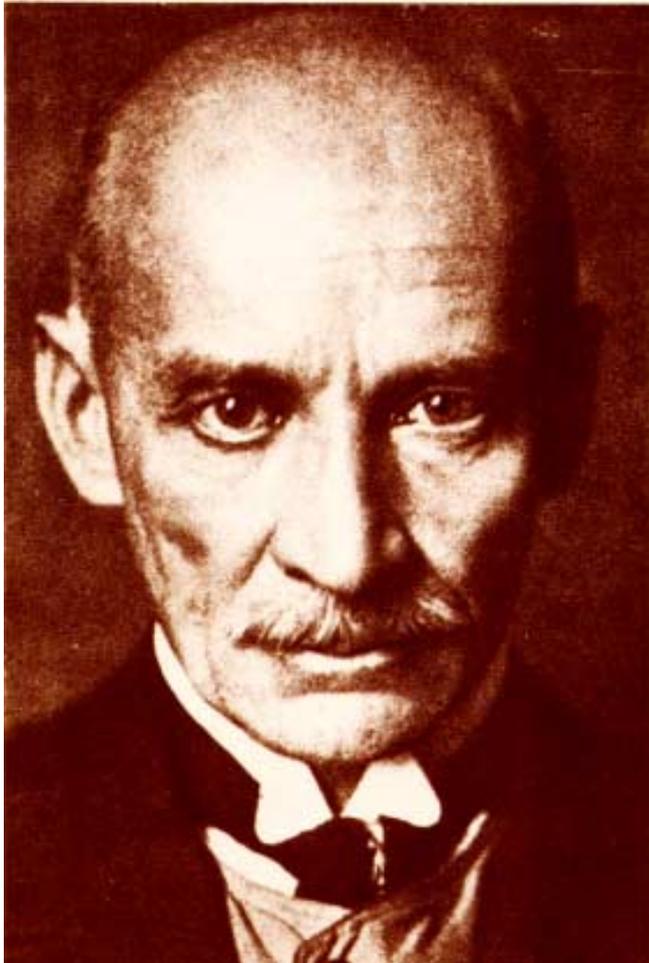


Theosophical History



A Quarterly Journal of Research

Volume V, No. 4 October 1994
ISSN 0951-497X

THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

A Quarterly Journal of Research

Founded by Leslie Price, 1985

Volume V, No. 4

October 1994

EDITOR

James A. Santucci
California State University, Fullerton

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Robert Boyd

John Cooper
University of Sydney

April Hejka-Ekins
California State University, Stanislaus

Jerry Hejka-Ekins
Nautilus Books

Robert Ellwood
University of Southern California

Joscelyn Godwin
Colgate University

J. Gordon Melton
Institute for the Study of American
Religion
University of California, Santa Barbara

Leslie Price
Former Editor, *Theosophical History*

Gregory Tillett
Macquarie University

Karen-Claire Voss
San Jose State University

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

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

The subscription rate for residents in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada is \$14.00 (one year) or \$26.00 (two years). California residents, please add \$1.08 (7.75%) sales tax onto the \$14 rate or \$2.01 onto the \$26 rate. For residents outside North America, the subscription rate is \$16.00 (one year) or \$30.00 (two years). Air mail is \$24.00 (one year) or \$45.00 (two years). Single issues are \$4.00. Subscriptions may also be paid in British sterling. All inquiries should be sent to **James Santucci**, Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.). Second class postage paid at Fullerton, California 92634. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Theosophical History (c/o James Santucci), Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634-9480

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

* * * * *

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

The final copy of all manuscripts must be submitted on 8½ x 11 inch paper, double-spaced, and with margins of at least 1¼ inches on all sides. Words and phrases intended for *italics* output should be underlined in the manuscript. The submitter is also encouraged to submit a floppy disk of the work in ASCII or WordPerfect 5 or 5.1, in an I.B.M. or compatible format. If possible, Macintosh 3½ inch disk files should also be submitted, saved in ASCII ("text only with line breaks" format if in ASCII), Microsoft Word 4.0–5.1a, or WordPerfect. We ask, however, that details of the format codes be included so that we do not have difficulties in using the disk. Should there be any undue difficulty in fulfilling the above, we encourage you to submit the manuscript regardless.

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

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

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

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

Dr. James A. Santucci
Department of Religious Studies
California State University
Fullerton, CA 92634-9480 (U.S.A.)
FAX: 714-449-5820 E-Mail: JSANTUCCI@FULLERTON.EDU
TELEPHONE: 714-773-3727

Copyright © 1994 by James A. Santucci

Layout and composition by Robert L. Hütswold, 924 Alto St., Santa Fe, NM 87501 USA, using Adobe type 1 typefaces: ITC Garamond 1, Linotype Univers and Linotext, with an adapted Sanskrit-Tibetan diacritical Garamond typeface designed by Mr. Hütswold.

THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

Contents

October 1994
Volume V, Number 4

Editor's Comments

James Santucci 115

Book Notes

*The Buddhist and the Theosophical Movements: 1873–1992 and
Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature*

James Santucci 118

Yesterday's Children

Jean Overton Fuller 121

Communications

Michael Gomes 123

Doss McDavid 123

W. Dallas TenBroeck 124

From the Archives

The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to W.Q. Judge:

Part III: Letter Dated 19 March 1887

With Notes by Michael Gomes 125

Articles

Background and History of the Theosophical Society in Bohemia

I. M. Kozlovsky 128

Paul Johnson's "Theosophical Influence in Bahá'í History: Some Comments"

Robert H. Stockman 137

On the cover: Gustav Meyrink. Reprinted by permission from I. M. Kozlovsky.

Editor's Comments

In this Issue

Over the last two years, a series of articles have appeared in *Theosophical History* that have turned the spotlight on Eastern Europe: D. Spivak's "Russian Ways to Theosophy" (IV/1), A.V. Gnezdilov's "The Destiny of Russian Theosophists in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century" (IV/2), and K. Tokarski's "Wanda Dynowska-Umadevi: A Biographical Essay" (V/3). In the present issue appears still another contribution that highlights this region, "Background and History of the Theosophical Society in Bohemia" by Mr. Ivan M. Kozlovsky.¹ Information about this region of Europe is sparse; indeed, perhaps the most accessible information about the T.S. in the former Czechoslovakia comes from *The Theosophical Year Book, 1937* (73) and *The T.Y.B., 1938* (81), both giving only perfunctory information for those years. To paraphrase their contents, as of 1936, General Secretaries included Jan Bedrnicek-Chlumsky (1909–1925), Oscar Beer (1925–27), Josef Parchansky (1929–31), and Vaclav Cimr (1927–29, 1931–date of publication of *The T.Y.B.*). At the time of the Section charter of 7 February 1909, seven Lodges existed, each concentrating on a distinctive type of Theosophical study and activity as the names suggest: Lodges Occultism, Mysticism, Philosophy and Science, Religion, Ethics, Esthetics, Psychic Studies. As Mr. Kozlovsky notes, Theosophical works in Czech—both original and in translation—exist mainly

through the efforts of writers such as Drs. Bezdek, Samalík, and Mrs. Moudrá. Judging from studies that have recently appeared in this journal as well as such important books as Maria Carlson's *No Religion Higher Than Truth*, not to mention the material published in South Asian languages, Theosophical literature boasts, despite the relatively small membership of the various Theosophical societies, a disproportionately large number of books, journals, and other written material. Michael Gomes' *Theosophy in the Nineteenth Century* gives us a titillating glimpse into this literature. There can be no doubt that further global cataloguing of Theosophical publications will assuredly contribute to a greater understanding of the Theosophical Movement.

Over two years ago, Paul Johnson contributed an article in TH IV/1 entitled "Theosophical Influence in Bahá'í History." As Robert Stockman observes in his "Bahá'í Faith and Theosophy: A Response," it "represents a valuable initiation of research on the relationship between the two traditions" despite some caveats that question some of Mr. Johnson's conclusions. One of Dr. Stockman's observations is especially important when treating historical influences on an individual or a movement, and it strikes at the heart of historical methodology:

Proving the existence of influence of one person or movement on another is a compli-

¹Mr. Kozlovsky is a coordinator in a psychiatric clinic. He was born in 1945 in Ostrava, Czechoslovakia.

cated scholarly task unless the influenced part acknowledges it. It is not adequate simply to show that one person met someone else or encountered another movement to prove an influence. Sometimes the movements' contact with each other stems from preexisting commonalities and disproves influence, rather than indicating it. Detailed examination of other possible sources of influence is also necessary to isolate which ideas came from which sources.

This cautionary statement is especially true in theosophical and esoteric studies and therefore deserves careful consideration.

The H.P. Blavatsky – W.Q. Judge letters from the Andover-Harvard Library continues with a short letter of March 19, 1887. The name of Elliot Coues comes up again as well as that of a particularly gifted Theosophical writer, C.H.A. Bjerregaard, a librarian at the New York Public Library, and author of many articles. Of special interest is H.P.B.'s suggestion on how to join “a secret group,” a topic that was most likely raised in a previous letter of Judge. It is around this time (May 1887) that Judge raised the idea of an Esoteric Section. Indeed, the mention of a “secret group” in this letter appears to be the first inkling of the later E.S. On this fact alone, the letter proves most valuable.

Theosophy Seminar

The meeting program of the 1994 American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature has just arrived. Included therein is the “Theosophy and Theosophic Thought Seminar,” which will meet on Monday, November 21 in the McCormick Room (fourth floor) of the Chicago Hilton & Towers. Registration information will be in the Hilton from Friday, November 18 from 4:00

pm to 8:00 pm, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on November 19–21, and from 8:00 to 10:00 am on November 22. It is recommended that participants preregister, the address being AAR/SBR Annual Meeting Preregistration, P.O. Box 15399, Atlanta, GA 30333-0399. For information, you may also call at 404-727-2343. International registrants may fax to 404-727-2348. Rooms at both the Hilton and the other host hotel, the Ramada Congress Hotel, are already sold out, but rooms are available at the Bismark Hotel, Palmer House, and Stouffer Riviere. To make reservations, you may call the housing bureau at 800-725-4520 (U.S. and Canada), 312-567-8507 (outside the U.S. and Canada), or fax the bureau at 312-567-8577.

