The Paracelsian Order was formed as “a theosophical monastic order” in 1975. It is a non-profit, religious, California, church, corporation. This is an essay on its founding and standing as a theosophical organization, and the criteria upon which such a decision is to be based. The question has long been labored as to what makes an organization “theosophical.”

There were theosophists and Theosophical Schools for the last 2,000 years, from Plato down to the medieval Alchemists, who knew the meaning of the term, it may be supposed. Therefore,...<sup>1</sup> the question is not whether the T.S. is doing good, but whether it is doing that kind of good which is entitled to the name Theosophy'....<sup>1</sup>

So just what are these criteria? These words come from H.P.B. [Helena Petrovna Blavatsky] in her writings published as *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society* by C.J. Jinarâjadâsa, in which she states her guiding principles in establishing the Theosophical Society:

(1) The Founders had to exercise all their influence to oppose selfishness of any kind, by insisting on sincere fraternal feelings, ... working for it to bring about a spirit of unity and harmony, the great diversity of creeds not withstanding; expecting and demanding ... a great mutual help in the research of truths in

every domain - moral or physical - and even, in daily life.

(2) They had to oppose in the strongest manner possible anything approaching dogmatic faith and fanaticism - belief in the infallibility of the Masters,... a great respect for the private views and creeds of every member was demanded.... The greatest spirit of free research untrammelled by anyone or anything, had to be encouraged.<sup>2</sup>

Simply stated, these principles relate to brotherhood and dogmatism. The society must be all of the first and have none of the second. Furthermore, to be successful a practical difference must be made in man's “code of life.”

Theosophy must be made practical, and has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless discussion... It has to find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life thoroughly impregnated with its spirit - the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity and love.<sup>3</sup>

That is, it must affect humankind's behavior, both ethically and materially. And she goes on to say:

The problem of true theosophy and its great mission is the working out of clear, unequivocal conceptions of ethic ideas and duties which would satisfy most and best the altruistic and right feeling in us, and the modelling

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<sup>1</sup>H.P. Blavatsky, *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society* (Adyar, Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1966), 44-45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4-6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 45.



of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life where they may be applied with most equitableness.<sup>4</sup>

There are, then, three criteria on which a decision as to a group's theosophical nature is to be based. The organization must make no distinctions as to better or best on the basis of prejudice. Every race, sex, social status, nationality, religion, creed, and cultural expression must be equal. Truth must be sought religiously. The organization must function in such a manner as to make a difference in man's behavior. It must be a model and working example of theosophical concepts, and it must provide a means for theosophical creativity. In short, these are the requirements: Universal brotherhood, Freedom from dogma, and a Code of life that is all embracing.

The Paracelsian Order was established to provide a practical example of these three theosophical principles as guides for everyday worldly activity. At a time when the world's theosophical societies have dogmatically fragmented into arguing sects held together by claims of apostolic succession, is not this the time to restate our theosophical intentions? Is it tenable for societies supposedly theosophical to be so intolerant of another's "private opinion"? Do we already have theosophical authority? If we do, it would seem we are doomed to argue papal infallibility yet again in this Messianic Cycle.

As an organization The Paracelsian Order is an universal brotherhood, open equally to everyone, and it is free of dogma, all opinions as to one's positive path to perfection are expressible. Does it have an all embracing code of life? And, if it does, is this code of life practical for daily

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 46-47.

right livelihood, without compromising any theosophical principles? The Paracelsian Order declares its theosophical intention with H.P.B.: "You are Free-workers on the Domain of Truth, and as such, must leave no obstructions on the paths leading to it."<sup>5</sup> The Paracelsian Order, furthermore, agrees with the view of the Maha Chohan:

For our doctrines to practically react on the so-called moral code or the ideas of truthfulness, self-denial, charity, etc., we have to preach and popularize a knowledge of theosophy. It is ... the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true Theosophist.<sup>6</sup>

In this statement, the Maha Chohan gives us the principles on which a code's practicalness can be judged. In order to make a practical impact on the moral code of life, a system must be pursued and practiced according to what Buddhism calls "right livelihood". That is it will inculcate a compassionate, self-sacrificing, charitable and honest nature. Monks of The Paracelsian Order may be men or women, single or married, freed from the outside world or as yet having outside obligations. If freed they may reside at and be supported by their monastery, and volunteer their services to the order's healing and teaching purposes. Healing and teaching are broadly applied to all aspects of "man physical and man psychological" and to all beings, animate and inanimate. Monks of the order operate according

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>6</sup>Margaret Conger, *Combined Chronology for use with The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett and The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1973), 43.

to these principles, which become vows to full monks.

**Non-ownership and non-attachment** I recognize that I own nothing and that non-attachment to things of this material world is important to my spiritual unfoldment. I accept the responsibility of being a caretaker for the bounty of the Universe.

**Moral Chastity** Recognizing freedom for all beings, I will strive not to impose on anyone to do anything against his or her highest consciousness, nor will I allow anyone to impose on my highest consciousness.

**Obedience** I will endeavor to be obedient to my Highest Self, my Godself. I seek to recognize the group mind of the monks, the church and the rule as a reflection of the Highest.

**Root Digger** I pledge all my energy to the work of the Order. I recognize that I am a channel for infinite abundance, and I accept the responsibility for meeting my material needs.

**Openness and honesty** I strive to be honest with myself and others and to encourage openness through positive and loving communication.

For a comparison, read the “Preliminary Memorandum” and “Rules,”<sup>7</sup> published in Volume 12 of *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*.

If a real change is to be effected in humankind’s code of life, a means other than

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<sup>7</sup>“Preliminary Memorandum” and “Rules”, in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: Volume XII*, compiled by Boris de Zirkoff (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1980), 488-498.

market forces must be found to provide for the needs of all. Each of us must provide for their own self; that is the lot of “the great orphan humanity.” Maimonides, in the *Guide of the Perplexed*<sup>8</sup>, while discussing this dilemma, advises a simplification of life style, so that only a minimum of time need be spent for personal maintenance. Thereby, the rest of one’s time can be spent on spiritual development. If that minimum work period is spent in right livelihood, then the concept of work-for-pay vanishes. As right livelihood, the work becomes both karma yoga and *satipatṭhāna*, a duty to give to this world and an awareness meditation to increase ability for skillful action, respectively. All extremes of association with the monastery are allowed, even to the extent of Monks at Large, who have no monastery affiliation, and Associate Members, who are merely supporters of the church’s purposes and theosophical ideals. This broad association allows a maximum of individuals exposure to theosophical ideals and gives them all a steady process for development of those very traits expressed by the Maha Chohan as necessary theosophical criteria. They are also necessary for full monastic commitment.

