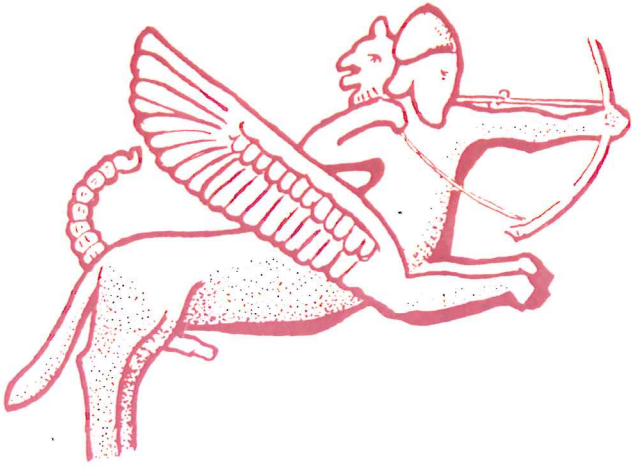
Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion



René Guénon

COLLECTED WORKS OF RENÉ GUÉNON

THEOSOPHY: HISTORY OF A PSEUDO-RELIGION

RENÉ GUÉNON

THEOSOPHY

HISTORY OF A PSEUDO-RELIGION

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE PAST CENTURY HAS WITNESSED an erosion of earlier cultural values as well as a blurring of the distinctive characteristics of the world's traditional civilizations, giving rise to philosophic and moral relativism, multiculturalism, and dangerous fundamentalist reactions. As early as the 1920s, the French metaphysician René Guénon (1886–1951) had diagnosed these tendencies and presented what he believed to be the only possible reconciliation of the legitimate, although apparently conflicting, demands of outward religious forms, 'exoterisms', with their essential core, 'esoterism'. His works are characterized by a foundational critique of the modern world coupled with a call for intellectual reform; a renewed examination of metaphysics, the traditional sciences, and symbolism, with special reference to the ultimate unanimity of all spiritual traditions; and finally, a call to the work of spiritual realization. Despite their wide influence, translation of Guénon's works into English has so far been piecemeal. The *Sophia Perennis* edition is intended to fill the urgent need to present them in a more authoritative and systematic form. A complete list of Guénon's works, given in the order of their original publication in French, follows this note.

Many readers of Guénon's later doctrinal works have longed to hear the tale of his earlier entanglement, and disentanglement, from the luxuriant undergrowth of so-called esoteric societies in late nineteenth-century Paris and elsewhere. The present work documents in excoriating detail Guénon's findings on what did, and did not, lie behind the Theosophical Society founded by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in 1875. Much further information has of course come to light during the 80 years since this book was first published, but it has never been superseded as a fascinating record of the path of a master metaphysician through this maze. A particularly unusual feature is its extensive treatment of the Hermetic

Brotherhood of Luxor, which has recently attracted the attention of scholars of the occult.

Guénon often uses words or expressions set off in 'scare quotes'. To avoid clutter, single quotation marks have been used throughout. As for transliterations, Guénon was more concerned with phonetic fidelity than academic usage. The system adopted here reflects the views of scholars familiar both with the languages and Guénon's writings. Brackets indicate editorial insertions, or, within citations, Guénon's additions. Wherever possible, references have been updated, and English editions substituted.

The translation is based on the work of Alvin Moore, Jr., and Dr. Hubert and Rohini Schiff. Careful revisions were made by Patrick Moore and Marie Hansen, with final editing by James Wetmore. For help with selected chapters and proofreading thanks go to John Champoux, John Ahmed Herlihy, Jay Kinney, and Cecil Bethell, to whom is due thanks also for providing the index. Cover design by Michael Buchino and Gray Henry, based on a drawing of Sagittarius from a Babylonian (Kassite) *kudurru*, ca. 1200 BC, Reign of Nebuchadnezzar, by Guénon's friend and collaborator Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

THE WORKS OF RENÉ GUÉNON

Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines (1921)

Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion (1921)

The Spiritist Fallacy (1923)

East and West (1924)

Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta (1925)

The Esoterism of Dante (1925)

The Crisis of the Modern World (1927)

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PREFACE

THEOSOPHY AND THEOSOPHISM

FIRST OF ALL we need to justify the seldom used word serving as title to this study: why 'theosophism'[1] and not 'theosophy'? This is because for us these two words designate very different things; and even at the price of a neologism or of what may seem to be such, it is important to dispel the confusion that similarity of names is naturally bound to produce. This is all the more important, moreover, as it is in the interest of certain people to maintain this confusion so as to lead others to believe that they are connected to a particular tradition (or to any other tradition whatsoever for that matter), something which they cannot legitimately contend.