The schedule remains the same as that given in the last issue. It will appear in the Program as follows:

Theosophy and Theosophic Thought Seminar
3:45–6:15

James A. Santucci, California State University,
Fullerton, Presiding

Theme: *Theosophy and its Phases of Development*

Antoine Faivre, École Pratique des Hautes Études
The Place of Theosophy in Relation to Other Modern Esoteric Currents

Jean-Pierre Laurant, École Pratique des Hautes Études

Theosophy Disguised in Religion: An Aspect of Secularization in the 19th Century

Jean-Louis Siémons, Loge Unie des Théosophes,
Paris

Theosophy in an Universal Perspective

Respondent: James B. Robinson, University of Northern Iowa

Michael Gomes, Des Moines, Iowa
Laying the Foundations of Belief: The Evolution of Theosophical Literature in the Nineteenth Century

Marla J. Selvidge, Central Missouri State University
Anna Bonus Kingsford and Edward Maitland: Twin Souls of *Christian Theosophy*

Joscelyn Godwin, Colgate University
Theosophy versus theosophers: The Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor

Leslie Price, London, England
Swedenborg's Understanding of Theosophy

Respondent:
John Patrick Deveney, New York

5:45

Business Meeting

James A. Santucci, California State University, Fullerton, Presiding

* * * * *

Book Notes

Among the many eventful occurrences in 1891 was the establishment of the Mahā Bodhi Society, an organization that had close associations with the Theosophical Society, especially in conjunction with the Buddhist Revival in India and Sri Lanka. Two names that are especially prominent in this Revival are Henry Steel Olcott, the President of the Theosophical Society from 1875–1907, and Anagārika Dharmapāla, born Don David Hewawitarne (1864–1933). It was on May 31, 1891—only 23 days after the death of another champion of Buddhism, Madame Blavatsky—that Dharmapāla established the Mahā Bodhi Society, becoming its first General Secretary, with the blessings of Ven. Hekkaduwe Sumangala Nāyaka Mahā Thera—the chief monk of Adam’s Peak and Principal of the Vidyodaya College (Colombo) who assumed its Presidency—and Col. Olcott, who assumed the titles of Director and Chief Advisor. This connection between the leaders of the T.S. and Sri Lankan Buddhism is celebrated in a recently published pamphlet authored by Dr. C.V. Agarwal, *The Buddhist and the Theosophical Movements: 1873–1992* (Sarnath, Varanasi: Mahā Bodhi Society of India, 1993).¹ The purpose of the pamphlet is best described in the introduction by M. Wipulasara Mahathero, the General Secretary of the Mahā Bodhi Society of India:

¹The address of the Mahā Bodhi Society of India is Dharmapala Marg, Sarnath, Varanasi 221007 (India). The pamphlet is also available from the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras 600 020 (India). No price is given.

This book written at our suggestion is a result of coming together of the two sister organizations and is aimed at giving information in an interesting story like style of their collaborative work especially in the early days. It is hoped that it will help to refresh our memories of the early ties and make them higher and stronger in the days to come....

The author, a former General Secretary of the Indian Section of the T.S., discusses the relevant events of the Revival, beginning with the debate at Panadura, the first evidence of a reawakening of Buddhism in modern Sri Lanka, to the more than considerable contributions of Col. Olcott to the Buddhist cause and of his once close associate Dharmapāla. As a Theosophist, it is natural that Dr. Agarwal emphasizes Olcott’s contributions to reintroducing Buddhist education on a large scale in Sri Lanka, to his attempts to bring Buddhists of all persuasions together by writing the *Buddhist Catechism*, to his success in reinstating the Wesak Full Moon Day as a public holiday—which took place on 27 March 1885 by proclamation of Governor Sir Arthur Hamilton, some 115 years after Wesak was taken off the list of public holidays by the Dutch on 1 November 1770—to his efforts in creating a Buddhist flag, which first appeared on Wesak Day of 1886, and to his lecture tours in Japan.

The work of Col. Olcott towards improving the condition of Buddhists in Sri Lanka and furthering the Buddhist cause in other Asian countries led to a symbiosis of both Buddhists and

Theosophists. Dr. Agarwal notes the names of several well-known Buddhist scholars who were either members of the T.S., or who were influenced by their writings. Included is the popular Zen scholar and author, Daisetz T. Suzuki (1870–1966), who was also a member of the Theosophical Lodge in Kyoto, Japan (one should not forget that he also had connections with the Swedenborg Society); the P>li scholar Frank Lee Woodward (1871–1952), well-known for his translation of P>li Buddhist s>tras (for instance, the *Anguttara Nik>ya* and the *Sanyutta Nik>ya* as well as his more famous *Some Sayings of the Buddha*), and also a member of the T.S. and headmaster of Mahinda College from 1903–1919; the British jurist Christmas Humphreys; Alexandra David-Neel (1868–1969), traveler to Tibet and author of *My Journey to Lhasa* and *Tibetan Journey*, who had the distinction of being the first woman to have an audience with H.H. the Dalai Lama; and Dr. Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz (1878–1965), author of *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* and *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, who was associated with the Point Loma Theosophical Society (he died nearby in Encinitas, California). Other lesser known Theosophists who advanced the Buddhist cause were Sir Norendra Nath Sen, editor of the *Indian Mirror*, and Babu Neel Comal Mookerji, the Secretary of the Bengal Theosophical Society.

Professor Agarwal does not discuss the contributions of the second principal of this pamphlet, Dharmap>la, to the extent that he does Col. Olcott, but he does summarize his efforts to restore the sanctuary at Buddha Gaya—the site of the liberation of Gautama—to Buddhist control, the creation of the Mah> Bodhi Society as a vehicle for reviving Buddhism, and his contribution as Representative of the Southern (Therav>da)

School of Buddhism to the World Parliament of Religions in 1893.

Then there is the matter of the falling out of these two champions of Buddhism. Dr. Agarwal believes it was based on differing priorities and emphases: Olcott giving more weight to spreading the Buddhist message, Dharmap>la laying more stress on the restoration of the Buddha Gaya sanctuary. Not much is said beyond this, understandably so since Dr. Agarwal wishes to emphasize their cooperative efforts and not their disagreements. On the other hand, an illuminating article by Michael Gomes, “The Contribution of the Theosophical Society to the Buddhist Revival in India,”² gives a more detailed explanation of their differences, one emphasizing the universalism or syncretism of Theosophy as perceived by Olcott; the other, Dharmap>la, exhibiting an attitude of exclusivism and aggressiveness. As early as 1877, in an interview in the *New York World*, Madame Blavatsky explained Buddhism in just such an universalistic light as being the “Wisdom religion,” whose philosophy included that “of Confucius, Pythagoras, Plato, Jesus, and all the really great philosophers.” In other words, there are no substantial differences among the great teachers of the world’s religions, and more particularly from the Indian perspective, between the teachings of Gautama Buddha and the “Wisdom Religion of the Aryan Upanishads—or more specifically, between Buddhism and Ved>nta—since, as A.P. Sinnett asserts in his *Esoteric Buddhism*, “Sankaracharya simply was Buddha in all

² The article appears in *Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature*, general editors Dr. Shu Hikosaka and Dr. G. John Samuel, editor, Dr. J. Parthasarathi. Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1992. Mr. Gomes’ article appears on pages 15–26. Copies of the book may be purchased from the Institute of Asian Studies, 10th East Street, Thiruvanniyur, Madras 600 041 (India). The price is Rs. 250 or US \$60.

respects, in a new body.” [175] Two years prior to this writing, Blavatsky wrote that the “rational or even *radical* Vedānta philosophy was equivalent to spiritualized Buddhism.” This Theosophical inclusivism was certainly one reason why Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī (1824–83), the founder of the Īrya Samāj, broke with the Founders of the T.S. in 1882 after a short period of affiliation dating back to 1878, an action predating Olcott’s decision to part with Dharmapāla and the Mahā Bodhi Society for a similar reason, namely, that the Theosophical view, as stated in Olcott’s, Blavatsky’s, and Sinnett’s writings, was non-sectarian or inclusive, quite at variance with the more exclusivistic worldview of Dayānanda and the more disputatious approach of Dharmapāla.³

Also appearing in *Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature* is an informative article by G.V. Saroja entitled “The Contribution of Anagārika Devamitta Dharmapāla to the Revival of Buddhism in India” (pp. 27–38). Much the same material that appears in Agarwal is presented here though in more detailed form. His plans to resurrect Buddhism are given on pages 30–34. Included were his intentions to organize a Buddhist Missionary Society and to establish Buddhist centers in places sacred to Buddhism, such as Buddha Gaya, Sarnath, Kusinara, and Mathura are mentioned. So too his apology of Buddhist teach-

ings illustrating its superiority to other religions, his reinstatement or formation of festivals—such as Wesak and the Dharma-Cakra Ceremony—and his dream of making Buddhism the National Religion of India. Saroji concludes with a summary of Dharmapāla’s impact on regions of India, including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Bengal. Of particular interest is mentioned the introduction of Pāli in the curriculum of Calcutta University, and the Nobel Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore’s composing poems for inclusion in the *Journal of the Mahā Bodhi Society* (37–38).

These are just two of the twenty-one contributions contained in *Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature*. Arising out of a National Seminar on Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature held on 28–31 October 1991 held under the auspices of the Institute of Asian Studies in Madras, the presentations also include “Dr. Ambedkar’s Contribution to the Revival of Buddhism in India” by V.R. Lakshminarayanan (39–42), “Contribution of Periyar E.V. Ramaswami to Buddhist Revival” by Salai Ilanthiraiyan, and a series of papers on Buddhist themes in the major vernaculars of India, including English, Sanskrit, and Urdu. Of particular interest is Ajit Kumar Ghosh’s paper on Bengali (51–70), Moti Lal Saqi’s paper on Kashmiri (83–94), T.S. Kuppasamy’s on Hindi (111–121), and N.D. Mirajkar’s Marathi (143–156) [the *JñāneĀvārī* is mentioned in the article].

