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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

A Quarterly Journal of Research

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April 1993–July 1993 (Double Issue)

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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.

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\* \* \* \* \*

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

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# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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# Editor's Comments

## In this issue

Professor Joscelyn Godwin's research in English archives have uncovered some startling documents dating back to the 1870s. In the last issue he introduced one such document of a highly controversial nature (more about this below). In the present issue Professor Godwin presents a hitherto unpublished letter from H. P. Blavatsky to Rev. William Stainton Moses, dated 16 November 1875. Unearthed in the Library of the United Grand Lodge of England, Freemasons' Hall (London), the letter is important because it reveals her Theosophical views exactly at the time of the founding of the Theosophical Society (17 November). The date of this letter is confirmed by her closing remarks: "To night is the inauguration [*sic*] meeting of our Theosophical Society and Oldcott [*sic*] is busy with his address for he is elected President and poor me corresponding secretary of the society . . ."

A number of illuminating articles also appear in the current issue, two of which were first presented at the International Theosophical History Conference (ITHC) last year. The first, "The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society" by John Cooper, is based on material not accessible to public scrutiny. This Society, in a period of "indrawal" since 1935, claimed a number of distinguished Theosophists over the course of its activity—the Sanskritist Charles Johnston, Dr. Archibald Keightley, and "Jasper Niemand" (Julia Campbell Ver Planck)—and produced one of the more noteworthy magazines of

the Theosophical Movement, *The Theosophical Quarterly*.

The second article, "Theodor Reuss as Founder of Esoteric Orders," is the second part of at least six articles that its author, P.R. König, has prepared for the journal: the first part appearing in IV/3. This article is primarily a presentation of original source material containing biographical information on Reuss and his activities within the OTO (Order of Oriental Templars) and related organizations.

Readers no doubt are familiar with John Oliphant's highly-acclaimed account of Edward Arthur Wilson in his book, *Brother Twelve: The Incredible Story of Canada's False Prophet* (reviewed in IV/2). His article, "The Teachings of Brother XII," was presented in summary form at the ITHC. Unlike the book, Mr. Oliphant has added sources and provides further information on E.A. Wilson's teachings, which are strongly Theosophical in character.

The publication of Sylvia Cranston's *H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement* has been recognized as this year's major publishing event by Theosophists in 1993. For this reason, the journal will be publishing two reviews: one by Dr. John Algeo, the other by the author of a previous biography on H.P.B. (*Blavatsky and Her Masters*), Jean Overton Fuller. The next issue will also include a third review by Robert Boyd.

## For What Purpose?

The *Book Notes* section contains a review of poet, literary critic, and Blakean scholar Kathleen Raine's *Autobiographies* by Robert Ellwood. Those interested in Dr. Raine's insights may wish to obtain the Spring 1992 issue of *Gnosis*, containing therein an interview conducted by its editor-in-chief Jay Kinney with Dr. Raine entitled "Imagination and the Sacred" (pages 50 to 55). Also included in the same section is John Clifford Holt's *Buddha in the Crown*, a book chosen for review because of the unusual circumstances in which the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara has developed in the ethos of Sri Lanka.

Paul Johnson's review of Noël Richard-Nafarre's *Helena P. Blavatsky ou la réponse du Sphinx* resulted in a lengthy retort by Mr. Richard-Nafarre. This, and Mr. Johnson's rejoinder, are included herein.

An announcement by Leslie Price regarding the discovery of documents in the India Office on the possibility of Madame Blavatsky being a Russian spy appears in the *Communications* section. This is a major discovery that reveals no direct evidence that H.P.B. was in fact a spy. But such a suspicion seems to be confirmed by a letter supposedly written by H.P.B. herself to the Director of the Third Section. Therein, she offered her services to the Russian government. The letter in question was published (in Russian) in *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 6 (1988): 111-12 and partially translated in Maria Carlson's "*No Religion Higher Than Truth*": *A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia, 1875-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 214, note 6. It is obvious that a careful study of both the India Office material and Russian letter must be conducted before any definite conclusions can be ascertained.

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A document appearing in the last issue of *Theosophical History* (IV/4-5) summarizing E. Gerry Brown's account of H.P. Blavatsky's attempt to commit acts of psychic murder against Brown and his family no doubt will be upsetting to Blavatskyphiles. Indeed, one correspondent sent a lengthy reply expressing his displeasure over its publication. Although the letter will appear in the next issue with Professor Godwin's response, the document's iconoclastic nature demands a more immediate clarification of the editor's opinions and motives for its inclusion in the journal. Readers may remember that in the IV/1 issue of *Theosophical History* I set forth on the editorial page my conviction that the journal's purpose was to consider Theosophical history (with an emphasis on history) in an impartial and scholarly manner. Historical journals by nature must exhibit complete freedom of expression within the purview of their areas of investigation. For this reason, it is my firm belief that to deny publication of an article or document based upon the biases of either the editors or the journal's audience would convert the journal into a theologically- or dogmatically-oriented publication. Some may wish to see more discretion as to what appears or what not appears in the journal, but if we mean by discretion the avoidance of any controversial topic or opinion that disclaims one's received assumptions about an individual or event, then surely whatever credibility the journal possesses as an open forum for the free exchange of ideas has been lost. To be sure, articles and documents will appear that will offend some person or group. Come what may, historians, at least the camp to which I subscribe, do not presume to judge the dramas or actors of the past.

I would rather follow the example of Herodotus or Thucydides—both of whom were for the most part non-judgmental—rather than a Livy or a Tacitus, the latter stating that history's main goal was to "rescue merit from oblivion." Although the noted Oxford philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin observed in his *Historical Inevitability* (Oxford, 1954, 52-53) that the "invocation to historians to suppress even that minimal degree of moral or psychological evaluation . . . seems to me to rest upon a confusion of the aims and methods of the humane studies with those of natural science," for what purpose should the historian impose his own judgment? Analysis and interpretation are, it is true, part and parcel of historical investigation; making moral judgments, however, are established on views that have little or no historical basis, therefore, not, in my opinion, part and parcel of the historical method. Justice Holmes once remarked, "I prefer champagne to ditch-water, but I see no reason to suppose the cosmos does."

The inductive process and moral judgements, however, are very often confused in the arts and sciences, history included. As a case in point, time and time again reviewers praise or condemn books on the sole basis of agreeing or disagreeing with the thesis of the book. This approach offers no insight into the book's worth; what it does do is to reveal the bias(es) of the reviewer.

The historical method, in my view, involves the elimination of moralistic judgments but retains interpretive judgments based on inductive methods. The two should not be confused any more than the method of that other Holmes, Sherlock, being mistaken for a moral judgment rather than solutions based upon material evidence.

As an history journal, *Theosophical History*

retains three specific roles: (1) the publication of articles that attempt to shed light on the past, (2) the publication of documents for the purpose of expanding the data base, (3) and a forum for the free and open exchange of ideas. *Apropos* the second purpose, who can deny that the augmentation of *primary* material can only help the historian? To paraphrase Veronica Wedgwood, the historian unlike any other writer is constrained by the documentation available. Such a limitation should caution the historian not to overstep the bounds of prudent interpretation. If not, what is purported to be a historical narrative becomes more like docudrama, a phenomenon that is emerging in studies on current affairs and in biographies to an increasing degree.

Now to the document in question. If it is true that the chief objection to its publication is to place H.P.B. in a bad light, then such an objection is but a reflection of a dogmatic or ideological attitude that has no place in this journal. If the suspicion centers on the *motives* of either Professor Godwin or myself—namely, to deliberately present H.P.B. in a bad light—such an allegation could not be further from the truth as our publishing records will attest. Our overriding concern was twofold: to add to the bank of documents to which historians can turn in order to present a more complete account of the times, and to attempt to identify the writer of the document. In addition, it was also our desire to initiate an informed discussion regarding the circumstances surrounding the writing of the document. This is, after all, one of the roles of the journal.

Of immediate concern, however, is the connection of this document with Brown's relations with Olcott and Blavatsky around 1875 and early 1876 (I thank Ted Davy, former editor of the *Canadian Theosophist* for reminding me of Michael

Gomes' important article, "Studies in Early American Theosophical History: I. Elbridge Gerry Brown and the Boston 'Spiritual Scientist'" (*Canadian Theosophist*, 69/6 [Jan.-Feb. 1989: 121-129 and 70/1 [Mar.-Apr. 1989]: 14-17). Brown's journal, *The Spiritual Scientist*, was heavily supported by H.P.B. and Olcott to the tune of perhaps \$631 if the amount written in the second volume of H.P.B.'s Scrapbook is correct. The journal was obviously of crucial importance to the two founders of the Theosophical Society for publicity purposes. Indeed, in June of 1875 Serapis (as pointed out by Professor Godwin) wished for Brown to be the third member of a Triad that was to advance the cause of the Lodge (of the Masters) in America (Gomes: 121-22). By the beginning of 1876, however, a falling out between Brown on the one hand and Olcott and H.P.B. on the other occurred. In the Scrapbook containing the 1875 circular "Important to Spiritualists," H.P.B. annotates: "Several hundred dollars, out of our pockets were spent on behalf of the Editor [Brown], and he was made to pass through a minor 'diksha.' This proving of no avail—The Theosophical Society was established. The man might have become a POWER, he preferred to remain an ASS . . ." (Gomes: 123) What was the reason for this abrupt change in attitude of the Editor? Could our document shed any light on the sudden turn of events? Perhaps Brown's initial importance prior to the founding of the Society led to the document portraying H.P.B. in an overbearing and imperious manner because so much was at stake. What were her reasons for being so adamantly opposed to the marriage? Who was his future wife, who is described as "one of the most sensitive and perfect mediums I [the interviewer] have known . . ." On a mundane matter, when were they married? This would obviously pinpoint the time

that these events occurred. Can we assume that much of the description was embellished? If so, what does this tell us about the Browns? Or about H.P.B.'s attitude toward Spiritualistic phenomena? A careful reading of the document suggests caution in accepting every statement *verbatim*. It is obviously written for the consumption of a Spiritualist audience and not the general public. Consequently, Brown going into detail about the number of spirit entities involved in the assaults, his conversations with them and his eventual winning the spirit band over to his side would naturally be accepted by Spiritualists. In conclusion, the document is significant, not so much because of the reference to H.P.B. attempting psychic murder on the Browns; more significantly, it gives us some insight into the personal life and personality of E. Gerry Brown, his relations with Olcott and H.P.B., and the times in which he lived. The document therefore is a fairly significant contribution to our knowledge of a generally unknown player in early Theosophical history. If it induces the historian to investigate his life, then the document will have served its purpose.

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# Book Notes

**AUTOBIOGRAPHIES.** By Kathleen Raine. London: Skoob Publishing 1991. Pp. x + 372. £12.99. Distributed by Gazelle Book Services Ltd., Falcon House, Queen Square, Lancaster LA1 1RN England.

This rambling but often evocative and intensely interesting autobiography of one of the most fascinating figures in modern literature, the poet and Blakean scholar Kathleen Raine, may be of particular interest to studies of Theosophical history. Although not a Theosophist, Raine was influenced by that tradition; she moved in some of the same circles and explored some of the same philosophical terrain as Theosophists of her era. For many years she edited the journal *Temenos*, an important venue of traditional spiritual learning.

The present volume really combines three previously published autobiographical writings: *Farewell Happy Fields* (1973), a bittersweet recollection of childhood in a respectable but stifling lower middle class Methodist home, and her idealistic first love; *The Land Unknown* (1973), the story of a gifted and desperately searching student at Cambridge in the late 1920s, including her brief conversion to Roman Catholicism; and *The Lion's Mouth* (1977), the narrator's life as a maturing writer finding her own voice, hewing fervently to it, and at the same time engaging in her monumental studies of Blake and his sources in the esoteric tradition. As she writes, "The one thing I

had retained from my upbringing on the Romantic Poets and the Protestant religion was an absolute belief in the inner light of inspiration as the one sure guide." Indeed, in her wide ranging quest for wisdom she found and registered the line from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which says, "It is better to perish in one's own law [*dharmā*]; it is perilous to follow the law of another."

Yet in this quest for the personal voice Raine, unlike certain others, realized that individual expression is only enhanced when it resonates with the deepest wisdom known to others. She was led to finally believe that a master key to wisdom was in fact contained in a particular tradition, one very much related to the sources of Yeats and Blake. She came to that awakening first in reading René Guénon, whose works "profoundly changed my outlook; for in Guénon I first found clearly defined that 'knowledge absolute' of which every metaphysical tradition is an expression." The stance of the "Neo-Traditionalism" of Guénon and his followers is in some (though not all) significant points comparable to Theosophy's view of the "ancient wisdom." It is of telling interest that, setting foot on this pilgrimage, Raine "now sought for wisdom not in Academe but in Watkin's bookshop"—Mr. Watkin's "theosophical bookshop in Cecil Court—that University Library of lost knowledge—became for me, as for others before and since, a shrine of wisdom." Worshipping at this shrine, "little by little, I found how great is that literature of exact spiritual

knowledge, unheeded by literary critics and literary historians alike,” and she became convinced, as she sought to demonstrate in her great work *Blake and Tradition*, that this poet and others, did “possess this knowledge and [spoke] that royal language.”

More recently Kathleen Raine has published another autobiographical volume, *India Seen Afar*, based on journeys to India and explorations of its culture. All these works can be highly recommended. Her wandering and wordy style, and her outspoken (and sometimes unfashionable) opinions, may exhilarate some readers and put off others—which will no doubt bother Kathleen Raine not at all. One distinctly senses that she writes what she wants to write for those who want to read it, and that’s that. But she is a person definitely worth knowing, both in her own right and for the illumination she casts on the modern fate of wisdom in the theosophical lineage.

### **Robert S. Ellwood**

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### **BUDDHA IN THE CROWN: AVALOKITEŚVARA IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITIONS OF SRI LANKA.**

By John Clifford Holt. New York and Oxford:  
Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. xii + 269. ISBN  
0-19-506418-6. \$39.95.

Sri Lanka is correctly regarded as a bastion of Theravāda Buddhism, but there is abundant evidence that Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism was also present on the island. One significant piece

of evidence for this is the presence of icons of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Mahāyāna teaching indeed appeared in the more receptive Abhayagiri monastery in Anurādhapura as early as the third century C.E., during the reign of Vohārika Tissa (224-236 C.E.), but it was not until the eighth century that sculptures of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, appeared on the island, some three hundred years after the emergence of his cult in the northern Indian city of Mathurā.

What occurred after Avalokiteśvara’s introduction in Sri Lanka is of special interest to Professor Holt, a noted scholar of Theravāda at Bowdoin College. Specifically, his main concern is that of religious assimilation. Such assimilation involves an understanding of the relationship between *laukika* and *lōkōttara*—This-Worldly and Other Worldly, mundane and supra mundane, conditionally- and unconditionally-oriented—that is so prominent in Sinhala Buddhism, aptly expressed in political terms in the following expression: “The country (*laukika*) exists for the sake of the religion (*lōkōttara*).” It is within this framework that the symbolism of Avalokiteśvara is understood: ascetic determinism and altruistic compassion expressing the *lōkōttara* category, royal power the *laukika*.

An examination of the iconographical evidence suggests that there was a shift from *lōkōttara*- to *laukika*-orientation from the Early Medieval period (eighth century C.E.), at which time he was viewed more as an ascetic, to the Late Medieval period of Kandyen culture (thirteenth to fifteenth C.E.) when he takes on more of a royal demeanor in the form of the national “guardian” deity Nātha Dēviyō. In Chapter Four, Holt emphasizes the assimilation of Avalokiteśvara to Nātha and his subsequent transformation to *laukika*

concerns once the Mahāyāna identity of the Bodhisattva was forgotten, thus converting him more into a “boon-conferring, protective, and regional deity” (104) after being incorporated into the Sinhala Buddhist sociopolitical cosmos during the Gompola period (1341-1415).

Holt’s thesis regarding this assimilation is quoted as follows:

. . . It is my contention that the Mahāyāna identity of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Kandyan up-country was eventually forgotten over the centuries as he became more and more identified as a *laukika*-oriented, boon-conferring, protective, and regional deity. Concomitantly, his name was shortened simply to Nātha, a general term of currency in south India meaning “protector” that aptly describes his active *laukika* role to his devotees. In the fourteenth century . . . he was incorporated into the religion of the court as the result of his local importance as a regional up-country deity as well as his newly recognized importance in the legitimation scenario of Bodhisattva/god/king kingship. That is, the cult of Avalokiteśvara was revived in Sinhala circles during the fourteenth century due to the twin pressures of imported international Buddhist theories of royal legitimation on the one hand, . . . and by virtue of the fact that the Sinhala cult of Avalokiteśvara had devolved into the local cult of Nātha in the Kandyan region. Both currents converged during the latter part of the fourteenth century to form the bases of the Nātha cult.

In what is perhaps the most important—and intriguing—chapter of the book, “The Mythicization of History” (Chapter 5), the author sets out to examine how Avalokiteśvara-transformed (Nātha Dēviyō) becomes reoriented to a more *lōkōttara*-profile in the myth *Nātha*

*Deviyange Tābime Upata*, recounting Nātha Dēviyō’s defeat at the hands of the foreign upstart Piṭiye (now considered a *baṇḍāra*-class deity, so one of twelve ranked below the four national deities and certainly more *laukika* in nature), whose entrance and dislocation of Nātha is further narrated in the *Doḷaha Dēviyangē Kāvi* (“The Poem of the 12 Gods”). Holt gives a masterful presentation of how these myths explain not only Nātha’s elevated, *lōkōttara* status but also the socioeconomic events that surround the immigration of the Indian Tamils to the Kandyan cultural region (137) and the domestication of jungle lands for rice paddy cultivation. (138)

Avalokiteśvara’s re-elevation to *lōkōttara* status now makes it possible for his eventual identification with the Buddha-to-be, Maitreya (Maitrī). (133) His association and later identification with Maitreya and Maitreya’s subsequent demythologizing transformation in contemporary Sri Lanka at the hands of “Buddhist modernists” and reformers are the subject of the concluding chapter. The dangers of the Avalokiteśvara/Nātha/Maitrī cult of being eclipsed by the modernists’ efforts to create Pāli canonical Buddhism among the laity on the one hand and the resurgence of the “spirit religion” on the other are also briefly placed in perspective.

All in all, this is an important book for a number of reasons, the most obvious being the assimilation of a Mahāyāna Bodhisattva with a Sinhala national deity and with the Buddha-to-be. More significant, perhaps, is the author’s integration of local and popular concerns, with what is usually described as the Other-Worldly or *nibbanic* form of Buddhism. In this regard, Holt adds to a small but increasing body of works that are slowly redirecting Buddhist studies from transnational to national issues.

**James Santucci**

# Communications

## An announcement from Leslie Price

*Associate editor Leslie Price reports that a number of documents were discovered in the Oriental and India Office Collections (British Library on the subject of Madame Blavatsky being a Russian spy. Mr. Price wrote the following note accompanying the documents:*

The documents attached are part of the material found in the investigation of the India Office Library started in March 1993, and are being made available before publication to interested scholars. You may cite and quote from them in your work, but you are asked not to publish them without agreement from those preparing them for publication. They are Tony Hern of London, who found them, and Paul Johnson of the United States who is following up transatlantic references. Blavatsky Trust of London paid for and owns the original photocopies. Arrangements for full publication will be discussed with James Santucci, Editor of Theosophical History and with the Trust.

The main documents are a report from the British Consul in New York in 1879 rejecting the idea that Madame Blavatsky was a Russian agent; and a report from the Ottoman minister in Washington, shortly before, suggesting that she was.

*The documents include a letter from the Turkish Imperial Legation in Washington dated 24 December 1878, dispatches dated 4 February 1879 from Constantinople, 28 February 1879 from the Foreign Office (two in number), 8 May 1879, 10 May 1879, 3 June 1879 (3) and 3 July 1879.*

An announcement regarding their eventual publication will be included in the next issue.

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## A Reply to Mr. Paul Johnson's Review of N. Richard-Nafarre's "Helena Blavatsky ou la Réponse du Sphinx."

Paul Johnson's kind remarks about the qualities he recognizes in my biography of Helena Blavatsky are soon followed by harsh judgments concerning the credibility of my deontology which I cannot let pass without an appropriate answer.

Mr. Johnson's first reproach is of an epistemological nature. He points out to a lack of a discussion which should have stemmed, according to him, from the confrontation of all the matters at issue concerning the sources of H.P.B.'s life through all the previous writers. This lack of reference is analyzed by Mr. Johnson as the result

of “*baste*,” and he concludes to “*a lack of thorough, objective research and documentation*” undermining my “*biography’s scholar credibility*.”

On the one hand, the fact that I do not refer directly to some “*points discussed by previous writers*” and, consequently, do not mention them, does not signify I did not know about them. If I did not find it convenient to retain these ideas in a very syncretical work, it is only because I was not convinced of the credibility or interest of the materials they provide.

Thus, I wish to make it clear that, as I duly declared in my introduction, my purpose has never been to produce a biography which could be “*a significant contribution to scholarship*.” My only purpose was to propose to a large public a synthesis, in a narrative mode, referring exclusively to the *first-hand* and *direct* sources available, that is to say those of direct witnesses. All these sources are stated and should allow the reader to control and judge by himself about the credibility of my standpoint, which I explain in notes most of the time. Extended discussions about the theses of each previous author was not conceived as a necessary part of a *popular work* written without any pretension of being a “*scholar*” contribution and of adding new materials founded on “*sources not drawn upon by one’s predecessors*.” This is certainly the limit of my work—a very deliberate limit indeed.

This standpoint gives to Mr. Johnson the impression that I am a “*true believer defending the faith*.” This may be the result of my final frame of mind which Mr. Johnson is perfectly right to contest but that I maintain: all testimonies or considerations of the “*witnesses*” and commentators having known *Helena Blavatsky*—would they be friends or enemies—founded my conviction

of H.P.B.’s “*innocence*.” This is by no means a pre-established faith. I have just become gradually convinced of H.P.B.’s credibility.

A biography must certainly be founded on historical documents, but it should also rely on a *minimum* of psychology as an unavoidable subjective part. In the case of H.P.B., genuine sources are nothing but *testimonies*, all other data being nothing but speculations related in a more or less clever manner to the subject, like Mr. Johnson’s hypothesis. The fact that I emphasized Rawson’s role less than Mr. Johnson preferred, however, may be taken up as a point of discussion.

The point of contention between two parties will always be the credibility of the testimonies. But to deny the credibility of H.P.B. about her Masters, and this is her most intimate spiritual order of conviction and also when she deals with her close companions, is to make her an impostor and these fellows stupid simpletons or liars being party to a mystification. It is exactly what Mr. Johnson does, although he denies it at length.

Hence, on the subject of the identification of H.P.B.’s Masters, particularly of the “*Mabatma Morya*,” I did not discuss all the “*discrepancies*” of his manifold masks for a reason I believed I had made clear: we have to consider the evidence that H.P.B. gave to her relatives and friends “*information*” which is nothing but an accumulation of inextricable “*blinds*” (concerning the data of the *Dondakoff-Korsakoff letters*, I share the suspicion of Mrs. J. Overton Fuller and refer to her arguments). Moreover, it is vain trying to get some information about these *personages* from other people than those taking a share of the daily and *spiritual intimacy of H.P.B.*—Olcott the first (who met the Masters) and certainly not from her sisters or other family members whom she tries, from the

very beginning, to mislead on this subject.