Indeed, long before the creation of the so-called Theosophical Society, the term theosophy was used as a common denomination for a wide variety of doctrines which were nonetheless all of the same type, or at least originated from the same tendencies. It is therefore appropriate to maintain the historical significance of the term. Without going into detail regarding the nature of these doctrines, we may say that their common and fundamental feature is that they are more or less strictly esoteric conceptions of a religious

1. The French original of this book is entitled *Le Théosophisme: Histoire d'une Pseudo-Religion*. In English, the capitalized term 'Theosophy' is generally understood to refer to the Theosophical Society founded by H.P. Blavatsky and H.S. Olcott, while the uncapitalized 'theosophy' is associated with various mystical writers such as those Guénon mentions below. It seemed unnecessary, then, to introduce the French neologism 'theosophism' to reinforce a distinction already clear in English through the connotations of the capitalized and uncapitalized forms of the word theosophy. See also *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*, chap. 1, n8. ED.

or even a mystical inspiration, even though this mysticism is somewhat peculiar. They claim to belong to a totally Western tradition, the basis of which is always Christianity under one form or another. Of such a kind, for example, are the doctrines of Jacob Boehme, Gichtel, William Law, Jane Lead, Swedenborg, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, and Eckartshausen. We do not claim to furnish an exhaustive list, but merely mention a few of the better-known names.

Now, the organization presently called the 'Theosophical Society', which we intend to examine here exclusively, does not belong to any school related even indirectly to doctrines of this kind. Its founder, Mme Blavatsky, could have had a more or less thorough knowledge of the writings of certain theosophists, especially Jacob Boehme, and she may have picked up some of these ideas which she then inserted into her own writings along with a host of other elements of the most varied origins, but that is about all that can be said in this respect. Generally speaking, the more or less coherent theories issued or upheld by the leaders of the Theosophical Society have none of the characteristics just described, apart from a certain pretension to esoterism; moreover, they are presented falsely as of Eastern origin, and if at a certain point some people deemed it necessary to add a pseudo-Christianity of a most peculiar nature, it remains no less true that their original tendency was frankly anti-Christian. 'Our goal,' as Mme Blavatsky used to say, 'is not to restore Hinduism, but to sweep Christianity from the surface of the earth.'[2] Since then, have things changed as much as a merely superficial view might suggest? Our own caution may be legitimated when we observe that the great propagandist of the new 'esoteric Christianity' is Mrs Besant, the same woman who formerly proclaimed that it was necessary 'above all to combat Rome and her priests, fight against Christianity all over the world, and *chase God out of Heaven.*'[3] No doubt the doctrine of the Theosophical Society and the opinions of

2. Declaration made by Alfred Alexander and published in *The Medium and Daybreak*, London, January 1893, p23.

3. Closing speech at the Congress of Free-Thinkers which took place in Brussels in September 1880.

its current president may have 'evolved', but it is also possible that their neo-Christianity is no more than a mask, for as is always the case in such circles, anything may be expected. We think that our present exposé will amply demonstrate how wrong we would be to lend credence to the sincerity of the people who lead or inspire movements such as the one here under examination.

Whatever may be the case regarding this last statement, at this point we can say plainly that between the doctrine of the Theosophical Society, or at least what is proclaimed as such, and theosophy in the true sense of the term, there is absolutely no filiation, not even on the level of ideas. Thus we reject as pure fantasy assertions tending to present the Society as the continuation of other associations, such as the 'Philadelphian Society', which existed in London toward the end of the seventeenth century[4] and to which Isaac Newton supposedly belonged, or the 'Fraternity of the Friends of God', said to have been created in Germany in the fourteenth century by the mystic John Tauler, who for reasons unknown to us is considered by some a precursor to Luther.[5] These assertions are perhaps even more groundless than those which are used by the Theosophists try to establish a connection with the Neoplatonists[6] on the ground that Blavatsky in fact adopted certain fragments of these philosophers' theories, although without really having assimilated them.

In reality, the doctrines professed by the Theosophical Society are wholly modern, and in almost every respect are so different from those to which the name theosophy legitimately applies, that the two could never be confounded except as a result of dishonesty or ignorance: dishonesty on the part of the heads of the Society, and ignorance on the part of the majority of those who follow them, and also, we have to admit, on the part of some of their adversaries who, being insufficiently informed, commit the grave error of taking these leaders' assertions seriously and believing, for example,

4. *The Key to Theosophy*, by H.P. Blavatsky (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1972, verbatim reprint of original 1888 edition), pp17–18. [All subsequent citations refer to this edition. ED.]

5. *Modern World Movements*, by Dr J.D. Buck [1836–1916] (Chicago: Indo-American Book Co., 1913): *Life and Action*, Chicago, May June 1913.

6. *The Key to Theosophy*, pp1–12.

that they represent an authentic Eastern tradition, although this is simply not true. As we shall see, the Theosophical Society owes its name to purely accidental circumstances, without which it would have received an entirely different name. Thus its members are in no way theosophers, but rather 'theosophists', if you will. As for the rest, the distinction between the terms 'theosophers' and 'theosophists' is almost always made in English, where the word 'Theosophism' is frequently used to designate the doctrine of this Society. This distinction seems important enough in our eyes to be maintained equally in French, despite of its unusual character, and this is why before all else we were anxious to give the reasons why there is more to this than a mere question of words.