³ Dharmapāla was by no means as exclusivistic and strident as Svāmī Dayānanda. In the *Journal of the Mahā Bodhi Society* VII (Oct. 1898): 57 (as quoted from “The Contribution of Anagārika Devamitta Dharmapāla to the Revival of Buddhism in India” by G.V. Saroja in *Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature*: 37), he writes: “The Advaita of the illustrious Sankara is the philosophical brahmanism influenced by the spirit of Buddha’s teachings....” This viewpoint is in agreement with Blavatsky’s and Olcott’s earlier statements mentioned in Gomes. It also reflects in part Sinnett’s assertion that Buddha continued his work under the form of Sankara (Gomes: 17).

James Santucci

* * *

YESTERDAY'S CHILDREN. By Jenny Cockell. London: Judy Piatkus, 5 Windmill St. W1P 1HF, 1993. Pp. 147. Photographs and sketch maps. £8.00.

Whilst there have been a certain number of books about people's recollections of their past lives, what gives this one its special interest is that it is written by the subject herself. It concerns an existence sufficiently recent to permit checking up. Jenny Cockell, as a child growing up in Northamptonshire in the 1950s, had fragmentary memories of earlier personae, by far the most insistent being that in which she still seemed to be half living. Her name, she knew, had then been Mary. She had then been living not in England but in Ireland. Though her mother of this life had a vacuum cleaner, Jenny preferred to sweep the garden shed with a broom, such as she had used to sweep the cottage at Malahide. She had then used not her mother's modern cooker but a large, old, kitchen range. She must have lived from about 1898 until into the 1930s, and she had one child after another. These were what worried Jenny; what had happened to them after she died? Though she had not wanted to die, she felt guilty at not having been able to make arrangements for them to be looked after, and this thought haunted her. Her husband seemed like a dark shadow and she felt that he had been brutal. In this life, she was fortunate. Her mother was understanding and so was her husband. He had been accustomed to her talking strangely about her previous life from before he married her so made no objection to her finally setting out to research it. She had some sessions with a hypnotist. These produced certain things of interest: the hint of a brief incarnation in 1940 in Hendon, London, lasting only until 1945 midway between Mary's

death and Jenny's birth, which she had not suspected. The hypnotist wanted to trace her further back. Asking about 1850, he found her calling herself Jane Matthews, English, aged 15, in Southampton, a dockside street, with a father who was violent; her life ended as a runaway hiding in a barn with horses. Further back, she was in France; it was 1716; she had been sold into service of a family in Boulogne and was seeing for the last time the country farm where she had been born, with terrible feeling of injustice and terror; she was only seven. Further back, 1650, she was a boy about ten, in a barn where some men were working, he did not understand what at; he could not speak to answer the hypnotist's questions; Jenny, reflecting, thought he must have been autistic. Further back still, Wales in the Dark Ages, she described only the dress and cloth. Really she was not interested in being taken back to all these earlier births. All she wanted was to find out what happened to Mary's children.

She resolved to pursue the research through documentary records and was initially wrong-footed by the surname she had "brought back" under hypnosis, O'Neil. It had not been O'Neil. It was Sutton, née Hand. She found the village, Malahide, and she found the street, though the cottage had been demolished. As a reader, one feels all the excitement of her chase, for the impression that comes over is of honesty. She found Mary's death certificate. She had died in a Dublin Hospital on October 24, 1932, aged 35, twenty-one years before her rebirth as Jenny. Even more remarkable, she was able to trace and meet two of her former children—they had all been taken into orphanages—and was accepted by them as their mother come back. Most precious, one of them, Phyllis, had a photograph of herself, aged two, with her mother; the resem-

blance between the face in that photograph, the face of Mary, and that of Jenny, today, is extraordinary.

As she was said still to be living in Northamptonshire, I looked in the local directory. She was not under Residents but had mentioned that she was a qualified chiropodist, so looked in the Business directory and found her under Chiropodists, and rang her. She was simple and direct. She would probably write again but not about the past. "The past is solved." The incarnations previous to Mary did not interest her. Indeed, since they seemed to have been unhappy, she was probably wisest to let them recede and to live in the present, which is obviously a great improvement. But Jenny, today, is highly intelligent—indeed, she is a member of Mensa—so how did she come to have that series of very disadvantaged incarnations in the preceding centuries? I feel that there must have been something better further back.

Jean Overton Fuller

* * * * *

Communications

For the Record

Communication from Michael Gomes

Regarding the letter of May 1, 1885, Michael Gomes wishes to make the following corrections in the letter of HPB to Judge, dated May 1, 1885, and in his introduction to the same. He writes:

The date of the letter from W.Q. Judge to Mme. Blavatsky quoted in column two on p. 49, should be 1885, not 1884 as printed. The word “is” should be added between “this” and “what” in the first line of the second paragraph of column two on p. 52, so that the sentence reads: “Now this is what he said to....” The word “have” should be added between “they” and “collectively” at the end of the second paragraph in column two on p. 57, to read: “they have collectively sent....”

* * *

From Doss McDavid (San Antonio, Texas)

The views expressed by H.P.B. in the letter to W.Q.J. which was published in your last issue should not be taken out of context. It is true that for a period of time H.P.B. distrusted and talked against Dr. Hartmann to Judge, Sinnett, and others. It is also true that she came to see things somewhat differently after receiving further facts from her Master. In a letter to Dr. H. dated April 3, 1886 and published in a series of letters in *The Theosophical Quarterly* beginning in January 1926

* * *

H.P.B. wrote:

Mind you, Doctor, my dear friend, I do not justify Olcott in what he did and how he acted toward yourself—nor do I justify him in anything else. What I say is: he was led on blindly by people as blind as himself to see you in quite a false light, and there was a time, for a month or two, when I myself—notwithstanding my inner voice, and to the day the Master's voice told me I was mistaken in you and had to keep friends—shared his blindness.

An undated letter from the same series adds the following:

If I could see you for a few hours, if I could talk to you; I may open your eyes, perhaps, to some truths you have never suspected. I could show you who it was (and give you proofs) who set Olcott against you, who ruined your reputation, and aroused the Hindu fellows against you, who made me hate and despise you, *till the voice of one who is the voice of God to me pronounced those words that made me change my opinion.*

Perhaps this change of heart explains the favorable treatment which Franz Hartmann has received from Boris de Zirkoff, Sven Eek, and other historians. I would be interested to know if any of your readers has further information regarding the identity of the unnamed trouble-maker(s).

* * *

From W. Dallas TenBroeck (Calabasas, CA)

[Regarding the date of the publication of *The Dream of Ravan* mentioned in *Theosophical History* V/3: 82, note 2, it] was republished in 1947. I was then manager of the International Book House (Pvt.) Ltd. in Bombay. I enclose a copy of the old "dust-cover." The design was penned by my mother Mrs. E.P. TenBroeck.

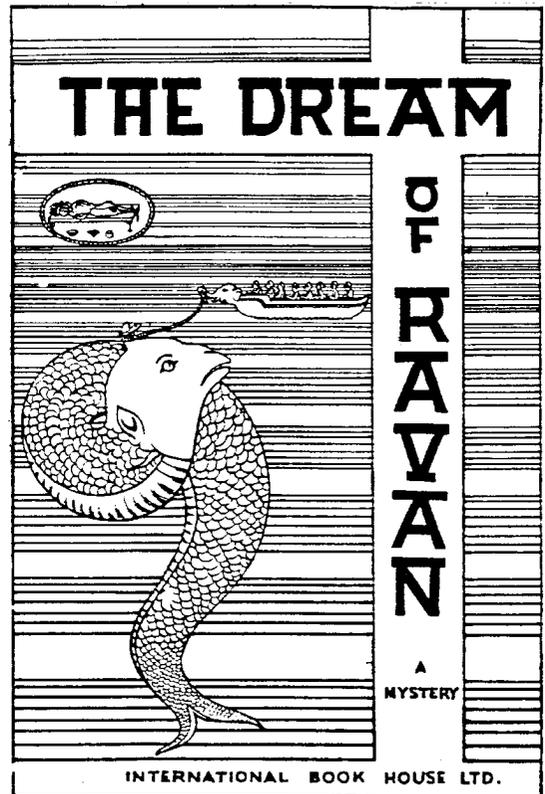
The *Dnyaneshwari* was also published by Mr. Manu Subedar in Bombay. He was a barrister and issued several private printings: the first edition was in 1932, and the third (which I have a copy of) in 1945.

In regard to the date of Dnyaneshwar, in the 1932 edition he says that this was approximately 650 years earlier. This would put his time of teaching at around 1272 A.D.

The *Dnyaneshwari* is a Marathi version of the *Bhagavad Gita* and Dnyaneshwar, a brahmin, had resolved to make this rare Sanskrit treatise available to the Marathas. He did this through discourses, which were recorded by his disciples. In recent years, the ancient form of Marathi having become obsolete, Pandit G.R. Moghe reissued it in the modern version of that tongue, and he encouraged Mr. Manu Subedar to render it in English so that it could have a much wider audience.

I hope this may be of some interest to you and the readership of T.H.

* * * * *



From the Archives

The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to W.Q. Judge: Part III: Letter Dated 19 March 1887

With Notes by Michael Gomes

While much of this letter relates to Mr. Judge's personal life, it introduces Blavatsky's views on settling some of the difficulties that emerged with the formation of the American Section of the Theosophical Society. Theosophists in America were left without much guidance after Olcott and Blavatsky's departure for India at the end of 1878. Gen. Abner Doubleday was appointed President *pro tem* by Olcott and carried on as best he could in the face of such neglect. (For Doubleday's work see "Abner Doubleday and Theosophy in America, 1879–1884" in *Sunrise*, April/May 1991.) At Judge's suggestion, Olcott formed an American Board of Control in May 1884 comprised of seven prominent American Theosophists to handle the immediate concerns of the four branches of the Society there. Elliott Coues, added to the Board in August 1884, became its President in 1885. Orders were received from the Adyar headquarters to dissolve the Board in 1886. The American Section was organized simultaneously and Judge elected General Secretary of the thirteen branches in the U.S. Coues, who seemed to have little regard for Judge, would not relinquish his position so easily and maneuvered to become President in America again.

Mme. Blavatsky was actively corresponding with Coues at the same time of her writing to Judge. Her letters to Elliott Coues, covering much

the same period as those to Judge at the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, are available in *The Canadian Theosophist* (Sept.-Oct. 1984–Jan.-Feb. 1986). Prior to the letter printed here of March 19, 1887, two letters from Blavatsky to Judge exist in the Archives of the Theosophical Society, Pasadena, for Jan. 27 and Feb. 23, 1887. In the letter of Feb. 23, she explained her position about Coues: "[t]he fact remains that he has infused life into what was a corpse before he stepped in. The few remnants even that still exist in the U.S. are due to him. Let us be just & give to Caesar what is Caesar's, however imperfect, even vicious Caesar may be" (*Theosophical Forum*, July 1932).