It must also be emphasized that my aim has never been to *identify* the Masters (as Mr. Johnson pretends to do) but simply to make clear H.P.B.'s *relationship* with them, whoever they are.

So, if my work appears to my critic as "*one-pointedness*," I can return the compliment since his way of thinking is a constant denigration of any other source than those giving credibility to his version of facts—Mr. Johnson's propensity is to elude, and even to leave unquoted the positive testimonies (of direct witnesses) in order to be able to adopt a diametrically opposed point of view relying on indirect sources he more or less arbitrarily links with the subject.

The thesis of this author is certainly sustained by highly sophisticated (and remarkably well-documented) *suggestions*, however, they are never *demonstrations* but an incredible "house of cards" in which involuntary inconsistencies are as numerous as in H.P.B.'s deliberate play of "hide and seek." H.P.B.'s spiritual stature appears to me exclusive of any mean-spirited conspiracy like the one she is confined to by the inappropriate "demonstrations" of Mr. Johnson.

On the other hand, I must reply to this author's more severe allegation that I used his book without mentioning my source! I consider it a duty to answer on this point.

My nine months' research—following many years of study on the doctrine though I am not a Theosophist—was completed and my book was *ready for printing* when I was told by M. Jean-Christophe Faure about Paul Johnson's book (in September 1991); two months later, my friend Robert Amadou also told me about it. At that time, I was only able to have a short glimpse of the content of *In Search of the Masters*. I highly

deplore it that I was not informed of the publication of this book, published privately (like mine) and quite unknown in France. Among the people I questioned about the bibliography, nobody ever gave me the information on time. In September, it was too late to incorporate some more material to my book.

Yet, it is perfectly true that, as I was writing the corrections of my text, I realized that a reference to *Dolgorouky's* occult environment (Waite's *Masonic Encyclopædia* and the quotation of *St. Germain's* manuscript in the *Collected Writings*) could be inserted in the third chapter. After a due verification, I felt I could refer to the first hand source. The quotation about the *Dolgorouky's* papers in *H.P.B. speaks* was mine though. *Apart from that, I absolutely deny any other "borrowing" of the research of Mr. Johnson than these two references.* My own idea of H.P.B.'s connections with *Cagliostro's* tradition stemmed out of my personal reading of Gerard Galtier's book and of our conversations about the influence of Egyptian rites in occult practises in the nineteenth century.

So, why did I refrain from quoting Mr. Johnson's book in my bibliography when I am indebted to him for *two* references? It appeared to me that adding some short lines upon a subject I had looked into in such a superficial way when I could so easily refer to available direct sources, was not absolutely relevant. This bibliographical reference did not seem possible for another reason: my bibliography is *exclusively composed of sources I have used at length and carefully studied*, (thus my whole book is indebted to the work of Mrs Mary K. Neff whom I quote at length). So, I could not include a book the content and the credibility of which I had not verified yet and, above all, that I had not used (apart from the two data provided by a glimpse at it).

I can easily understand the suspicion of Mr. Johnson and, for this “Kiddle incident,” as I am not a “Mahatma,” I do apologize. As I have now read Mr. Johnson’s book, I can assure him that the future edition of my biography will make mention of it and Mr. Johnson may be sure that I will probably confront some of his (incredible) conclusions with mine. Maybe an appendix could take René Guénon’s place in an English version (this is not a promise).

Noël Richard-Nafarre

**Paul Johnson responds:**

*An apology prefaced by a series of attacks, and followed by the threat (not a promise) of more to come, suggests a certain insincerity; nevertheless, I accept it. Since Mr. Richard-Nafarre’s opinion of my book is irrelevant to the subject at hand, I will confine my remarks to his own. Two implications of his letter deserve comment. First, in arguing that the book’s scholarly limitations are intentional, he seems to suggest that it is therefore exempt from criticism on that score. But in a journal devoted to scholarly investigation of theosophical history, any reviewer would be remiss not to emphasize research and documentation. Whether the book’s weaknesses are deliberate or accidental is beside the point. Second, Richard-Nafarre’s explanation of his use of bibliographic citations has alarming implications. Plagiarism is the use of another’s words, research or ideas without acknowledgment. But as a matter of principle, Richard-Nafarre cannot cite his sources unless their “content and credibility” are “verified” and he has used them extensively. He clearly rejects any interpretation of H.P.B. that dissents*

*from Theosophical orthodoxy as “incredible.” This implies that plagiarism is always justified by any suspicion that the victim might be a heretic, or by the source having provided only a little information. It doesn’t take a Mahatma to see how unethical this is.*

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# From the Archives

## H. P. BLAVATSKY WRITES TO “M.A., OXON.”: An unpublished letter

Presented by Joscelyn Godwin

This letter from H. P. Blavatsky is preserved in a copy, as part of the “Rosicrucian Miscellanea” manuscript in the Library of the United Grand Lodge of England, Freemasons’ Hall, London. Compiled by Francis G. Irwin and his son, Herbert Irwin, and dated 1878, this manuscript contains transcriptions of letters, extracts from books, notes on Freemasonry and alchemy, and miscellaneous jottings.<sup>1</sup>

The present letter seems to have been H.P.B.’s first approach to “M.A., Oxon.,” the nom-de-plume of the Rev. William Stainton Moses (1839-1892), who was in regular correspondence with her and Olcott during their American period. Moses had been a curate, but was now a teacher of English at University College School, London. He was a writing medium whose main control was called “Imperator +,” and one of the most active figures in the more intellectual circles of Spiritualism, contributing frequently to *The Spiritualist* before founding his own journal, *Light*, in 1881.

Moses may first have become aware of H.P.B. on 13 February 1874, when *The Spiritualist* of London published J. M. Peebles’ article “A Seance

on the Great Pyramid.”<sup>2</sup> This stated that “Mme. Blavatsky, assisted by other brave souls, formed a society of spiritualists in Cairo about two years since. They have fine writing mediums, and other forms of the manifestations. They hold weekly *seances* during the winter months. Mme. Blavatsky is at present in Odessa, Russia. The lady whose husband keeps the Oriental Hotel [=Emma Coulomb], is a firm Spiritualist.”<sup>3</sup> *The Spiritualist* also carried H.P.B.’s very first English publication,<sup>4</sup> a defence of the Eddy Brothers; and a report of Olcott’s intention to publish a book based on his newspaper accounts of the Chittenden phenomena and his meeting there with H.P.B.<sup>5</sup> Moses thereupon wrote to his friend Epes Sargent in Boston, offering to introduce Olcott’s book (*People of the Other World*, published April 1875) to English Spiritualists. As a result, he heard from Olcott himself on 10 April 1875. Their letters of the following months, of which Moses published

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<sup>2</sup> The article was taken from *The Banner of Light* of 10 January 1874.

<sup>3</sup> *The Spiritualist* IV (13 Feb. 1874): 98.

<sup>4</sup> “Mediumship of the Eddy Brothers,” in *The Spiritualist* V (25 Dec. 1874): 306; same as her *New York Graphic* letter of 30 Oct. 1874; see *BCW* I, 29-34.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spiritualist* VI (1 Jan. 1875): 3-6.

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Mr. John Hamill, Librarian and Curator of the Library and Museum of the United Grand Lodge of England, for permission to publish this material.

long extracts in *Light* after H.P.B.'s death, show Olcott filled with enthusiasm for the new explanation of the Spiritualist phenomena as the work of Elementaries, and for the study of ancient books as containing the key to them. Evidently Moses wrote to H.P.B. herself during the summer; and this is her reply.

Begun on the eve, and completed on the very day of the Theosophical Society's inauguration (17 November 1875), this letter gives an unequalled insight into H.P.B.'s studies and erudition at the time. It is a pity that the copyist slipped up, apparently running on to another paragraph (or page) without noticing it, just as H.P.B. begins to write about Buddhism. Otherwise, to judge from the retention of all her mis-spellings and ungrammaticisms, he has been faithful to the lost original. I have made no editorial changes (not even correcting her use of quotation marks), so as to preserve an exact record of her command of written English. Students of the period may be interested to read another recent discovery, H.P.B.'s first letter to Moses' friend Charles Carleton Massey, published in *Light*, 113/1 (Spring 1993): 19-26. *The Occult Observer* 2/2 (Autumn 1992): 27-28, carries a short analysis of another item in the Irwins' manuscript, "Queen Victoria and the crystal." An important letter from Olcott to Massey from the same source, in which he describes an otherwise unrecorded visit from two Masters (one of whom is named), will follow in the next issue of *Theosophical History*.

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[88] New York, November 16, 1875

My dear Sir,

I feel guilty indeed towards you. I have

received your first letters, on a visit to Professor Corson and wife at Ithica Cornell University, and was so busy at the time that I had actually no time to acknowledge your favor—I did not wish to make of it merely an interchange of polite ceremonies, for my object in writing you, was to give you all the information that was in my power, and having my book to attend to at the time busy in the university library<sup>6</sup> I felt unable to collect two ideas—now I just received your second letter and the pangs of smitten conscience proved so powerful that I intend to devote you this day and so will give all I *can*—There are certain subjects which I am not at liberty to mention—neither will you ask me to give you on them any information—

Before I begin answering your questions I beg leave to take Sir Lt. Bulwers part<sup>7</sup>—He was an [89] Adept and kept it secret—first for fear [*sic*] ridicule—for it seems that [*sic*] the most dreaded weapon in your nineteenth century—and then because his vows would not allow him to express himself plainer than he did—he might have supped on pork chops for all I know—and perhaps they were underdone—but no chops either raw or reduced to cinders will prevent you if ever you are initiated to see the *Dweller of the Threshold*—and the Dweller is far from being a welcome or agreeable visitor I can assure you—

You offer me a good many questions—and if necessary I will answer them all—but will you

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<sup>6</sup> Corson's account of H.P.B.'s visit shows her as a recluse, shut up in his house all day (see Michael Gomes, *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement* [Wheaton: TPH, 1987], pp.112-113). But future biographers should note that she began her research for *Isis* in the Cornell University Library.

<sup>7</sup> Evidently Moses had asked some question concerning Bulwer Lytton and the "Dweller of the Threshold" described in *Zanoni*.

understand me? not that I doubt your intelligence but I doubt two things first my ability to express them—and second the aptitude of any one in this world to understand tail when he has no idea of a head—learning must come gradually—you have to learn the A.B.C. before you can spell, and spell before you can read fluently—and though you may read fluently you may understand what you read in the wrong way—and be worse off than ever—

[90] I am ready to stake my life—though it is not worth much for me—that the most illiterate of our fakeers knows *practically* more than all of your Tyndal's [*sic*] and Huxleys<sup>8</sup> put together—he will not be able to give a theoretical description of a fire mist—as the former does but he may teach Mr Tyndal what things were created out of the fire mist—what it is good for—and how he could produce it perhaps on a small scale—without any paraphernalia [*sic*] of science and useless apparatus—Brahim yoggi [*sic*] will not loose [*sic*] his time by splitting his brains over the probable evolution of our race—but he will take you to an aperture in a dark room and tell you “see for yourself”—

Then Mr Darwin or Wallace may perhaps *see* how at the beginning of time “the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters” in total darkness *for us*—in Divine self-radiancy for Himself—Mr Darwin might discover perhaps the chaos of the ancients—our modern ether *the first matter*—for it was existent before man—

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<sup>8</sup> Professor John Tyndall had made a scathing attack on Spiritualism and its believers in his Presidential Address to the British Association at Belfast in August, 1874. Coming from such an eminent scientist, it was circulated throughout Europe and caused high emotions. Thomas Huxley's antipathy to Spiritualism, likewise, is well known. H.P.B.'s allusions to “fire mist” are pointed, since Tyndall was the greatest living authority on radiant and other forms of heat.

This is the En Soph—from his outward aspect [91] the darkness before the *light*—the Orphic night “O Night thou blackness of the golden stars”<sup>9</sup> out of this darkness the Invisible remote Maker or Chaos, all things that are in this world come out as of a primal source, the Matrix as the Caballists call it—

Nature has two extremes between the two there is a middle substance or nature—man in his natural state is in this middle nature—where lurk the elementary future men of the Earths (plural if you please) rude sketches of men from different planets—you do not suppose we are the only inhabitants on an inhabited planet do you?

From this elementary state man must recede to one extreme or the other either corruption in his grave where he rots away, or to a spiritual glorious condition now listen well—the human earthly body must change ie die, for death is the transformation of the body to a more perfected shape materially and the man properly has nothing to do with it—towards the end of his life—but the inner man—the real one (not his mask) is not so well off as [92] his body—for whilst the latter is an irresponsible matter or substance—gets through various transformations always becoming more perfect—the spiritual man is either translated like Enoch or Elias to the higher state, or falls down lower than an elementary again—

There is an evolution and Darwin is right but not as he understands it—if science searched *both ways* as the Chaldean primeval sages did, she would be better off—there's an evolution for spiritual nature as for the material one—when prof Draper says in his “conflict” “theres no such thing as a sudden creation”—a sudden strange appearance, but there is a slow metamorphosis a slow development from a pre-existent form—”

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<sup>9</sup> This line is quoted from Orphic Hymn no.3, “To Night.”

this great scientist only repeats what Hermes Trismegistus (or Enoch or Abraham for the [*sic*] are all one) said many thousand years before him—and he learned it from the lips of nature herself—for “He walked with God.”

Remember what Orpheus “De verbo sacro” nemo illus, nisi chaldaeo de sanguine quiddam progenitus [93] vidit”, and this man descended of the Chaldean blood was Abraham, or Brahma, or Enoch, or Hermes Trismegistus, or Thaut or Thutii [Thutu?—take Higgins Anaclypsis [*sic*]—see what he says of Abraham being Brahma—and he is right so far but not further. \*\*\*

The Bible the Old Testament is a real Cabala and the Apocalypse gives the key it—the same with the Vedas—and the numbers of Pythagoras the same with Appollinus [*sic*] of Tyane and the Apocrypha (sun [*sic*] of them at least, Christianity is a hideous skeleton of paganism and Judaism, with the spirit having fled from it from the first century—this spirit of truth is now manifesting itself in the spiritual phenomena again, but it can never reenter the once abandoned skeleton—

It remains for us to build for him a new Temple—we must first understand the great magical axiom which says “Ex invisibili factum est visibili” [*sic*]

The Spirit moving upon the face of the water [94] is the one that none of us will ever know before we get so purified as to be able to behold her—the Adonai themselves never saw him—and Hermes, or Brahma, or Enoch saw him but through the Adonai—who was himself but a cloud of fire—

The Fire worshippers were no fools they adored the spirit in its only visible form—the chaos or Ether—science goes against theology—for the latter repeating like a parrot a word the meaning of which the clergy do not understand

and so take it literally—theology says that God created all out of nothing.

Does science know better than Theology from whom and how that seed which we call first matter for want of a better name proceeded—“God created out of nothing something” and science grins—yes but that something which proceeded from nothing was created one thing in which all things were contained—every being celestial and Terrestrial, and this first something was but a cloud or darkness—for the latter is matter to [*sic*]—[95] which condensed into matter—and this water or chaos or Ether—is the storehouse of everything in the universe—but you ask science or theology, what was that nothing out of which the first principle the creator of all and everything was made—It is indeed as the Rosicrucians say with “Robertus Fluctibus”<sup>10</sup> nihil quo ad nos.”

Will then [*sic*] let us leave it alone—and not quarrel over it Dionysius expressed it perfectly when he said it is nothing that was created or of those things that are and nothing of that which thou dost call nothing, that is of those things that are not—in thy empty destructive sense. “But by your leave it is a *true thing*—it is that transcendent essence whose *theology* is *negative*, as says Eugenius Philalithes<sup>11</sup> [*sic*]—and was known to the primitive Church, and to Christ or Jesus rather—but is now lost “to know nothing is the happiest life” said Cornelius Agrippa for to know nothing is life eternal.

This nothing is a Cabalistical name for God—and so far church is right unconsciously [96] when she says that everything was created out of nothing—for the universe cannot certainly be an

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Fludd.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Vaughan.

offspring of blind chance all this does not answer your questions—

I did not mean to say to you that Spirits (Elementary) were created out of or by the perpetual and universal motion of cosmic matter—as this used is [*sic*] understood by science but of what might be called the essence of it—Their creation is like our Creation to science a mystery—when you become an adept you will understand it without me teaching you—

Enough that they do exist and are created and can communicate with us a great deal easier than the disembodied men and women or immortal spirits it is easy to understand why the like attracts like ethereal as they are and invisible they are more matter than ourselves—the more terrestrial the more sinful we are—the more we attract these material beings created out of this cosmic matter—but over [97] which substance “the Spirit who moved on the face of the water” did not spread his Divine Ether as yet—thus conferring on them immortality the Adonai and Elohim—did not present them to Him to breath [*sic*] in their nostrils the breath of Immortal Life—they are of the middle nature of which I spoke above—

A man is a Trinity like the essence of God when man dies, as soon as he dropped off his body which must decay and so become more perfect his Spiritual or sidereal body takes place of his old Terrestrial body—and a new still more Ethereal envelope is given him—to cover the Divine ray of his Augoeides his soul or the real self—who waits during his endless transmigrations until he becomes absorbed in God or nothing—

This part of himself the Augoeides<sup>12</sup> is the Cabalistic nothing, or a particle of God—for being a particle and not the whole (for how can the endless [98] and boundless be a whole)? It is not

the less divine for it—it is not the less God—as a flame borrowed from a light a candle if you like will not diminish if you ignite at this mother flame, millions and myriads of other flames—

The sublime Hindoo doctrine of Emanation and absorption was never rightly understood Buddhism [*sic*] is an Eastern religion [*evidently the copyist has omitted something here*] and only give it vital life—or rather resurrect it in the Elementary foetus and endow sometimes with much of their vices—the astral body of the child—the second person of the Trinity—but with his soul neither elementary or Father or Mother have ought to do.

This Augoeides is a spark of the great fire, the En Soph—the invisible nothing—it is this Trinity in man which puzzle [*sic*] so much the scientist for they [*sic*] can hardly admit of a duality in man—the poor psychologists let alone the Trinity—and thus physiologists and psychologists, and anthropologists all scream [99] annihilation and incomprehensible—and come to a dead stop—whereas if they only studied the Chaldean Book of Numbers<sup>13</sup> the analogies and numbers of Pythagoras, the books of Hermes and so forth they would learn the value of the Hermetic axiom “quod est superius, est sicut ad quod est inferius” as above so is it beneath and vice versa—

I see you ask a good many questions which I cannot answer you—not because as I told you—you would not understand me bye and bye—but it would be useless for you—you would not realise it—I make an experiment if you show me candidly and honestly that you understand all I

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<sup>12</sup> On the Augoeides or “radiant body” - a favorite theme of H.P.B.’s and Serapis’s early writing - and its popularization in English by Bulwer Lytton, see G. R. S. Mead, *The Subtle Body* (London: Watkins, 1919), 75-90.

<sup>13</sup> This must be H.P.B.’s earliest reference to this enigmatic text.

wrote above—I will tell you more—but I cannot begin by the end—now in schin [*Hebrew letter Shin here*] is contained *all* the astral light is the Alpha and Omega—I can tell you so much not more. What you received about elementary spirits, was not intended for you, but for some one who studies already for several years. [100] Col. Olcott asked me to send it to you and I did—copying it as it was from the Treatise or M.S.S.<sup>14</sup>—you are a clairvoyant and have direct communications with spirits—perhaps you may see some of the Brotherhood—I mean the one I belong to—not of Luxor—for Luxor is but an adopted name for the committee—

I think in your first letter which I cannot find at the present moment you tell me of a certain Gentleman who wants to know what lodge I belong—it is certainly not to the Rosicrucians—as I said to every one in the Article to Hiram<sup>15</sup>[*sic*]—It is a secret Lodge in the East perhaps they are the Brotherhood Mejnour speaks about in Zannoni [*sic*]—

Believe me dear Sir that if I do not say more it is not because I do not want to tell you. Col Oldcott [*sic*] knows as little as you do—but he has faith and knows me—he knows I am incapable of deceit or deliberate falsehood—[101] Except receiving a few letters from the Brothers and meeting one or two occasionally—he is utterly in the dark—Judge me by the works I do not by my words.

To night is the inauguration [*sic*] meeting of our Theosophical Society and Oldcott is busy with his

address for he is elected President and poor me corresponding secretary of the society time will show you can always write me to the P.O. box of the society 4335—

I wish you would do me the favour of asking one of your best *spirits* to answer me two or three mental questions—I have stored for him in my head he knows—then I will tell you something very interesting for you.

Truly me,

Truly and faithfully yours

H. P. Blavatsky

What did you think of seeing when you looked so hard out of the opened window in the country. I think [102] it was a Friday or a Saturday morning it was the emanation of the water—did you remark anything

You will find much of what I write in *Magia Adamica* by Eugenius Philalethes. I see you do not understand it rightly—he did not even finish it I explained several passages of it—of the astral light.

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<sup>14</sup> The Irwins' manuscript contains a transcription of this "treatise" following the present letter. Much of it is adapted from Eliphas Levi.

<sup>15</sup> I.e., the article H.P.B. called her "first occult shot": "A Few Questions to 'Hiraf,'" in *BCW*I, 101-19.

# The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society

John Cooper

In the not too distant future the writer intends to compose an outline history of the Esoteric Schools that have manifested themselves within the Theosophical Movement since the formation of the Theosophical Society at New York in 1875. This proposed outline will link what is already known about the history of these Schools with a fairly large amount of previously private material, particularly about those Schools which have been forgotten both by Theosophists and by Theosophical historians.

The present paper is intended to present an outline history of one of these almost forgotten Schools and this paper is based upon the reading of most of the original documents mentioned in it.

However, we must first of all place this School within the framework of the background history. Following several attempts that failed, Madame H.P. Blavatsky, the prime founder of the Theosophical Society and Movement, formed the Esoteric School of Theosophy at London on October 9th., 1888. She was the Outer Head of the School and her Master was regarded as the Inner Head. By 1890 an Inner Group of the E.S.T. was formed. Before H.P.B. died, on May 8th., 1891, the School had been renamed the Eastern School of Theosophy. Following her death a full meeting of the Council of the E.S.T. was held in London on May 27th. Present at that meeting were the members of the London Council who had worked under H.P.B., plus the American Theosophist William

Quan Judge. At this meeting the Council agreed and recorded that

the highest officials in the School for the present are Annie Besant and William Q. Judge . . . and that from henceforth with Annie Besant and William Q. Judge rests the full charge and management of this School.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of the Judge Case the E.S.T. was split into two separate organisations leaving one E.S.T. with Annie Besant as Outer Head integrated with the Theosophical Society with headquarters at Adyar in India and William Q. Judge as Outer Head of the E.S.T. which was composed of members of the Theosophical Society in America, and affiliated Societies in other countries, including England and Australia.