The very thought of “monastic commitment” brings up archetypal fears in freedom loving people, but what we call “monastery,” the Buddhist call *saṅgha*, the Hindus call *āśrama*, and Kabbalists call *chabura*. Clearly lacking in western society is the ability to provide a means for doing selfless work, *sādhana*. Although other monastic orders provide right livelihood and spiritual support, there certainly are few at which one might be eclectic in one’s spiritual quest!

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<sup>8</sup>Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*. Trans. by M. Friedlander (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., n.d.), 126.

Monks may volunteer their time and gain both good works through right livelihood and a sangha by unifying their efforts with like-minded theosophists of every persuasion. The theosophical creativity thus released will flow forth with blessing on all who contact and help it. This Order was conceived to provide both right livelihood and theosophical monasticism. Recall that monastic derives from Greek *monas*, meaning unity. Unity neither implies, nor desires, nor benefits from identity of its individuals. Diversity and fallibility are expressions of truth and are thus to be encouraged. Even Mme. Blavatsky held to “monastic” principles.

Theosophy teaches mutual-culture before self-culture to begin with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many theosophists of the same way of thinking into one or more groups, and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the objects of mutual development and progress in theosophical thought may be best achieved....<sup>9</sup>

Could a better definition of monastic be found? Read Olcott’s *Old Diary Leaves* for many comments on the “monastic” model of life at Adyar. Furthermore:

... for the first year the Members of the T. Body who, representing every class in Society as every creed and belief - ... - lived and met under these rules of peace and friendship.<sup>10</sup>

If the “monastic” hurdle has been passed, the next seems greater. Association of Theosophy with Religion has been abused, but one dogma is

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<sup>9</sup>*Original Programme*, 28.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

no better than another, and religion is after all the practice of “binding one’s self back” to one’s source. The Paracelsian Order is a religious, church, organization, and, indeed, H.P.B. said:

... the two Founders were told ... what they should never do, what they had to avoid, and what the Society should never become. Church organizations, Christian and Spiritual sects....<sup>11</sup>

However, this opinion is too narrowly stated. For, in the same article, H.P.B. states her opinion more clearly:

Our Society had never certainly any idea of rising superior to the brotherliness and ethics preached by Christ, but only to those of the sham Christianity of the Churches - as originally ordered to, by our Master.<sup>12</sup>

Even KH [Koot Hoomi], whose statement in Mahatma Letter No. 10,<sup>13</sup> blaming two-thirds of the world’s suffering on the world’s religions, only means those institutions who dogmatically define Truth. By disallowing personal integrity, the ability of each to gain knowingness is lost.

You and your colleagues may help furnish the materials for a needed universal religious philosophy; one impregnable to scientific assault because itself the finality of absolute science; and, a religion, that is indeed worthy

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>13</sup>*The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, edited by A. Trevor Barker (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1975 [facsimile edition]), 57.

of the name, since it includes the relations of man physical to man psychical, and of the two to all that is above and below them. Is not this worth a slight sacrifice?<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, in the “View of the Chohan on the T.S.,” it is explicitly stated as a prime function of the theosophical movement that, “... the Theosophical Society was chosen as the corner stone, the foundation of the future religion of humanity.”<sup>15</sup> Clearly the Maha Chohan is predicting a “universal religious philosophy” as the basis for religious expression in the ensuing messianic age. The Paracelsian Order accepts monks of all cultural expressions without prejudice, in order to accelerate their intercultural awakening. Its monasteries are theosophical expressions of its universal religious philosophy.

One of the cycles said to be beginning in our time, and in preparation of which Blavatsky was sent, is the Aquarian Messianic Age. There have been and always will be divergent opinions on our true date of entry into this Age. This diversity suggests that a broad transition period is more likely than an abrupt date. But the Kabbalistic tradition indicates the cycle is measured according to Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions, H.P.B. tells us: “the sign of his (messiah’s) coming ‘is the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the sign Pisces.’”<sup>16</sup> As shown in previous publications, transition from

the significant conjunctions of 1961 to that of 1981 marked the resurrection of the new Messianic Age.<sup>17</sup> H.P.B.’s remarks relative to the year 1975 are well known and, regardless of the actual date of entry into the Aquarian Age, 1975 was certainly between these conjunctions. We agree with H.P.B. that what mankind does in the next few years determines whether the next century is to be a relative heaven or hell. Current world wide politics would appear to corroborate this prediction. Universalism is the keynote of the Aquarian Age. The inception of The Paracelsian Order was auspiciously chosen as 1975. As in *The Voice of the Silence*: “Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.”<sup>18</sup>

As we transit out of the Age of Pisces with its vicarious atonement for the “faithful” alone, we will correspondingly enter an age of universalism. The ancient order of Melchizedek<sup>19</sup> must continue as before, but priests now help prepare all people to share equally in the self-sacrifice and so celebrate their own christos illumination, as the Christians might say. This is astronomical and psychological fact, and the mystical truth will be equally expressible in all cultural types. Is there, then, to be a theosophical priestcraft? I hope not, but priests of all crafts can certainly become more theosophical. The Paracelsian Order has no priesthood, only monks of all expressions. All monks are equal. They may be priests or officers

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<sup>14</sup>*Combined Chronology*, 38.

<sup>15</sup>*Original Programme*, 44.

<sup>16</sup>H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*. Volume II (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, 1968 [centenary anniversary edition]), 256.

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<sup>17</sup>John H. Draï, “Age of Aquarius – 1981, Part I & II,” *The Eclectic Theosophist*, No. 62 (Jan./Feb. 1981) and No. 63 (Mar 1981).

<sup>18</sup>H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Springfield Rd., Vernon, B.C.: The H.P.B. Lending Library, 1978), 14.

<sup>19</sup>“Epistle to the Hebrews,” *The New Testament*, Chapter 5, vv. 1-10 and Chapter 7, vv. 1-3.

in any or all religious systems, but they have no priestly standing within the Order.