* * *

Ostende March 19/87

My dear W.Q.J.

When a fruit has a worm in it, the latter does its work of destruction to the bitter end. But the fruit can't help it—a human fruit endowed with will, intelligence & perambulatory powers can. If the human fruit who could extract the damaged part 10 years ago did not do it,—for lack of

resolution & choice of either one thing or the other—of “to be or not to be”—why should he curse his fate, the web of his own fabrication.

[2] If you went in search of Masters now—you would not find Them. One must be free & unclaimed by man or woman if he would offer himself personally to them. Otherwise the link which binds you to Brooklyn would be like a rope ever pulling back. You have tried it once & went half way to search for & meet the Masters. What has it resulted in? Scandal certainly worse than a clean divorce ever would. You have fettered yourselves with chains & unless you keep within their limit they will be always strangling you. You have to come to a decisive & final [3] determination & she has to choose. It is only womanly accursedness to hold you chained as she does. In this I can give no advice but only point out the cause in the diagnosis of the mortal disease. You will never be happy outside your natural element.

You have very good & wholesome ideas when sitting bent over your fancy sketches & pen drawings. But these ideas vanish away in thin air as soon as you throw up your pencil or pen. You have been watched my poor old [4] chum. You have all the sympathy of Masters and pupils. But who dares touch the “link” and bonds & break them except yourself?

No; you do not know yourself. The only palliative I know of is for you to come & get strength with me for a month or two this summer. Try to do so.

I have dozens upon dozens of petitions from London to come without delay & take the management, reformation & revival of the Branch—of the L.L.¹—into my hands. I am offered a corpse!! I have to galvanize a rotten [5] body like Christ with Lazarus. I must go, nevertheless. The

Keightleys² have come for me—all is prepared there & it is old, paralyzed, hardly moving old woman who has to build up a new Frankenstein who, when grown & strong again will pounce upon his parent & try to destroy her. So be it.—Such is my destiny.

Mrs. Cables writes & complains you will not answer her letters—something about Convention. Asks & wants me to tell her whom shall she choose this day—the gods in Washington—or Coues [6] or the god of her fathers—W.Q.J. I answered she might choose who she damn pleased. I opined for Coues. She is too gushy for you.

My advice, our advice is external unity at least. 31 counties or states & rings and quarrels do not prevent the U.S. from being one for the outside world. Let the Branches be all as free as every state is in America, all of which recognize one fool, who so ever he be in the White House & yet have their own laws. The Board of Control is abolished isn't it? Why then [7] not let & even help Coues to do his work as an independent President of his Branch. Let each Branch have its own Karma. “There is more joy over one repented sinner than over 99 saints in heaven.” Make a rule that any fellow found out slandering another—be expelled after the second warning. Make the rules strict & foremost of. Let every one either peg out of the Society or—hold his tongue & mind his own business. Too many cooks spoil a broth. Make another rule that on that day when one joins the Society a wall should be built between his [8] past & the Fellows of [the?] Society. No one has the right to criticize a fellow for what he was before he joined. But no mercy should be shown to one

² Bertram Keightley, the Secretary of the London Lodge, and his nephew Archibald. The move to London was delayed to the beginning of May 1887 due to a sudden turn for the worse in H.P.B.'s health.

¹ London Lodge of the Theosophical Society.

who goes on whoring & backbiting & leading a bad life when he is in the Society.

He who does all & the best he can & knows how—does enough for them. This is a message for you. Your “Path”³ begins to beat the Theosophist out of sight. It is most excellent. Bjerregaard’s articles⁴ are very very good. The Path alone is your certificate for you in Theosophy. A secret group may be formed in any state the T.S. is in. Join three or five [9] or seven; and work with all your powers on the same & one [line ?].⁵ Note every event every casual thing in your daily lives—to the most trifling—then once a week meet & compare them & find out the occult causes & effects & the mutual interaction & correlation of those events & then see whether a hand will not lead you; whether you will not recognize that hand which will retard some events, precipitate others etc—without interfering with the law of Karma in the least. If your group can be brought into strict union of thought & singleness of purpose—& harmony you will sense Orders and [10] the right direction you have to take as plainly as Bishop & Co. sense the hardly perceptible tension of the muscles in the hand that he is in

³ “A Magazine Devoted to the Brotherhood of Humanity, Theosophy in America, and the Study of Occult Science, Philosophy and Aryan Literature,” published and edited by Judge monthly from New York since April 1886.

⁴ C.H.A. Bjerregaard’s articles in *The Path* began with a six part series on “Sufism,” starting in the May 1886 issue, and followed by “The Elementals, the Elementary Spirits, and the Relationship between them and human beings,” a paper read before the Aryan T.S. of New York, Dec. 14, 1886, and published in *The Path*, Jan. and Feb. 1887.

⁵ Much of the remainder of this paragraph bears a strong resemblance to similar advice given by H.P.B. to members in London in an undated letter, but believed to be written at the same time. See “Extract of a Letter from H.P.B. to a London Group, 1887,” *The Theosophist* (July 1988).

contact with. This is the method of training of the younger chelas—down there at home. They record every small circumstance, compare their accumulated numbers, deduct their conclusions from the premises & those syllogisms lead them unerringly onward. It helps sharpening intuitions & sensitiveness[,] develops clairvoyance & every chela comes to recognize instantaneously the smallest change in the invisible aura of the ever present thought of [11] his guru who guides the events though he never creates them. Do you understand, oh Lamb of god? Try to.

My poor, poor friend, what a damned fool you are with all your intelligence, Irish-Hindu acuteness of perception etc. It is the worm that gnaws at your discriminative powers. It is the incubus of the family hearth that sits so heavily on your brain that it can hardly function in the right direction after every methodist squabble. Oh my poor crushed chum what I would I give to help you. But how can I fight against [12] your Irish Self which sits upon & tries to throttle the Hindu Self—the “mild” Hindu?

I try to be with you as much as I can. I am often watching you. Watch the shadows on the walls around you & gather strength from one who is oftener with you than you know of. Do not oppose Coues in his department. For my external sake do not be against him openly. He is a weapon in the hands of Karma & you are interfering with the Law.

Be strong, calm firm & hopeful. You are not even forty.

Yours ever
HPB

Background and History of the Theosophical Society in Bohemia

I. M. Kozlovsky

The year 1891 is a very important one for Theosophists all over the world, because on the 8th of May, the Founder of the Theosophical Society, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, left the physical world which had been so harsh and unkind to this “first modern woman.” In Bohemia, Theosophists have an additional reason to hold the year 1891 in special reverence. In the spring of that year, the first Theosophical lodge opened in the old capital of Bohemia, Prague.

In that last decade of the 19th century, Prague was still considered as one of the few “magical” cities of Europe.¹ “The ghosts of John Dee, Rabbi Loew ben Bezalel, and Elias Artista haunted the Old Town, where each and every stone stood a silent witness to a mysterious past.”² A popular story tells that centuries ago, the city was visited by some mysterious brotherhood from Asia that was in some way connected with the Count of Saint-Germain. It is certainly hard to say whether there is any truth in this Prague folk-tale, but some authors writing about the period suggest that the myth is not entirely devoid of truth. Thus Emanuel

Lešehrad’s popular but reliable study³ offers another version, according to which “a lodge of the Asiatic Brethren was established in Prague sometime in the year 1785. The house was in Opatovicka Street, and is still standing.” W. B. Crow says that the Count of Saint-Germain was a member, or even the Grand Master, of the Order of Saint Jakin (sometimes spelled St. Jacques or St. Joachim), and adds that this Order was identical with the Illuminated Asiatic Brethren.⁴ Antoine Faivre writes that the Hermetic order that succeeded the Golden Rose-Cross in 1786 “was the System of the Knights of the Cross of the Trinity (*Equites a Cruce Trinitatis*), founded by Assum, whose Grand Master was Karl von Hesse-Darmstadt (1749-1823). It transformed itself very soon into the Order of the Knights and Brothers of Light—also, and better known as the Initiated Asiatic Brethren: a creation or recreation of Ecker-und-Eckhoffen.”⁵ Another piece of information comes from the

³ E. Lešehrad, *In Search of Secret Societies* [in Czech] (Prague, 1922). Lešehrad was a symbolist poet in the tradition of Novalis, Blake, and Maeterlinck. He joined the T. S. Lodge of the Blue Star, but later became a devout Martinist. See also his *Secret Societies in Bohemia* [in Czech] (Prague, 1922).

⁴ W. B. Crow, *History of Magic, Witchcraft, and Occultism* (London: Abacus, 1973).

⁵ A. Faivre, *Accès de l'ésotérisme occidental* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p.224.

¹ The French poet André Breton writes in one of his essays that Paris, Prague, and Venice are the last magical cities of Europe.

² Angelo Maria Ripellino, *Praga Magica* (Torino, 1973); Czech translation, 1992.

Czech historian, Prof. F. Mašlaň,⁶ who writes that “a lodge of the Order of St. Jakin was established in Leitmeritz in 1766 by Freiherr von Ecker-und-Eckhoffen.⁷ Leitmeritz is a small town in Bohemia, not far from Sonnenberg, where J. H. Schmidt, alias Hermann Fictuld or “Elias Artista,” published in 1747 his *Aureum Velleus*.⁸

Surveying the history of Bohemia from the 15th century onwards, we see that the country was often in the center of a battle between the Catholic Church and various esoteric fraternities. There was Jan Huss (1371-1415), the Reformer priest strongly influenced by the Waldensian movement, burnt at the stake for heresy by the Catholic Church. After his death, one of his followers, Petr Chelčický (died 1460) founded the Bohemian Brotherhood, which was in constant conflict with the Catholic authorities. At the beginning of the 17th century, the Bohemian Brotherhood was closely connected with the Rosicrucian movement⁹, through people such as Comenius (Jan Amos Komenský), who was both a bishop of the Bohemian Church and a Rosicrucian. From the time of Rudolph II (Emperor, 1576-1611),

Bohemia was full of alchemists, magicians, and secret societies. Rudolph was a great patron of alchemy, astrology, and other occult sciences; it was at his invitation that John Dee and Edward Kelly visited Prague. Other notable guests at Prague Castle were Michael Maier (the Emperor’s physician) and the astronomers Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler.