We need to next look at the story of the E.S.T. within America. W.Q. Judge died on the 21st. of March, 1896. At an E.S.T. meeting held on the 29th. March the English Theosophist Ernest Temple Hargrove<sup>2</sup> announced that W.Q.J. had left instructions behind. A pamphlet, dated the 3rd. April,

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<sup>1</sup> See Henk J. Spierenburg and Daniël van Egmond, "The Succession of H.P. Blavatsky: A Documentary History," *Theosophical History* III/7-8 (July-October 1991) for details of the May 27th meeting (206-208).

<sup>2</sup> For a biography of Ernest Temple Hargrove, see *Echoes of the Orient, the Writings of W.Q. Judge*, volume 2. Compiled by Dara Eklund (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1980), 471.

was sent to the E.S.T. members stating that a new Outer Head had been chosen according to directions left by Judge. The name of the new Outer Head was kept secret for a time and was then announced to be Katherine Tingley. All went well



Ernest Temple Hargrove (By permission of the author).

for a time and Katherine Tingley<sup>3</sup> led a world crusade. Hargrove was elected President of the Theosophical Society in America.

By 1898 Hargrove had resigned as President and at the Convention held that year a new Constitution was approved by the members giving Katherine Tingley greatly increased control of the Theosophical Society in America. The Hargrove-led group then held their own Convention and reformed the Theosophical Society in America, retaining some 200 of the original members of the T.S. in America. Hargrove then wrote to Katherine Tingley that

by Order of the Master you have ceased to be the Outer Head of the E.S.T. in the interior and true sense. The Outer Head to follow you has already been appointed by the Master.

It is the history of this Esoteric School that is the subject of this paper. But first a few words about the reformed Theosophical Society in America. The Society inspired by Hargrove changed its name in 1908 to the Theosophical Society with its Headquarters based in New York. It appears that the magazine *Theosophy*, the rebirth of Judge's *The Path*, continued to be edited by Hargrove and that the question and answer magazine *The Theosophical Forum* was edited by Jasper Niemand. However, the major magazine for this organisation was *The Theosophical Quarterly* which was published from July 1903 until October 1938 and was one of the most distin-

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<sup>3</sup> For an outline of the work of Katherine Tingley, see Emmett A. Greenwalt, *California Utopia: Point Loma 1897-1942*. Second and revised edition (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1978)

guished magazines published within the Theosophical Movement.<sup>4</sup>

This Theosophical Society formed branches, held Conventions and remained active until it went into a period of 'indrawal' in 1935. There still remain active and devoted Theosophists who draw their inspiration from this Society and *The Theosophical Quarterly*. In correspondence they have provided me with a large amount of information on the work of their Society which will not be mentioned in this paper. Nor am I thanking them by name as I believe they would prefer to maintain their anonymity. This Society contained among its membership some of the most distinguished Theosophists in the Movement. They included Ernest Temple Hargrove (who died in 1939); Charles Johnston, the Irish Theosophist who was the friend of Yeats and of George Russell (Æ), and who married the niece of H.P.B. and also provided translations of several Eastern classics; Dr. Archibald Keightley, who assisted H.P.B. in the editing and production of *The Secret Doctrine*; and his wife, the former Julia Campbell Ver Planck who was best known as Jasper Niemand, the author of a number of outstanding Theosophical essays and the recipient of the *Letters That Have Helped Me* from W.Q. Judge. Other prominent members were Professor Henry Bedinger Mitchell and Mr. and Mrs. Clement Acton Griscom. Dr. J.D. Buck was also a member for a few years.

Let us now look at the Eastern School of Theosophy connected with this Society. The first known paper of this School is titled *Subsidiary Paper D* (presumably following on from the

*Subsidiary Papers A, B, and C* as issued by W.Q. Judge). After commenting on the Hierarchy, cycles, the Lodge and on meditation the Paper quotes from a message from a Master dated the 15th of December 1897 and dealing with the importance of the Pledge of the E.S.T. The Outer Head then commented on the importance of the Pledge.

In May 1898 the Outer Head wrote a letter to the members of the School. It was read at an E.S.T. meeting at the time of the Convention held at Cincinnati and was known as the Cincinnati Letter. The Outer Head wrote that

the Masters are both displeased and disappointed with the School as a whole . . . The School will have to submit to a period of silence, of darkness, of discouragement. Only those who can get beyond the outer clouds and reach the inner Light which always is burning will be able to find light during this time . . . when this test of silence is ended . . . the School will be more truly an occult body than ever before; entrance to it will be much more difficult; rigid probations and examinations will be required . . . .

On October 17th., 1898, E.T. Hargrove wrote to the members of the School

Already I have been instrumental in "introducing" the Outer head to the members, I have not yet "introduced" the members to the Outer Head; and this has to be done in due form . . . . This is one way of saying that the School must be organised. Now you already know that the Outer Head will confine himself to aiding those members who appeal to him for guidance in their studies and in their interior development; that he will not attend to the routine work . . . .

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<sup>4</sup> *The Theosophical Quarterly* lasted for 35 volumes. It was started by C.A. Griscom and contained articles mainly by the members of the Society. A series called *Fragments* by Cavé was published from this magazine in three volumes and follow the lines of *Light on the Path*. Again the identity of Cavé is one of the interesting puzzles of this Society.

Based on this initiative a Committee of the School was established to be responsible to the members of the School and to handle its administrative work. The Outer Head did not appoint this Committee as it was established by Hargrove. By December 1898 this Reference Committee of the School was formed. It consisted of A.P. Buchman, J.D. Buck, George M. Coffin, C.A. Griscom, Charles Johnston, Archibald Keightley and William Ludlow.

On the 1st of March 1899 the E.S.T *Aids and Suggestions No. 8* was issued. This followed the previous seven issued by W.Q. Judge. After commenting on the statement made by H.P.B. that no Master would come, or send a messenger to Europe or America after the 31st of December 1899 until after 1975, the paper makes two points:

(1) the members themselves must govern the School as there is to be no leader;

(2) the Outer Head is to remain absolutely unknown to the members of the School.

It would seem that both these requirements were maintained within this School. The School governed itself and the Outer Head did remain unknown and his or her name was never given to the members. Here I should mention that I believe that I know who was the Outer Head but as his or her name is just about unknown to present day Theosophists and as I have no proofs for this statement I prefer to keep this information private for the present.

In *Aids and Suggestions No. 8* the Outer Head wrote that

H.P.B. left in her writings *the entire mass of the Lower Mysteries* with the *Instructions* for a key. To understand this requires training (1)

by living the life, (2) by linking with the Higher Mind (the fire of Kundalini playing on the pineal gland) and by (3) registering on the brain the knowledge thus acquired.

*Aids and Suggestions No. 9* is dated the 17th May, 1899. This document deals with Initiations and stated that the School, as a whole, has passed through an Initiation. It states that the first Initiation of the School was when it passed through the attacks on H.P.B. The second Initiation of the School was "as a psychic body, in the psychic world." The School had now passed through a third Initiation and was, as a School, now

an accepted Chela, of the Masters, and has its proper place and share in the creative work of the Oversoul.

This meant that the School had gained a footing in the causal world and this would bring three powers to the members who can realise themselves on the causal plane. These three powers are:

1. The power to guide his or her own life.
2. The power to draw forth the creative and the divine to become real and immortal selves, self-poised amid infinities.
3. The omniscience and omnipotence of the Eternal.

The real work of the Outer Head is to guide the members to this realisation. Although the trials of the second and third Initiations are not mentioned, it seems probable that the second Initiation was the Judge Case and the third was the split away from Katherine Tingley. The concept of the

School being an accepted Chela of the Masters is mentioned many times in the papers of this School. It was shown as a diagram with the Pre-Chelic condition being pictured with the Lodge of the Masters being in the inner world and the Outer Head, Esoteric School and Theosophical Society in the outer world. After the School is seen as a Chela of the Masters we see the Lodge of the Masters, the Outer Head and the Inner Body of the E.S.T. residing in the inner world and the members of the E.S.T. and of the T.S. residing in the outer world.

In October 1899 a series of examination questions were sent to the members. The Outer Head, in January 1900, responded and stated that the members of the School could be classified into three classes. The first class consisted of the disaffected members who considered the School to be practically dead. For them the cycle had closed and the School had passed on and they were invited to consider resigning from the School. The second class of members were called the intermediate class who "cannot say that they *know* but who have an interior conviction." This class was urged to fight until they knew. The third class consisted of those members who felt the power and the guidance of the Lodge behind them. It is only the members of the third class who have found the Outer Head. Here it is not clear whether the meeting was to be on the inner plane. From the document it is clear that some of these members did meet the Outer Head. As some of the members in their replies to the questions wrote that they felt the School to be dead, the Outer Head made a few comments on the history of the School. As they are the only personal items in the voluminous papers of this School they deserve to be quoted.

First: Mrs. Tingley was Outer Head of the E.S.T. Those who announced that fact, and endorsed her as such, were entirely right in what they did, and carried out the wish of the Master. By the Master was she appointed, and by the Master deposed; the agent (E.T. Hargrove) who made the second announcement [deposing Mrs. Tingley] being as correct in that as he had been in the first. Any other hypothesis is untenable for those who believe that the School is guided by the Masters, for the link would have been broken otherwise, and the School left for a period to its own devices, in other words, deserted. Were this possible, the entire structure crumbles to pieces. Those who object to my remaining "unknown" will have to address themselves to the Master who appointed me, and by whose command that condition exists.

. . . A democratic organisation is essential at this time, when "no Master may come or send;" and when the School, therefore, must govern itself if receiving only interior inspiration.

A special committee was appointed to consider the best ways of teaching Theosophy to the members of the School. Their proposals were approved by the Reference Committee of the School and then by the Outer Head who emphasised that the teachings on the Inner Man should be central to this study. In Sept. 1900 four courses of study were proposed. These proposals were later modified probably along the lines of easing the divisions between the courses. These courses were:

The First Course provided a comprehensive knowledge of Theosophical philosophy by means of studying the exoteric Theosophic works in the light of the E.S.T. *Instructions* 1,2 and 3.

The Second Course taught a more advanced

DIAGRAM OF 1<sup>st</sup> 25 YEARS  
WHEN THE LODGE WORKED  
DIRECTLY IN THE WORLD

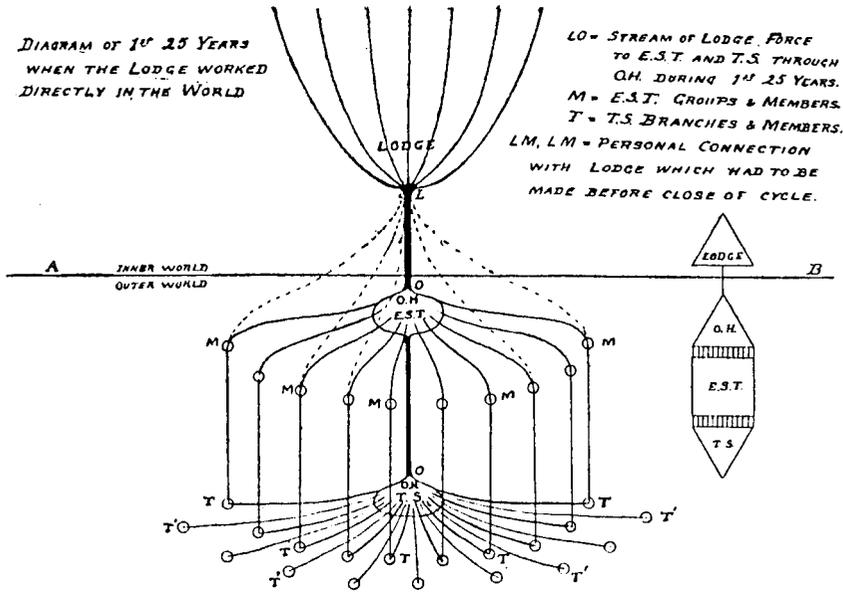


FIG. I.

DIAGRAM AFTER CHANGE  
OF CYCLE  
PRESENT CONDITION

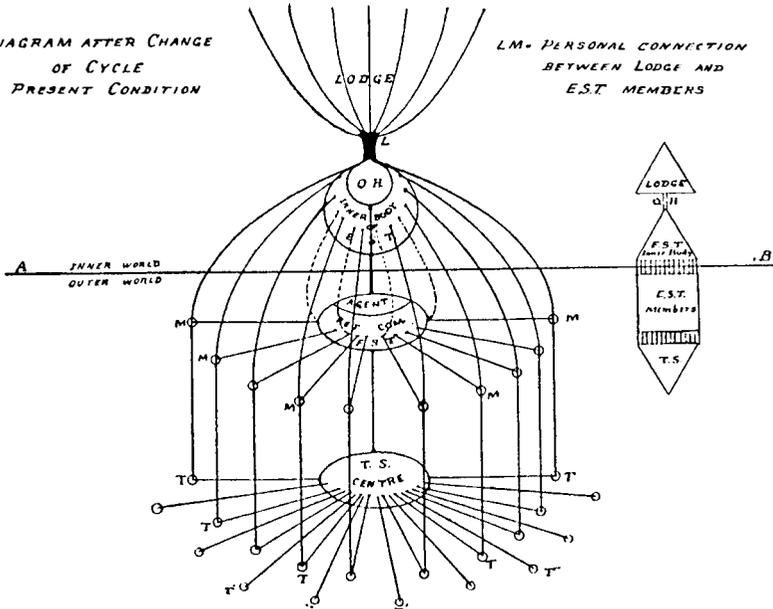


FIG. II

philosophy based upon *The Secret Doctrine* and other metaphysical works with the study being based upon the E.S.T. *Aids and Suggestions*.<sup>4</sup>

The Third Course will use *Instructions* 4, 5 and 6 of the E.S.T. plus other papers to be issued to the School plus some unpublished letters of the Master K.H. The emphasis in this course was to compare the above with the Upaniṣads, Veda, Purāṇas, Bible and other sacred texts.<sup>5</sup>

The Fourth Course was to be based upon the devotional side of Theosophy and was to study *Light on the Path*, *The Voice of the Silence*, *Letters That Have Helped Me*, *Through the Gates of Gold* and other devotional texts. This course was intended to lead to the development of the Inner Man.

An examination paper was sent to members. The Examining Board, on the 1st of May, 1901, sent to the members their comments on the answers received. The earlier portion of the examination paper asked for definitions for the Theosophical Movement, Theosophical Society and the E.S.T. The members of the School were also asked to explain the relationships between

these three. Then followed questions on general Theosophical philosophy. Two of the questions were

What are the Tattvas?

When does true self-consciousness begin? In what principle is the consciousness of the ordinary man centered?

The last question in the paper was No. 18:

What do you understand the Inner Man to be? What are the effects of thought and action on the Inner Man?

The answer to this question, as given by the Examining Board was described as

The most valuable contribution which has been made to E.S.T. literature for many years. It marks a distinct advance in what the Masters permit to be disclosed, for the truth about the Inner Man is one of the most closely guarded secrets of occultism.

*Aids and Suggestions* No. 14, dated the 11th of June, 1902, dealt at length with the Inner Man. It referred to "The Elixir of Life"<sup>6</sup> Judge's "The

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<sup>4</sup> *Aids and Suggestions* as issued by W.Q. Judge are in *Echoes of the Orient*, vol. 3. Compiled by Dara Eklund (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> I understand that *Instructions* 1-6 plus possibly other material was issued to members of this School. I have not seen it. *Instructions* 1-5 are included in *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1889-1890*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume XII (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1980), 513-713. *Instruction* 6 contains some of the Inner Group material plus other matter. See H. J. Spierenburg, *The Inner Group Teachings of H.P. Blavatsky* With a short historical introduction by J.H. Dubbink (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1985), 138.

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<sup>6</sup> "The Elixir of Life" has been reprinted many times, particularly as the first article in *Five Years of Theosophy*. The author was Godolphin Mitford, who wrote as Mizra Murad Ali Beg. For a brief biography, see *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1883-1884-1885*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume VI (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1989), 241-44. There is a rumour that he was a member of the famous Mitford family, but I have found no reference to him in the standard biography of the family.

Culture of Concentration,”<sup>7</sup> certain of the notes from *The Voice of the Silence* and *The Dream of Ravan*<sup>8</sup> to explain a process that resulted in the

creation of a permanent individual vehicle for the occupation of the Soul or Higher Ego.

A seven year Report on the work of the School was given at a meeting held on the 30th of April, 1905, on the occasion of a T.S. Convention. Here it was stated that the School had moved from the phase of Instruction under H.P.B. and W.Q. Judge to that of Discipline under the present Outer Head.

The last document that I have from this School is called *Aids and Suggestions* No. 18, dated the 7th of December, 1907, from New York. This document deals with the study of *Instructions* 1,2 and 3 and states that while

*Instruction 1* sets forth the broad truths as to the Inner Man, and *Instruction 2* shows the Inner Man as the child of the Logos, *Instruction 3* lays down the conditions in which the growth of the Inner Man may favourably proceed.

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<sup>7</sup> “The Culture of Concentration” will be found in *Echoes of the Orient*, volume 1. Compiled by Dara Eklund (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1980), 64-73.

<sup>8</sup> *The Dream of Ravan* is a portion of the *Jñāneśvarī*, a Marāthi poem written in the 12th century A.D. by Jñāneśvar. It is referred to by H.P.B. in her Preface to *The Voice of the Silence*, where she calls it the *Dnyaneshwari*, “a superb mystical treatise in which Krishna describes to Arjuna in glowing colours the conditions of a fully illumined Yogi.” H.P.B. says it is a Sanskrit work, whereas it was written in the Marthi language of Western India. A translation was published in two volumes in 1967 by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. of London. A better translation is *Jñāneswar’s Gitā* by Swami Kripananda (Buffalo: State University of New York, 1989).

This is all the information that I have on this School that is relevant to this paper. The material that I have is contained in almost 400 pages of teachings on cycles, meditation and other aspects of the Esoteric Philosophy. The question remains: what happened to this School? I do not know the answer. However I suspect that it too may have gone into a period of ‘indrawal’ *i.e.* from active work; when their Society entered that phase in 1935. This would mean that the School itself (if we recall the diagram mentioned earlier) had entered into the inner world, to remain there and to be contacted by its members only by rising to that plane and finding the School, the Outer Head and the Masters within themselves.

This School warrants detailed analysis. Here I would make only three comments:

- 1) The stress on the democratic process in the management of this School.
- 2) The emphasis on the need for the thorough study of Theosophy and the inauguration of a graded study course based initially, upon Theosophic texts and then on the Sacred Books of the East and West.
- 3) The position of the Outer Head meant that the members of the School could only make contact with him or her by means of interior development and not by asking for orders from an outer superior.

This leads me to my final point. Papers such as this indicate the need for systematic study of all the developments that have resulted from the initial Theosophical inspiration in 1875. This might result in a more broadly based understanding of Theosophy and, possibly, answers to many Theosophical puzzles. For example the teachings

on the Inner Man mentioned earlier can be correlated to the Nirmāṇakāya and Saṃbhogakāya doctrines of both Yogācāra Buddhism and Theosophy and also with the teachings of Harold Waldwin Percival, editor of *The Word* magazine.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *The Word* (New York): volumes 1-25 (Oct 1904 - Sept. 1917).

# Theodor Reuss as Founder of Esoteric Orders (Part II of the OTO)

Peter-Robert König<sup>1</sup>

Despite our attempt to draw a chronological picture of events, we must omit almost all consideration of the personality of Carl Kellner (1851-1905), the ideological founder of the OTO. In our forthcoming book on the OTO-Phenomena a comprehensive biography will be given for the first time by the Austrian researcher Josef Dvorak.

The present article consists mostly of quotations of historical materials only slightly annotated. Editorial comments are inserted in brackets so that the reader can understand the historical context. A few additional comments and bibliographical notes will be found in the footnotes.

We start with a biographical overview of Theodor Reuss 1855-1923), published in 1936 in the “völkisch” Jew-baiting pamphlet “Der Judenkennner.” It is republished here in order to show the feelings against secret societies as they existed at that time. Anti-Semitic attacks are omitted.

A more detailed biography of Reuss was written by Ellic Howe and Helmut Moeller under the title “Theodor Reuss” in *Ars Quatuor Coronati* 91 (1978). The same authors wrote a somewhat confusing version in German as “Merlin Peregrinus” (Würzburg, Königshausen and Neumann, 1986). The present article contains some material which

has never before been published.

## The Grandfather of the Anthroposophical Society

*Der Judenkennner* 6 (5 February 1936):

Karl Theodor Reuss was born in 1855 in Augsburg . . . .He attended the Gymnasium, was apprenticed as a druggist but soon got an education as a professional opera singer. As such he contacted [*in 1883*] Richard Wagner and his protector King Ludwig II of Bavaria. Suddenly his career came to an end when Reuss lost his voice (there was a rumour that he had syphilis). . . .As regular correspondent of several major newspapers he went to London where, [*on 9 Nov. 1876*], he was initiated in the German-speaking “Pilger-Loge” Nr. 238 . . . [*and expelled in 1881*].

In 1878 he was sent by the *Times* (London) as a well-paid war-reporter to the Balkans and in 1882 he went to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 1880 Reuss spent a longer period in his home country, in Munich. Together with descendants of the “Order of the Illuminati” he attempted a revival of this anti-government order originally founded by Professor Adam Weishaupt of Ingolstadt . . . .

We find Reuss again in the year 1885 in London, in the executive committee of the

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<sup>1</sup>This is the second in a series of articles by Mr. König on the personalities and branches of the OTO, the first of which appeared in *Theosophical History* IV/3.

anarchist “Socialist League.” . . .

[His *first*] pamphlet, “The Matrimonial Question,” was not warmly received.<sup>2</sup> . . . On May 10 he was expelled from the “Socialist League” because of defamatory actions.” . . .

The unveiling of his activities as a spy for Germany through the anarchists of London forced the traitor to leave England.

In 1888 Reuss re-appeared in Berlin and joined the actor Leopold Engel in order to re-found the “Order of the Illuminati.” . . .

The German Grand Lodges firstly ignored Reuss and his allies . . . Only when Reuss in 1900 propagated his own “Johannislogen” under his business enterprise “Grosse Freimaurerloge für Deutschland” did the “most honorable Grandmasters” become furious against the unfair competitor. As a result, in 1901 Leopold Engel separated from Reuss, accusing him of fraud . . . the majority of the members of the “Order of the Illuminati” stayed with Reuss, while Engel tried to run his “Weltbund der Illuminaten”<sup>3</sup> independently from all the other Grand Lodge offices . . . .

*Der Judenkenner* 7 (12 February 1936):

Within [*the Memphis-Misraim*] Reuss collected the most reliable members into one particular group; the Order of the Oriental Templars (OTO) . . . .

One can detect the spirit of the [*pertinent*] Church<sup>4</sup> from what is written in one of

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<sup>2</sup> Reuss allegedly used the same ideas about women in his “Aufbauprogramm der Gnostischen Neo-Christen OTO” (Bad Schmiedeberg, 1920), reprinted in the German magazine *AHA* 2 (Bergen/Dumme, 1992): 13-17.

<sup>3</sup> The history of Leopold Engel’s Orders will be discussed in a future article.

<sup>4</sup> The Gnostic Catholic Church will be discussed in a future article as well.

their brochures: “The Israelites would not have to give up a lot in order to belong to us . . . the Gnostic Church supports the parliamentary-liberal republic” (*Le Réveil des Albigeois*, No. 1, 1900<sup>5</sup>).