The Johannine Catholic Church is the founding, parent corporation of The Paracelsian Order. This church is apostolic, with accepted consecration stemming from Bishop Miendaarts of the Old Catholic See of Utrecht in 1739. The Old Catholics were excommunicated from Rome primarily over the question of papal infallibility. The Johannine Catholic Church is not a member of the Old Catholic or Liberal Catholic movements; it is independent, and it is eclectic. Members may be Christian as well as other expressions simultaneously, once they have gained intercultural awareness. It is a part of the ancient wisdom movement. It is lotus like, its roots are in the mud of the past, its stem is from the water now peaking, and its flowering is in the sunlight of the future. It has no dogma, for "there is no religion higher than truth." By establishing a theosophical monastic order, it has opened its heart in true Christ-like fashion, to allow the essence of the messianic avatar to inspire our universal (i.e., catholic) spirit. "These tears, O thou of heart most merciful, these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal."<sup>20</sup> But monks of The Paracelsian Order are not required to declare membership in the Johannine Catholic Church, and neither organizations define beliefs for its members. The message of the spiritual self immolation of the bodhisattvic and messianic avatar allows vicarious atonement to be replaced with individual responsibility.

The namesake for this organization is, appropriately, Phillipus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, called Paracelsus, the father of modern medicine. This controversial figure,

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<sup>20</sup>*The Voice of the Silence*, 13.

contemporary to Martin Luther and Huldreich Zwingli, differed with the practitioners of his time. He insisted on treating the whole being, not merely the part displaying disease. This holistic philosophy of Paracelsus lead him to introduce, controversially, allopathy, homeopathy, dosage, chemotherapy, hypnotism, mesmerism and faith healing into the practice of medicine. Religiously he tolerated both Protestants and Catholics. Scientifically he researched the traditions of the common person, the alchemy of the mystics, and the chemistry of the modern. He used astrology, charms, magic, and faith, whatever it took to make the cure. He drew on every source from the east and west and acted in concert with his understanding of each. He dedicated his life and bequeathed his money to the cause of the poor, who he treated for free as much as possible. This pioneer of holism left no stone unturned in his search for truth. He was, furthermore, recognized as a Theosophist by H.P.B.

...although there had been alchemists before the days of Paracelsus, he was the first who had passed through the true initiation, that last ceremony which conferred on the adept the power of traveling toward the 'burning bush' over the holy ground, and to 'burn the golden calf in the fire, grind it to a powder, and strow it upon the water.'<sup>22</sup>

The Paracelsian Order provides a theosophical response to dogmatic theosophy. As an intercultural religious expression, free from dogma, it provides means for theosophists of every persuasion to occupy themselves in truly theosophical selfless service and support themselves by right livelihood at the same time. It is a universal brotherhood with Truth as its religious path. It has

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<sup>21</sup>*Isis Unveiled*, 349.

also worked out a model that allows “as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it.” This code engenders “the altruistic and right feeling in us” in “clear, unequivocal conceptions of ethic ideas and duties.” It is indeed justified in its claim as a theosophical organization.

# Boris de Zirkoff and the *Blavatsky Collected Writings*

Dara Eklund

To trace the editorial life of Boris de Zirkoff with respect to the *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, one would need to examine carefully not only marginal notes on his mss., but his entire correspondence regarding them. These are available in the archives of the Olcott Library in Wheaton, Illinois, often in the form of first editions into which he entered his editorial marks.

Those who knew and worked for Mr. de Zirkoff trusted his honest and thorough scholarship. They realize that he did on occasion make minor alterations. Most often these involved correcting a quotation by filling in missing words, perhaps dropped by the original typesetter. He would editorially plunge into a quote, placing the reference after the paragraph, rather than interjecting it in the passage. These were mostly matters of style and did not interfere with the meaning of a passage.

How many of those who rigidly insist the editor changed H.P.B.'s words, have really examined his MSS to give his editorial labors a fair hearing?

In my years of assisting him, Boris would point out passages where a quote seemingly closed off in the original, yet would continue into portions of the text to follow and not be given quote marks again (again, perhaps dropped by the typesetter). As solution for these encounters, he would sometimes extract the portion, or phrase, and rejoin it to the body of the quote where it belonged. At least he would replace the quote

marks into the discourse where they were required.

The reader of Boris' editions will also find bracketed remarks where the original word is shown first and H.P.B.'s rendition next to it. This occurs for instance on page 284 of *The Secret Doctrine* (vol. I), where the Wilson edition of the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*<sup>1</sup> was quoted. After checking the Wilson edition, the word "development" was restored, but H.P.B.'s word [evolution] kept in brackets. This was meant to provide the reader a source for comparison. [In H.P.B.'s time, how many other translations existed for the reader to consult? Generally very few!]

Boris made every effort to consult those editions available to students of H.P.B.'s time. For example on p. 286 (*Secret Doctrine*, vol. I) the reader will observe that the footnote to Hermetic Fragments in *The Virgin of the World*<sup>2</sup> cites the 1885 edition, 153. H.P.B.'s parenthetical "It?" is placed by Boris in brackets, providing the editorial impact of her pen by qualifying a Westernized attempt to deify the impersonal Deity. This type of attention to scholarly detail in no way hampers

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<sup>1</sup>Translated by H.H. Wilson (London: John Murray, 1840). There is also an editing of Wilson's translation by Fitzedward Hall (London: Trübner & Co., 1864-77) in five volumes.

<sup>2</sup>Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, *The Virgin of the World of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (Minneapolis: Wizards Book Shelf, 1977). This is part of the *Secret Doctrine* Reference Series. Wizards Book Shelf (now spelled Bookshelf) is presently located in San Diego.

the student's comprehension of a passage. In restoring what Boris might dub "the family honor" the quotation is found as originally printed, along with a key to a less anthropomorphic teaching of Gnostic antiquity. B. de Z.'s tremendous effort to relocate H.P.B.'s textual references is complemented by the current availability of modern reprints. Today a number of these ancient texts are available through the fine publications of Wizards Bookshelf in San Diego, as well as by such august publishers as Sam Weiser and WisdomBooks.

Another example of changes made in the *B.C.W.* series is explained with regard to changing Cosmos with a "C" to Kosmos with a "K." The editor explains this usage on pages 656–57 of Volume XII, in the crucial Esoteric Teachings Section.