After the French Revolution of 1789, however, there was a strong anti-masonic movement. Secret societies were held responsible for all the problems, and Freemasons were painted in the colors of the devil. In the 19th century the situation did not change in that regard, because all masonic activities were still considered as the highest offence against the state. Freemasonry had been prohibited in all the countries of the Austrian Empire since 1764, and the ban was not lifted until 1867. The Prague uprising of 1848 and its brutal suppression by the Austrian army was an example of growing anti-masonic paranoia. “Blood-drenched Prague had learned a hard lesson, that Austrian political power and the Catholic Church were not prepared to give up the least bit of their despotism,”¹⁰ says Augustin Smetana in his *Autobiography of a Banished Priest*. After the revolt, the situation worsened, with the secret police everywhere present. “It was the period of witch hunting,” says Smetana, “when Empire and Church stood against all that is great in the human spirit.”

Augustin Smetana was a Catholic priest who taught philosophy at the University of Prague but was dismissed because in his lectures “he preferred Bacon, Spinoza, and Schelling to the light

⁶ F. Mašlaň, *History of Freemasonry in Bohemia* [in Czech] (Prague, 1923).

⁷ Karl von Hesse-Cassel (1744-1836) was the Grand Master of Ecker-und-Eckhoffen’s “Asiatic Brethren.” It is well known that the Count of Saint-Germain “died” in 1784 at a castle belonging to Hesse-Cassel. The relation between the mysterious Saint-Germain and Ecker-und-Eckhoffen remains to be established.

⁸ Fictuld was another mysterious personage of the age. He is the author of many books on theosophy and alchemy, but his real identity is still uncertain due to his many pseudonyms. See A. Faivre, 212-18.

⁹ See Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp.156-70.

¹⁰ Augustin Smetana (1814-1851), *Autobiography of a Banished Priest* [in Czech] (in *Complete Works*, Prague, 1960).

given to us by the Holy Mother Church.”¹¹ Prof. Masaryk writes of Smetana that “he was so enthusiastic about the possibility of a free society that he believed that Italy would soon follow France, and that Germany would do in reality what some of its philosophers had written about with such genius.” For Smetana, as for all Freemasons, religious despotism was the greatest enemy of mankind. In one of his inspired essays, he says:

The era of freedom of conscience will come—it will be the time of equality and brotherhood, when Love will be considered as the utmost treasure and Art as a religion of a new humanity. All nations shall become one family, and through the power of Love all men will be transformed into God-men. The ideals of Pythagoras, Plato, and the Essenian Brotherhood shall become a reality.¹²

But times were hard for idealists who, like Smetana, desired to work towards the realization of this lofty ideal. Expelled from the University, banished from the Church, and constantly harassed by the Austrian police, he died exhausted in 1851. Many others would be banished, imprisoned, or both, before any changes occurred for the better.

The second half of the 19th century witnessed a rapid growth of interest in Mesmerism and magnetic healing. Fashionable society was gathering at healing séances organized by enthusiastic

supporters of Baron von Reichenbach, famous for his discovery of the “Odic Force.”¹³ With the approach of the last quarter of the century, Prague was swept by a wave of Spiritualism or “spiritisme,” as the movement was called in France. Spiritism came to Bohemia from France, where Allan Kardec (alias H. Rivail) published in 1857 *Le Livre des Esprits*, soon to become the bible of the movement. Prominent among the Spiritists was a certain Baron Adolf Leonardi, an Austrian nobleman of Italian descent then living in Bohemia who owned a castle south of Prague. Although little is known about him, he was reputed to be a member of secret societies in Italy, Germany, and France, perhaps an initiate of such societies as the Brotherhood of Light, the Order of Unknown Philosophers, and perhaps the Carbonari. A group soon formed around the mysterious baron, whose manners and appearance suggested a sort of new Saint-Germain; they experimented with mediums and the ouija board. Leonardi’s traces disappear after the creation of the Blue Star Lodge.

The Prague author Paul Leppin, who lived through this interesting period, writes: “Our meetings were spent in moving tables and thought-reading. Spirits knocked and squeaked in the old furniture... and the ouija board gave strange messages full of banal nonsense. Neither our piano nor the harp hanging on the wall were touched by the hand of a spirit... no music from higher spheres, no falling of flowers from the

¹¹ Tomáš Garigue Masaryk, *Augustin Smetana: Creative Love is Religion* [in Czech] (Prague, 1897). Prof. Masaryk (1850-1937) was the first President of free Czechoslovakia in 1918, and also a philosopher of worldwide reputation. His long essay on Smetana is part of a book entitled *Modern Man and Religion* [in Czech] (Prague, 1897).

¹² Augustin Smetana, *The Meaning of Our Age* [in German] (Prague, 1848).

¹³ Karl von Reichenbach (1788-1869) was influenced by Mesmer and his theory of Animal Magnetism. His researches were concentrated on the study of the human aura and on the use of the Odic force in healing. Od or Odic force is, according to Reichenbach, a subtle energy like the animal magnetism of Mesmer, which can be directed towards any part of the body of a sick person.

ceiling, no kiss from a higher dimension.”¹⁴ At one of these meetings, someone introduced a newcomer. This elegant looking man of uncertain age was Gustav Mayer or Meyrink, soon to become a famous novelist; he had just survived a personal tragedy that had almost ended in his suicide. Meyrink himself describes this event in his autobiography, *How I Became a Writer*.

The pain of love and other sentimental causes made me choose a quick end with the help of a revolver. A sudden noise at the door of my room stopped me from pressing the trigger. It was my destiny, dressed up as a mailman who was pushing some journal in under my door. I picked up the journal in order to have a look at its contents: it was all about spiritism, magic, and other terrifying subjects. My interest was caught immediately, to such a degree that I put the gun away in a drawer, and my life took on a new direction.

Meyrink joined the group which had formed around Baron Leonardi, and soon became one of his close friends. The old baron guided his reading and practices, and thus Meyrink learned about the works of J. B. Kerling, Eliphas Levi, and H. P. Blavatsky. When later, dissatisfied with Spiritism, some members decided to form a Theosophical lodge, Meyrink was among the first to join. He writes about his feelings at this time in one his autobiographical essays: “What had begun as a pastime developed into a real passion. My desire to know was consuming, but it took years before I reached the goal of my quest.”¹⁵

¹⁴ From *Memories*. Paul Leppin was interested in all sorts of mysterious things, but never became a serious student of Theosophy.

¹⁵ G. Meyrink, *How I Became a Writer* (Prague, 1935).

The Blue Star Theosophical Lodge, with Meyrink as one of its founders, was established in Prague in the spring of 1891. It consisted of ten members who met at Meyrink’s apartment. The first President of the newly-opened lodge was Baron de Gidofalvia, and among its members were people like Julius Zeyer, a novelist, Emanuel Lešehrad, a poet, and Karel Weinfurter, the author of a now forgotten book, *Man’s Highest Purpose*.¹⁶ The group met at least once a week in order to discuss Theosophical teachings and to share experiences from the practice of Raja Yoga. Karel Weinfurter writes in one of his many books: “After founding the Blue Star Lodge, we had been meeting once a week at the magnificent apartment of Gustav Meyrink, where the greatest effort was made to progress on the esoteric path.”¹⁷ Meyrink was a wealthy man, and used to spend large sums on acquiring rare Theosophical and occult books, and on all sorts of mystical paraphernalia. Leppin writes: “His ‘tower’, as his apartment was called, was decorated with paintings reputed to be miraculous, or at least inspirational in character. In the middle of a large drawing room was placed a strange sculpture representing some elemental being, and on one of the walls was a portrait of H. P. Blavatsky, surrounded by shelves full of bronze and ivory statues of Indian gods and Buddhas.” Enthusiastic about Theosophy, the group was eager to make real contact with the Masters and to be accepted as chelas. Meyrink writes: “We were strict vegetarians and slept only three or four hours a night. We

¹⁶ This is Weinfurter’s only book to have been translated into English (London, 1930). The English version is an abridgment of a work in three volumes entitled *Obnity Keř* [*The Burning Bush*] (Prague, 1925).

¹⁷ K. Weinfurter, *Cestu Kralovska* [*The Royal Way*, in Czech] (Prague, 1936).

had renounced coffee, tea, and other pleasures of ordinary life, but practiced Yoga asanas and pranayama with great perseverance.”¹⁸ At one time, the group practiced a sort of meditation which they had learned from an old Theosophist from the North of England: someone who cannot be identified, but who may have been connected with the group that published *The Lamp of Thoth* in Keightley, Yorkshire.¹⁹ Weinfurter says that “all who practiced this meditation obtained identical visions and had similar experiences.”²⁰ It was believed that a certain Order of White Monks or Masters was to be reached by means of concentration on a symbol of the Pole Star. Meyrink was one of those who practiced this meditation diligently. He writes: “After months of hard practice, I had found what I desired the most. I made contact with a group of people, consisting of both Europeans and Orientals, living in Central Asia, who know all the secrets of higher Yoga. After an entry trial, I was accepted as a chela.”²¹

We do not know what really happened to Meyrink, but one thing is certain: the knowledge he acquired through contact with the mysterious brotherhood was later put to use in his literary work. He wrote a number of occult novels: *The Golem*, *The White Dominican*, *The Green Face*, *The Angel of the West Window*, only the first of which has been published in English translation. Meyrink was also a translator of a number of Theosophical and occult books, and he com-

mented on the works of Eliphas Levi.²² Among his translations were the early Theosophical book, *Nature's Finer Forces* by Rama Prasad, and a selections of essays from *The Theosophist* which I have been unable to locate. Meyrink's interesting life could be the subject for a whole book, but our primary concern here is not Gustav Meyrink but the history of the Theosophical Society in Bohemia; and at this point the two are separating. We leave him in 1904, the year he left Prague and settled for a few years in Vienna.²³

After Meyrink's departure from Prague, Karel Weinfurter became President of the T. S. Lodge, and the Blue Star Lodge changed its name to the Theosophical Lodge “Psyche.” Weinfurter was a prolific writer and a translator by profession. He wrote over thirty books and translated some forty-six, all mystical and esoteric in character. They include translations from H. P. Blavatsky, Mabel Collins, Franz Hartmann, Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Prentice Mulford, and Paul Brunton.