The first head [*of the OTO*] . . . was not Reuss, but the Vienna manufacturer Dr. Karl [*sic*] Kellner . . . .

In 1905 Reuss was living in Hamburg. In the summer of 1906 [24 June] he went to Munich . . . in order to initiate some “Novizen” in the secrets of the Order of the Templars. These “Novizen” were so disgusted by these “revelations”<sup>6</sup> that they alerted the police to arrest the libertine Reuss, who only just escaped arrest while dining in the hotel “Metropol,” and fled to his crony John Yarker in England . . . .

In Germany, sorting out the business of the Order became rather complicated after General Grandmaster Reuss’ ignominious retreat. Although Herr A.P. Eberhardt of Leipzig had already received the leadership of the “Johannislogen” on 11 November 1906, Reuss kept the higher degrees for himself until 1909. Now he transferred authority to his most faithful squire, Dr. Carl Lauer of Ludwigshafen.<sup>7</sup>

Only the highest floor of his headquarters, Memphis-Misraim or OTO, was still rentable. A suitable tenant was found in . . . Doctor Rudolf Steiner, who acquired the complete firm [*collection of orders*] in the winter of 1906/07 for the trifling sum of 1500 Marks. Steiner himself always told his faithful (followers) that the highest degree of his masonic system should be only the lowest degree of another occult system on whose peak was . . .

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<sup>5</sup> The magazine of Jules Doinel’s Gnostic Church.

<sup>6</sup> The “mutual touching of the phalli as yoga-meditation.” *Wiener Freimaurer Zeitung* 9/10 (October 1929): 26.

<sup>7</sup> Lauer published his *Andreas-Blätter* from 1908.

. . . a “*Rex summus maximus*.”<sup>8</sup>

*Der Judenkennner* 8 (19 February 1936):

In order to support himself in London, Reuss founded there a “High School of Hermetic Sciences.” . . . At the end of 1913 he settled in Paris.

Six months after Reuss settled down in Basel, war broke out.

After the war Reuss stayed another two years in Basel [*Der Judenkennner* now mentions *E.T. Kurtzahn*, a leading member of the *Gnostic Church*, in connection with Reuss since 1922.<sup>9</sup>]

Reuss removed his residence to Munich . . . where he became an employee of the municipal travel agency. He still held his OTO meetings [*for example, with Arnold Krumm-Heller*<sup>10</sup>]. Krumm-Heller nowadays [1936?] still spreads his cancer as an agent in Rosicrucian societies in Brazil. We beg all our friends to watch his activities closely and to report to us.

Brooding over new plans to stultify Aryan scientists, Reuss died in 1923 in his 68th year in Munich.

[*Translated*]

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<sup>8</sup>This title perhaps refers to the X<sup>o</sup>, the administrative degree of the OTO which rules over the members of the pertinent country: *Rex Summus Sanctissimus*. The X<sup>o</sup> members vote for the election of the O.H.O.

<sup>9</sup>The events that took place between 1916 and 1920 will be dealt with in a future article.

<sup>10</sup>The Theosophist Krumm-Heller was such an interesting personality that he and his order, *Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua*, will be dealt with *in extenso* in the forthcoming book on the OTO-phenomena as well as in a future article.

## TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS

### FIRST FOUNDATION DOCUMENT

In the name of the secret Aeropagus of the Order of the Illuminati . . . it is decided that from January 1900 onwards that right will be re-asserted to found Freemasonic lodges, as was done by its founder Adam Weishaupt.

The Secret Aeropagus of the Order of the Illuminati hereby delivers to his member of the Order, Dr. Theodor Reuss, the sole right to found and enlighten Freemasonic lodges of the Scottish Rite of Ancient and Accepted Masonry . . . Dresden, 1. Dimeh [?] 1900 . . . [signed:] Theodor Reuss, Leopold Engel.

[*Transcript from Oriflamme*, July 1914: 7-8<sup>11</sup>.  
*This paper allegedly was written on 6 May 1901, translated.*]

### MARTINIST ORDER<sup>12</sup>

With the present paper, Theodor Reuss of Berlin is authorised to represent the Order under the office/title of Special Inspector with seat in Berlin . . . 24 June 1901 . . . [signed:] Papus [*Gerard Encausse*]<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>*Oriflamme* was the name of a magazine of the aforementioned fringe-masons which started in January 1902. First an organ for Memphis-Misraim it soon became the voice of the OTO. Citation from *Oriflamme* (Berlin and London, July 1914): 7.

<sup>12</sup>A French masonic esoteric organisation founded in the 18th century.

<sup>13</sup>That summer Papus allegedly initiated the Tzar of Russia into Martinism. See James Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1976), 168.

[*Transcript of the original, translated*]  
**SWEDENBORG RITE OF  
FREEMASONRY**

Be it known by these Presents, that our worthy Brother Theodor Reuss a Master Mason who has signed his name in the Margin thereof, was duly elevated on the 25th day of July AD 1901 . . . to the Degrees of Enlightened Sublime and Perfect Freemason in the Emanuel Lodge and Temple No. 1 of London [*England*]...this 26th day of July AD 1901 . . . [*signed*]: William Wynn Westcott]

[*Transcript of the English/German original*]

## CONSTITUTION

The Illustrious Patriarch Grand Conservators of the Rite, constituting the Sovereign Sanctuary of Antient and Primitive Masonry, in and for the continent of America, duly convoked by the Most Ill. Sov. Grand Master General, Harry J. Seymour, acting by authority vested in him by Letters Patent granted him by the Executive Chiefs of the Rite, sitting at the East overlooking the Valley of Paris, France, on the 21st day of the Egyptian month Tibi, answering to the 21st day of July 1862, E.V. . . . duly and constitutionally established the Sovereign Sanctuary in, and Grand Lodge for Great Britain and Ireland, with the M. J. Brother John Yarker, as Sovereign Grand Master General, the same was duly inaugurated personally by . . . Harry J. Seymour on the 8th day of October, 1872, at London.

The said Sovereign Sanctuary in and Grand Lodge for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, after careful and deliberate discussion, have ordained and decreed that a Lodge and Temple of Antient and Primitive Masonry [*Svedenborg Rite*] be constituted and established in Germany. This

Lodge and Temple [*is*] to be known as the Holy Grail Lodge and Temple No. 15 . . .

Brother Freemasons who wish to enter the Lodge "Holy Grail," kindly address Grand Chancellor Max Rahn . . . or Grand Treasurer General August Weinholtz . . . or Grand Conservator and Custos Leopold Engel or Herr Franz Held . . .

[*Transcript from the German/English first issue of Oriflamme in January 1902*<sup>14</sup>]

THE SPIRITUAL FATHER of the re-organised Order of the Oriental Templars<sup>15</sup> was the late Sovereign Honorary General Grandmaster of Germany and Great Britain, Brother Dr. Carl Kellner, 33°, 90°, 96°, X° . . . In 1895 Dr. Kellner's idea could be realised . . . But at that time no results were achieved since Dr. Reuss still was busy with the re-activation of the Order of the Illuminati whose leading personalities were not agreeable to Dr. Kellner.

When the final split between Br. Reuss and his pupil Leopold E[ngel] took place in June 1902, Br. Kellner immediately established contact with Br. Reuss and initiated the Charta for the Memphis and Misraim Rites for Germany, because he considered those 90°-95° as suitable for his idea of a sort of "masonic academy." The Rosicrucian, esoteric doctrines of the "Hermetic Brotherhood of Light"<sup>16</sup> were only for the few initiated ones of the occult inner circle and ran parallel with

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<sup>14</sup>First issue of *Oriflamme* without number, page 1 of a leaflet in *Die Übersinnliche Welt*, January 1902.

<sup>15</sup>In 1906 Reuss published an English and a German version of *Allgemeine Satzungen des Ordens der Orientalischen Tempeler O.T.O.* with the so-called OTO-Lamen: Divine Eye, Descending Dove and Chalice. On page 3 Reuss spoke of a "re-organised" society.

<sup>16</sup>See Joscelyn Godwin, "The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor," in *Theosophical History* III/5 (January 1991): 137-148.

the highest degrees of Memphis-Misraim and those “Initiates” constituted the secret core of the Order of the Oriental Templars.

Nobody can become an “Initiate” of the O.T.O. who has not received the three “St. John”—degrees of regular Freemasonry.

[*Theodor Reuss*,<sup>17</sup> translated]

FROM THE EAST OF THE SUPREME GRAND COUNCIL OF THE SOVEREIGN GRAND INSPECTOR GENERAL of the 33rd and last degree of the Ancient and Accepted Rite of Freemasonry in and for Great Britain & Ireland . . . Know Ye that we the undersigned Sovereign Grand Inspector General do hereby certify, acknowledge and proclaim, our Ill. Brother Theodor Reuss of Berlin to be an Expert Master Mason, Secret Master, Perfect Master, . . . Grand Elect Knight Kadosh, 30°, Grand Inquisitor Commander, 31°, Prince of the Royal Secret, and a Sov. Gd. Inspector Gen. 33° . . .

Signed and delivered by us Sovereign Grand Inspector General of the thirty-third and last Degree with the Seal of our said Supreme Council affixed in the Valley of Manchester this . . . 24th day of September A.D. 1902. John Yarker 33° . . .

[*Transcript of the English original*]<sup>18</sup> 1902 is the year at which Reuss always hinted as the year when he should have received “his” *Charta authorising him to found lodges etc. in Germany. No original of that Charter has yet appeared: only several transcripts— and all give the same day as the above Charta: 24 September 1902.*]

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<sup>17</sup>Jubilee-Issue of *Oriflamme* (Berlin and London, 1912): 15f. In July 1914 Reuss again took up the subject in reply to A.P. Eberhart’s *Winkellogen Deutschlands* (Leipzig,: Verlag Bruno Zechel, 1914).

<sup>18</sup>On 29 November 1910, Aleister Crowley received an almost identical paper from the same source: John Yarker.

We . . . do . . . issue . . . this our Warrant empowering our Illustrious and Enlightened Brothers: Theodor Reuss 33°, 90°, 96° to act as Most Illustrious Sovereign Grand Master General, Franz Hartmann 33°, 90°, 95°, Thrice Illustrious Grand Administrator General, [etc.] with power to appoint [*sic*] the other necessary officers of a Sovereign Sanctuary etc. to be held in the Valley of Berlin or other German city, aforesaid by the name and title of the Sovereign Sanctuary 33°-95° in and for the Empire of Germany . . . [following the authority to found lodges, chapters and to give all degrees] 24. day of Sept. 1902 E.V . . . John Yarker 33°, 90°, 96° Gr. Master Gen. ad vitam . . .

[*Transcript from Oriflamme of January 1911*]<sup>19</sup>. There is a German translation in “*Der Cerneau-Ritus*”<sup>20</sup> where other degrees were given: Theodor Reuss: 33°, 90°, 95°; Franz Hartmann: 33°, 90°, 96°. The “*Konstitution, Statuten und Formulare*” (Berlin, 1903) on page 6 cites the same text as above but leaves out the pompous title of Franz Hartmann.]

## HISTORICAL ISSUE OF ORIFLAMME, 1904

Peace, Tolerance and Truth . . . Manchester, London, Vienna and Berlin on the 27th December 1903. Dr. Carl Kellner, 33°, 90°, 96°, S. [A] Honorary General Grandmaster for Great Britain and Germany . . . Theodor Reuss, 33°, 90°, 96° ad vitam General Grand Master for

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<sup>19</sup>*Oriflamme*, Nr. 1 (January 1911): 4f.

<sup>20</sup>W.C. Achard, “Der Cerneau-(Neuyork 1807) Ritus” (Zürich 1925), 18f.

the German Empire.

[*Translated. The question arises whether all those writers have ever seen any original.*]<sup>21</sup>

33° AND LAST DEGREE SUPREME COUNCIL . . . SOVEREIGN GRAND INSPECTOR GENERAL — Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Masonry sitting in the Valley of New York, where abideth Peace, Tolerance and Truth: From the Grand Orient of IERODOM<sup>22</sup>, at New York . . . I, Max Scheuer 33° by the authority in me vested as Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander, do appoint the Most Illustrious Brother Theodor Reuss Sovereign Grand Inspector General, Thirty-third degree, Deputy as Representative of the Supreme Council of the United States of America, its territories and dependencies, to the Supreme Council of the Grand Orient of Germany, Thirty-third degree Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite . . . this twenty-first day of Sivan A.M. 1663 [?] Max Scheuer 33° . . .  
[Transcript of the English original]

IN THE NAME OF THE GRAND ORIENT OF THE SCOTTISH RITE AND THE RITES OF MISRAIM AND MEMPHIS . . . Hereby let it be known that . . . John Yarker . . . based upon the Charta of the Sovereign Grand Orient of France dated 21. July 1862 signed by Harry J. Seymour gave the right to Brother Theodor Reuss, 33°, 90°, 96°, Dr. Franz Hartmann, 33°, 95°, Heinrich Klein, 33°, 95° and their allies to constitute a Sovereign Sanctuary for the Ger-

man Empire and the authority to give all degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite 33°, of the Oriental Rite of Misraim 90° and the Rite of Memphis 95°, from the first 33° (90°-95°) up to the last degree and to found and enlighten Symbolic Lodges, Chapters, Senates, Councils and Grand Councils in Germany . . . [followed by the founding of Orient "Phoenix zur Wahrheit" in Hamburg]

Signed and delivered this present Charta . . . 1st day of month July 1904 E.V. John Yarker 33°, 90°, 96° G.M.G. of Gr. Britain + Ireland Theodore Reuss 33°, 90°, 96° General Grandmaster for the German Empire ad Vitam.

[*Transcript of a photocopy of the original, translated*]

HEREBY LET IT BE KNOWN . . . John Yarker, 33°, 90°, 96° Sovereign General-Grandmaster ad Vitam of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Masonry, of the Scottish rite, Ancien et Accepté 33° (Cerneau-Neuyork 1807) and of the Oriental (Egyptian) rite of Misraim . . . has given to . . . Theodor Reuss 33° 96° a charta to constitute a Sovereign Sanctuary in the German Empire . . . 24th day of the month June 1905.

[*Transcript in "Vademekum für Lichtsuchende,"*<sup>23</sup> translated.<sup>24</sup>]

EDICT: We, Albert Karl Theodor Reuss, 33°, 90°, 96°, Sovereign General-Grandmaster ad Vitam of the Order of the united Rites of Scottish, Memphis- and Misraim- Freemasons in and for the German Empire, Sovereign

<sup>21</sup> *Oriflamme* (Berlin, 1904): 19. Also in "Konstitution, Statuten und Formulare des Gross-Orient" (Berlin, 1903), p. 3, but herein Kellner is mentioned only as a 33°! On page 5, Reuss is mentioned as: "Ritter des kaiserl. ottomanischen Medschidje-Ordens." Since there is no proof whether Kellner ever became a Freemason, regular or irregular, all those grades and titles remain doubtful.

<sup>22</sup> Original in Greek letters.

<sup>23</sup> Published by the Symbolic Grand Lodge of the Scottish Rite in Germany, 1916.

<sup>24</sup> A.P. Eberhart, "Winkellogen Deutschlands," (Leipzig, 1914), 108, the same text but with the additional initiates Franz Hartmann 33°, 95° and Heinrich Klein (d. 1913) 33°, 95°.

General-Grand-Commander, Absolute Grand-Sovereign, Sovereign Pontiff, Sovereign Master of the Order of the Oriental Templar-Freemasons, Magus Supremus Soc. Frat. R.C.S.I. 33°, Termaximus Regens and so on, hereby declare that we separate three freemasonic rites and declare those independent.

From 24 June 1907 onwards the following orders will be under our jurisdiction: Supreme Council of Scottish, Antient and Accepted 33° Rite for the German Empire.

General-Grand-Council (90°) of the Egyptian rite of Misraim. Sovereign Sanctuary (95°) of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis

. . .

Theodor Reuss, 10. Sept. 1906<sup>25</sup>

[*Translated*]

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<sup>25</sup> *Oriiflamme*, Nr. 2, Munich (July-December 1906): 49f.

# THE TEACHINGS OF BROTHER XII

John Oliphant

In the latter part of 1926, with the publication in London, England, of a modest pamphlet, Theosophists in Great Britain, the United States and Canada became aware that the Masters of Wisdom—the same Masters who had allegedly inspired Madame H.P. Blavatsky a half-century earlier in her work of founding the Theosophical Society—had inaugurated a new spiritual work in the world. The pamphlet which made this startling announcement was entitled *A Message from the Masters of the Wisdom in 1926*, sold for threepence, and contained an outline of this new Work, which it claimed had been given through the agency of a new Messenger of the Great White Lodge, a *chela* who identified himself as Brother XII.<sup>1</sup>

The publication of *The Message* and the subsequent formation of the Aquarian Foundation by Brother XII marked the beginnings of a drama that would last for over seven years, cause intense controversy in the occult world, drastically affect the lives of countless people, and come to be deservedly regarded as one of the strangest

episodes in the history of modern occultism. The central figure in this drama was a slight, soft-spoken English sea-captain named Edward Arthur Wilson, whose life and activities remain to this day, in large part, shrouded in mystery. Who was he and what were his teachings?

Brother XII was born Edward Arthur Wilson in Birmingham, England, on July 25, 1878, the son of a minister in the Catholic Apostolic Church. Although little is known about his early life beyond what he reveals in his own writings, Wilson was apparently apprenticed as a youth on a Royal Navy windjammer training ship, where he acquired the skills by which he would earn his living as a mariner for most of his life. During his travels around the Earth, he studied world religions, and prepared himself for the spiritual work which he felt would be his destiny. According to his own account, he was in contact with the spirit world from an early age:

From early childhood, I have been in touch with super-physical things, and have often received visitations from highly developed beings. . . . At first I thought that these were “Angels,” but as I grew older and received teaching, I learned of the Masters and Their work for humanity. . . . This direct contact continued all through my life from time to time, but it was not until much later that I

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Arthur Wilson used the name “The Brother, XII,” “Brother XII,” “XII,” or simply “The Brother” interchangeably. Technically speaking, “The Brother, XII” is the correct formal usage. Wilson was also generally referred to as “Brother Twelve.”

learned the reason for these experiences and the teaching that was given me.<sup>2</sup>

In 1912, Wilson joined the American section (Adyar) of the Theosophical Society. Membership records place him in California, giving addresses in San Diego, Ocean Beach, and San Francisco, c/o Maxwell & Company, Papeete, Tahiti. He is also said to have once held an “official or semi-official”<sup>3</sup> position with the Society. As a number of references in his writings make clear, he was active in the T.S. for many years<sup>4</sup> and had obviously made a profound study of the writings of Madame Blavatsky.

On October 22, 1924, while staying in the South of France, Wilson had a vision which indicated to him that his mission was about to begin. Lying in his bed one evening, he suddenly became aware of an extraordinary stillness. His window was wide open, but the usual night noises were silenced; there was not a rustle of a leaf, nor any movement of the air. He then became aware that he was about to hear a Voice, so he lay still and listened:

Immediately, I had the sensation of looking down an immense vista of Time, a roofless corridor flanked with thousands and thousands of pillars. I seemed to be looking into both Time and Space at once.

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<sup>2</sup> The Brother, XII (Edward Arthur Wilson), *Foundation Letters and Teachings* (Akron, Ohio: The Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 43-44.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Barley makes this statement in a written summary of his experiences with Wilson (document in possession of author). Unfortunately, he gives no particulars.

<sup>4</sup> In *Foundation Letters and Teachings*, Wilson writes: “I have heard (and reported) scores of lectures *about* Brotherhood . . .” (33).

Then, from an immeasurable distance, came the Voice, faint but very clear and wonderfully sweet; it conveyed a sense of unutterable majesty and power. The bed shook, the room wherein I lay was shaken, and the very air throbbled and vibrated. I listened to the Voice, filled with a sense of its immense and awful distance. It said:-

“THOU WHO HAST WORN THE DOUBLE CROWN OF UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT, OF THE HIGH KNOWLEDGE AND THE LOW, HUMBLE THYSELF. PREPARE THY HEART, FOR THE MIGHTY ONES HAVE NEED OF THEE. THOU SHALT RE-BUILD, THOU SHALT RESTORE. THEREFORE, PREPARE THY MIND FOR THAT WHICH SHALL ILLUMINE THEE.”

A cold wind blew down that enormous aisle of pillars; somewhere in the endless distance, lights seemed to move; then from above my head, the light flooded me so that the distance and the vistas were dissolved. Then the light faded and I lay still, filled with a sense of wonder and a great reverence.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of this vision, Wilson experienced a marked expansion of his normal consciousness. He became aware that his mission was, in part, to restore the ancient truths which lay at the heart of the Egyptian Mysteries. He also realized that individuals with whom he had worked in past lives would be drawn to him. In a letter to an associate written at this time, he makes the statement: “I have to tell you that the moment when you [and I] meet in this knowledge and for the purpose of discussing it, will be the moment *for which forty centuries have waited.*”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

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

In September, 1925, in Genoa, Italy, Wilson began to receive via automatic writing a manuscript which he later published as *The Three Truths*. He claimed that during the writing of it, “for hours at a time and for days in succession, I was rapt right out of the body.”<sup>7</sup> *The Three Truths* expressed the essence of Brother XII’s teachings in its assertion that humanity was about to undergo a revolutionary change in consciousness:

Humanity as a whole is about to take a step forward in Race-consciousness. With this day and generation *there commences the preparatory work for a new Race*—the race of the future.<sup>8</sup>

That race was the sixth sub-race of Theosophical teaching, a race whose members would have conscious recall of their past lives, and who would be more evolved spiritually. The emergence of this new race would be accompanied by both geological and political upheavals; the sixth sub-race would be born out of the chaos and destruction that would accompany the decline of modern civilization.

*The Three Truths* was a commentary in both poetry and prose upon three truths which were considered fundamental to Theosophical teaching: the unity of all life, the immortality of the soul, and the law of karma. Brother XII stated that these truths would form the spiritual basis upon which the new order would be built, and that their widespread realization by mankind would constitute the evolutionary expansion of consciousness necessary for humanity to successfully enter the new era.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>8</sup> Brother XII (Edward Arthur Wilson), *The Three Truths* (London, England: The Chalice Press, 1927), 39.

# THE THREE TRUTHS

A SIMPLE STATEMENT OF THE  
FUNDAMENTAL PHILOSOPHY  
OF LIFE



AS DECLARED AND SHOWN TO  
“BROTHER XII”  
(the personal Chêla of a Master)

THE CHALICE PRESS  
18 ERSKINE RD., LONDON, E.17

Title page of *The Three Truths*. The Egyptian ankh, flanked by the Roman numerals IX and XII, appeared on the title page of Brother XII’s books and was the symbol of the Work. (By permission of the author.)

After completing *The Three Truths* in February, 1926, Wilson received the document which would become the manifesto of the new spiritual movement. It was entitled *A Message from the Masters of the Wisdom in 1926*, and outlined the plans of the Great White Lodge for a new spiritual

work in the world. Wilson learned that he had been chosen to be the Lodge's Messenger; hereafter he used the name "Brother XII," which signified that he was the personal *chela* of the XIIIth Brother in the Great White Lodge.