It somewhat distresses this writer to observe Boris de Zirkoff's labor of over fifty years questioned by those who have never retraced his steps through the great University Libraries, or perused his worldwide correspondence in ardent search for documentation. There are after all numerous notes and letters to track down the hundreds of quotations checked. But why repeat that labor merely to satisfy some skeptical whim, or in order to please scholarly pride? It is the message beyond the quotes which counts anyway. Boris knew that message well, as anyone reading his 'forty-year journal, *Theosophia*, can prove to himself.

Perhaps, for the newer students, a brief sojourn into his Theosophical history would be a keen way of appreciating what Boris de Zirkoff accomplished.

Growing up in St. Petersburg Russia, Boris knew little about his illustrious great aunt until around the age of sixteen. Escaping across Finland in the aftermath of the Russian Revolu-

tion, he settled in Stockholm with his mother and step-father. There, at the home of the Russian Consul, he saw *The Secret Doctrine* for the first time. This moment marked a beginning of his life-time dedication to Theosophy.

In 1923, at the age of 21, Boris met Katherine Tingley during one of her European tours as world leader of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society. She invited him to come to her headquarters in America, where at Point Loma his mission to compile the *Collected Writings* of H.P. Blavatsky would surface. There, some months later, he was afforded every chance to further explore H.P.B.'s articles in *The Theosophist*, *Lucifer*, and other Theosophical journals.

Sometime during 1924, while browsing through these journals, B. de Z. resolved to compile H.P.B.'s works into one uniform edition. He could by then see that the bulk of her accomplishment exceeded one-thousand items, aside from her sublime literary tomes. For nearly six further years it was a private venture, involving a search for clues to other mss. from her pen, locating undated or incorrectly dated sources and starting a far-flung correspondence to elicit information not available at Point Loma.

In 1929 Dr. Gottfried de Purucker suggested publishing a uniform edition of H.P.B.'s writings, and formed a small committee to bring out the first volume for her 1931 birth centennial. Since A. Trevor Barker (of Rider & Company) had been working along similar lines, he joined forces with the committee. Due to Barker's reputation as the editor of *The Mahatma Letters*, his name was to be on the title page.

On April 1st of 1930 this became an Inter-Organizational publication venture, dovetailing with the *Fraternization Movement* inspired by G. de Purucker, leader of Point Loma after the passing of Mrs. Tingley. Dr. Annie Besant's



cooperation was secured at the T.S. Convention that July in Geneva, Switzerland. This meant permission to utilize the T.S. Archives at Adyar, and the collaboration of N. Srî Râm, Mary K. Neff, Jinarâjadâsa and others. Meanwhile, The United Lodge of Theosophists kept faithfully in print *The Modern Penarion*, which was the Theosophical Society's initial attempt to collate all of Blavatsky's articles. However, since 1895, nothing further had been accomplished towards the total magnum opus until the 1930 publication venture. Although ready for the printer in the summer of 1931, the first volume was actually published in 1933 as *The Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky*. Volume II also came out in 1933. Volume III appeared in 1935 and Vol. IV in 1936, the year in which a new edition of *Isis Unveiled* was reset. All the Rider edition plates were lost in the London "Blitz"! However, the lost volumes were eventually expanded and printed anew by Boris for the Theosophical Publishing House edition of the series. This was after Boris had moved to Los Angeles and was working independently of any society. Volumes V and VI had been sponsored by the Philosophical Research Society under the auspices of Manly Palmer Hall, and a world-wide H.P. Blavatsky Writings Fund. When T.P.H. of the American Section of the Theosophical Society took over the funding of the entire project, naturally the later reprints bore the imprint of the T.P.H. Boris continued to work independently from his Los Angeles office, with a handful of student helpers and co-workers. As president of the American Section, Joy Mills always gave full support to his efforts, as have all the presidents since the time of Dr. Henry Smith. Stockton Trade Press of Los Angeles was his typesetter. However, after a fire wiped out much of the stock in the mid-seventies, the binding of future volumes was done in the mid-West, where as manager of

T.P.H., Clarence Pedersen was of immense assistance. *The Secret Doctrine* edition of 1978/79 was typeset in Adyar originally, but in 1990 it was decided to buy the plates, so that future editions could be printed in the United States. A reset edition is forthcoming, just as soon as the existing stock at Olcott is depleted.

Boris de Zirkoff died on March 4, 1981, after fifty years of labor, seeing the twelve volumes of *Blavatsky Collected Writings* into print. Subsequently Volumes XIII and XIV have been published from his manuscripts, as well as a combined Index (Vol. XV) which came out this year [1991].

I wish only to add that Boris always gave credit to a wide range of resource people from such co-workers of H.P.B. herself as Henry T. Edge, Bertram Keightley and E.T. Sturdy, to his own early co-workers at Point Loma. These early co-workers, namely Geoffrey Barborka, Grace Knoche and Emmett Small, (and later John and Kirby Van Mater of the Theosophical Society Pasadena) were all involved in the production at one stage or another. The librarians contacted through world-wide correspondence, his own research assistants and co-workers were always meticulously noted. The man's frame was weak but his spirit never remitted towards his inspired mission.

In the year before his passing, Boris dictated an autobiographical sketch which later appeared, along with selections from his magazine *Theosophia*, in a Point Loma Publication entitled: *The Dream that Never Dies*<sup>3</sup> From these articles one can surmise the inner astuteness of the editor and his deep comprehension of Theosophical Philosophy. His reverence for H.P. Blavatsky is

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<sup>3</sup>Compiled and edited by W. Emmett Small (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, Inc., 1983).

unquestionable. In his publisher's note to this 1983 tribute collection, Mr. Emmett Small, the editor states on page v:

As the last living relative of H.P. Blavatsky, Boris de Zirkoff held a unique place in the hearts of all Theosophists, and to them it has always seemed peculiarly appropriate that he should, in the karmic course of 'events, become the compiler-editor of *Blavatsky Collected Writings*.

# Addendum

## Blavatsky Collected Writings

James A. Santucci

**Listed below is the complete bibliographical record for the Blavatsky Collected Writings.**

### Articles

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1874-1878*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume I. Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1966. [Second edition: 1977.]