We have spoken as though there really were a theosophical doctrine; but the fact of the matter is that if the word 'doctrine' is to be taken in its strictest sense, or even if one simply wishes to designate something solid and definite thereby, it must be admitted that no such thing exists. What the Theosophists present as their doctrine appears after a modicum of serious examination, as filled with contradictions. Furthermore, from one author to another and sometimes with the same author, there are considerable variations, even on points regarded as of the utmost importance. In this regard we can distinguish above all two main periods, which correspond to the periods of Mme Blavatsky's and Mrs Besant's direction. It is true that contemporary Theosophists often try to obscure the contradictions by interpreting their founder's thought in their own fashion and by pretending that it was misunderstood at the beginning, but the discord is no less real. One will readily understand that the study of such inconsistent theories can hardly be separated from the history of the Theosophical Society itself. This is why it did not seem appropriate to divide the present work into two distinct parts, one historical and the other doctrinal, which would have been a natural thing to do in other circumstances.

1

MADAME BLAVATSKY'S ANTECEDENTS

HELENA PETROVNA HAHN was born on August 12, 1831 in Ekaterinoslaw. She was the daughter of Col. Peter Hahn and the granddaughter of Lieutenant-General Alexis Hahn von Rottenstern-Hahn, a family originally from Mecklemburg and settled in Russia. Her mother, Helena Fadeeff, was the daughter of private consultant André Fadeeff and princess Helena Dolgorouki. The future Mme Blavatsky never forgot her noble origins, to which the neglected and even crude manners she affected formed a strange contrast. Even as a child she had behaved in an intolerable manner, throwing violent tantrums at the least annoyance, which made it impossible to give her a serious and steady education despite her great intelligence. At fifteen 'she swore in a manner that would have made a soldier blush', as her friend Olcott himself put it, and she retained this habit throughout her life. At sixteen, she was married off to General Nicephore Blavatsky, who was already quite old. She went with her husband to the province of Erivan, of which he was the vice-governor, but left the household at her first reprimand. It is said that the general died shortly after her departure, but we think this was not at all the case and that he lived another fifteen years, as Blavatsky mentions having spent a few days with him again in Tiflis in 1863.[1] In any event, this matter is of little importance.

Thus it was that in 1848 Mme Blavatsky's extraordinarily adventurous life began. During her travels through Asia Minor with her friend the Countess Kiseleff, she met a Copt (some say a Chaldean)

1. Letter to Solovioff, February 1886.

named Paulos Metamon, who claimed to be a magician and seems to have been something of a conjurer.[2] She continued her travels in the company of this individual, with whom she went to Greece and Egypt. Her funds nearly depleted, she then returned to Europe, and in 1851 we find her in London giving piano lessons for a living. Her friends claimed that she had come to this city with her father in order to study music, but this is obviously false, for at the time she was on bad terms with all her family, which explains why she dared not return to Russia. In London she frequented both spiritist[3] and revolutionary circles; in particular, she made friends with Mazzini, and around 1856 became a member of the Carbonarist association 'Young Europe'.

An extraordinary story is connected with this period, and it may be appropriate to say a few words about it. A special mission from Nepal came to London in 1851 (in 1854 according to others) and Mme Blavatsky was to later claim that among the members of this mission she had recognized a mysterious individual whom she had often seen at her side since childhood and who always turned up to help her when she was in difficulty. This protector, who was none other than the 'Mahātmā' Morya, then made known the role he had destined for her. As a result of this encounter Blavatsky supposedly traveled to India and Tibet, where she claims to have remained three years, during which the 'Masters' supposedly taught her occult science and developed her psychic faculties.[4] Such, at least, is the

2. If we refer to certain information conveyed to us, but which we have not been able to verify directly, this Metamon was said to be the father of another character who for a while was head of the 'external circle' of the 'HB of L' (a secret society which we shall discuss later), and who has since founded a new organization of a very different nature.

3. This is where she knew Dunglas Home, the medium of Napoleon III whom we shall meet again further on.

4. What we say here cannot be gainsaid, as some have tried to do, by Olcott's affirmation that in 1854 Mme Blavatsky tried vainly to penetrate Tibet through Bhutan or Nepal. Even if the attempt really was made, the date given is rather doubtful, for at the time Mme Blavatsky must have been in London and not Asia; but in any case the attempt failed. Moreover, one cannot consider as an allusion to the 'Mahātmās' the passage from a letter published in the *Spiritual Scientist* of July 1875, in which Mme Blavatsky asserted, without being more specific, her 'personal knowledge' of the existence of occult schools in India, Asia Minor, and other countries, and in which she added furthermore:

> The true Kabbalah [it was not then a question of Hindu or Tibetan doctrines] is in the hands of a few Eastern philosophers, but who they are and where they reside, it is not given me to reveal.... All I can say is that this body does exist and that the headquarters of the brotherhoods will be revealed to the world only at the awakening of humanity.

version given by Countess Wachtmeister,[5] according to whom this stay was followed by another period in Egypt. This must have been Mme Blavatsky's second trip to this latter country, and we shall speak of this a little further on. On the other hand, Sinnett says that