The basic teaching of *The Message* was that of Universal Brotherhood, but this important Theosophical precept took on compelling urgency and meaning given the impending destruction of the present order. The Work announced by *The Message* would be an "Ark of Refuge"<sup>9</sup> in which all that was true in existing teachings would be preserved, and into which the Masters would pour a new measure of knowledge and power. The immediate purpose of the Work was to provide individuals with the training and encouragement necessary for them to achieve spiritual enlightenment. The second part of the Work was the training of succeeding generations:

The children who by their karma will be drawn to parents who are linked up with this present Work belong to a group of highly evolved egos who are now beginning to come into incarnation. They must be kept free from karmic ties or links connecting them with the old and dying order. They will be the Thinkers and the Leaders in that new order which shall arise from the ashes of the old.

At the time of their birth they will be free from karmic links with existing nations. They are of two classes: (1) those who have had a very long Devachan (2000 years or more) and are therefore unconnected with the Christian era, and (2) those whose bodies perished during the recent European war, and who have therefore balanced the account of their respective national karmas. This is one reason

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<sup>9</sup> E.A. Wilson, *The Message*, reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation* (Akron, Ohio: The Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 5.

why so many "advanced" people lost their lives during the recent war.<sup>10</sup>

There would be a constant influx of these egos from the present time until approximately 1975:

Those who are now children, or who are born within the next few years, will be the parents of that army who will be in their very early prime in 1975. It is these, the grandchildren of our present day, who will have the chief part in the great Work that ushers in the year Two-thousand.<sup>11</sup>

Many of these incarnating souls were adepts, who would bring with them vast stores of knowledge supposed to have been lost with the earlier races of humanity. Under the guidance of the Masters, they would form on the physical plane the nucleus of the coming sixth sub-race. The plans of the Masters involved the formation of "Centres of Safety,"<sup>12</sup> where actual colonies would be founded and the coming type evolved. The Work was also a form of preparation for "HIM WHO IS TO COME,"<sup>13</sup> an Avatar or divine Being who would appear on Earth in the closing years of the century to found and stabilize the sixth sub-race.

The Work announced by *The Message* was directly concerned with the coming Age of

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

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

<sup>12</sup> "Additional Information Concerning The Message of the Masters," reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation* (Akron, Ohio: The Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 14.

<sup>13</sup> "General Letter No. 1 of The Aquarian Foundation," reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation* (Akron, Ohio: The Sun Publishing Co., 1927), 19.

Aquarius, a period that would last for approximately two thousand years: “The Message given is the first Trumpet-blast of the New Age, and the Standard we set up is the Standard of the new Order.”<sup>14</sup> *The Message* itself would act as a touchstone: those persons who had an affinity with the Work would be drawn to it by a process of “spiritual self-selection.”<sup>15</sup> *The Message* concluded:

THE MESSAGE IS EVERYTHING, THE PERSONALITY OF THE MESSENGER IS NOTHING. ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE MESSAGE ITSELF, ALL MUST STAND OR FALL.<sup>16</sup>

Because the purpose of the Work was to lay the foundations of the Aquarian Age, the Masters had decided that their Work would be known in the world as The Aquarian Foundation. Only those persons who were “spiritually linked to one another and to the Masters by the bond of *service given in other lives*”<sup>17</sup> would be drawn to it:

Those who have a part in it belong spiritually and psychically to a future day and generation; they have been chosen in past Ages and are dedicated to a definite end and aim. They are the nucleus of nations yet unborn, a little band chosen and selected by the Great Ones, the hope and seed of the future—they form collectively THE AQUARIAN FOUNDATION.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “Additional Information Concerning The Message of the Masters,” reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> *The Message*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>17</sup> “General Letter No. 1 of The Aquarian Foundation,” reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Foundation Letters and Teachings*, 92.

In London, England, Brother XII became a prominent figure with the publication of an article in *The Occult Review* entitled “The Shadow.”<sup>19</sup> Written under the pseudonym “E.A. Chaylor,” it attributed the cause of the world’s unrest to an abnormal pressing outwards of the forces of the astral world into the physical—a *psychic extrusion*.<sup>20</sup> The article claimed that the determined efforts of Spiritualists to communicate with entities of the astral world had worn the veil which normally separated these two realms perilously thin; at the same time, thousand of evil and malicious astral entities were concentrating their efforts upon demolishing such protecting barriers as still remained, so that they could force an entrance into the physical world. The article concluded with a prophetic vision, which Wilson claimed to have received in full waking consciousness, of the destruction of Europe. In a letter written from Genoa at the time of his vision, Wilson graphically described the horrors that were about to overwhelm humanity:

The flood of evil which is even now so unmistakably rising will be manifested on all three planes. Physically, it will take the shape of national wars, anarchy, bloodshed, and Bolshevism. All restraints being removed, the passions of men will be loosed; private murder will be a common-place and go unavenged; every kind of foul excess will flourish unchecked. On the mental plane, the thoughts and inventions of men will be placed at the service of demons and will be used for the wholesale destruction of humanity. Those who perish will be more fortunate than those who remain.

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<sup>19</sup> E.A. Chaylor (pseudonym), “The Shadow,” *The Occult Review*, XLIII/6 (June 1926).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

Psychically, the prospect is more terrible even than this. There will shortly come about what I can only describe as the breaking of a dam. All the evil forces and powers of the lower astral worlds will burst the barriers which have hitherto restrained them. They will shortly flood this physical world in such a tidal-wave of horror as no living generation has seen. To find its parallel one must go back to the closing periods of the great Atlantean epoch.<sup>21</sup>

The editor of *The Occult Review*, Harry J. Strutton, considered Wilson a gifted natural seer and gave his blessing to the new spiritual movement. Notable individuals who joined the Aquarian Foundation included the English astrologers Alfred Barley and his wife Annie Lewton Barley,<sup>22</sup> and Sir Kenneth MacKenzie of Tunbridge Wells. Wilson is also alleged to have known, or been associated with, such prominent individuals as Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Eddington, Sir Neville Chamberlain, Sir Herbert Austin, and the South African statesman Jan Smuts. The circumstances and details of his association with these men remains a matter for investigation.

The excitement with which Brother XII's *Message* was greeted was no doubt related to the widespread feeling of disenchantment which existed at the time among many Theosophists with the leadership of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater. The Society's promotion of Jiddu Krishnamurti as the vehicle for the coming World Teacher was a matter of intense controversy. And to many, the "Neo-Theosophy" epitomized in the teachings of C.W. Leadbeater was incompatible

with the original teachings given out by Madame Blavatsky. Brother XII was highly critical of the T.S., claiming that with the death of H.P.B., and later of a few of her close personal associates, the Masters had severed all connection with the Society:

The Society has been irreparably discredited through its self-appointed leaders depending upon the mediumistic pronouncements of certain psychics, one of whom has been described as "standing upon the threshold of divinity."<sup>23</sup>

We are told that the Christ is to incarnate almost immediately in the body of one who has been schooled by these psychic "Bishops." Unsavoury psychism is palmed off on credulous followers for spiritual powers and insight; ancient records, plagiarized and distorted, are camouflaged as independent psychic research. A new and constantly increasing supply of "Initiates" and "Arhats" are turned out as needed.<sup>24</sup>

Brother XII made the intriguing assertion that the Catholic Apostolic Church into which he was born, and which had its origins in Scotland in 1825,<sup>25</sup> was intended by the Masters of Wisdom to be a major spiritual movement for the revival of Christendom, one which would have prepared the way for the later work of H.P. Blavatsky. The Church failed in this purpose, with the result that

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<sup>23</sup> Brother XII, "Things We Ought To Know," reprinted in *F.L. & T.*, 146. It is not known in which periodical this article originally appeared.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Members of this Church were more commonly known as "Irvingites," after the Church's charismatic leader, Edward Irving.

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<sup>21</sup> *Foundation Letters and Teachings*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> The Barleys were close associates of Alan Leo; Alfred Barley was the sub-editor of *Modern Astrology* from 1903-1917.

when H.P.B. came a half-century later in 1875, the work of preparation was yet to be done, and for the most part “the truth she taught fell on stony ground.”<sup>26</sup> In spite of her achievements, the world had not been ready for her message:

In the year 1875, H.P. Blavatsky headed a great movement for the regeneration of spiritual life and principles. The ideal of Universal Brotherhood was held up before all nations. Men were shown their common origin and the unity of their true interests. They were implored to cease from campaigns of mutual hatred and injury, and to make peace. The Message was rejected and the Messenger practically hounded to her death. The old games of international murder and lying and land-grabbing went on unchecked. Commercial immorality increased to an extent unknown before. Class hatreds became more embittered and Science multiplied the engines of death and destruction.<sup>27</sup>

Brother XII claimed that the rejection of H.P.B.’s teachings had resulted in the capitalistic war in South Africa, the atrocities in the Belgian Congo, and the culminating horrors of World War I. The Society she had nurtured had been split into divided and warring factions. The Work announced by *The Message* continued the cycle that had commenced in 1825 with the Catholic Apostolic Church, and carried forward Madame Blavatsky’s pioneering work. Brother XII stressed: “You who prize the philosophy of H.P.B., I bid you cleave to it, for it is Truth; cleave to the Principles, the great root-ideas it expressed, and upon which it is built.”<sup>28</sup> He told the members of

the Aquarian Foundation that they could not go back to Blavatsky—they had to go *forward* to Blavatsky:

I tell you of my own certain and personal knowledge, our Brother H.P.B. is not behind you, buried in the “eighties” where you would enshrine her. H.P.B. is ahead of you, working in this very Cause of which I am a Messenger, and working twenty-four hours a day; not yet physically but none the less effectively.<sup>29</sup>

In a General Letter issued on January 15, 1927, Brother XII announced that he planned to go to North America to inaugurate the work of the White Lodge there, since it was the place where the sixth sub-race would develop. He told the members of the Foundation that the Center chosen by the Manu (Vaivasvata) to be the cradle of the coming sixth sub-race was neither Mexico nor California, but Southern British Columbia, and that it would be not only the center of the present Work, but “THE center of spiritual energy and knowledge for the whole continent of North America—for the whole world in the not distant future.”<sup>30</sup> In February, 1927, after arranging to meet his wife, Elma Wilson, and the Barleys in British Columbia at a later date, Brother XII sailed from Southampton for Montreal.

After speaking to various Theosophical Lodges in Eastern Canada, Brother XII travelled by train to British Columbia, where he established the headquarters of the Aquarian Foundation on a 126-acre piece of picturesque waterfront property at Cedar-by-the-Sea, seven miles south of the colliery town of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island.

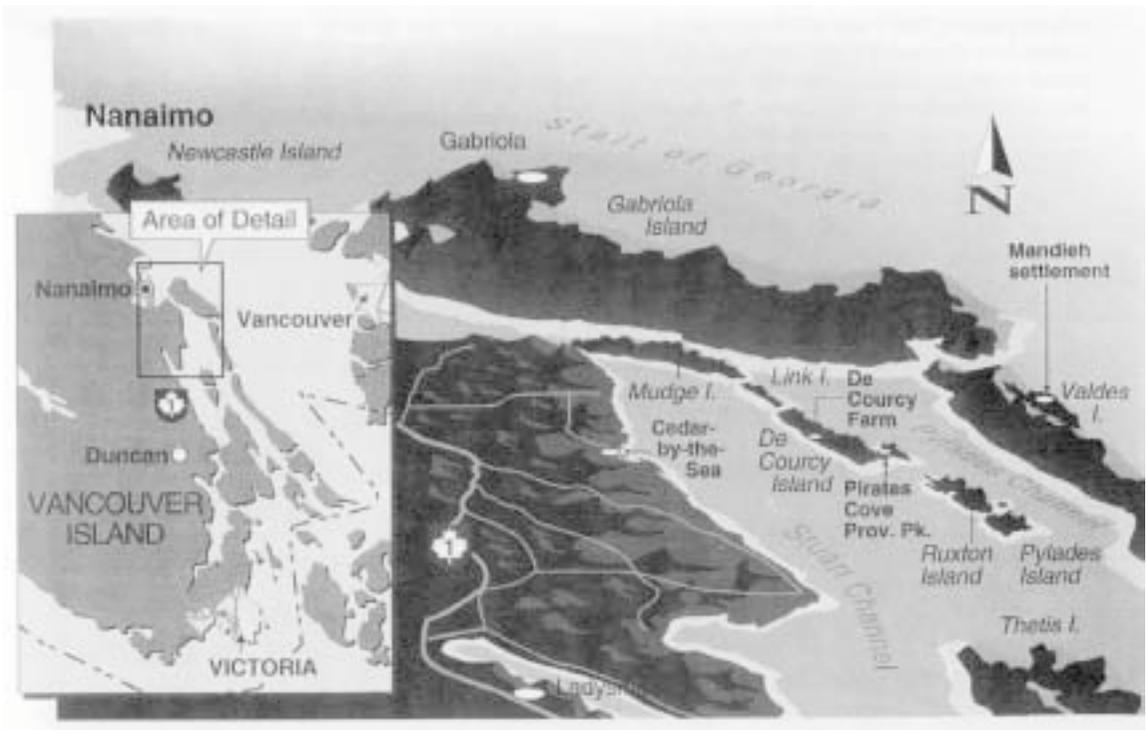
<sup>26</sup> “Things We Ought To Know,” 145.

<sup>27</sup> “The Shadow,” reprinted in *F.L. & T.*, 153.

<sup>28</sup> *F.L. & T.*, 67.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> General Letter dated 15 January 1927, reprinted in *The Aquarian Foundation*, 31.



Rob Struthers

Vancouver Island, British Columbia (Canada): the area of Brother Twelve's activity. (Reproduced from *Beautiful British Columbia*. By permission of the artist, Rob Struthers.)

The Foundation was incorporated as a Society under the Societies Act of British Columbia on May 16, 1927. In addition to Brother XII, the seven Governors of the Society included Joseph Benner, owner of the Sun Publishing Company and author of *The Impersonal Life*; Will Levington Comfort, an American novelist and frequent contributor to *The Saturday Evening Post*; Coulson Turnbull, an astrologer from Santa Cruz and author of *The Solar Logos* and *The Divine Language of Celestial*

*Correspondences*; Maurice Von Platen, a retired Chicago manufacturer; Edward Lucas, a prominent Vancouver attorney; and Phillip Fisher, son of a wealthy family in Birmingham, England. This inner group was intended by Brother XII to be the vessel which the Masters would fill with their power and knowledge:

Those who compose it will form collectively the Chalice into which the life of the Master

will be poured. The Water of Life will take its colour from the vessel which contains it. That vessel must be clean, utterly free from the stain of selfishness or of ambition. Its purity must be most jealously guarded.<sup>31</sup>

On July 25, 1927, the first annual general meeting of the Aquarian Foundation was held at Cedar-by-the-Sea, with the seven Governors in attendance. According to Brother XII, there were twelve groups in the Great White Lodge that were specifically concerned with the evolution of humanity and the planet. Each of these twelve groups would function through an incarnated physical body, so that there would eventually be twelve men, in the literal human sense, who would become focal points for the expression of the energy of the Lodge upon the Earth. Brother XII claimed that seven of those twelve groups had taken, and were presently using, human physical bodies. Those seven groups were acting through the Governors of the Aquarian Foundation. As a result of the meeting that day, he stated, the consciousness of the six other Governors would be raised and extended, so that they would become conscious instruments of the Lodge. The meeting was an historic occasion for which the Earth had waited for thousands of years: "Later, when men come to understand its true significance, the twenty-fifth day of July in the year 1927 shall be commemorated for long ages to come."<sup>32</sup>

The work of the Aquarian Foundation had two distinct aspects: spiritual and political. Brother XII believed that politics represented the responsibility of the individual for his or her part in the life of the State. He was critical of other occult groups

that were not actively seeking to change social conditions:

The work to be done by and through the Groups is entirely practical—it is *the work of making over this every-day world*, of bringing about those conditions which will make possible the incoming of the children of the new Race. Being a practical work, it can only be done by employing practical methods. To affirm that the world is yours by a species of divine right, and because you are a part of the "Great All" does not make it so. This may be an exhilarating pastime in itself, but it will not clean up a civil ulcer like Chicago, or help restrain the thirst for national banditry as exemplified by the recent policies in Nicaragua.<sup>33</sup>

Brother XII claimed that the root cause of the lack of brotherhood in the world was an unjust and corrupt economic system. The great mass of mankind was in the grip of a cruel industrial autocracy which treated its workers not as human beings with souls to be developed, but as wage slaves hardly more important than the machines they tended. The economic serf of modern industry spent his or her entire life in bondage, trying to escape the spectre of poverty and starvation, living and dying without realizing his or her full capacities and powers as a human being. This oppression was increasing as the rich became richer and the poor, poorer. Brother XII cited as an example the conditions in New York City:

In New York, the centre of wealth, fashion and social gaiety on this continent, two-thirds of the school children are physically defective and 25 percent of them come to school

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<sup>31</sup> *F.L. & T.*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> "From The Brother, XII," *The Glass Hive*, September, 1927, 8.

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<sup>33</sup> Aquarian Foundation Instruction No. 5 (January 1928): 2.



The Governors of the Aquarian Foundation, July 25, 1927. Left to right: Joseph S. Benner (front), Baron Maurice Von Platon (rear), E.A. Wilson (front), Phillip J. Fisher (rear), Will Levington Comfort, Edward Lucas, and Coulson Turnbull. (By permission of the author.)

suffering from hunger and malnutrition. The General Bakery Company, which supplies the greater part of New York with bread *has increased the value of its investments sixty-seven thousand five hundred percent (67,500%) in nine years*, and only two years

ago its president paid two hundred thousand dollars for a box at the opera. "Thou shalt not steal."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Arleux (pseudonym), "Brotherhood," *The Chalice* (April 1928): 34.

Brother XII's politics were based upon his belief that a grand design had existed throughout history to enslave the masses: "Is the financial world the product of the servants of God, or the children of Mammon?" he asked. "What is there that is not controlled, directly or indirectly, near or afar, by the hidden hand of finance?"<sup>35</sup> The real rulers of the world, he claimed, were the servants of the Antichrist, and they controlled everything—from the price of bread to the policies of nations. "No president is ever elected, or king crowned, no treaty ever signed, or army moved, unless it be at the bidding, or at least with the knowledge and consent, of this unseen power which controls prince and president and peasant alike."<sup>36</sup>

Brother XII claimed that the world's wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few powerful men, the directors of the Jewish banking houses that controlled the huge financial mergers that were taking place at the time. He accused these men of plotting to control world capital and manipulate international politics in order to achieve their goal of setting up a world dictatorship. It would be headed by a man Brother XII identified as a member of the Rothschild family living in Paris. He told the Foundation members that they were about to witness the final battle of Biblical prophecy—the Armageddon: "At this moment, men are rapidly approaching the most terrible struggle in the history of mankind upon this planet—a struggle for the control of all the resources of the planet itself."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "From The Brother XII at Nanaimo, B.C.," *The Glass Hive* (June 1927): 8.

<sup>36</sup> "The Aquarian Foundation," *The Chalice* (December 1927): 8.

<sup>37</sup> "From the Brother XII at Nanaimo, B.C.," *The Glass Hive* (June 1927): 9-10.

In January, 1928, Brother XII traveled to Washington, D.C. to lobby support for a Third Party in the United States. He met with U.S. congressmen, including Alabama senator Thomas James Heflin, whom he asked to be his Third Party candidate for president. He also formed an organization called the Protestant Protective League, an anti-Catholic coalition which was dedicated to the defeat of the Democratic candidate Alfred Smith, the first Roman Catholic to be nominated for president. Brother XII claimed that Smith was a tool of the Roman Catholic Church, and that if he were elected, the United States would be torn apart by a bloody religious war. If, on the other hand, the Republican candidate Herbert Hoover were elected, the complete and utter financial demoralization of the United States would follow. The people didn't have a real choice: "Elect Hoover, and you will be plundered in a thousand ways. Elect Smith, and freedom will become only a memory in the land."<sup>38</sup> Brother XII hoped to rally the nation behind his Third Party, and achieve the biggest political upset in the history of the United States. At the second annual general meeting of the Aquarian Foundation, held on July 5, 1928, he declared: "*I expect to select, and will select, the man who is to be the next President of the United States, and also the next Vice-President.*"<sup>39</sup>

Following the general meeting, Brother XII left Seattle by train to attend the Third Party convention in Chicago. During the trip, he met a woman named Myrtle Baumgartner, the wife of a physician in Clifton Springs, New York. The two

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<sup>38</sup> The Brother, XII, *The End of the Days* (Nanaimo, B.C. : The Chalice Press, 1928), 85.

<sup>39</sup> Text of address of Brother XII, 5 July 1928, in possession of author.

took the “Sixth Initiation”<sup>40</sup> together, during which it was revealed to them that they would have a child who would become Brother XII’s successor and the World Teacher in or about 1975. Brother XII was also alleged to have claimed that he was the reincarnation of the Egyptian god Osiris, that Myrtle was the reincarnation of Isis, and that their child would be the reincarnation of Horus. By the time the train reached Chicago’s Union Station, Myrtle Baumgartner had conceived the child that the couple believed would become the future World Teacher.

In letters that Myrtle wrote to her husband explaining her relationship with Wilson, she describes meeting him years earlier in her dreams. Since then, she had conducted a nocturnal out-of-body relationship with him that had become the entire focus of her life. The initial contact occurred in a dream she’d had in St. Louis:

I awoke with the firm conviction that somewhere the true one was awaiting me, and in my mind’s eye I had a very clear picture of his appearance. At intervals I dreamed of him again. Then in 1922 came my long and wonderful Egyptian dream—and this same man again figured prominently in the dream. I knew that I never really loved anyone but *him*—but it never occurred to me that he was on earth in physical embodiment. From 1922 onward, the contact in night consciousness was almost constant. My dream life became my real life, and while I had my outer life and my outer love and outer duties, they truly

seemed a means to an end—a ladder upon which I must climb to stand upon the mountain top with *him*.<sup>41</sup>

Myrtle added that she knew that the man she met nightly was her “Beloved,” because “there was between us a rhythmic electric bliss when in each other’s presence that simply left one spell-bound—and which when once experienced left absolutely no room for doubt. When you have come into the presence of that one once, you will never again wonder—you will *know*.”<sup>42</sup>

Wilson claimed that Myrtle Baumgartner was a fellow Initiate who had taken a feminine embodiment so that the two could teach the occult laws governing human relationships in the new era. “For many years past, *we have worked together on inner planes*, but the time has come when we must work as one, outwardly and in the life of the physical world,” he explained to the members of the Foundation. “We have to teach by example and action, not only by words. We have to *live the life*, and that means to show men and women what the true marriage relationship is, as distinguished from the conventional and the false.”<sup>43</sup> He denied that the relationship was a matter of an ordinary personal attraction, and quoted a passage from *When the Sun Moves Northward* to convey the sacredness of the union:

To be powerful enough to attain an association with a companion on the physical as well as on the psychic plane means that the divine part of the man has been able to unfold a petal

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<sup>40</sup> Brother XII allegedly passed the Fifth Initiation on July 25, 1927, at Cedar-by-the-Sea, an attainment he celebrated in his poem “Greeting,” printed in *F.L. & T.* (187). In a *Vancouver Daily Province* article, “Weird Occultism Exemplified in Amazing Colony at Cedar-by-Sea” (28 October 1928), several disciples discussed Brother XII’s Sixth Initiation with reporter Bruce McKelvie.