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Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1888-1889*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume X. First edition. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1964.

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Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1889-1890*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume XII. First edition. Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1980.

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Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: Miscellaneous. Volume XIV*. First edition. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff and assisted by Dara Eklund. Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1985.

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: Cumulative Index*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff and edited by Dara Eklund. Volume XV. Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1991.

## **The Secret Doctrine**

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings, 1888: The Secret Doctrine*. Edited by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume I: *Cosmogogenesis*. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1978.

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings, 1888: The Secret Doctrine*. Edited by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume II: *Anthropogenesis*. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1979.

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings, 1888: The Secret Doctrine*. Edited by Boris de Zirkoff. (Volume III): *General Index and Bibliography*. Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1979.

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Blavatsky, H.P. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings 1877: Isis Unveiled*. Edited by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume II: *Theology*. Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972.

Note: The Rider publications edited by A. Trevor Barker that are mentioned by Ms. Eklund are listed as follows:

Blavatsky, H.P. *The Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky*, edited by A. Trevor Barker. Volume I (1874-1879). London: Rider & Co., 1933.

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Blavatsky, H.P. *The Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky*, edited by A. Trevor Barker. Volume III (1881-1882). London: Rider & Co., 1935.

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# A Lamasery in New York

## Practicing Magical Rites In a Prosaic Eighth-Avenue House An Astonishing Conversation with the Presiding Genius of the Place

[From the *New York World*, Monday 26 March 1877, 1.

H.P. Blavatsky's first masterwork, *Isis Unveiled*, was published in 1877. Interest in the work was particularly intense prior to and following its publication. Michael Gomes, in his detailed account *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement* (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1987, 137f.), observed that the *World* as early as 23 January 1877 contained an article entitled "A Coming Buddhist Book. 'The Veil of Isis' and the Lady Who Is Writing It." Following this article appeared the present article written (according to Gomes, 138) by David Curtis. The Lamasery itself was located at 302 West 47th Street in Manhattan (New York City),

just off 8th Avenue. Walking up one flight of stairs, the visitor came to the door of the apartment which led into a narrow corridor giving entrance to seven rooms. Mme. Blavatsky's 'den' was at the end of the hallway, and its blue glass windows looked out on both the avenue and West 47th Street. (Gomes, 119)

A picture of the building appears on the same page in the book.

The article seemed to have sparked a reaction among the newspaper's readers in the days following the interview. Just what this reaction was will be printed in coming issues, in the hope that some light will be shed on those individuals and groups who took an interest in magic.]

The rose-pink curtains were no longer there, but when the reporter entered, the softly-shaded gas-light shone back by reflection from the same blue-glass window on the same heaps of manuscripts and proof-sheets that lay on Mme. Blavatsky's table when he called before. Mme. Blavatsky, it will be remembered by the *WORLD's* readers, is a Russian countess, who now lives on Eighth avenue in this city, and is Corresponding Secretary of the Theosophical Society - the same which conducted the cremation of the late Baron de Palm.

Mme. Blavatsky's parlor is rather large, but so full of all manner of furniture and articles of virtu as to seem small. Two good-sized bookcases, three library-tables and a piano are the most conspicuous articles of furniture, but a lounge and an infinite number of easy-chairs fill nearly all the remaining space. On the piano is a hideous image of Buddha, on the marble mantel a Chinese god in a gilt shrine. In one window stands an enormous ape, stuffed and grotesquely half-dressed. In another window hung a tuneful canary, on the occasion of the reporter's visit, while half a dozen Javanese sparrows frantically pecked at the bars of their spacious cage on the opposite side of the room. A huge palm-leaf waved in one corner of the room, and a ferocious tiger's head gaped hungrily in another. Heavy tapestry curtains half hid a sacred alcove, and Oriental nick-knacks filled every niche and chink that could be discovered. Within a brief yard of the visitor's elbow reposed the ashes of Baron de

Palm. An Oriental pipe, finished in velvet, gilt filigree and amber, and filled with a seductive mixture of Turkish tobacco and perique, was handed to the visitor (Mme. Blavatsky has a true Russian's indulgence for a smoker's weakness), and lying back in one of the easy-chairs, he listened attentively - as, indeed, he was compelled to do - to understand the words that came rapidly, and with a strong foreign accent, from the lips of the hostess.

Mme. Blavatsky has spent some thirty years of her life in Oriental countries, and, a mystic by nature, has embraced the Buddhic faith. A profound scholar and a remorseless critic, she is fearless in her attacks on what she holds to be error, wherever it is found. The reporter had called to learn about magic.

"Magic?" said Mme. Blavatsky. Well, magic is what science has not learned. That is the reason that people who arrogate to themselves the epithet 'civilized' scoff at magic. They are divided into two classes, those who follow the priests, and those who follow the scientists, and both priests and scientists, being either knaves or fools, teach their followers that magic is flapdoodle, because they are afraid to grapple with it themselves."

"But this is a negative description of magic," urged the interviewer. "Easy enough to say that magic is what science has not learned, but what is that? Is it fair to say that magic is the exercise of power in contravention of known natural laws?"

"No. The natural laws are not to be transgressed. What science calls the natural laws can every one of them be broken, but the real laws of nature cannot. What is magic? You ask. Magic is the great original religion. It has been handed down from father to son among the people who live in 'the cradle of humanity' - the East. Science

and religion quarrel over the age of the world, and religion, as usual, gets the worst of it; but even science is greatly at fault. I find in Max Muller the statement that there are some reasons for supposing that there was a language before the Sanscrit; that there are indications in the formation of that language that would tend to show that it must have been derived from some other language; but he says that there are absolutely no traces of it; that there is not a word of it left, not a monument of its existence. Why, my dear sir, that language, older than the Sanscrit - that tongue which was once the universal language of mankind - is today a written and a spoken language. We know it."

"Who do you mean by 'we?'"

"The adepts."

"What is an adept?"

"An adept is one who has nothing more to learn. I am not yet an adept, but I have taken some steps in the initiation in the great societies of the East in which knowledge of the mysteries is handed down from father to son, from one member of the society to another."

"But you say, 'has nothing more to learn.' Surely life is too short for one man to learn everything."

"Oh! an adept need not know the details of every branch of knowledge. It is only necessary for him to master the principles of knowledge, and he can learn the details of whatever he chooses."