Under Weinfurter's leadership there were some changes in the life of the Prague Lodge, mainly due to the fact that the new President was strongly attracted towards Christian mystic esotericism. The Lodge continued to grow in membership until the year 1906, when the Theosophical world was shaken by the “Leadbeater affair.” In 1907, Weinfurter left the mother society and founded

¹⁸ *How I Became a Writer*.

¹⁹ J. Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (London: Richard Drew, 1981), 37, 75.

²⁰ *Obnivý Keř*.

²¹ *How I Became a Writer*.

²² See his Preface to the German translation of Levi's *Transcendental Magic*. He also co-authored a book on the French magus with R. H. Lars (Vienna, 1922).

²³ For two years in Vienna, Meyrink edited a “Jugendstil” literary journal, *Lieber Augustin*. In 1908 he moved to Starnberg in Bavaria, where he lived until his death in 1932. It is said that “he died fully conscious, sitting up and looking towards the sun rising over the Starnberger See.” C. Vesela, *Gustav Meyrink* [in Czech] (Prague, 1989).

Karel Weinfurter

his own “Society for Spiritual Life ‘Psyche’.” In leaving the Adyar Society, he was followed by two thirds of the membership, so that it could be said without exaggeration that 1907 was a disastrous year for the Bohemian T. S. Moreover, the Bohemian lodge also lost much of its precious library, and its rented premises, to Weinfurter’s group. Although Weinfurter created the Psyche Lodge as a protest against the Leadbeater affair, it seems that his strong tendency towards Christian mysticism was the main cause of his secession. In later years he became a very authoritarian leader, expelling everyone who did not bend to his will. He died in 1942.

The small group which had remained loyal to the Adyar Society under the leadership of Annie Besant had to start practically from the beginning. We learn that it met at first at a private apartment belonging to one of the members, and that they were given a typewriter by the Vienna Lodge. The group elected a new president, Mr. Bedrniček,

and a secretary, Dr. Pražák, who remained in office until 1912. Many people had lost confidence in the Adyar leadership, and rumors of the “strange practices of C.W. Leadbeater” did not make matters any easier. In those difficult times, when Theosophy was attacked from all sides, the Prague Lodge received considerable help from Theosophical friends in Germany.

In the period following the crises of 1907, a reconstruction of the Prague Lodge took place, and Theosophy regained much of its earlier prestige. Its revival in Bohemia was much helped by Drs. Franz Hartmann and Rudolf Steiner, who often came to Prague, gave interesting lectures, and inspired people with reminiscences of the early days of the Theosophical Society. Hartmann’s Rosicrucian Theosophy found a sympathetic reception in the Bohemia of those days. Steiner, who was at the time the General Secretary of the German Section, was appreciated for his direct approach to spiritual life. His Theosophy was a sort of Christian gnosticism, freely mixed with the German Romantic tradition springing from Goethe. But Steiner was to cause further trouble for the Bohemian T. S. when he left the Adyar Society in 1909 and created Anthroposophy in 1913, taking with him a large part of the membership.

The lectures at this period drew large audiences, and even well-known writers like Franz Kafka sometimes attended. By 1911, the T. S. had its own publishing house and had issued a number of books, both translated and original.²⁴

²⁴ Translations: Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, *Nightmare Tales*, a short abridgment of *The Secret Doctrine*; Mabel Collins, *Light on the Path*, *Through the Gates of Gold*; Annie Besant, *Ancient Wisdom*, *Karma*, *The Riddle of Life*, *Man and His Bodies*; C. W. Leadbeater, *Outline of Theosophy*; Alcyone, *At the Feet of the Master*; Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*. Original works: Dr. B. Pražák, *New Psychology and Theosophy*; Jan Bedrniček, *Theosophy and the Kabbalah*; Jan Maliarik, *Philosophy of Sri Shankaracharya*.

It published a quarterly magazine, *Lotos*, and a monthly newsletter for members. A library containing over three thousand volumes of Theosophical, philosophical, mystical and other occult literature was opened to the public. The T. S. in Bohemia was gaining strength: the number of lodges had grown to seven. Apart from Prague, there were new lodges in Ostrava, Brno, Olomouc, Pardubice, Čáslav a Železný Brod, with a total membership of 503.

The Bohemian T. S. continued to thrive until the beginning of the First World War, when massive mobilization interrupted the life of the Theosophical lodges. After the war, most of them resumed their activities with renewed enthusiasm. Lectures and public expositions of Theosophical teachings were organized all over newly-created Czechoslovakia: no longer the Bohemian and Slovakian provinces of the Austrian Empire, but from 1918 an independent state. Annie Besant, George Arundale, and C. Jinarajadasa came over to Prague and gave lectures which were much appreciated by the public. A famous Czech artist and photographer, František Drtikol, who was one of the creators of Art Nouveau movement, became one of the most appreciated lecturers in Prague's Theosophical circles. His lectures on Vedanta and Buddhism were very inspiring, and many young people in search of a meaning to their lives were brought to Theosophy by this remarkable man, who was a personal friend of Rabindranath Tagore and a correspondent of Mahatma Gandhi. Drtikol wrote no books, but translated and commented on Shankaracharya's *Vivekachudamani* and the teachings of Gautama Buddha.

Another noteworthy figure in Bohemian Theosophical circles was a Protestant pastor, Jan Maliarik, who corresponded for years with Annie Besant. A great admirer of Blavatsky, Maliarik was

Jan Maliarik

a polyglot who could speak seven languages fluently. He also had a good command of Sanskrit, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. In one of his numerous books he describes his coming into contact with Theosophy:

After three years as a Protestant priest, I was lucky to discover H. P. Blavatsky, and especially her *Secret Doctrine*. I was overwhelmed with a great passion for Truth, and made my life even more ascetic. Attracted by the teaching of Buddha, I bought the whole *Tripitaka* in fifteen volumes, and spent most of my time reading through the dialogues and meditating on their real meaning... Some of the Sutras I

read more than fifty times before understanding their real meaning... After six years of that, I turned towards Hinduism. Reading and meditating on the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Puranas and Upanishads, I felt that I was still not at the heart of the Truth. Then, reading the Buddhist *Jataka Tales*, I suddenly realized that the Truth lies in the ideal of the Bodhisattva. The meaning of all life and the development of humanity was clear, and I was certain of the direction my life was to take in the future.²⁵

In the years between the two World Wars, Maliarik often lectured at the Theosophical lodges at Brno and Vienna, and some notes of his lectures are still in existence. The one on the philosophy of Sri Shankaracharya later developed into a full-length book that is still in circulation.²⁶

In 1925, the T.S. headquarters was transferred from Prague to the Silesian town of Ostrava. The change was due to Josef Škuta, who was a native of Ostrava and a student of Jiddu Krishnamurti. Škuta was elected President of the T. S. in Bohemia in 1924, mainly for his organizational qualities. It was thanks to his deep and constant devotion to the cause of Theosophy that the region of Ostrava had six new lodges by the end of 1925. However, after the creation of the Order of the Star, there was yet another crisis in the Bohemian T. S. Members who disagreed with the idea of a “New Coming” left the Adyar Society and joined Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy, thus causing the closure of some T. S. lodges. The ones initiated by Škuta in the Ostrava region were not affected by this affair.

²⁵ From Maliarik’s personal letters to Prof. Leopold Procházka, who was teaching Pali and Sanskrit at Prague University.

²⁶ *The Philosophy of Sri Shankaracharya* (1929). Another of Maliarik’s lectures, *The Way to Peace and Happiness*, was also published in book form in 1929.

The work of Josef Škuta proved to be of lasting importance, because it was mainly due to him that Theosophy survived the difficult times of World War II. When with the war came a ban on all societies like the T. S., people such as Škuta, Maliarik, and Drtikol continued to organize secret meetings, at which Theosophy was not only taught but put into practice, despite the hard conditions of life.

After the war, when the whole of Europe welcomed the return of peace, the T. S. in freed Czechoslovakia started to reopen its lodges. But unfortunately this period of freedom did not last long. The Communist takeover in 1948 put a sudden end to all the plans of the Czech Theosophists. The T. S. was declared an illegal, anti-communist organization, and was forced to end all its activities. Being illegal meant becoming a secret, underground group; but the Czechs were getting used to such conditions. Some of the old T. S. members continued to meet secretly, studying Theosophy and initiating new disciples; Drtikol’s group survived until his death in 1960. Many T. S. members joined the Unitarian Church, which was not under the ban of the Communist government. Others continued to meet privately until the Fall of 1989, when the Communist regime collapsed.

Thus Theosophy has survived forty years of Communist rule. There are now two Theosophical societies in existence: T. S. Adyar has a study group in Ostrava, and T. S. Pasadena has a small group in Prague. The disciples of Josef Škuta, Jan Maliarik, and František Drtikol, who received the torch of Theosophy in the dark years of Communism are now trying to make Theosophy in Bohemia alive and thriving again.

Prague, 1990

Postscript, September 1992.

Since the above was written, there have been new changes in our situation. Czechoslovakia has split in two, becoming the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, and there are noticeable signs that the new government (made of ex-Communist Party members) is not too well-disposed towards democracy. In June 1992, a law was passed that clearly discriminates against all non-Christian organizations. The T. S., which is considered a non-Christian sect (!), is forced to register as a business, which means paying taxes on all gifts, bank accounts, and property. Those groups that are recognized as Christian religious bodies are free of all taxation and have the right to receive public financial aid. Is this the work of a democratic government or of a Christian-Communist or ex-Communist mafia, because all high standing Communist Party members are now members of parties which could be defined as conservative right wing? With our financial situation getting worse every day, it could be envisaged that in the near future the Theosophical Society in Bohemia will again function as a secret, underground group, meeting only privately and without any printed study-material in the Czech language.