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<sup>41</sup> Letter from Myrtle Baumgartner to Edwin Baumgartner, 13 September 1928, 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Brother XII, November 1928 General Letter, 2.

of its lotus flower and to permit its sweetness to become a fragrance that can reach the outer sense. For this so wonderful thing must come from on high; it means that two initiates are fated or permitted to meet upon earth—a marvel in an aeon.<sup>44</sup>

Brother XII's affair with Myrtle Baumgartner caused a crisis in the Aquarian Foundation. His wife Elma felt bitterly betrayed, while other members of the Foundation were scandalized by Wilson's flaunting of the marriage vow, feeling that the affair marked a dangerous descent into the lawlessness of "free love." In defense of his actions, Brother XII wrote an article in *The Chalice* in which he argued that there were three kinds of marriage, each corresponding to a different state of consciousness. He claimed that he and Myrtle had consummated the highest type of marriage possible—the marriage of two Initiates, a marriage which was undertaken for a specific purpose and over which the Church and State had no authority:

In such a case, physical union is undertaken deliberately and for the express purpose of providing a particular kind and quality of physical vehicle for *a known type* of incoming soul. The question of sexual gratification does not enter into such a union at all—it is, in effect, a dedication, the payment of a debt to that soul for whose benefit the act is undertaken.

When the purpose of such a union has been accomplished, there is no obligation for its indefinite perpetuation; that is a matter which

must be decided by the individuals concerned—no third party has any shadow of right to interfere in this decision, or to dictate it. Such a marriage as this is concerned exclusively with spiritual verities—its physical aspects are merely incidental.<sup>45</sup>

Brother XII's attack on conventional marriage created a further split in the Aquarian Foundation. Additional conflict arose when he deposited a \$25,000 donation, given by a wealthy socialite named Mary Connally of Asheville, North Carolina, to his own bank account, rather than to the general funds of the Foundation. The Governors felt that Wilson was acting in violation of the constitution of the Society and charged him with misappropriating the money. Mary Connally made a last-minute dash across the continent, and testified in court that she had given the money to Wilson for him to do with as he saw fit. The case was dismissed.<sup>46</sup>

In a General Letter that Brother XII issued to the membership, he defended himself against the various charges that had been made against him, and claimed that he had not deviated from the original plan of the Lodge:

The first stage of this Work was individual—I alone gave *The Message*, built up the outer organization, and gave the subsequent teachings and instructions you have received. Those writings are my witness—a living witness that will endure long after those who try to destroy it are forgotten. My work will live.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 3. (Brother XII quoted from the last part of Chapter IV, pages 69-70 of a London, 1923, reprint edition of *When the Sun Moves Northward*. He did not identify the publisher of this particular edition.)

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<sup>45</sup> Brother XII, "Marriage," *The Chalice*, September, 1928, 14.

<sup>46</sup> On November 28, 1928, on the recommendation of Chief Justice Aulay M. Morrison, the Grand Jury at the Nanaimo Fall Assizes returned a verdict of "No Bill" against Wilson.

<sup>47</sup> Brother XII, November 1928 General Letter, 2.

At the same time, he also answered the charge that he had claimed that he and Myrtle Baumgartner were the reincarnations of the Egyptian deities Osiris and Isis:

I never made such a statement. Osiris-Isis are living Principles in nature, not personal god and goddess. In the Mysteries, they symbolized this very principle of Duality of which the modern world is entirely ignorant. The worship of Osiris-Isis was really a study of, and an understanding of, the dual aspect of the spiritual Monad, inseparable from manifestation in form. To that extent, every person is an "incarnation" of one or other of these dual Principles. But there are few today who have any knowledge of the "dual law," and it is our work to restore, in part, that knowledge to mankind. The "divine child" Horus symbolized the concrete brain-knowledge of those truths, which are "born" into the world of men as the result of a knowledge of the Dual Law which governs the union of the Osiris-Isis Principles in nature.<sup>48</sup>

Brother XII explained that his teachings were for disciples, not for the masses. There was a wide difference between the disciple and the rank-and-file of humanity, so there had to be a corresponding difference in the laws which governed these two differing stages of growth:

What is Law? Law is the aggregate of the CONDITIONS of sentient existence in A GIVEN FIELD of consciousness. There is one law for the animal, another for man, one law for the savage, another for the intellectual; there is the Law of the disciple, and the Law of the Initiate, and the Law of the Adept or perfected

man. Law is not a rule of conduct but a condition of existence, and it varies with the range of consciousness.<sup>49</sup>

Despite his explanations, Brother XII's credibility in the eyes of the disciples was undermined by the fact that many of his predictions had *not* come true. In her attempt to bear the child who would become the future World Teacher, Myrtle Baumgartner had suffered not one, but *two* miscarriages. Rejected by Brother XII and divorced by her husband, she suffered a mental breakdown. In addition, the American populace had not responded to Brother XII's political appeals, and both the Third Party and the Protestant Protective League had proved to be conspicuous failures. It was clear that Brother XII's grandiose political plans would never be realized. The Governors of the Foundation felt that they had good reason to doubt Brother XII's divine sanction.

The one individual Brother XII trusted the most was Robert England, the Foundation's Secretary-Treasurer, who had worked with him daily for fourteen months. Now England also broke with Wilson. In his letter of resignation, England told Wilson that he had come to the conclusion that "The Brother XII is no longer working in or through the body and faculties of Edward A. Wilson,"<sup>50</sup> and that "the Master's consciousness was gradually withdrawn during the period from the latter part of January to about the first day of July of this year, 1928."<sup>51</sup> England accused Wilson

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<sup>49</sup> Brother XII, Additional Paper No 1, December, 1928, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Robert England to Edward Arthur Wilson, undated, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3.

of being concerned only with “the getting of money and a place,”<sup>52</sup> and said that the many attacks he had made upon individuals in his published writings, and in private letters, had shown him that “there was none of the love in you or the compassion an Adept of the White Lodge should and would show. . . for his chelas.”<sup>53</sup>

Brother XII denied that there had been any personal failure on his part. He accused the Governors of treachery, disloyalty, and an utter breaking of faith, but said that he made no complaint: it was the lot of everyone who undertook the thankless task of helping humanity.<sup>54</sup> He said that he had anticipated these same events two years earlier, when he had written a letter explaining what aspiring to *chelas* meant:

It means the certainty of being misjudged and condemned by those who should be, or perhaps were your friends. You will be accused of ambition, of desire for power or place, or of scheming to obtain money by doubtful means. You are “suspect,” and you must be content to remain so. It means disappointment, failure on failure, plans wrecked through the treachery, or the selfishness, or the inefficiency of others. Time and again your work will be torn down, and you must patiently and painfully rebuild it.<sup>55</sup>

By the end of 1928, Brother XII’s career seemed to be over. The six other Governors had petitioned the British Columbia government to cancel the charter of the Foundation, and many

members had resigned because of the crisis. H.N. Stokes, editor of *The O. E. Library Critic*, observed: “It appears certain that the Brother XII has signed his own death warrant, and as he alone was the supposed link between the Masters and the White Lodge, the affair will go to pieces and leave not a wrack behind.”<sup>56</sup>

But Brother XII continued with his work. He told the Foundation members that the crisis was a test, and that those who remained loyal to the cause would go forward into the next phase of the Work: “Learn to regard this Society known as the Aquarian Foundation for what it is; it is now but the chrysalis, the soon-to-be-empty shell. You who issue from it shall shortly emerge into a world of sunlight, of spiritual consciousness hitherto unknown to you.”<sup>57</sup>

With a further donation from Mary Connally of \$10,000, Brother XII purchased the DeCourcy group of islands. The three islands, comprising 669 acres, along with 400 acres on Valdes Island and the original property at Cedar-by-the-Sea, brought the size of the colony to almost 1,200 acres. Brother XII called the new settlement the Brothers’ Center. He claimed that it would be the actual physical location where certain great souls would incarnate, bringing a new spiritual impulse to mankind and giving instruction to the selected individuals who would take part in the restoration succeeding the break-up of the existing order. He likened the collapse of the Aquarian Foundation to the failure of certain aspects of H.P.B.’s work:

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> November 1928 General Letter, 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Foundation Letters and Teachings*, 66.

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<sup>56</sup> “The Brother XII Bubble Bursts,” *O.E. Library Critic* (December 1928).

<sup>57</sup> Brother XII, General Letter, 12 November 1928, 2.

The one modern authority on these matters whom we entirely endorse is H.P. Blavatsky. . . . The work inaugurated by [her] towards the end of the nineteenth century was thwarted by the strife for position and leadership on the part of those who followed her, and by the lack of understanding in the majority. This later effort—The Aquarian Foundation—has also been brought to APPARENT shipwreck from the same causes; jealousy, selfishness and unscrupulous greed have made those who have worked against us an easy prey to the enemies of mankind—the dupes of those who oppose us.<sup>58</sup>

An important factor determining the selection of candidates for the new colony was the birthchart. Brother XII believed that “the nativity is the chart of the Soul,”<sup>59</sup> and stressed that the candidate had to have brought over the needed qualifications from a former life, as there wasn’t time to develop them in the present one. The prospective applicant had to be willing to renounce personal possessions and to entirely abandon the life of the outer world:

True discipleship means a life dedicated to the service of humanity; it is diametrically opposed to the preferences of the personal self. No compromise between these two is possible. Therefore, the first requirement is THE SURRENDER OF PERSONAL POSSESSIONS, an actual not a theoretical surrender. If the disciple is truly dedicated, it follows that all he has is included in the dedication of himself. This is the first requirement and it constitutes at once a safeguard and a test which the insincere will be unable to face.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> “The Brothers’ School,” reprinted in *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother* (London, England: L.N. Fowler & Co., 1930), 210-11.

<sup>59</sup> Brother XII, Additional Paper No 1 (December, 1928): 3.

Brother XII declared that not one in millions would be able to fulfill the conditions for admission to the Brothers’ Center: “The real occultist is born, just as is the musical genius, the artist, or the Teacher.”<sup>61</sup> He explained that the souls of the sixth sub-race who would be born as children to colony members would be raised in an environment conducive to their development, away from the spiritually devastating conditions of the outside world: “The effects of eighteen or twenty years of ordinary training are so terrible from a spiritual standpoint that they permanently disable all but those rare souls, the born Servers of the Race, and even these are hindered to a degree.”<sup>62</sup>

Beginning in January, 1929, Brother XII issued a monthly letter to the disciples, the purpose of which was to help them make the transition to a higher state of consciousness. The first requirement of the disciple was that he or she be reborn in a spiritual sense. Once this spiritual birth had taken place, the enclosing walls of personal concerns would have forever fallen away, and the disciple could live consciously in the world of spirit:

Love, emotion, experience, life itself, all these will be seen in a newer and truer perspective; you will view and understand them from the mountain peaks of reality instead of, as heretofore, from the weary and flattened plains of illusion. Life for you will no longer mean the few brief and perhaps empty years which lie within the span of one short incarnation, for you have now entered consciously into a life

<sup>60</sup> “The Brothers’ School,” *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*, 215.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

that is endless and eternal, you have only to realize the fact.<sup>65</sup>

This same spiritual birth was taking place in the life of the race, Brother XII explained. An epochal change was being wrought in the field of human consciousness:

This our Era is both the ending and the beginning of an Age; all who are born in it are part of it, are factors in the total sum, grains weighed in one or other of its scales. *It is a period of birth for the Race as a whole*—humanity may no longer be carried in the womb of ignorance and darkness; the hour of birth is upon them. It is not a Saviour of men that shall be born, but Man himself.<sup>64</sup>

Brother XII stated in the letters that the present work had commenced thousands of years earlier in ancient Egypt with the pharaoh Akhenaten, and that the Restoration of the Mysteries, which was a part of the present Work, was the fruit of that pharaoh's earlier efforts. He gave the disciples an Invocation which he said had originated in Akhenaten's reign, and which he claimed he'd recovered at 5:00 A.M. on April 27, 1926. Members of the group repeated the Invocation daily, each morning upon arising and at night before going to bed.

### **The Invocation of Light**

O Thou Who bringest the Dawn,  
Who renewest the Day without ceasing,  
Whose splendour is the Brightness of the Morning;

Fountain of Life and Source of Light Eternal,  
Increase in us Thy Knowledge and Thy Strength.

Thou Who shinest in the East,  
Who showest the West Thy glory,  
And art supreme in the high heaven;  
Thou fillest Thy Houses with Light,  
And Thy Mansions with hidden Power.  
Thou sustainest the Seven Lords,  
The Shining Ones Who keep Thy Path,  
And we, who serve Thee through Their Ray,  
O Light ineffable.

Increase in us Thy Wisdom and Thy Power,  
Dwell Thou in us, as we are One in Thee.<sup>65</sup>

Brother XII claimed that the present work was also linked to the Middle Ages through the work of the Knights Templar and their associate Orders. He believed that he had been a member of the Knights of Malta in one of his past lives, and that he had formerly known Roger Painter, the Florida poultry dealer who was Brother IX, as Jean de Valette, after whom the capital of Valetta in Malta was named.<sup>66</sup>

Brother XII also claimed that many outstanding religious figures from the past were part of the Work:

Remember that the physical embodiments of a Regent are practically continuous, and that many notable lives or historical characters are, in reality, but the work of the one life or Consciousness. I will give you an instance—Moses, Samuel, Daniel, John the Baptist, and Saint Paul were physical embodiments of THE REGENT OF THE MANU. Note how the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 52.

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<sup>65</sup> The only known surviving copy of this Invocation was given to the author by Alice Rudy, a former member of the colony.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from E.A. Wilson to Mary Connally, 27 June 1929.

qualities of leadership and judgement characterize them all alike, how they arraign the evils of their day, how they exhort, drive, compel, build and rebuild, and in the end—establish. Moses said, “Ye are the Seed of Abraham”; St. Paul said, “Ye are children of one Household” (Hierarchy); and I say unto you—“Ye are members of one Brotherhood.” It is the same teaching and the same Work.”<sup>67</sup>

Brother XII told the disciples that they formed the nucleus of that new order which would rise, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the old. He used the expression “City of Refuge” to describe the colony, and predicted that within a very short time it would become a center of safety in the midst of chaos. To every Foundation member, he sent a “Card of Recognition” that was inscribed: “Labour in this Vineyard, and thou shalt eat of its fruit. Build thou the City of Refuge; it shall hide thee in the Day of Adversity.”<sup>68</sup>

Brother XII’s monthly letters were published in England by L.N. Fowler & Company under the title *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*. The reviewer for *The Occult Review*<sup>69</sup> was intrigued by the contents of the book, particularly by Brother XII’s outline of what he called the “Dual Law,” in which he wrote that near the end of the life-history of the Monad, the two complementary souls who had originally comprised the Monad before it divided would be drawn to each other and by “*the fusion of a dual CONSCIOUSNESS*”<sup>70</sup> be able to do a great spiritual work together. The reviewer speculated that this was the process at

work in partnerships like the one between Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland.

After the departure of Myrtle Baumgartner, Brother XII entered into a relationship with a woman named Mabel Skottowe, who arrived at the colony from Pensacola, Florida, where she and Roger Painter had been Divisional Secretaries of the Aquarian Foundation. The 39-year-old Mabel, who had taught school in the Canadian prairies after emigrating with her family from England, left Painter to become Brother XII’s mistress. He put her in charge of supervising the colony on a day-to-day basis, and told the disciples that she was his co-worker, with authority equal to his own. “She is my eyes, she is my ears, she is my mouth,” he declared. “Her orders are my orders. Whatever she says, you are to take as coming from me.”<sup>71</sup> Mabel, who used the initial “Z” as her occult name, was called “Madame Zee” by the disciples. She and Wilson apparently participated in some kind of private marriage, legally changing their names in 1931 to Amiel de Valdes and Zura de Valdes.<sup>72</sup>

Brother XII and Mabel Skottowe may have collaborated on a manuscript entitled *The Law of Cycles and of Human Generation*, the authorship of which was ascribed to “Two Brothers of the Twelfth Hierarchy.”<sup>73</sup> The book explained how the same forces which had caused the downfall of ancient civilizations were operating in the present day. It also examined the occult laws governing

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<sup>67</sup> *Unsigned Letters*, 148.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>69</sup> Leon Elson, *The Occult Review* (September 1930): 207.

<sup>70</sup> *Unsigned Letters*, 182.

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<sup>71</sup> *Mary W.T. Connally v. Amiel de Valdes and Zura de Valdes*, The Supreme Court of British Columbia, Nanaimo, B.C., 26 April 1933, transcript of proceedings, 20.

<sup>72</sup> Wilson changed his name by deed poll on 23 March 1931; Mabel Skottowe changed her name by deed poll exactly six months later on 23 September 1931.

<sup>73</sup> Advertisement in *Unsigned Letters*, 230.

human conception and physical birth. Although advance orders for the book were taken, it isn't known whether or not *The Law of Cycles and of Human Generation* was ever published.

Brother XII and Mabel were away from the colony for most of 1930, returning from England on November 15, 1930, on Brother XII's sailboat, the *Lady Royal*. The final stage in the life of the colony now began. In many respects, Wilson seemed like a different man. He kept himself separate from the disciples, and also ignored his wealthy patron, Mary Connally. "Apart from seeing him about half-a-dozen times, for perhaps five minutes at a time, I never saw him, or talked to him, or had any conversation with him," she recalled. "As far as the personnel were concerned, he absolutely ignored me as completely as if I didn't exist."<sup>74</sup>

On December 21, 1930, Mary was abruptly removed from her comfortable house at Cedar and taken to Valdes Island, where she was put to work chopping wood, cooking, cleaning, scrubbing floors, and carrying heavy loads on her back to the various cabins on the island. Mary was placed under the supervision of Leona Painter, who was instructed to make her work as hard as possible, with the result that Mary performed all of her tasks at high speed and under constant pressure. The wealthy socialite pushed herself to exhaustion in the belief that the constant work and physical privation was a form of initiation which would strengthen her soul and prepare her to take a step forward into higher consciousness.

Herbert Jefferson, a commercial artist from Toronto who spent six months at the colony, later explained the rationale behind this treatment of the disciples:

All these jobs he gave us to do were tests. He'd say, 'Now, you'll be tested. I'll give you something to do which may appear to be hard for you or unreasonable, but this is my way of testing you. When you come through with flying colours, then you've passed your initiation and you're ready for further work.'<sup>75</sup>

For three months, Mary Connally toiled relentlessly on Valdes Island. When she was informed that she had failed the test, she was devastated. Returning to Cedar, she was given the job of cultivating a three-acre field. She worked seven hours a day, plowing and harrowing the field. "I thought it was a test," she recalled, "just to see if I could make good, if there was anything in this world that would hold me back in this work I had come here for—the freeing of humanity from its shackles."<sup>76</sup>

Again, according to some arbitrary standard apparent only to Brother XII, Mary failed the test. She was thereafter considered to be unsuitable for the Work, and was permanently downgraded in the community. The fact that Brother XII appeared to have finished with her may have been because she had no more money to give him.<sup>77</sup> The hard physical labor took its toll on Mary's health. When she later sought damages in court,

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<sup>75</sup> Interview by Imbert Orchard with Herbert Jefferson, 29 January 1966.

<sup>76</sup> Transcript of Connally v. Amiel de Valdes, 25.

<sup>77</sup> Mary had hoped to receive \$250,000 from a lawsuit she had brought against the Southern Railroad Company in which she claimed that the smoke and cinders from the railroad's shops in Asheville, North Carolina, had damaged the property value of her Biltmore Forest estate, "Fernihurst." On August 11, 1929, in the U.S. district court in Washington, D.C., she was awarded one cent damages.

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<sup>74</sup> Transcript of Connally v. Amiel de Valdes, 18.

she testified: “The damage to my physical body is something that cannot be paid for.”<sup>78</sup>

In spite of the harsh conditions at the colony, the disciples believed that the hardships they endured were dictated by Brother XII’s zeal for the spiritual welfare of the community. Before they had arrived at the Brothers’ Center, they’d been warned in advance: “The activities of the Great White Lodge can be summed up in one word—WORK. This work is endless, never-ceasing . . . Those who come to us will be expected to support our Work and our Cause TO THE UTTERMOST.”<sup>79</sup> For the most part, the disciples continued to regard Brother XII as “the representative—the incarnation almost—of this new brotherhood movement, which we believed was in the process of being established.”<sup>80</sup>

By dint of their unremitting labor, the colonists created a prosperous and self-sufficient community in which they had everything they needed to survive the Great Depression and prepare themselves for the coming collapse of the social order. Although there was little formal teaching at the community—Brother XII had written that the Brothers’ Center was not a school of classrooms or of books, but a school for the soul<sup>81</sup>—there was definitely an emphasis upon the esoteric. A disciple named Alice Rudy recalled:

They gave you what they called your “inner name.” It was the name of your Higher Self.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>79</sup> “Additional Paper,” reprinted in *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*, 227.

<sup>80</sup> Alfred Barley document, 15.

<sup>81</sup> This remark is from Brother XII’s February 1929 letter to the disciples. The paragraph in which it occurs was omitted from the letter published in *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*.

Ramathiel or Serathiel, or whatever. My inner name was Niadi. Zee told me, “Never voice it out loud, but if you ever need help, call on this name!”

They told me I was a young soul—only about a 3,500-year-old soul, which isn’t very old. Alfred Barley was an old soul. He told me he’d never left the earth at some deaths—he just came right back again into a new body. Roger Painter was Simon Peter in a past life, and XII was supposed to have been the Apostle Paul.

He didn’t want anyone reading. One time, he saw me reading something, and he said to Zee, “What’s she reading? *Take it away from her!* I don’t want her reading *anything!*”<sup>82</sup>

Early in 1932, police and immigration officers landed on DeCourcy Island to investigate the complaints of a disgruntled former colony member. The incident triggered Brother XII’s paranoia. He purchased rifles and ammunition, and ordered the disciples to build forts surrounding his headquarters. The colonists took turns doing guard duty, and in some cases even fired warning shots at vessels that strayed too close to the island. If a government vessel approached, Brother XII fled into the woods. After awhile, however, he became tired of running. “Let them come!” he told the disciples. “I’m not hiding anymore!”<sup>83</sup>

As the year progressed, conditions at the colony rapidly deteriorated. In some instances, the disciples were made to work twenty-hour shifts in the fields. They were also subject to the constant haranguing of Madame Zee, who seemed to take delight in tormenting various members of

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<sup>82</sup> Interview by author with Alice Rudy, 12 January 1981.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

the colony. Arms upraised, she would stamp up and down in front of anyone who incurred her displeasure, calling down “the Power”<sup>84</sup> to smite the wretched object of her wrath. The disciples were even placed on rations: a slice of brown bread with a spot of jam and one teaspoonful of tea to twenty gallons of water was a typical daily ration that almost defies belief.<sup>85</sup>

Brother XII himself exhibited increasingly erratic behavior. Often the most trivial incident would trigger an explosive rage. A misunderstanding over the purchase of a power-saw caused him to mercilessly berate Roger Painter, who was cutting wood at the time:

And like a flash, he came at me, and cursed me for everything under the sun, and called me a dirty low-down sneak, and said that I had undermined him. And he talked with me there for three solid hours, and called me every name under the sun.”<sup>86</sup>

Mary Connally, who had given her fortune to Brother XII in the belief that he was the instrument of the Masters—only to be cruelly rejected by him, later explained:

He did not fail until he came back from Europe. And when he came back, he started fooling us fast, until he smashed up everything that was capable of being smashed. It

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<sup>84</sup> Madame Zee’s behavior was described by Bruce Crawford during the courtcase *Barley v. Amiel deValdes*, held in Nanaimo on 27 April 1933, and reported by Bruce McKelvie in “Black Magic, Gold and Guns Feature Strange Cult Case,” *The Victoria Colonist*, 28 April 1933.