"And there are such men!"

"Undoubtedly. There are even adepts in Europe, but the European mind is not well adapted to grasping subtle knowledge. It is in the East, where the people inherit this knowledge, that it is preserved. You know it has been scientifically proved that the people of Cashmere can distinguish 300 more colors than Europeans can. So the Hindoo has the sixth or seventh sense,

which enables him to perceive mystic truth.

“And does he thus acquire the power to perform the wonders that are told of the magicians of the East?”

“Yes. Magic, you must understand, is of two kinds - white and black. White magic is that produced by the exercise of a true understanding and knowledge of general principles. The holy men of the East are great magicians, but they never perform any of their feats for money. Black magic is a perverted use of a knowledge which is often, indeed generally, imperfect and partial. The jugglers of India and of Egypt, who are hired by travellers to perform their wonders, are men who have learned from their fathers a sort of mechanical knowledge of how to perform tricks - not merely sleight-of-hand feats, but genuine wonders. True magic,” she continued, “comes of an understanding of the constitution of man. As I have said to you before, the nature of man is three-fold. He has a physical body, and an astral body, and a soul. The astral body is the ‘spiritual body’ spoken of by St. Paul - the ‘irrational soul’ of Plato. It is not identical with the physical body, but permeates it, occupying the same position with it in space, although it can be separated from it. This separation, however, is the very last and highest possible achievement of magic. The soul hovers above the head of a man, and is a portion of the Divine Essence. It is God himself. By the separation of the astral and physical bodies the latter is left inert and lifeless, while the former becomes almost omnipotent. We live in one of the lowest of the spheres, but as we progress in successive lives from one sphere to another our astral body becomes purged of its imperfections and grossness, and becomes more and more nearly omnipotent and omniscient. You find the possibility of this separation hinted at in the Hebraic table of the creation, when Jehovah said

that he did not want man to become ‘as one of us.’ This separation has been accomplished in well-attested cases. The British Government tested it by hermetically sealing up the physical body of a Hindoo in a glass coffin, in which it was kept for months, constantly watched night and day by a military guard. When it was taken from the coffin the astral body and the soul rejoined the physical body and apparent life was restored. In the case of the lower animals, who have astral bodies, this separation is easily accomplished. The very shepherds in Thibet - ignorant people - know the trick of doing this. They frequently put to temporary death such of their sheep or cattle as they wish to preserve for any time, and then, when they desire to do so they bring them to life again. I have done this myself a number of times. It is done by a certain manipulation of a certain artery in the neck. I prophesy to you that within a year from now scientists will discover how this is done in the case of the lower animals.”

“You speak of different countries. Is magic commonly practiced in all of them?”

“Yes. Through all the countries of the East there are veritable magicians. In Thibet, in the city of colleges, there are over fifteen hundred lamas engaged in teaching the principles of magic to students. Many of them study to be lamas, and enter the lamaseries, but many more only learn enough for the education of a layman.”

“What is a lamasery?”

“It is to the original religion what its modern copy, the monastery, is to the Roman Catholic. The monastery, with its rules of conduct and general management, is modelled after the Thibetan lamasery, as has been shown by a great number of writers who are accepted as authorities. And the lamaseries have suffered from the same abuses that have crept into the monasteries of the Christian. The Dalai-lama who was born,



or rather who was inspired, in the thirteenth century, caused over 500,000 unworthy lamas to be driven out from the lamaseries. They were unworthy men, who used their profession merely as a means of livelihood. You know the Dalai-lama is the divinely inspired head of the Church. When a Dalai-lama dies Buddha enters the body of another human being - generally that of a child less than a year old. Some of the European ambassadors who have paid their respects to new Dalai-lamas in different centuries have recorded their amazement at being received by an infant of a few months with the courtesy and grave demeanor of an old man."

"But of the actual operation of magic - the working of wonders - what have you seen?"

"What have I seen? Look there!" And Mme. Blavatsky pointed to a window - not the one with a blue-glass sash, but another.

The reporter looked, and promptly dropped his pipe. Across the window was passing a shadow. That of itself was not remarkable; but the shadow was not cast from the inside and there were certain reasons why it seemed impossible that it could have been cast from the outside.

It was a clear, dark night. The only lights visible outside the windows were the street gas-lights, the stars and a few night lights of other keepers of late hours besides the party in Mme. Blavatsky's room. None of these lights could by any possibility have cast the shadow that was seen, no single one was brighter or nearer than many others, and the shadow was as distinct as if cast by the noonday sun. Then, again, the shadow - if it was really a shadow - must have been cast by a body very near the window, for it was the exact profile image of a man, not distorted or disproportionate in any particular, and exactly life size. And another reason why it must have been cast by a body near the window lies in the

fact that it was a second-story window, and there was no place nearer than the width of Eighth avenue where the body could have been, excepting a ledge below the window, about eighteen inches wide. And the reporter will make affidavit that no solid body passed along that ledge when the shadow passed across the window.

Of the six persons who sat in the room one besides the reporter was a skeptic. All looked carefully. All saw the shadow, and four asserted and two admitted the facts detailed as showing the strange character of the apparition.

"Colonel Olcott," said Mme. Blavatsky, after the examination had been made, "please pull down the curtain." Colonel Olcott complied and Mme. Blavatsky left the room leaving the company in silent and not altogether comfortable expectancy.

When she returned she was asked, "What was that?"

"It was a friend of mine, an adept who lives on the Mediterranean and who is this moment at home. You will hear his music-box in a few minutes."

"Did you mean that it was really he and that he has returned to the Mediterranean already?"

"I do. It was his astral body. He comes here frequently, and generally appears inside the room. I don't know why he did not come in here to-night unless it was because you were here. I went into the next room and spoke with him. Listen! Do you hear music?"

The reporter did not, and for a full minute all was silent. Then there came the sound of a music-box playing an unfamiliar air.

"It is a very old box," said Mme. Blavatsky, "and I wish it played more than two old tunes. They set me almost wild at times, do those two tunes."

“But is that the sound of a music-box that is playing on the shores of the Mediterranean?”