> after a course of occult study carried on for seven years in a Himalayan retreat, and crowning a devotion to occult pursuits extending over five-and-thirty or forty years, Madame Blavatsky reappeared in the world,[6]

and he seems to place this retreat almost immediately prior to her departure for America. Now, even if such were the case, considering that Mme Blavatsky was only forty-two years old at the time of this departure, it would follow that her 'mystical studies' commenced directly at birth—or even a bit earlier! The truth is that this journey to Tibet is nothing but a pure invention of Mme Blavatsky, and according to what we just saw, one must admit that the descriptions she gave of this journey to various people were far from being in agreement. She did write an account of this journey, however, which came into the hands of Mrs Besant, who, when it was proven that the journey could not have taken place at the dates indicated, claimed that the account was not really by Blavatsky herself since she had written it under the dictation of a 'Mahātmā', and that her handwriting could not even be recognized. Moreover, the same was said about certain portions of her works, which is all too convenient a way of excusing the many contradictions and inconsistencies found therein. Be that as it may, it seems well-established that Mme

5. *Lotus Bleu*, June 27, 1894; cf. *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky* [by Constance Wachtmeister (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1976, first edition 1893)], chap. 8.

6. *The Occult World* [by A.P. Sinnett, 1840–1920 (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1969], p30.

Blavatsky did not travel to India before 1878 and that until then there was never any question of 'Mahātmās'. What follows will provide sufficient proof of this.

Around 1858, Mme Blavatsky decided to return to Russia. She was reconciled with her father and stayed with him until 1863, during which time she went to the Caucasus, where she met her husband. A little later we find her in Italy where she had probably been called by a Carbonarist order. In 1866 she was with Garibaldi, accompanying him on his expeditions. She fought at Viterbo and then at Mentana, where she was gravely wounded and left for dead on the battlefield. However, she recovered and went to Paris to finish her convalescence. There, for some time she was under the influence of a certain Victor Michal, magnetizer and spiritist,[7] whose name is distorted at times in accounts relating to this period of her life: some called him Martial, others Marchal,[8] leading to his being mistaken for a vicar named Marchal who was also involved in hypnotism and psychic research. Michal, a journalist, was also a Mason, as was his friend Rivail, alias Allan Kardec, a former school teacher who became director of the Folies-Marigny theater and the founder of French spiritism.[9] It was Michal who developed Mme Blavatsky's mediumistic faculties, and in later days he always spoke with a certain horror of the 'split personality' she displayed from that period on, which well explains the very peculiar circumstances in which she later composed her works. Blavatsky was herself a spiritist at that time, or at least she said she was, and more precisely claimed to belong to the school of Allan Kardec, some of whose ideas she retained or later went back to, especially those regarding 'reincarnation'. If we seem dubious as to the sincerity of Mme Blavatsky's spiritism despite her numerous assertions on the subject prior to the foundation of her Society,[10] it is because she later declared that she had never been a 'spiritualist'[11] (in Anglo-Saxon countries this word

7. Born in Grenoble in 1824, died in Paris in 1889.

8. *Light*, London, August 28, 1897 and May 27, 1899.

9. For more on Kardec and his connection with spiritism, see *The Spiritist Fallacy*. Ed.

10. Especially in her letters to A.N. Aksakoff (1874–1875) published by Solovioff.

11. *Light*, February 19, 1881, October 11 and November 11, 1884.

is often used as a synonym for spiritist).[12] One may well ask oneself at which moment she was lying.

However that may be, it is certain that from 1870 to 1872 Blavatsky practiced the profession of medium in Cairo, where she had encountered Metamon once again, and where, with his help and that of a French couple managing a hotel, the Coulombs, of whom we shall speak later, she founded her first 'miracles club', announced thus by a spiritist journal:

> A society of spiritualists had been formed in Cairo [Egypt] under the direction of Mme Blavatsky, a Russian, assisted by several mediums. The sessions take place twice a week, on Tuesday and Friday evenings, with admission reserved to members only. The intention is to establish, jointly with the society, a reading room and a library of spiritualist and other works, as well as a journal entitled *The Spiritualist Review of Cairo*, which will be published on the 1st and the 15th of each month.[13]

This venture was not a success, however, for shortly thereafter Mme Blavatsky was convicted of fraud, as she was again to be some time later on several occasions in America, where she took up the same profession.[14] This is far from being rare among professional mediums, although we do not mean to say that everything in the phenomena that serve as a basis for spiritism is fake. Besides, these facts by themselves are entirely independent of the absurd interpretation that the spiritists give them. But in any case they have been frequently simulated by hoaxes, and anyone who makes a profession of producing these phenomena is highly suspect, for even in cases of real mediumistic capacities, personal interest can drive one to cheat when for one reason or another, real phenomena cannot be

12. On the terms 'spiritist' and 'spiritualist', see the preface to *The Spiritist Fallacy*. Ed.

13. *Spiritual Magazine*, April 1872.

14. *Mind and Matter*, of Philadelphia, November 21, 1880. This journal provided evidence to help expose the 'tricks' used by Mme Blavatsky. — A paper read at the Chicago Congress in 1893 by William Emmett Coleman, who also took pains to draw up a detailed inventory of the 'borrowings' made by Mme Blavatsky for her *Isis Unveiled*.

produced. Such has certainly been the case of many well-known and reputed mediums, such as the famous Eusapia Paladino, and it was probably also true of Mme Blavatsky, especially at the beginning. When she was unmasked as an impostor, she hurriedly quit Cairo and returned to Paris, where she tried to live with her brother, but, unable to get along with him, she soon left for America, where two years later she was to found her Theosophical Society.