<sup>85</sup> Reported by Alexandrine Gibb in “Brother Twelve,” *The Toronto Star Weekly*, 20 May 1933.

<sup>86</sup> Transcript of *Barley v. Amiel de Valdes*, 27 April 1933, 3.

took him one year and six months to absolutely demolish everything.<sup>87</sup>

The disciples wondered if Brother XII’s return voyage from England, during which he and Zura had almost died at sea when the *Lady Royal* was blown far off course, had perhaps rendered the two of them insane. “We often wondered if they didn’t put on a show for us, especially at full moon,” Annie Barley recalled. “It was either that they were insane people or that they were taking drugs.”<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of life in the colony was the fact that the disciples believed that if they didn’t do exactly as Brother XII told them, they would lose their souls. “When he told us that we had failed in the Work,” Leona Painter testified, “why, we were lost for aeons of time—and that would put you through intense agony.”<sup>89</sup>

A further reference to this destruction of the soul is made in a letter Alfred Barley wrote to a woman named Regina LaCarte. Seeking to free her from “mental enslavement,” Barley speaks of an “insidious bondage which, if persisted in, ends in total darkness and disintegration of the soul, until its atomic parts are so scattered that it takes aeons and aeons of time for it to rebuild its constituent parts.”<sup>90</sup>

The disciples lived in an atmosphere of growing dread. Isolated on a remote island, forbidden to communicate with the outside world, forced to work long hours in terrible conditions, and psy-

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<sup>87</sup> Transcript of *Connally v. Amiel de Valdes*, 26 April 1933, 9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>90</sup> Letter from Alfred Barley to Regina LaCarte, 30 October 1930.

chologically terrorized by a man they believed had the power to destroy their souls, their dream of living in an utopian community had turned into a nightmare. As Bruce Crawford observed: “I wasn’t there long until I found out I wasn’t in a brotherhood of love, but in a brotherhood of hell.”<sup>91</sup>

There were no further teachings from Brother XII, who appeared indifferent to the fate of the land-working slaves who toiled ceaselessly under the vigilant scrutiny of his harsh mistress, Madame Zee. Driven to the breaking point, the disciples finally revolted, demanding a meeting with him and an explanation of the intolerable conditions at the colony. This challenge to his authority caused Brother XII intense rage, and he proceeded to remove the disciples from DeCourcy Island, taking them in his tugboat, the *Kbuenaten*, two and three at a time, to Cedar-by-the-Sea. On June 5, 1932, the banished disciples held a meeting at Cedar and resolved to continue the Work without him.

Mary Connally and Alfred Barley subsequently brought court actions against Brother XII to recover the money they had contributed to the colony. In his statement of defence, Wilson denied all of the allegations made against him:

In answer to the whole of the Statement of Claim herein this Defendant says that the books and other writings of this Defendant honestly set forth the opinions and beliefs of this Defendant upon the present material and spiritual condition of civilization and of its future; that the present financial crisis and economic stringency, the unprecedented and alarming condition of world-wide unemploy-

ment, the chaotic condition of international relations, are a manifestation of the disintegration of our present civilization and have been foretold by this Defendant in his books and writings since 1925; that the Defendant’s said books and other writings were, as they purport to be, written under the overwhelming inspiration of spiritual forces, and were only intended for those whose consciousness of spiritual realities would permit them to read with understanding.<sup>92</sup>

The most sensational testimony of the trial was Roger Painter’s disclosure that Brother XII and Madame Zee had attempted to kill their enemies with black magic. In rituals held at midnight in the cabin of the *Lady Royal*, Brother XII would summon the etheric body of his victim into his presence:

He would stand him up there in his imagination, and he would then begin his tirade, cursing and damning that spirit, and then going down this way with his hand, and that way, cutting what they call the etheric, which is the finer body, from which the physical gets its life. The operation was supposed to—that is, the physical organism, as I understood it from him, the physical organism would gradually become depleted and die.<sup>93</sup>

The disciples won their cases, but Brother XII and Madame Zee had already fled, leaving the colony in ruins and disappearing with an estimated \$400,000, which Wilson had accumulated during his seven-year reign as Brother XII.

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<sup>92</sup> Statement of Defence of Amiel de Valdes, 2 February 1933, 8.

<sup>93</sup> Transcript of Barley v. Amiel de Valdes, 7. Apparently none of the individuals Brother XII targeted for assassination died as a result of this procedure.

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<sup>91</sup> “Mary Connally Given Judgement Against Brother Twelve,” *Nanaimo Herald*, 27 April 1933.



Clinique du Chânet (Neuchâtel, Switzerland). Wilson was a patient here in November, 1934, under the care of Dr. Roger Schmidt. His death in Neuchâtel remains a matter of speculation. The clinic is now a police training academy. (By permission of the author.)

Returning to England via Montreal, Brother XII and Mabel Skottowe lived in seclusion for a year in Devonshire, before departing for the continent. Wilson's health appears to have been failing, for he sought medical attention in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, from Dr. Roger Schmidt, who had been his personal physician at the colony in British Columbia. Wilson died at 19 Rue des Beaux-Arts at 9:00 p.m. on November 7, 1934. The death certificate, which was signed by Dr. Schmidt,

listed the cause of death as angina pectoris. Wilson was fifty-six-years-old. He died penniless, leaving no record of the fortune he had amassed. Mabel Skottowe left Neuchâtel upon his death and disappeared without a trace, with the exception of the occasional sighting reported over the years.

There is a possibility that Brother XII's death in Switzerland may have been a hoax. In July of 1936, Wilson's lawyer, Frank Cunliffe, acting on

instructions from Mary Connally, made a special trip to San Francisco. Going on board an ocean liner docked in the harbor, he rendezvoused with a mysterious individual to whom he gave a briefcase containing a large amount of cash. Cunliffe's son Donald was a witness to the transaction, and reports that the man matched Brother XII's description exactly. When asked to describe him, he recalled:

There was an impression of whiteness about him. His hat was white—his clothes were white—his shoes were white. Everything about him was white. And these gleaming eyes! This man *lived!* He was vibrant! I met Churchill once—a totally dissimilar person—but the same kind of electric energy seemed to flow through him.<sup>94</sup>

A year later, Frank Cunliffe received a trans-Atlantic telephone call via Gibraltar from the same man, whom the operator identified as a Mr. Wilson. After the call, Cunliffe all but confirmed to his son Donald that the man was, in fact, Brother XII, and added uncharacteristically, "I hope he goes to hell!"<sup>95</sup>

Over time, the disciples of Brother XII gradually dispersed, starting new lives for themselves elsewhere. Mary Connally remained in British Columbia, living on DeCourcy Island, which had been awarded to her by the court. The Barleys and Roger Painter moved to Marysville, Washington, where they bought a berry farm and continued to live a communal life. The disciples each drew their own meaning from the experience.

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<sup>94</sup> Interview by author with Donald M. Cunliffe, 6 April 1978.

<sup>95</sup> Letter from Donald M. Cunliffe to Don Clark, 12 February 1974.

"Hereafter, I'm not taking orders from no-one," Bruce Crawford declared. "I'm just gonna listen to my Higher Self."<sup>96</sup>

Why had Brother XII changed? That was the great mystery. In an editorial in *The Occult Review*,<sup>97</sup> Harry J. Strutton, who had known Wilson in England for a year before he left for British Columbia, wrote that he had detected in his character from the very beginning, a latent wildness and instability which was so disconcerting that certain persons, whom Strutton did not identify, had attempted to have him certified as insane. Strutton felt that Wilson's very success was his undoing, and that he had succumbed to egomania in a rapidly accelerating fall from grace, until he had become "a monarch of mere tinsel, bereft of the power of the Lodge."<sup>98</sup>

Strutton remarked that although it was impossible to agree with every detail of Brother XII's teachings, his earlier books had breathed sincerity and charm: "Judged merely by his writings, Brother XII was an inspiration to renewed endeavour, to more unselfish service."<sup>99</sup> He told readers that they should mourn Wilson's failure, rather than condemn him: "And may the experience of the thousands who came under his influence strengthen their determination, rather than deter them from seeking the true 'City of Refuge'—the peace within, rather than any organized Centre on the physical plane."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Interview by author with Alice Rudy, 12 January 1981.

<sup>97</sup> "Brother XII Loses His Way," *The Occult Review*, LVII/6 (June, 1933).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

In response to Strutton's editorial, the disciples offered their own answers to the mystery of why Brother XII had changed. Edward Conrow believed that an explanation for Brother XII's apparent failure was to be found in the Master Morya's statement that all action in life is dual, and that unless one was prepared for the negative consequences of a positive action, one would be "caught in the toils of the negative action."<sup>101</sup> Brother XII had neglected to take the necessary precautions, hence the ignoble end to what might have been an important spiritual work.

Another correspondent, identified only by the initials F.G.B., wrote that Brother XII reminded them of the character Narada in the Hindu pantheon, of whom H.P.B. had written in *The Secret Doctrine* that the adversity he brought upon individuals was for the purpose of hastening their progress and evolution. F.G.B. stated that there were those who believed that Brother XII had acted consciously in that role.<sup>102</sup>

Alfred Barley concurred with Strutton's observations about the value of Brother XII's writings, and his deep sincerity in the early days. Barley felt that the disciples had learned a salutary lesson, and that Brother XII's "fatal course of action in direct contravention of everything he had written shall result in having educated us into a realization of those truths which before had been but words on paper."<sup>103</sup>

Brother XII remains an enigmatic figure. Had he been able to retain his psychological stability, and conduct the affairs of the Aquarian Founda-

tion more skillfully, he might be recognized today as an important religious figure. But as he himself observed, the path of Initiation is a quaking one to travel, and success is the exception rather than the rule.<sup>104</sup> For all of his genuine insight and awareness, he ended up betraying the trust of those persons who sought him out as a Teacher.

A careful study of Brother XII's writings has led this writer to the conclusion that he was a true mystic, who wrote eloquently of what he had experienced, and without the intent to deceive credulous followers—although there were undoubtedly times when he used his powers of rhetoric to purposefully manipulate people to his own advantage. Many who were associated with him were struck by the magic of his words, and impressed by the evidence of his inspiration. Brother XII's teachings, notwithstanding his extreme political beliefs, are a contribution to the literature of the occult and a persuasive argument in themselves for his statement, "My work will live."<sup>105</sup>

For all of the conflict, moral ambiguity, and deception that characterized Brother XII's life, there is an authority and a clarity to his writings that sets them apart from the drama of clashing personalities that swirled about him. He strove to make real to his disciples his perception of a transcendent reality beyond the *maya* of the everyday world and the ordinary self. Truth itself did not change, he wrote, only the forms into which it was poured, and through which it was imperfectly expressed from age to age:

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<sup>101</sup> *The London Forum*, October, 1933, 270. *The Occult Review* changed its name to *The London Forum* in September, 1933.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>104</sup> *Unsigned Letters from an Elder Brother*, 142-44.

<sup>105</sup> Brother XII, November 1928 General Letter, 2.

Only the Wise may know the mystery of the Cycle; birth, growth, maturity, decay, death—which is but birth into another section of the Cycle—so turns the wheel. He who imagines the last word spoken, the final revelation made, is yet far from *the beginning* of Wisdom. It is only with these or similar thoughts in mind that we may hope to approach the Mysteries. Such thoughts must flow into the mind unconsciously and without effort; their Source is in That which is above mind and below it, and from Which mind itself is born—the worlds of Reality, the Gateway to the Temple of the Mysteries. Man is born of woman, lives out the fret of life and passes on. Nations rise and fall, creeds blossom and decay, Teachers and Messengers arise, serve and pass to further service. Men are left with three things—the tradition of the past, the hope of the future, and the work of today. The last is the sum and substance of the other two. Only Eternal Truth endures. Creeds and religions are but the man-projected shadows of Its light. From It all comes, to It all returns—It is at once the Source, the Sustenance, the Goal.<sup>106</sup>

Brother XII leaves a legacy of mystery, a complex and contradictory life that is still far from being fully understood. The discovery of new information about him which will further illuminate his character, and a detailed and comprehensive analysis of his writings, will assist future researchers in assessing his role and significance in Theosophical history.

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<sup>106</sup> Aquarian Foundation Instruction No. 10, June, 1928, 4.

# Book Reviews

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

By Sylvia Cranston. New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons (A Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book), 1993. Pp. xxiv + 648. \$30.00 (\$39.00 in Canada). ISBN 0-87477-688-0.

In these days, when authors (in the U.K. anyway) are used to being relentlessly hectored by their publishers to reduce the length of their books so as to bring down the costs of paper, typesetting and printing, to permit selling at an affordable price, it is amazing to see appear a biography of Blavatsky of this length. Either Putnams of New York are very much more generous than is usual in the expense to which they are willing to go, or this publication has been silently subsidised.

The length being such, I had expected to find in it everything that is known about the life of H.P.B. This is not the case. Pains have been taken to include everything known of her ancestry and childhood, but from the time of her leaving her husband, there are big cuts in the account given of her early years. Metrovitch is cut down to this:

In April of 1862 H.P.B. attended the Tiflis Opera House to see Gounoud's *Faust* which only four years earlier had had its world premiere in Paris. Two of the leading singers

at this Tiflis production, Agardi and Teresina Mitrovitch or Metrovitch, were very good friends of HPB. Teresina played the part of Marguerite and her husband—a famous basso of the time—played the part of Mephistopheles.

True, but in a full biography one would have expected to read rather more of her strange and dramatic relations with Agardi Metrovitch, which started twelve years earlier, with her stumbling over him on the ground one night in Constantinople as he lay wounded by political enemies, through her later having to intervene to prevent his execution for political activities, to end with her having, together with Lydia Pashkoff (whose name does not appear in this biography), to bury him at night on a lonely beach at Alexandria, after he had finally been politically assassinated, because no church would allow his internment in its ground. This is the high stuff of drama. Why has it all been left out? I suspect, because of the rumours that made him the father of the child she at one time took about, and which he helped her to bury. Even if one does not believe Metrovitch to have been the father of this child, and I do not (I think it was the child of a female relation of her husband, Nikifor Blavatsky), something, I feel, ought to have been said of it. The child is not mentioned at all. I incline to think that Metrovitch was not her lover; but even without his being so,

he was a very important person in her life, her companion, support—and burden—in much.

Then, when Olcott comes in, we are not told that he was a divorced man with two children, or even that he had been married. This is not because the author did not know. During the time that both our biographies of Blavatsky were separately in progress, Leslie Price put Cranston and myself in touch, and I asked her, as an American, to what office in the USA I should apply for Olcott's divorce papers. She replied by sending me photocopies of the papers in full, showing that the suit was filed against him, before he ever met Blavatsky, in respect of his visit to a New York house of prostitution. She gave me her opinion, which I share, that one need not conclude that Olcott was in the habit of resorting to prostitutes; it could be that it was his wife who wanted her freedom and that he, to spare her reputation, agreed to pose as the guilty party. I used this gratefully in my book, but why does nothing about it appear in hers?

After the appearance of my book, *Blavatsky and Her Teachers*, Cranston wrote to me asking if I would share with her the diagrams described but not reproduced in it, made for me by Dr. Margaret Little to show the relative positions of womb, bladder, urethra and vagina in (a) a healthy woman, (b) a woman in whom the womb was prolapsed, but not so seriously as to prevent childbearing, and (c) so seriously prolapsed as to press down on the bladder, causing the troubles from which H.P.B. suffered and not only occlude the vagina, impeding intercourse but allow no space in which a foetus could develop, this being Dr. Little's understanding of the medical certificate written out for H.P.B. by Dr. Leon Oppenheimer, a distinguished gynecologist of the time. I had to explain to Cranston that the set

of diagrams made by Dr. Little had been lost in the offices of East-West and that when I mentioned this to Helen Gething, of the Theosophical Publishing House in England, which was co-publishing my book with East-West, she said she was not sorry they had been lost as they would have been too upsetting for Theosophical readers to view. I was surprised Theosophical readers should be assumed so shockable, and, to avoid troubling Dr. Little a second time, made for Cranston a set of sketches myself, from memory of hers, signing the set, "J.O.F. after M.L." This I fully expected to appear in Cranston's book. It does not. Neither is there any mention of the medical certificate or even of the medical examination.

Since Sylvia Cranston was not herself too prudish to be interested in these matters, can it be that their omission was required by the United Lodge of Theosophists, to which I believe she belongs, if perhaps, it was they who were subsidising this monumental publication?

More difficult to understand is the complete omission of the Master Serapis (important particularly in relation to Olcott) and of the Master Hilarion.

To pass from what is left out to what is in, no pains are spared to substantiate H.P.B.'s having been in Tibet. Amongst the many documents I saw in photostat was a letter from Hartmann printed in *The Theosophist* of March 1887 in which he told of experiments he had made with a German woman who had been a servant to his parents but whom he had discovered to possess psychic powers. He had handed her letters from several people whom she was able correctly to describe to him, then one which had mysteriously appeared on his desk at Adyar, and which he supposed to have come from one of their Adept teachers: the woman began to describe a place...

a building... of certain characteristics which, when he passed them on to H.P.B., then at Ostende, she thought slightly confused yet relating to the temple of the Panchen Lama at Shigatse. The copy made by Hartmann of a drawing made by the woman of part of the roof of the temple, with writing, did not look to me specially significant, and after some deliberation I left it out of my book because I thought that those people who doubted H.P.B.'s own word that she had been in Tibet would not be convinced of it by the vision of a clairvoyant, as reported by Hartmann. H.P.B. had suggested to Hartmann that he might further test the woman by asking her to draw the mantra *Om tram ab bri hum* to be found on some temple mirrors, but the article in *The Theosophist* did not reproduce the drawing made in compliance with this suggestion. Now, Cranston reproduces (on her p. 95) the woman's response, from *The Path*, in which it was printed in January 1986. This I had not seen before, and it contained what I immediately recognised as Tibetan characters—for I did, some time ago, take a course in the Tibetan language. I did not pursue it much beyond the alphabet and construction of simple sentences as my motivation was not to read original Tibetan texts but merely to check up on the Tibetan words used by H.P.B. in *The Voice of the Silence*, but I saw in front of me now, in five squares, Tibetan characters, four of which I had learned laboriously to copy: (1) L or LA, (2) Y or YA, (3) R or RA, (4) was a squiggle I could not identify, but (5) must be B or BA. The squiggles above these looked genuine though I could not decipher them. Now, I read (p. 95-96) that Cranston exhibited then to Wesley Needham, keeper of the Yale University's Tibetan collection, an expert in the language. He was able to read off the top group as the mantra proposed as a test by H.P.B., and the

larger symbols, within the five squares, as *Lam*, *Yam*, *Ram*, *Kham*, and *Vam*, the names of the five *Dhyāni Buddhas*. Many of the consonants written in Tibetan are not sounded and that may explain the missing "m"s at the ends of these names, unless Tibetans sometimes just leave them off. The alphabet heading my Tibetan lessons gives no character for either *V* or *F*, but *B* (bi-labial) and *V* (labio-dental) are very close phonetically, and some languages, such as Spanish, have a sound which is actually in between them, and it may be the same here.

I do think it very remarkable that this woman was able to draw the mantra suggested by H.P.B. and add five other significant names, and though it was apparently from holding the materialised Adept's letter she was able to do this, it does strengthen the credibility not only of the Mahatma Letters but of H.P.B.'s link with Tibet. Only, one has to take Hartmann's word for all this, nothing was done under test conditions and it is not stated whether, like the first inferior drawing, this was Hartmann's copy of the woman's or the woman's own. One has to have an initial good will to accept this as what it appears to be. Granting that, it has weight.

On a lighter note, Cranston has a nice piece about H.P.B.'s detractor, William Emmette Coleman (p. 381-2). He who accused her of plagiarism, particularly in the sense of lifting classical quotations from the works of modern authors in such a way as to give the impression she had read the classics for herself, was himself accused of just this offense by one W.E.C. Burr, who complained that a booklet by himself was the unacknowledged source of quotations from Latin, Greek and other authors as though Coleman had read them all for himself. This gave me so much pleasure that I looked for the date of Burr's publication, but

unfortunately neither this nor the source reference are given. Perhaps Cranston could still supply them. The significance is that if it appeared before Coleman's attack on H.P.B. it may have been to get his own back that he taxed someone else with a fault with which he had been taxed, but if after, it would be karma.

In a general sense, one can say that Cranston's aim seems to have been not so much to enter into the personal life of H.P.B., for which there are fuller sources, but to exhibit the impact of her teaching on the world of today, particularly with regard to science. She notes that Blavatsky's assertion that "the atom is divisible" has found more than ample confirmation in the work of physicists, who think now in terms of waves and energies. This century has seen the strife of two rival theories of cosmogenesis, the "steady state" of Fred Hoyle and "big bang" of Martin Ryle. "Big bang" or "open universe" is doom-laden, since it has everything flying away from the point of the one explosion, ultimately to lose itself; but now there is a new idea, that it can somehow turn back on itself and return to its point of origin, re-gather. Like all of us who have followed the great debate as well as the layman can, she notes that the latter theory, of the "oscillating universe" is practically that of the Manvantaras and Pralayas of The Secret Doctrine, and she shares (p. 453) all our excitement that Sir Stephen Hawking, having started in the first, "Big Bang" or "open universe" theory seems to be moving, perhaps already moved, into the second.

Incidentally, under the heading "Quantum Mechanics," difficult enough for most of us anyway, the obstacles to our comprehension have been compounded by a printer's error on p. 434, line 24, where we read: "He [Max Plank] also posited that an electron ... made a quantum leap,

and expression frequently used..." I believe "and" was meant by the author to read "an."

Cranston also takes us through the arts. She is right to claim H.P.B.'s work as the inspiration of the Irish Literary Renaissance, spearheaded by Yeats and Æ, but I question the claim of T.S. Eliot. He mentions Blavatsky but was very Church of England in his attitude. Under painters, she is right to claim Kandinsky and Mondrian, both of whom professed their inspiration from H.P.B., but it seems to me stretching a point to include Gauguin, who, though he seems to have read Schuré, remained at least nominally Catholic.

Cranston's purpose is to show H.P.B. to us as the "Mother of the new age." It is a noble design.

One very small point. In the Index on reads, "Grant, Joan, 507f." There is no reference to Joan Grant there or anywhere. There must have been one, deleted from the text after it was set in page-proof, a deletion from the Index having been forgotten to be made at the same time. Such things easily happen, especially in a big work.