“It is. You carry sound by means of the telephone. All that is necessary to do is to establish the current. We can do that without a wire. But this is nothing unusual. You will see and hear many such things if you come often to this house. And you may read of far more wonderful things in the books of travel in the East. I have seen a man throw a large ball of cord into the air which unwound as it ascended, one end being fastened to the ground. As the ball unwound it disappeared in the clouds and the cord remained stationary. In a few moments the man sent a little boy up the cord, pretending that it was to find out what held the other end up. The boy went up and up, till he was entirely lost to sight. And he stayed up so long that the man pretended to become enraged and climbed up after him with a drawn sword in his hand, and he, too, disappeared from sight. And presently down fell a bloody foot, and then another, then a leg, and then different pieces of the boy, all bleeding. We dipped our handkerchiefs in the blood to see if it was really blood, and it was. At last the boy's head fell down, and presently the man climbed down, all bloody, and still simulating rage. He collected the fragments of the boy that lay around and threw them in a heap on the ground. Then he threw a cloth over the pieces, and the boy instantly jumped up, alive and well. The man and the boy were entirely naked, and the trick, if it was a trick, as you will say it was, was done on an open plain, out of doors. I say it was actually done. There were hundreds of spectators. That is the kind of things that Eastern magicians do.”

“But why is it, if such things are true, and not tricks, that we of the Western countries do not know more of them? Are we not as intelligent as those of the East?”

“Our Western civilization is young yet,” replied the occultist, “and, as I have said, the mind of the Caucasian is not as well adapted to the perception of subtle truths. But there are many Europeans who are real adepts, and there is quite a number of persons in New York who are studying occultism. Some of them only study it philosophically, but some are practicing it. There is one who has several times accomplished the separation of his astral body from his physical body, though only for a few moments. But I can make all this much clearer to you after a time by showing you a copy of the book I am writing - ‘The Veil of Isis’ - than I can do in conversation.”

“Is this coterie of students then a lamasery?” asked the reporter.

“You may term it so,” said the mystic, “though technically it is not exactly that. The students are mastering slowly the knowledge possessed by the lamas, but do not expect to become lamas themselves.”

The Oriental pipe had gone out again. The cuckoo sang “one”. The ape grinned in ghastly fashion and (or the reporter fancied it) nodded a derisive “good night”. Buddha's serenity was now almost slumber, and groping their way slowly back from what seemed dreamland, and yet was indubitably a reality, the party dispersed.

# Lamaseries

[From the New York World, Monday, 26 March 1877. This is an editorial that is based on the article "A Lamasery in New York" and found on page 4 of the same issue.]

A lamasery is a place where lamas are kept, and if Mme. Blavatsky knows what she is talking about, it is the school of strange knowledge. It is the home of the Eastern priesthood and the seminary of all magic arts. There the students learn to speak the mystic language older than Sanscrit in which the adepts throughout the world converse with each other. There they acquire knowledge until they have nothing more to learn. There they are taught to distinguish between white and black magic. There they analyze the human being into his astral and physical bodies and acquire the art of separating them for indefinite intervals, throwing the subject into a trance like a certain tribe of Western Indians who deposit their pappooses at the bottom of a lake during winter and fish them out again in good condition in the spring. The graduate of the lamasery flits at will from place to place, and communicates with friends across the sea to the sound of sweet music. In fact the lamasery appears to be far in advance of the ordinary American university, and if the professors in those institutions would consent to advertise in our newspapers, there can be no doubt that Harvard, Yale and Columbia would be deserted for the more erudite colleges of the East. Why are not respectable fathers of families furnished with catalogues of the leading lamaseries of the world? It might be well too that as a

matter of guarantee some of the prizemen from these institutions should travel through Europe and America, giving exhibitions of their wonderful acquirements. We should like to see an adept seat himself upon a piece of magic carpet and soar away through the clouds, or touch a corpse and recall it to life, or turn a rod into a serpent or build a stately palace by dulcet sounds. It would be pleasant to hear one of those men who have nothing more to learn deliver a course of lectures at the Cooper Institute. The spiritualists and magicians that have heretofore come among us seem ignorant of everything but the fact that others possess ineffable knowledge, and incapable of performing any feats worthy of the attention of sensible people. They can tilt a table or produce cracked tunes, but that is all. Let us by all means have a genuine Senior Wrangler from a lamasery; a wizard with troops of genii at his command; a man who can bestride a broomstick and outpace an Arabian courser; a necromancer who can smooth the wrinkles from the cheek of age. We want an Owen Glendower sort of personage, at whose nativity.

"The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,  
Of burning cressets, and at whose birth,  
The frame and huge foundation of the earth  
Shaked like a coward."

We are weary of all pale and sickly imitations.

# Book Review

James A. Santucci

## **RADICAL SPIRITS: SPIRITUALISM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA.**

By Ann Braude. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989. Pp. xiii + 268. \$24.95.

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the voluminous *History of Woman Suffrage* (edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony) astutely observed that Spiritualism was “the only religious sect in the world...that has recognized the equality of woman....” Now, more than a century later, an assistant professor of religion at Carleton College (Minnesota), Ann Braude, has undertaken the task of uncovering the reasons behind this curious bond between the Spiritualist and the Women’s Rights movements. Basing her information on original source material located in archives around the country as well as already published primary and secondary articles and monographs (the complete list in the Reference section of the book covers seventeen pages), Dr. Braude apparently has left no stone unturned in shedding insight on the attitude, motivation, and involvement of women in this quasi-religious movement.

The book covers a number of themes and questions that naturally arise from this interrelationship. Since the core of Spiritualism is the role of mediumship, Dr. Braude discusses the conditions that allowed women to function as mediums, thereby leading the way for them to function outside their traditional sphere of activity, the

hearth and home. Furthermore, she examines the results of this activity on the broader women’s rights movement. Included in her study is what she considers the chief inhibiting factor to a woman’s basic rights: the institution of marriage as practiced and understood in the nineteenth century (Chapter Five). The following chapter (Six) considers the fostering of alternative views of health and the practice of medicine designed to advance women’s health and to help improve their overall position in society. The next chapter discusses the decline of Spiritualism in the 1870s as a social force advancing the position of women in society and the two movements that competed with it from this time on: Christian Science and Theosophy.