2

THE ORIGINS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

ON LEAVING FOR AMERICA, where she arrived in New York on July 7, 1873, Mme Blavatsky claimed that she was 'controlled'—or 'guided' as the French spiritists would say—by a 'spirit' named John King. It is worth noting this curious fact, for the same name is invariably found in the manifestations of a number of fake mediums unmasked at about the same time,[1] almost as though these mediums were all acting under the same inspiration. What is also very significant in this respect is that in 1875 Blavatsky wrote:

> I was *sent* from Paris to America in order to verify the phenomena and their reality and to show the deception of the spiritualist theory.[2]

1. The Davenport brothers (1865); the Holmes couple (Philadelphia, early 1875); Firman (Paris, June 1875); Herne (London); C.E. Williams (The Hague, 1878), etc. — Let us also recall Miss Florence Cook's Katie King, William Crookes' famous medium (1873–1875); is this similarity of names merely accidental? In this connection, let us point out that Crookes joined the Theosophical Society in 1883, and that he not only belonged to the Theosophical Society, but was a board member of the *London Lodge*.

2. Letter to Stainton Moses: *Light*, July 9, 1892, p331. In her letter to Solovioff dated February 1886, Mme Blavatsky again says: 'I was *sent* to America in order to try out my psychic capacities,' which, as we know, she had already 'tried out' in Cairo.

Sent by whom? By the 'Mahātmās', as she was to later say, although at this time there had not yet been any mention of them, and moreover that she received her mission in Paris and not in India or Tibet.

On the other hand, it seems that when Blavatsky arrived in America she would ask all the persons she met whether they knew anyone named Olcott.[3] She finally met up with this Olcott on October 14, 1874, at the Chittenden farm (in Vermont), the home of the Eddy family where 'spirit materializations' and other phenomena of the same kind were taking place. Henry Steele Olcott was born in Orange (New Jersey) on August 2, 1832. A son of respectable farmers, he had at first been an agricultural engineer and then, during the Civil War, served in the military police, where he had earned the title of colonel, so easy to obtain in the United States. When the war was over he took to journalism, while dividing his leisure time between Masonic Lodges and spiritist societies. Working for several newspapers, especially the *New York Sun* and the *New York Graphic*, he wrote various articles on the Chittenden phenomena,[4] and it was probably through reading these articles that Mme Blavatsky finally learned the whereabouts of her future associate.

But who gave Mme Blavatsky the notion of contacting Olcott, a man without a particularly conspicuous status in the 'spiritist' world? What may offer the key to this mystery, if we discard the hypothesis of communication with the 'Mahātmās', an hypothesis which cannot be seriously upheld and which is no more than an after-the-fact explanation, is that Olcott already knew John King, if we are to believe the following, which he wrote in 1876 about this so-called 'spirit' to William Stainton Moses, an English spiritist well

3. See the account of Countess Wachtmeister cited above.

4. Olcott's articles on the phenomena at Chittenden were collected in a volume called *People from the Other World*. — Concerning Olcott's role during and after the Civil War, we have been reproached for having 'carefully omitted to point out that he was responsible for denouncing and prosecuting all who were found guilty of misappropriation in the arms market,' which was 'a mandate that would only be accorded a man whose honor and integrity were above suspicion.' This omission was in fact was quite involuntary on our part, and moreover Olcott's 'integrity' was not at issue; but if the Theosophists find the function of informer 'honorable', we regret not being of their opinion on this point.

known under the pseudonym M.A. Oxon: 'He has often been in London; in fact, I myself met him there in 1870.' In the correspondence where this sentence is found, and which Stainton Moses himself later published in his journal,[5] there are many assertions difficult to take seriously, and we often wonder whether Olcott was trying to fool others or was himself the dupe. For our part, we do not believe that he was always as naive as he wished to appear, or as the investigators of the Society of Psychical Research of London also thought in 1884; nor that he was as completely under the influence of Mme Blavatsky as were certain others, such as Judge and Sinnett for instance. Moreover, he himself declares that he is 'neither an enthusiastic novice nor a credulous fool,' defining his role as that of 'braying in order to attract people's attention,' so that his sincerity is quite dubious. However that may be, truth sometimes rises to the surface in spite of all the fantasies that overlay it. Thus, in a letter dated 1875, one reads: 'Try to get a private interview with John King; he is an *Initiate* and the frivolity of his speech and action hide serious business.' This is still quite vague, but in another letter (the same one where Olcott refers to his personal relationship with John King, while speaking of him in a way which, by and large, hints that he is nothing but a 'materialization') he says that this same John King *is* a member of a Masonic Lodge (the verb is used in the present tense), as was also Olcott himself, as well as his correspondent, the Reverend Stainton Moses, and also, as we have already said, Victor Michal, who was Blavatsky's first magnetizer.