* * * * *

Bahá'í Faith and Theosophy: A Response to Paul Johnson's "Theosophical Influence in Bahá'í History"¹

Robert H. Stockman²

There is growing interest in relating the Bahá'í Faith to other movements and philosophies. The relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Theosophy is important, because some early American Bahá'ís were interested in Theosophy. Theosophists occasionally spoke in Bahá'í forums (such as the Green Acre Bahá'í School in Maine) and because Theosophists demonstrated enough interest in the Bahá'í Faith to invite 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1912), its head after 1892, to speak at some of their meetings. Since both groups were located near the fringe of American religious belief they felt a certain affinity to each other. "Theosophical Influence in Bahá'í History" represents a valuable initiation of research on the relationship between the two traditions.

¹ Paul Johnson, "Theosophical Influence in Bahá'í History," *Theosophical History* IV/1 (January 1992): 24-29.

² Robert H. Stockman holds a Th.D. in the History of Religion from Harvard University. He is the author of *Bahá'í Faith in America: Origins, 1892-1900* as well as numerous articles on the subject of Bahá'í. Dr. Stockman works at the Institute for Bahá'í Studies in Wilmette, Illinois and is an instructor of religion at DePaul University in Chicago.

The paper is founded on an intriguing thesis: that the Theosophical Society "was indeed the cornerstone of its [the Bahá'í Faith's] transformation from a Shi'a sect to the newest independent world religion" (p. 29). It identifies three Theosophical themes that it argues the Bahá'ís borrowed from Theosophy and that were keys to their success: 1) acceptance of eastern religions and incorporation of them into the Bahá'ís list of precursor religions; 2) modification of the Bahá'í approach to seeking truth; 3) adoption of Theosophical concepts of the equality of men and women. The paper argues that Theosophical influence entered the Bahá'í Faith because of contacts that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, head of the Bahá'í Faith from 1892, had with Theosophists during his trips to Europe and North America in the years 1911 though 1913.

Johnson obtains his information on the "Shi'a" nature of the early Iranian Bahá'í community under Bahá'u'lláh (1817-92), Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í religion, from Samuel G. Wilson's *Bahaism and its Claims*, originally published in 1915. There is no question that the nineteenth-century Iranian Bahá'í community, being mostly

of Shi'ite Muslim background, viewed its religion in Shi'ite ways; but the Bahá'í Faith became distinctive from Islam through a series of steps, some of which occurred during Bahá'u'lláh's ministry and some of which occurred in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tenure as head of the Faith. Wilson is not a particularly reliable source of information on the transformation of the Iranian Bahá'í community; he was a Presbyterian missionary who wrote about the Bahá'í Faith in order to refute it. His speculations about the Shi'ite nature of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and the "European" transformations of them wrought by 'Abdu'l-Bahá need critical examination before being accepted.³

Bahá'u'lláh's writings addressed an audience that was primarily (though by no means exclusively) Muslim, while 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in his western tour, spoke to secular and religious audiences; it is inevitable that different presentations of the Bahá'í Faith would be given to the different audiences, especially in the light of Bahá'u'lláh's exhortations to teach people the Bahá'í Faith according to their capacities and interests. 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed western audiences twenty years after Bahá'u'lláh's death, and some evolution or development of Bahá'í teachings can be expected in that time; no religion remains straightjacketed into a single formulation of its beliefs. However,

³ To describe Wilson's book as "the most comprehensive critical view of early Bahá'í history" (p. 27) is a bit misleading; if by "critical" one intends the negative sense of "criticism" this may be true, but if one intends the neutral, scholarly meaning of the word one might want to examine recent publications by some professional sociologists and historians first. For example, Abbas Amanat's *Resurrection and Renewal* (Cornell University Press, 1989), is the most thorough and objective treatment of the rise of the Bábí movement yet written; Peter Smith's *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), is the first effort to write a comprehensive account of the Bahá'í Faith from a historical and sociological perspective.

to postulate that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was substantially changing or rejecting Bahá'u'lláh's teachings does not stand up when one examines the teachings of both men in depth. In the case of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, this requires reading not just his public addresses to Theosophists, but his writings to American and Middle Eastern Bahá'ís.

When one examines each of the three themes of the paper noted above one finds a common pattern: 1) that while the paper states Bahá'u'lláh did not teach on the subject, he actually did; 2) that 'Abdu'l-Bahá often emphasized Bahá'í teachings differently than Bahá'u'lláh, but did not reject anything Bahá'u'lláh said; 3) that explicit Theosophical influence proves difficult to identify. This third point is particularly important. Proving the existence of influence of one person or movement on another is a complicated scholarly task unless the influenced party acknowledges it. It is not adequate simply to show that one person met someone else or encountered another movement to prove an influence. Sometimes the movements' contact with each other stems from pre-existing commonalities and disproves influence, rather than indicating it. Detailed examination of other possible sources of influence is also necessary to isolate which ideas came from which sources. Sensitivity to what someone will say to different audiences is necessary to put any one set of comments in a larger context; this is especially true of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who said very different things to Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í audiences, and in written versus spoken formats.

1. The Bahá'í Faith and the Oneness of Religion. The paper notes that in his writings Bahá'u'lláh does not mention certain East Asian prophetic figures such as Krishna, Buddha, and Confucius. This appears to be true. Bahá'u'lláh had limited exposure to eastern religions, though he had read Hindu books in Persian translation

and could have read Arabic newspaper articles about East Asia. More importantly, no one may have written Bahá'u'lláh and asked him about eastern religions; there were few Bahá'ís in India or farther east during Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime. However, to say Bahá'u'lláh said nothing about the eastern religions is not true. Scores of Zoroastrians became Bahá'ís in Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime, and Bahá'u'lláh addressed letters to many of them.⁴ The paper states that it was neither Bahá'u'lláh nor 'Abdu'l-Bahá who elevated Zoroaster to the status of a Manifestation of God (p. 27) but this is incorrect; Bahá'u'lláh clearly viewed Zoroaster as a Manifestation.⁵

Bahá'u'lláh is not known to have mentioned Buddha at all, but this does not mean the Buddha was not a Manifestation of God. Bahá'u'lláh was once asked whether there were Manifestations of

⁴ Bahá'u'lláh often wrote to the Zoroastrians in pure Persian (without the use of any words of Arabic origin; this would be equivalent to writing in English without including any words of Latin or French origin). Such a practice is a clear example of the Bahá'í principle of expounding the Bahá'í teachings differently to different audiences; one can imagine a Zoroastrian reading just these letters and arguing significant Zoroastrian influence on Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

⁵ The term *Manifestation of God* is used by Bahá'ís to refer to those rare individuals who are empowered by God to deliver a fresh revelation and serve as exemplars. While it is similar to the Indian concept of avatar, it is historically based on Muslim concepts of *nabí* (prophet) *rasúl* (messenger of God.) The Bahá'í scriptures regard Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh as Manifestations of God. There are also a few legendary Arab figures and a few individuals in Genesis whom the Bahá'í scriptures state are Manifestations. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other Old Testament figures are regarded as lesser prophets under the inspiration of Moses, but not as Manifestations. Bahá'u'lláh describes Zoroaster as a Manifestation of God in a letter called *Lawh-i-Haft Pursish* ("The Tablet of the Seven Questions"), which was revealed to a Zoroastrian Bahá'í in response to seven questions he wrote to Bahá'u'lláh. Only portions of the letter have been translated into English.

God other than the ones known to his Middle Eastern Muslim audience and he replied that "the Manifestations of His Divine Glory. . . have been sent down from time immemorial, and been commissioned to summon mankind to the one true God. That the names of some of them are forgotten and the records of their lives lost is to be attributed to the disturbances and changes that have overtaken the world."⁶ In many passages Bahá'u'lláh makes it clear that God has communicated to all of humanity via Manifestations throughout human history. Bahá'u'lláh authorized 'Abdu'l-Bahá to pronounce on the matter of who was a Manifestation, and perhaps based on Bahá'u'lláh's statement above, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that Buddha was.⁷ The pronouncement can be found in *Some Answered Questions*, a book of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's answers to questions put to him in the years 1904-06, at least five years before he had met any Theosophists in the West.⁸ The Bahá'í who asked him about Buddha was Laura Dreyfus-Barney, an American woman residing in Paris, and one can guess that she must have met Theosophists; but one cannot infer that she must have been influenced by Theosophy because there were many sources of information about Buddhism available to her besides Theosophical writings. Furthermore, one can be fairly certain

⁶ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), 174.

⁷ Bahá'u'lláh appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá as his successor and *interpreter* of his writings. The word *interpreter* does not describe 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authority well, for his interpretation was highly creative and innovative. Bahá'ís regard 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interpretations as authoritative and binding, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings, while not the Word of God (like Bahá'u'lláh's writings) are nevertheless sacred and scriptural.

⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), 165.

that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had met Bahá’ís of Burmese Buddhist background or Bahá’ís of Muslim background who had taught the Bahá’í religion to Buddhists, because the Bahá’í religion reached Burma in 1878, fifteen years before it reached the West. In 1903 or 1904 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá met Sister Sanghamitta, the Countess of Canavaro, an American who became a Buddhist nun before becoming a Bahá’í about 1901. Hence one cannot argue persuasively that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá added the Buddha to the Bahá’í list of Manifestations of God because of Theosophy.⁹

There is one additional point to consider before completing an examination of the question of Theosophical influence on the Bahá’í concept of the oneness of religion: a reference to the Buddha may yet be found in Bahá’u’lláh’s writings. Bahá’u’lláh wrote almost 20,000 letters in his life; not all of them have been collected from the descendants of their recipients; and their contents have not been completely catalogued. Possibly Bahá’ís of Buddhist background wrote Bahá’u’lláh asking about Buddha, or perhaps Bahá’í teachers of Muslim background did. The latter are likely to have inferred that the Buddha was a Manifestation of God and said so to Buddhists, and references to this argument might yet be found in the utterances or writings of

⁹One might add that the American Bahá’ís were speculating about Native American Manifestations of God as early as 1900 (Ibrahim George Kheiralla, *Bahá’u’lláh* [Chicago: I. G. Kheiralla, 1900], 346). Today Native American Bahá’ís write articles and books on the subject, thereby reinforcing their tribal and Bahá’í identities simultaneously (William Willoya and Vinson Brown, *Warriors of the Rainbow: Strange and Prophetic Dreams of the Indian Peoples* [Happy Camp, Cal.: Naturegraph Press, n.d.]; Annie Kahn, Olin Karch, and Blu Mundy, *Four Remarkable Indian Prophecies of the Navajos, Toltecs, Mayas and Indians of Idaho* [Happy Camp, Cal.: Naturegraph Press, n.d.]). Theosophical influence needn’t be found in the practice; rather, this is an expansion on Bahá’u’lláh’s statement that the names of many Manifestations have been lost.