**Jean Overton Fuller**

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**Review on *H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement***

**1. BLAVATSKY AND HER BIOGRAPHIES.**

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was a controversial woman in her lifetime. Associated with Spiritualism, she alienated the Spiritualists by insisting that their phenomena had quite a different cause from what they supposed. She accused both orthodox scientists and orthodox religionists of a like nar-

row-minded bigotry. Living at a time when Europeans had only scorn for what Kipling called “lesser breeds without the Law,” she affirmed that many ancient peoples and non-Europeans knew more than European philosophy dreamt of. She inspired intensely loyal followers, but badgered and bullied her closest friends and associates with emotional outbursts. Famed as a producer of phenomena, she was branded by a report submitted to the Society for Psychical Research as “one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history” (*Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 3 [1885]: 207).

But there was another side to her. She had a knowledge of arcane matters that amazed all who knew her, and sources for that information that no one else understood. She was generous, open-hearted, humorous, and insightful in her dealings with others. She was charismatic, a woman with magic eyes. She anticipated scientific theories that are only now starting to be recognized by science (as she predicted they would be). She inspired artists, poets, and musicians to introduce new forms of art expressing a new consciousness. She is the chief source for a wide variety of alternative spiritual movements in our own time, ranging from Western Buddhism to the full range of New Age ideas. She has been vindicated in the publications of the Society for Psychical Research by a centennial study showing that its original report was biased, unscientific, and unworthy of the standards usually upheld by that body.

If she was controversial during her life, she has remained so more than a hundred years after her death. Responses to her were polarized in the nineteenth century, and remain so today. Biographical treatments are mostly of two types. One consists of sympathetic biographies, written mainly by Theosophists who accept — to varying de-

grees — the claim she made about herself, namely, that she had been sent by wiser and more evolved human beings in order to make available certain information that humanity once knew but had lost sight of and particularly to form a community to spread that information and in other ways to carry on the work of the wise and evolved individuals who had sent her. Sympathetic biographies assume that what she said about her life can generally be believed (allowing for inevitable mistakes of memory and the emotional exaggeration that was part of her nature).

Other books about HPB are skeptical biographies beginning with the premise (often unacknowledged) that Blavatsky’s claim about herself cannot be true since there is no Inner Tradition, developed and passed on by highly evolved members of our species who serve as our guardians and teachers. Skeptical biographies treat everything she said about herself as doubtful unless it can be supported by independent testimony. They typically look for dishonorable explanations of her actions. They are sometimes openly hostile treatments — debunking exposés. They are sometimes works of personal fantasy in which the author explains Blavatsky’s real motives and purposes, as the author has imaginatively reconstructed them.

What we lack for Blavatsky is a neutral, scholarly, critical biography that seeks to assess the nature of her life and work and its consequences, without promotion or deflation, but with understanding. Given Blavatsky’s character and claim, and the controversy that surrounded her from her childhood, an impartial, critical biography is probably an impossible dream. So we must content ourselves with sympathetic biographies that are not credulous or hagiographical and with skeptical biographies

that are not vicious or polemical.

The newest life of Blavatsky, *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*, by Sylvia Cranston, is clearly a sympathetic biography. It is also, however, decently free of credulity and hagiography. It is, without a doubt, the best biography of HPB thus far to have been written, and is likely to remain the best for some time to come. It is not a perfect biography — that is a set with null membership — but it is a very good one, indeed, an excellent one.

Blavatsky's teachers recognized her flaws and failings, but they used her as their messenger because she was the best available. That may seem like a backhanded compliment, but it is a realistic assessment and, all things considered, not an evaluation to be ashamed of. Much the same can be said of this biography. It has its flaws and failings, but it is the best available, and that is no mean compliment. It is the best biography to give the general reader who wants to know about Blavatsky, and it is the most up-to-date, reliable, and well-documented life of this extraordinary woman.

2. **CONTENTS: THE LIFE.** In addition to the usual front matter, the book contains a helpful Chronology (pp. xiii-xv) of the chief events, year by year, in Blavatsky's life. The back matter includes a useful Bibliography (pp. 617-28) and an Index (pp. 629-48). The body of the work consists of seven parts of diverse length covering HPB's life and influence. The parts are divided into relatively short chapters, from 5 to 17 in each. The first six parts are biographical mainly, covering the major known events of her life, although they also include summaries of some of her main teachings. The seventh chapter treats her influ-

ence on Western Culture during the century after her death.

Part 1, "Life in Russia" (pp. 1-38), takes us through her family background and birth in 1831 to her flight from marriage and Nikifor Blavatsky in 1849. At the age of 18 she became a remittance woman and world traveler. Part 2, "World Search" (pp. 39-60), covers her 1849-1857 crisscross wanderings in the Near East, Europe (including London, where she first met her teacher in the flesh), America, and India. In the last country she showed she was her author-mother's daughter by writing a series of Russian articles later translated and published as *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*.

Part 3, "Maturing Years" (pp. 61-109), treats her 1858 return to Europe and Russia, where she amazed her relatives and friends with displays of paranormal abilities. Then followed more travels in the Near East and Europe, where she had some connection with Garibaldi and the Battle of Mentana in 1867. After that, she went to Tibet for a period of special training. Then she journeyed via the Middle East, Russia, and Paris, to New York in 1873, where her destiny awaited her.

Part 4, "America — Land of Beginnings" (pp. 111-187), traces the opening public phase of Blavatsky's life. Her first 42 years had been training and preparation. Now she was to begin applying herself and teaching. She had been sent to America, and once there, she recorded in her diary in July 1875:

Orders received from India direct to establish a philosophic-religious Society & choose a name for it — also to choose Olcott.

The choosing of the name is described in a traditional story, reported in this volume as follows (p. 145):

The selection of a name for the society was difficult. Turning the pages of a dictionary, [Charles] Sotheran came across *Theosophy*, which was unanimously adopted.

The adoption of the term *Theosophy* may have been the kind of chance event suggested by that story, but Cranston also provides evidence that nine months before the Society was inaugurated Blavatsky was already using the term as a designation for the system of ideas she was to promote. On 16 February 1875, HPB had written Hiram Corson of Cornell University as follows (pp. 117-18):

My belief is based on something older than the Rochester knockings, and springs out from the same source of information that was used by Raymond Lully, Pico della Mirandola, Cornelius Agrippa, Robert Fludd, Henry More, etc., etc., all of whom have ever been searching for a system that should disclose to them the 'deepest depths' of divine nature and show them the *real tie which binds all things together*. I found at last — and many years ago — the cravings of my mind satisfied by this theosophy.

Whatever the origin of the name, Blavatsky set about producing the movement's first textbook, *Isis Unveiled*, and held her salon at the Lamasery on Forty-seventh Street and Eighth Avenue in New York City. In mid 1878, she became an American citizen and in the following December left with Olcott for India, never to return to the United States.

Part 5, "Mission to India" (pp. 189-284), deals with the central and stormiest part of her public life. Arriving in Bombay in 1879, she founded *The Theosophist* magazine and helped A. P. Sinnett to begin the influential correspondence of *The Ma-*

*hatma Letters*. The headquarters of the Society were moved to Adyar, Madras, in 1882. HPB was there for only a little more than a year, leaving for Europe in early 1884 with Olcott. While they were away, the Coulomb Conspiracy broke and the Hodgson investigation was made. She returned to Adyar late in the year, but left permanently early in 1885.

Part 6, "Horizons Open in the West" (pp. 285-419), covers the last and most literary phase of Blavatsky's life. In 1885 she settled into Würzburg to work on *The Secret Doctrine*, moving to Ostende the following year and to London the next year, where *Lucifer* was launched as her personal vehicle. In 1888 the *SD* was finally completed and published, and Blavatsky founded her Esoteric School. In 1889, she published *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Voice of the Silence*, and the following year she established the European headquarters of the Society in London. These final events appear to be an energetic effort by her to recapture her central role of directing the fortunes of the Society, which she had lost after the Coulomb Conspiracy and the Hodgson Report. She died on 8 May 1891.

Such a bare-bones outline abysmally fails to do justice to the complexities of HPB's life or to the richness of detail in which this book describes it. It also does nothing to capture the person who was HPB, intelligent and full of earthy humor, as in this exchange between her and a young aspirant:

"Madame," she said, "what is the most important thing necessary in the study of Theosophy?"

"Common sense, my dear."

"And Madame, what would you place second?"

"A sense of humour."

“And third, Madame?”

At this point patience must have been wearing thin.

“Oh, just MORE common sense!”

3. **CONTENTS: THE INFLUENCE.** Part 7, on “The Century After” (pp. 422-554), is in some ways the most valuable section of the book. It treats Blavatsky’s direct influence on the culture of the hundred years following her death and also her anticipation of later ideas and practices. These subjects are dealt with to some extent in the earlier biographical parts, for example, in pages 191-98, “The Awakening of the East,” on the impact of Theosophy upon Buddhism in Sri Lanka and upon Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. As early as the second issue of *The Theosophist* in 1879, Blavatsky was writing about the need for conservation of natural resources in a way that makes her a proto-ecologist (pp. 205-6). The summary (pp. 349-60) of the core of *The Secret Doctrine* is a masterful statement of the essentials of that big book.

The 12 chapters of Part 7 make clear, however, that Theosophy has impinged on twentieth-century culture to an extent far beyond the size of the Society’s membership or direct influence. The concepts of Theosophy did indeed, as William Quan Judge quoted HPB’s prediction, “affect and leaven the whole mind of this century” (p. 423).

The 1893 Parliament of Religions, whose centennial is being celebrated this year, was one of the first evidences of her influence after her death. But more remarkable are the ways in which she anticipated scientific theories of later times: in physics, the divisibility of the atom, the vibratory nature of matter, and the convertibility of mass and energy. In *The Secret Doctrine* (2:672) she talked about “atomic energy” as an expression on our plane of consciousness of the universal Vital

Principle. Cranston observes that “HPB appears to have been the first to use this expression so common today” (p. 437). That is correct; in the twenty-volume *Oxford English Dictionary*, there are 285 instances of the expression *atomic energy*. The earliest is from 1906, 18 years after HPB’s use.

In biology, Rupert Sheldrake’s hypotheses of Formative Causation and morphic resonance are consonant with Blavatsky’s concept of the Akashic Records and Astral World. And Thomas Huxley’s assertion of the existence of three ultimates in the universe — matter, force, and consciousness — sounds remarkably like HPB’s three schemes of evolution. Cranston has assembled (pp. 430-62) a remarkable set of parallels between current scientific thinking and the view of the universe in the *SD*.

Literature has also reflected directly and indirectly the influence of Theosophy, including both some of the greatest writers of our time and some minor ones: William Butler Yeats, George Russell (Æ), James Joyce, Jack London, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Thornton Wilder, and L. Frank Baum. In the visual arts, Theosophy was a critical influence on Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian — two of the greatest names in nonobjective art — as well as on others like Paul Klee and Paul Gauguin. In music, Gustav Mahler, Jean Sibelius, and Alexander Scriabin resonated to Blavatsky.

Cranston traces the importance of Theosophy to the introduction of Buddhism to the West, especially through Christmas Humphreys. Following one of her favorite themes, she explores contemporary interest in reincarnation and relates it to Theosophy. The most serious academic investigator of reincarnation has been Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia; Cranston has uncovered the fact that his interest in the subject was first sparked as a child by reading

Theosophical books in his mother's library (p. 509).

Cranston also draws suggestive parallels between Theosophy and the work of persons like Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, and Sigmund Freud, as well as pointing out the incontrovertible fact that Blavatsky is the mother of all New Age movements, however much superficiality and "glamour" (in the words of David Spangler) characterize some of them. Near-death and out-of-the-body experiences, so prominently reported in recent times, are another parallel she points to.

Cranston's biography was written and published at a good time for interest in Blavatsky. Her last chapter concerns the revival of interest in HPB in her homeland, after the fall of the Soviet state and Russia's recent opening to the West and to ideas that had no official existence for the long stretch of intellectual and spiritual censorship in that land. But even in the West, there are indications that Blavatsky may be coming into her own and that her Theosophy has an opportunity to achieve the results she expected of it. If so, this biography is a good basis for making HPB more widely known.

4. **EVALUATION.** Like all books, this biography has both strengths and weaknesses. Its considerable strengths include the following:

a. The book is exhaustively researched and documented. In preparation for it, all of Blavatsky's writings (nearly ten thousand pages) were examined. Most of Blavatsky's letters, which were gathered by Boris de Zirkoff and are now being edited by John Cooper for publication as three volumes in the Collected Writings format, were used. A large amount of new material in Russian was translated for use in this volume. No other biography has had the wealth of information on which this book is based. The notes and bibliog-

raphy documenting these sources fill pages 557-628.

b. Cranston has discovered new evidence that corrects some of the imaginative and hostile biographies of the past, many of which tell us more about the psychology of the biographers than they do about the biography of HPB. For example, Marion Meade, whose book has a claim to be the most irresponsible biography ever written of HPB, fantasized a relationship of "deep hostility" between little Helena and her mother, energized by a kind of Electra complex. Cranston has found Russian letters and accounts from the nineteenth century that show a loving and caring relationship and no trace of the antagonism invented by Meade (12-13).

c. This biography adheres to the known facts of HPB's life and takes seriously the opinions of those who knew her best. Skeptical biographies attempt to fill in the missing bits with explanations that fit a theory and dismiss the views of HPB's colleagues as unreliable witnesses.

d. The tone of the book is upbeat and positive, focusing on what contemporary readers want and need to know about the founder of the Theosophical movement, and eschewing any obsession with ancient quarrels and recriminations.

d. The book deals with HPB's ideas and teachings as well as with the facts of her life. As Cranston correctly observes, Blavatsky's life cannot be understood apart from her ideas about Theosophy. This is thus an intellectual biography rather than a soap opera.

e. The last part of the book, in treating the influence of HPB during the century following her death, accurately sees her relevance to our time. She is not a figure from Madame Tussaud's wax museum, but a living force.

f. The prose is clear and simple, in an admirably plain style. It is a highly readable book.

g. The structure of the book is easy to follow. A great book, it has been said, is a great evil. Certainly long books are intimidating to the reader. This is a long book, but its organization in parts and short chapters makes it unusually reader-friendly.

h. The author's approach is admirably unsectarian. Because Theosophy today is divided among a number of separate organizations, those events toward the end of HPB's life that impinge on later institutional differences need to be handled impartially and fairly. They are.

The fantasy writer Ursula LeGuin remarked in one of her novels that to light a candle is to cast a shadow. All virtues have corresponding weaknesses. The weaknesses of this book include the following:

a. The treatment of HPB's life is episodic. The short chapters give an impression of isolated incidents, and a strong plot line is lacking. This weakness is the other side of the virtue of following the known facts faithfully. A coherent, well-plotted biography is often heavily fictionalized.

b. The full depth of HPB's personality is not revealed in this book. There is a lack of character development, of portraiture. The picture we get of her is not well-rounded. This too is the reverse side of a virtue — that of auctorial modesty, by which the biographer does not impose her interpretation of Blavatsky's personality and character on her readers.

c. This biography plays down the role of phenomena in HPB's life, a role often highlighted by other biographies. The phenomena are acknowledged, but given a minor place in her life story. Looked at in one way, that is a virtue. HPB's phenomena were a means, not an end — they were certainly of minor importance compared to her teachings, in her own opinion and in later

history, and emphasis on the phenomena is largely irrelevant to Theosophy today. Yet during Blavatsky's lifetime, the phenomena certainly were crucial for her reputation, both favorable and otherwise. It is doubtful that she would have garnered the attention she did without bells, teacups, and other such things.

d. More seriously, certain problems in the record of Blavatsky's life are ignored. Meade, for example, has HPB bearing a deformed child, Yuri, about 1862, the child dying in 1867. Meade's account is heavily laced with her addiction to fictionalizing, but a critical biography cannot omit such factual details as underlie even highly fictional interpretations.

e. Trivially, the book contains the inevitable typographical errors. Most are unimportant, but a few should be noted as of factual importance. Thus on p. 114 (and in the index), the reference to "Fritz Kuhn" as editor of *Main Currents* should be to "Fritz Kunz." And on p. 533, HPB's funeral was, of course, in 1891, not 1881.

5. **CONCLUSION.** *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky* is not the academic, critical biography that is still needed for Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. But it does not pretend to be and should not be judged by the standards appropriate for that sort of book. Cranston's biography is an honest, well-researched, readable, sympathetic treatment of HPB. It is the sort of book Theosophists have long needed to present their view of her to the world. It is a book to give people who ask, "Who was Blavatsky, and what did she do?" It is the best and most authoritative biography of Helena Blavatsky.

**John Algeo**

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## THE CHALCHIUHITE DRAGON: A TALE OF TOLTEC TIMES.

By Kenneth Morris. N.Y.: Tor Books, Tom Doherty Associates, 1992. Pp. 291. \$19.95.

Recently the newspapers quoted Jack Valenti, long-time Hollywood film czar, as saying, "We have a prayer in Texas we always offer up when someone claims to be the repository of All Truth. It goes like this: 'Dear God, let me seek the Truth, but spare me the company of those who have found it.'" Many readers of the book under review here may feel the same way.

Before giving an analysis of the story itself, it would be well to consider the comments of the author himself as to the genesis of the work. It was on Christmas day in 1925 that Katherine Tingley of the Point Loma group suggested to Morris that he write on a pre-Columbian subject. "Then (Hubert Howe) Bancroft became my study; a poor authority, perhaps, but historicity was not the chief aim" Morris wrote in the preface to this tale. H. H. Bancroft's (1832-1918) "historical" accounts of native races in Mexico and the American Pacific states have been long superseded by more authoritative and scientific investigation and are now mercifully relegated to dusty, overlooked shelves in university libraries. The author was well aware of all that, however, which was why he chose to discard Bancroft's original outline dealing with the life of the legendary Quetzalcoatl, so that it was enough for the plot of *The Chalchiuhite Dragon* if "he brought Quetzalcoatl to birth, rearranging things and resifting the legends, endeavoring to see through the crude stories . . . to the spiritual and the beautiful which might be historically possible, too." Morris added that he thought Toltecs were to Aztecs much like the Greeks are to ourselves,

giving a more romantic interpretation to his ideas. Most significantly, he concluded his preface by writing, "the days of a Theosophical propagandist, at least in Wales, are not conducive to continuous literary effort" (*p. ix*) so that a novel on the life of the Mexican Prince of Peace (Quetzalcoatl) was unlikely to be written by his pen. Well, those are his words, aptly summing up the content, and one might say that propagandistic values cannot be stressed enough. Too frequently they mar the simple charm and undeniable appeal of his poetic outlook by repetitive and tiresome moralizing driven home with the force of a sledgehammer when a few light brush strokes would have been subtly sufficient. Had a good editor excised the sonorous clichés, tired metaphors and thunderous platitudes, not to mention the now dated British colloquialisms, the promise of Morris's writing would be more valid.

In the area of children's books (in which Morris excelled), *The Chalchiuhite Dragon* would be the preeminent choice for boys and girls aged 8-12 years, particularly for pre-adolescent Theosophists to awaken their interest in mythology. Indeed, this book is neither a major rediscovery nor even remotely a lost classic, yet one cannot doubt the sincerity of a minor talent. For young readers, the necessary and constant resort to use of the glossary to explain the characters' honorific titles and sites of action may prove a considerable burden at times, but that would be nothing compared to the trial of sorting out the details that piece the narrative together. Somehow the story doesn't flow as well as it might, and one needs a box score to keep up with the characters and the constant change of scenes.

Then what is the story about, written as it is in acutely precious, poetic language? It opens with the arrival of Nopal in Huitznahuacan, capital city

of the kingdom of Huitznahuac, which today might be vaguely situated in southern Mexico somewhere. There he meets Chimalman, the queen, who one day will make him both her husband and king.

She receives the gift of the Chalchiuhite Dragon, a glowing piece of green jade, not much bigger than her thumb, and symbol of Quetzalcoatl, in mysterious fashion, after we have learnt about the birth of that mysterious person recounted in the form of the Mexican creation myth. Nopal then sets out to learn more about the Toltec kingdom of the northern plains (present day area near Mexico City and beyond) and the war-like conduct of the people. In discussing this subject, Morris reveals clearly his anti-Christian (and possibly anti-Catholic) bias all too clearly. But Nopal awaits the rebirth of Quetzalcoatl whereby peaceful arts will be a beacon of hope and ultimately provide a better life for cruder peoples. The narrative bogs down in more tiresome propaganda about discipleship and training by the Master. It occurred to this reviewer that Chimalman probably represented all the virtues of Katherine Tingley, which should surely have been a sop to her vanity. (But then, what are patrons for, if not to have their egos stroked?)

But Toltec (or is it Adyar really?) ambassadors try to persuade Queen Chimalman to join the Toltec League so as to form a world under their leadership, which she rejects. Nopal delivers the gods' message to Chimalman that she may open a path between gods and men, which she does by providing a son for a dying Nopal, which son is to be the reincarnation of Quetzalcoatl who will eventually unite the Toltec and Huitznahuac countries in peace and harmony. She was to trust until her trust became knowledge that opened the path between gods and men. It is truly surprising

that nobody thought up such a vehicle for Annie Besant except that the thought of her in childbirth would have caused consternation in the ranks. Well, so much for fantasy. As for most belief systems, Morris's choice included, they are usually based on faith taken as received truth in the main so that Everyman can feel justified in his biases and personal prejudices. So much also for self-opinionated knowledge palmed off as wisdom and accepted by the unskeptical and unlearned. Back in the 1920s and before, most adherents of this kind were generally found lurking about the dark precincts of the local gas works or occasionally dropping in at revival meetings for spiritual uplift, anywhere that would not overload the brain by serious and sound study of works of reliable scholars.

In the Afterword written by Douglas A. Anderson, a brief and rewarding sketch of Kenneth Vennor Morris's life is given. Born in south Wales in 1879, his mother took him and his brother to London after the failure of the family business. There, he was enrolled in the school at Christ's Hospital from which he graduated in 1895 at the age of sixteen with, we are assured "a thoroughly classical English education." (p. 280)

In 1896, Morris visited Dublin for a few months and met Yeats and George Russell (*Æ*) amongst others. There he joined the T.S. and began contributing publications—poetry, essays, dramas and short stories—which could be found in Theosophical publications over the next forty years. He attracted the notice of K. Tingley, who invited him to join the Point Loma staff, where he arrived in January of 1908 to spend the next twenty-two years. His duties included a professorship of history and literature at Point Loma's Rāja Yoga College. After returning to Wales, he founded seven Welsh Theosophical lodges be-

fore his death in April 1937 owing to a malfunctioning thyroid gland.

Novelist Ursula K. Le Guin, in her 1973 essay on style in fantasy literature, "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie," singles out Morris along with J.R.R. Tolkien and E.R. Eddison as the three master stylists of the genre in the twentieth century, although readers of Tolkien especially, and even Eddison, may be slightly concerned by the comparison.

Meanwhile, don't whatever you do, throw out the works of J. Eric S. Thompson nor even the University of Oklahoma's translation of the epic *Popol Vuh*. More profitable evenings could be spent in their company minus the moralizing and propaganda cum-allegory provided by Morris!

**Robert Boyd**

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