We shall have other occasions further on to point out many more relations between the Theosophical Society and various branches of Masonry; but the point here is that it seems John King's name could very well have been a cover for a living man whose identity had to remain unknown. Was he the one who courted Mme Blavatsky and arranged her association with Olcott? It is at least highly probable, and in this case one must admit that this mysterious individual was acting on behalf of a no less mysterious party, which the following further confirms by showing other similar cases. However we do not claim to have resolved the question as to who John King was

5. *Light*, July 9 and 23, 1892.

and shall simply note that Olcott, in a passage from his *Old Diary Leaves* describing a 'phenomenon' produced by Mme Blavatsky in April 1875 (a sketch allegedly drawn by occult means in a notebook, showing a Masonic Rose-Cross jewel), links John King's name to that of a certain Henry de Morgan (these two names having apparently been written above the drawing in question).[6] This might be evidence, but we would not like to make too much of it. There was indeed a professor de Morgan who was president of the Mathematical Society of London and took an interest in psychism, but we do not think that it is he who is involved here. On the other hand, in a letter addressed to Solovioff dated February 1886, Blavatsky speaks of a certain M... who she claims had 'betrayed and ruined her by telling lies to the medium Home, who had brought discredit on her for the past ten years.' One may suppose that this initial 'M' refers to the same character, and it must be concluded that for some reason this Henry de Morgan—if this is his real name—supposedly deserted his former agent around 1875 or 1876, that is to say around the same time the new 'miracles club' established in Philadelphia met with a setback of the same kind as that in Cairo, and for exactly the same reason, the discovery of Mme Blavatsky's numerous frauds.[7]

6. Concerning the identification of John King with Henry de Morgan, it is curious to note that William Crookes' Katie King also claimed to have lived in India under the name of Annie Owen Morgan; the comparison therefore seems closer than we first supposed (p17, n1). — As for the president of the London Mathematical Society, he was called Auguste de Morgan.

7. Certain people claimed that during her stay in Philadelphia Mme Blavatsky married one of her compatriots, who was also a medium and much younger than she, but it was not long before she left him and returned to New York. She is supposed to have filed a divorce suit which allegedly was only settled after three years. We have been unable to obtain confirmation of these events, and other information renders them improbable in our eyes. Besides, Blavatsky's life was already adventurous enough that it would be superfluous to insert more or less romantic events based on mere rumors. — The same observations apply to what we read about her in the recently published Memoirs of Count Witte (pp2–7 of the French edition). Although he was cousin to Mme Blavatsky through the Dolgoroukis, Count Witte does not seem to know much about her youth except for some more or less vague rumors current in Russia, and this is not surprising since Mme Blavatsky had no contact with her family during this period. Certain details of this account are obviously incorrect; others, such as those concerning Blavatsky's relations with a singer named Mitrovitch, may be true, but they relate to her private life only, which is of no particular concern to us. A resumé of all this was given by Lacour-Gayet in the *Figaro* of September 16, 1921, under the title 'The Wandering Life of Mme Blavatsky'.

We had hoped to consider the stories concerning Mme Blavatsky's second marriage and divorce simply as slanderous lies, but the Theosophists themselves have taken care to point out to us that Olcott speaks of it in his *Old Diary Leaves* and affirms that the papers relating to this affair are in his possession. If they can throw light on this rather regrettable aspect of their founder's character, we for our part do not see any objection. It seems then that the marriage took place in Philadelphia on April 3, 1875, at a time when General Blavatsky was still alive, and that no divorce had been granted. Mme Blavatsky's second husband was a young Armenian named Bettalay; moreover, J.N. Farquhar (*Modern Religious Movements in India*, p222) states that according to the register she gave her age as thirty-six years when she was in fact forty-three. Finally, it was during the divorce proceedings that she made the acquaintance of W.Q. Judge, who was charged with defending her interests in the case.

In fact, John King was no longer mentioned at that time and a notable change of direction was to be observed in Mme Blavatsky, a coincidence that confirms what we have just said. The main reason for this change was her encounter with a certain George H. Felt, who was introduced to her by a journalist named Stevens. This Felt, who claimed to be a mathematics teacher and Egyptologist,[8] was a member of a secret society commonly known by the initials 'H B of L' (*Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*).[9] Now, although it played an important role in the production of the first phenomena of 'spiritualism' in America, this society was totally opposed to spiritist theories since its teachings claim that these phenomena are not caused by the spirits of the dead but by certain forces controlled by living people. It was on September 7, 1875, precisely, that John King was replaced as Mme Blavatsky's 'control' by another 'spirit' calling

8. 'Old Diary Leaves', by Olcott, in *Theosophist*, November and December 1892.