Although the beginnings of Spiritualist ideas can be traced back to earliest antiquity, the origin of modern Spiritualism as a Western phenomenon is recognized to have begun with the Hydesville rappings as witnessed by Margaret and Kate Fox. Why this event is considered the beginning of the Movement is, according to the author, due in large part to the interest and persistence of two Quaker dissidents and abolitionists, Amy and Isaac Post, and their colleagues in the Congregational Friends of Waterloo, New York. Their efforts, coupled with the Quaker belief that religious truth resided as an “inner light” in all humans allowing for communication between the human and divine realm, sustained interest in the Fox sisters’ (Margaret, Kate, and shortly thereafter, Leah) mediumship. The formal

conjunction between what was to be called Spiritualism and the issue of the “social, civil, and religious’ rights of women” (57) was formally recognized at the Seneca Falls Convention. From that time to the 1850s and beyond, Spiritualism and women’s rights were closely bound to the abolitionist movement and dissident Quakerism. Radical abolitionists, for instance, were attracted to both Spiritualism and women’s rights because of the presence of the principle of individualism within the latter movements (60f.); disaffected Quakers similarly found a freedom of conscience in Spiritualism.

The success of women in Spiritualism was in part answered by the happy coincidence of the main function of Spiritualism, mediumship, occurring within the accepted domain of women’s activities: the home and family. Their acknowledged responsibility therein was to preserve the family’s morals and to offer comfort and solace at the time of death of family members, the latter event a common occurrence in the home. If I understand Dr. Braude correctly, she implies that a number of interacting sentiments - home, family, death, the American attitude of heaven, morality - all associated with the woman’s sphere of activity, helped contribute to the acceptance of women as mediums. Indeed, one Spiritualist writer, unidentified in the book, observed that spirit communication was a decidedly feminine (here implying passivity and the ‘negative’ force) property, a characteristic that was not necessarily restricted to the feminine gender.(23) Many within the medical profession recognized this association and so attempted to provide professional, albeit bizarre and ludicrous judgments for it. One Dr. R. Frederic Marvin offered this typical contemporary interpretation in his book *The Philosophy of Spiritualism and the Pathology and*

*Treatment of Mediomania* (N.Y.: Asa K. Butts & Co., 1874): mediumship is a form of insanity, which he labels “mediomania”, brought about by the “natural pathology of female organs” (159); it sometimes afflicts men though not as frequently. Come again? In the same vein, the good doctor writes elsewhere:

Utromania frequently results in mediomania.... The angle at which the womb is suspended in the pelvis frequently settles the whole question of sanity or insanity. Tilt the organ a little forward—introvert it, and immediately the patient forsakes her home, embraces some strong ultraism—Mormonism, Mesmerism, Fourierism, Socialism, oftener Spiritualism. She becomes possessed by the idea that she has some startling mission in the world. She forsakes her home, her children, her duty, to mount the rostrum and proclaim the peculiar virtues of free-love, elective affinity, or the reincarnation of souls. (160)

It is little wonder that Spiritualists sought alternative practices in place of orthodox medicine! Health reform, dress reform (women’s clothes were designed to be inhibitive to keep them in their proper place, the home), gymnastics, vegetarianism, and abstinence from tea, coffee, tobacco, alcohol, and drugs (151) were all designed to relieve women of their general state of ill health. The most active challenge and alternative to orthodox medicine, however, was the appearance of healing mediums, in the main women, who provided hope in areas where ordinary medicine was inadequate.

Another inhibiting factor for women’s rights was the institution of marriage, the laws of which deemed by many Spiritualists as robbing “the wife of her child, her property, of her name,

and of her individuality.” (118) This opinion led to the expected charge by their detractors that the Movement advocated “free love.” It is not unexpected, therefore, that reference to the extreme, antimarriage position of Victoria Woodhull naturally is raised. (136f.) Dr. Braude observes, however, that the term denoted different things to different people. It could, for instance, either refer to an opposition to the institution of marriage or simply against those specific marriage laws that discriminated against women (127), depending upon whether individuals regarded the phrase in a negative or positive light. Different interpretations could be also based upon the position of the genders: men for the most part considering free love in unfettered sexual contact, women considering it in many cases as a “freedom not to love....” (140) Without substantiating evidence, however, one must question just how common such interpretations were; furthermore, the second interpretation from the outlook of the genders, may bespeak more of a preconception, perhaps even a decidedly feminist bias, on the author’s part rather than the actual sentiments of the genders at the time.

Chapter Seven brings the book full circle by tracing the decline of Spiritualism and those feminine qualities that were evident in the early decades of the Movement. “Sensational” mediumship replaced trance mediumship from the 1870s on, with many exercising it for personal gain. In some ways, this chapter is the least satisfying because Dr. Braude seems to let her ideology get the better of her. Does she appraise the decline of Spiritualism as a reform movement to attempts to organize it: organization regarded by the contemporary medium Lizzie Doten as a masculine, positive characteristic, something that the “spirits were averse to...” (165). Is such a

decline to be construed as the same as the decline of the Movement itself, anchored as it was in mediumship? This seems to be so, since the rest of the chapter includes a discussion of the two main rivals of Spiritualism, Christian Science and Theosophy, and the ascent of sensational mediumship, both casting considerable suspicion on the validity of mediumship and hence on the Movement itself and not just women’s place within it.

This last observation highlights what I believe to be the one shortcoming of the book. All too often monographs that profile individuals or sub-groups within the greater society, in this instance, women in Spiritualism, have a tendency to overemphasize or exaggerate their role. To a small degree, this is evident in the present work. In addition to the confusion that is evident in Chapter Seven, one can call into question the reason for the success of the Hydesville phenomena in launching and sustaining the Spiritualist Movement. Dr. Braude’s explanation conforms to her general thesis but it is not necessarily the only reason for its success. No mention is made of the speculation that Hydesville was provoked by a “hidden hand” or secret society of individuals whose main purpose was to change the world view of Western civilization. Such a view, discussed in an earlier issue of *Theosophical History* (III/2) by Joscelyn Godwin, may not be the accepted explanation in many circles, but it nevertheless deserves mention. To ignore alternate theories and interpretations imparts a propagandist air to the account.

Regardless of these weaknesses, *Radical Spirits* is a fascinating account of nineteenth century Spiritualism and the women who played a major role in it. It should take its rightful place

in feminist and cultural studies as one of the more balanced and insightful accounts of the role of Spiritualism in furthering women's rights.