Bahá’u’lláh. Unfortunately the Burmese Bahá’í community is almost completely unstudied, partly because of that nation’s isolation from the rest of the world.¹⁰

2. The Bahá’í Concept of Investigation of Truth. A major Bahá’í teaching emphasized by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on his western tour was independent investigation of truth; that each person must investigate religion on his or her own, free of preconceived notions, ancestral traditions, and prejudices. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not invent the teaching on his western tour; he refers to it several times in *Some Answered Questions*, published years earlier.¹¹ The paper implies that Bahá’u’lláh taught blind acceptance of himself instead of religious search (p. 27), but this is a hasty reading of Bahá’u’lláh. Bahá’u’lláh made it amply clear that “when a true seeker determines to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days [God]” that the seeker should “cleanse and purify his heart. . . from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge. . . . purge his breast. . . of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay.”¹² This is precisely what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá calls independent investigation of truth. Furthermore, Bahá’u’lláh

¹⁰It should be added that Mr. Johnson states that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that Confucius is a Manifestation of God. This is incorrect, though the error is not his fault; rather, it was a mistake of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s translator. The mistranslation was published in the 1922 edition of *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, the record of many of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks in North America, and only a decade ago were the Persian notes of the talk checked and the error discovered. The second edition (1982) has the error corrected.

¹¹*Some Answered Questions*, 38, 297-99.

¹²Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude*, trans Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1950), 192.

abolished clergy from his religion, further encouraging individual study of religion.

As for Bahá'u'lláh's statement that the two primary duties of human beings are recognition of Bahá'u'lláh and obedience to his laws, these statements do not nullify the importance of individual search for truth because Bahá'u'lláh saw individual search as the *means* and acceptance of God's prophet as the *goal* or end of the search. In Bahá'u'lláh's teaching they were complementary and mutually necessary steps.

The paper then contains a digression about the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh's "most holy" book of laws. It repeats claims by missionaries that the Bahá'ís have attempted to conceal the true teachings of Bahá'u'lláh by refusing to publish the *Aqdas* or promulgate its laws. Unofficial translations of the entire *Aqdas* have circulated in the American Bahá'í community as early as 1900, however, and an official translation of about forty percent of the book has been available for sixty years. In early 1993 the entire book, with copious notes and annotations, was finally published in English translation by the Bahá'í World Centre. It is available not only to Bahá'ís but to the general public.¹³

¹³ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992). At the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago the *Aqdas* was sold to the public. Some have complained that the *Aqdas* was made available too slowly to the English-speaking Bahá'ís, but there are several reasons for the length of time that was needed. The first is the Bahá'í principle of gradualism, that not everything should be made available immediately; Bahá'u'lláh himself applied the principle to the *Aqdas*, stating in the 1870s that it should not yet be circulated to the Iranian Bahá'í community. Second, there is the complex problem of explaining laws, revealed in Islamic and Bábí contexts, to westerners unfamiliar with either religion. Third, before the *Aqdas* could be translated all the explanations and clarifications by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi had to be collected together, and this required indexing their writings (which total nearly 60,000

3. The Bahá'í Faith and the Equality of Men and Women.

The article essentially argues that Bahá'u'lláh did not view women as equals and that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, especially to Theosophical audiences, downplayed Bahá'u'lláh's sexist teachings and promoted sexual equality. Bahá'í pronouncements that men and women are equal, however, are far older than 'Abdu'l-Bahá's western tour; Bahá'u'lláh's writings contain several passages stating that men and women are equal, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá is known to have stated the same as early as 1903. Bahá'u'lláh strongly advocated the right of women to an education and to work.¹⁴ American Bahá'í women had the right to vote in Bahá'í elections as early as 1899, American Bahá'í women were elected to Bahá'í local governing councils as early as 1907, and they were elected to the first national Bahá'í governing body when it was established in 1909, a decade before women had the vote in United States federal elections. To be sure, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not have the same concept of equality as modern western feminists; theirs was a concept partially based on the notion of complementarity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá only summarized the Bahá'í teach-

documents), a task that has required thirty years to complete. Fourth, until the last decade the Bahá'í community has had a severe shortage of scholarly resources to examine the context and interpretations of the laws

¹⁴ *Women: Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice*, comp. Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre (Thornhill, Ont.: Bahá'í Canada Publications, 1986), 2-4. Bahá'u'lláh's statement that all—women as well as men—must have an occupation may be found in Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, trans. Habib Taherzadeh (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), 26. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement that women are equal to men is found in an unpublished letter he wrote to Isabella Brittingham in 1903, copy located in the Bahá'í National Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

ings on equality of the sexes when speaking to a Theosophical audience.¹⁵

The Relationship between Theosophy and the Bahá'í Faith. While the purpose of the above is to question some possible avenues of Theosophical influence on the Bahá'í teachings, there are important contacts between the two religions that should be acknowledged. Mr. Johnson notes that 'Abdu'l-Bahá often addressed Theosophical societies in Europe and North America, and this is true. Like Esperanto, Unitarianism, Spiritualism, and a few other movements, Theosophy provided the Bahá'í Faith with a sympathetic audience and sometimes a pool of potential converts. Theosophical societies often were eager to invite 'Abdu'l-Bahá to speak to them. A much more comprehensive argument for influence perhaps could be made if conversion to the Bahá'í Faith from Theosophy were researched, for many early American Bahá'ís had read Theosophical books or studied Theosophy. But once again, arguments of influence will need to determine, on a case by case basis, the relative influences of many move-

¹⁵ In its summary of the Bahá'í teachings on men and women the paper quotes missionary sources like Wilson who did not have access to all of Bahá'í law. Bahá'u'lláh phrased his divorce laws in terms of how the husband could divorce the wife, but when the laws were put into force they were seen reciprocally to apply to the situation of wives divorcing husbands; thus the Bahá'í laws treat the sexes equally with respect to marriage and divorce. Bahá'u'lláh permitted bigamy, but only on the condition that the husband could treat both wives with equity and justice. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that in effect Bahá'u'lláh was therefore only permitting monogamy ('Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, note 89). The statement that Bahá'u'lláh had "two wives and a concubine" (p. 28) is not true. Bahá'u'lláh never had a concubine, but he did have three wives; he married them, however, before he claimed prophetic status and before there were any Bahá'í marriage laws. Bahá'u'lláh married the women as a Muslim, and Muslim law allows up to four wives. Thus his behavior was perfectly acceptable and normal for the society in which he lived.

ments, books, and thinkers before the influence of Theosophy can be definitively isolated.

One must also be careful about claiming that 'Abdu'l-Bahá concealed or misrepresented the Bahá'í teachings (p. 28) when comparing his descriptions of the Bahá'í Faith in public lectures to those of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not just emphasize those teachings most likely to appeal to his audience; he advocated racial equality to those supporting segregation, the need for progressive taxation and limitations on wealth to wealthy audiences, and the missions of Christ and Muhammad to synagogue audiences. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not attempt to present the Bahá'í Faith in all its complexity to any public audience, Theosophical or otherwise. No speaker would attempt such a task, especially when he does not know the language or culture of his audience. Rather, 'Abdu'l-Bahá usually offered generalized treatments of the Bahá'í teachings and discussion of its basic principles when speaking before a crowd. In one-on-one conversation, and in his letters, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in a very different position; he was then able to be much more specific about the Bahá'í teachings, and was able to tailor his arguments in favor of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to the attitudes of each person. Naturally, in such very different media as public addresses and private letters, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings will look different. A comparison of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's public talks and Bahá'u'lláh's private letters will look even more different. But read together they can be seen to provide complementary, not contradictory, perspectives on the Bahá'í religion.

There are three other questions about connections between Theosophy and the Bahá'í Faith that could be explored. The first is whether there are any features that are found in Theosophy alone that also appear in the Bahá'í Faith. Such

features could be clear proof of influence. For example, are there any statements of praise of Annie Besant or Madame Blavatsky in the Bahá'í scriptures? To my knowledge, there are not even any references to them. Are there any figures that only Theosophy regards as avatars that the Bahá'í Faith accepts as Manifestations? Are there any statements about uniquely Theosophical teachings, such as Masters? Again, the Bahá'í scriptures are completely silent. This greatly weakens an argument for Theosophical influence on the Bahá'í Faith.

The second question one needs to ask is why, if the Bahá'í Faith borrowed some ideas from Theosophy, it did not borrow others, such as reincarnation. There is a specific statement by an early American Bahá'í that Ibrahim Kheiralla, the first Bahá'í teacher in the United States, taught reincarnation because of Theosophical influence on his early pupils.¹⁶ But 'Abdu'l-Bahá rejected reincarnation as Theosophists view it, thus making it impossible for Bahá'ís to accept the concept. As a result, the early American Bahá'ís gradually turned away from it.

A third significant question to consider is whether the Bahá'í Faith could have influenced Theosophy. Theosophy does not have a set of scriptural works like the Bahá'í Faith's that define its basic teachings, nor does it claim a divine revelation that cannot be contradicted. Consequently its teachings should be relatively malleable to outside influence. If the contacts between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Theosophists were as frequent as the paper argues, there was ample opportunity for 'Abdu'l-Bahá to influence the Theosophists. This question should be explored.

The historical connection between the Bahá'í Faith and Theosophy undoubtedly is a subject worthy of exploration, but a causal connection between central Bahá'í teachings and Theosophy has not yet been proved. A weaker argument—that Theosophy and the Bahá'í Faith have some independent parallels in their teachings—certainly could be made. Much research remains to be done to set the study of the historical links between the two traditions on a firm basis. Cooperation between Bahá'ís and Theosophists at the recent Parliament of the World's Religions and the proximity of the Theosophical and Bahá'í archives in Wheaton and Wilmette, Illinois, respectively, should give an impetus to much future work.

* * * * *

¹⁶ Robert H. Stockman, *Bahá'í Faith in America: Origins, 1892-1900, Volume One* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), 58.