9. This society should not be mistaken for another which has the similar name *Hermetic Brotherhood of Light*, founded only in 1895. There is even a third *Hermetic Brotherhood*, with no further designation, organized in Chicago around 1885. [On the *Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*, see *The Spiritist Fallacy*, chap 2; also *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor: Initiatic and Historical Documents of an Order of Practical Occultism*, by J. Godwin, C. Chanel, and J.P. Deveney (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1995 ED.]

himself by the Egyptian name Serapis, and who was soon reduced to being a mere 'elemental'. At this time the medium Dunglas Home publicly attacked Mme Blavatsky in a book entitled *Incidents in My Life*, and soon Blavatsky, who till then seemed to have been involved only in spiritism, was to declare with obvious insincerity that she 'never had been and never would be a professional medium', and that she had 'devoted her entire life to the study of the ancient Kabbalah, occultism, and occult sciences.'[10] This was due to Felt's having recently affiliated her, as well as Olcott, with the 'H B of L': 'I belong to a mystical Society,' she used to say a little earlier, 'but it does not follow that I have become an Apollonius of Tyana in skirts.'[11] After this statement which expressly contradicts the story of her former 'initiation', she would add however that 'John King and I have been connected since ancient times, since long before he started materializing in London.' Without a doubt it was this 'spirit' that was supposed to have protected her since her childhood, a role then passed on to 'Mahātmā' Morya, at which point she started talking about John King with the utmost contempt:

> Like attracts like. There are several high-minded, pure, good men and women, known to me personally, who have passed years of their lives under the direct guidance and even protection of high 'Spirits', whether disembodied or planetary. But *these* Intelligences are not of the type of the John Kings and Ernests who figure in *séance* rooms.[12]

We will again come across Ernest later when we speak of Leadbeater, who, incidentally, sometimes claimed that the occult protection enjoyed by Mme Blavatsky during her youth was provided by 'fairies' and 'nature spirits'. Theosophists really need to agree on their stories in order to tally their assertions! But, following her own admission, what is one to make of Mme Blavatsky's 'purity' and 'spirituality' at the time she was 'controlled' by John King?

10. Letter dated June 25, 1876.
11. Letter dated April 12, 1875. — Cf. *Old Diary Leaves*, by Olcott.
12. *The Key to Theosophy*, p193.

In order not to have to return again to this subject, let us now say that Mme Blavatsky and Olcott did not remain affiliated with the 'H B of L' for very long, and that they were expelled from this organization shortly before their departure from America.[13] This observation is important because the preceding facts have sometimes given rise to remarkable errors. For instance, in a study published a few years ago,[14] Dr J. Ferrand wrote the following in connection with the hierarchy existing among the members of the Theosophical Society:

> Above the leaders who constitute the Oriental Theosophical School (another name for the 'esoteric section'), there is yet another secret society, recruited among these leaders, whose members are unknown but who sign their proclamations with the initials 'H B of L'.

Knowing full well everything relating to the 'H B of L' (whose members, moreover, never sign their writings with these initials but only with a 'swastika') we can assert that, since the above-mentioned events, the 'H B of L' never had any official or unofficial contact with the Theosophical Society.[15] More than that, the 'H B of L'

13. A work by C.G. Harrison entitled *The Transcendental World*, published in England in 1894 [Reprinted in 1993 by Lindisfarne Press, Hudson NY. ED.], seems to contain some reference to this event and to the antagonism that prevailed between the 'H B of L' and the Theosophical Society, but the information it contains regarding the occult origins of the Theosophical Society is too fantastic in nature and too devoid of proofs for us to be able to mention them.

14. 'The Doctrine of Theosophy, its past, its present, its future', in *Review of Philosophy*, August 1913, pp14–52. — The passage mentioned here is taken from page 28.

15. Certain Theosophists have asserted, with an insistence proving that it is of some importance to them, that the 'H B of L' was an 'imitation' or even a 'counterfeit' of the Theosophical Society, implying that it was founded later. We must therefore point out that the 'H B of L' had been 'reorganized outwardly' in 1870, that is to say that this year saw the establishment of the 'outer circle' whose leadership was entrusted to Max Théon in 1873 (not 1884, as was reported in the *Theosophist*). Théon, who was later to become the propagator of the doctrine designated by the name 'cosmic tradition', and whose death we learned of quite recently, was apparently the son of Paulos Metamon (see p6, n2). As for the earlier forms of the

was in constant conflict with the Theosophical Society as well as with the English Rosicrucian societies that we shall speak of later, although certain individuals could have belonged to these different organizations simultaneously, which may seem strange under such conditions, but is not such an unusual thing in the history of secret

'H B of L', one must no doubt seek them in organizations which have been known under various other names, notably P.B. Randolph's 'Fraternity of the Eulis' (see p28, n4; *Eulis* is a deliberate alteration of *Eleusis*), and even in the mysterious 'Order of Ansaireh' to which the latter was connected; on this point we also refer to what we said in *The Spiritist Fallacy* (pt. 1, chap. 2). In addition, we can now say that unpublished documents concerning the 'H B of L' were given to us by F.-Ch. Barlet, who had been its official representative for France after having been one of the founders of the first French branch of the Theosophical Society; he broke with the Society in 1888 following dissensions of which we find echoes in the review *Le Lotus*. — The hostility of the Theosophical Society toward the 'H B of L' was particularly manifest in 1886, in connection with a plan for a kind of agricultural colony in America by members of the 'H B of L'. At that time Mme Blavatsky found a favorable occasion to avenge herself for her exclusion in 1878, and she manoeuvred in such a way that she succeeded in denying the Secretary-General of the Order, T.H. Burgoyne, access to the territory of the United States, sending to the American authorities documents establishing that he had once been convicted of fraud. But Peter Davidson, who bore the title of 'Provincial Grand-Master of the North', went to settle with his family at Loudsville, Georgia, where he died some years ago. After the 'H B of L' had already 'gone back to sleep', he founded a new organization called the 'Order of the Cross and the Serpent' (an allusion to the biblical symbol of the 'Serpent of Bronze') which published as mouthpiece a review called *The Morning Star*. It is Peter Davidson who in July 1887 wrote F.-Ch. Barlet the letter we quoted above. Here is another extract from this same letter:

> It should also be noted that since the arrival of Mme Blavatsky and Col. Olcott in India, the Theosophical Society is not and never has been under the direction or inspiration of the *authentic and real* Brotherhood of the Himalayas, but under that of a very inferior Order belonging to a Buddhist cult. Here I speak to you of something I *know* and hold on unquestionable authority; but if you have some doubt as to my statements, Alexander of Corfu possesses several letters from Mme Blavatsky in some of which she clearly *confesses* what I say to you.

The Buddhist Order in question here is most likely none other than the *Mahā-Bodhi Samāj*, that is to say the organization which had as its head the Rev. H. Sumangala, principal of the *Vidyodaya Parivena* of Colombo (see pp 104–105 and 169–170). A year later Peter Davidson wrote in another letter this somewhat enigmatic sentence: 'The true Adepts and the genuine Mahātmās are like the two poles of a magnet, although several Mahātmās are assuredly members of our Order; but they only appear as Mahātmās for very important reasons.

societies.[16] Moreover, we have in our possession documents furnishing absolute proof of what we state here; in particular, a letter from one of the dignitaries of the 'H B of L' dated July 1887 in which 'esoteric Buddhism'—that is, the Theosophist doctrine—is described as 'an attempt to pervert the Western mind,' and where among other things it is also said that 'the true and real Adepts do not teach the doctrines of 'karma' and 'reincarnation' emphasized by the authors of *Esoteric Buddhism* and other Theosophical works,' and that 'neither in these aforesaid works nor in the pages of the *Theosophist* do we find an accurate view or the esoteric meaning of these important issues.' Perhaps the division of the 'H B of L' into an 'outer circle' and an 'inner circle' gave Blavatsky the idea of creating in her own Society an 'exoteric section' and an 'esoteric section', but the teachings of these two organizations are in conflict on many essential points. In particular, the doctrine of the 'H B of L' is clearly 'anti-reincarnationist'. We shall come back to this subject when we speak of a passage from *Isis Unveiled* which really seems inspired by it, this work having been written by Mme Blavatsky at precisely the time now under consideration.

Let us now return to the course of events. On October 20, 1875, that is to say a little less than two months after Serapis made his entrance on stage, a society called 'Spiritualist Investigations' was founded in New York. Olcott was president, Felt and Dr Seth Pancoast were vice-presidents, Mme Blavatsky being content with the modest role of secretary. Among the other members, we shall mention William Q. Judge, later to play an important role in the Theosophical Society, and Charles Sotheran, one of the high dignitaries of American Freemasonry. And we may add in this connection that

16. The most extraordinary thing is perhaps that in 1885 the *Theosophist* published an announcement by the *Occult Magazine* of Glasgow appealing to people desirous of 'being admitted as members of an Occult Fraternity, which does not boast of its knowledge but teaches freely and without restriction all those whom it finds worthy of receiving its teachings.' This Fraternity, which was not named, was none other than the 'H B of L', and the terms used were an indirect but very clear allusion to the quite opposite procedures used by the Theosophical Society, procedures expressly criticized several times in the *Occult Magazine* (July and August 1885, January 1886).

General Albert Pike, Grand Master of the Scottish Rite for the southern jurisdiction of the United States (whose headquarters were then in Charleston), was also in touch with Blavatsky around that time. But these relations really seem to have had no sequel. It would seem in this case that Pike was more clear-sighted than many others, and that he quite quickly recognized with whom he was dealing. Since we have the opportunity to do so, let us add that Albert Pike's reputation as a Masonic writer was quite overrated: a considerable part of his major work *Morals and Dogma of Freemasonry* is clearly plagiarized from *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* by the French occultist Éliphas Lévi.

By November 17, 1875, the above-mentioned society, scarcely two weeks old, was changed into the 'Theosophical Society' on the proposal of its treasurer Henry J. Newton, a wealthy spiritualist who certainly knew nothing about theosophy, but was pleased by this title without really knowing why. The origin of this name is thus purely accidental, since it was accepted only to please a member commanding attention because of his large fortune. Moreover, there are plenty of examples of rich people being seduced from time to time by the leaders of the Theosophical Society, who succeeded in extracting from them subsidies for their own benefit and that of their organization by promising all kinds of wonders. This is the only reason why Felt, whose opposition was dismissed, would have preferred the title 'Egyptological Society'. After having given a lecture on the 'Egyptian Kabbalah', Felt, who had promised three more, suddenly disappeared, leaving various papers with Mme Blavatsky; no doubt his mission was fulfilled. As for Newton, it was not long before he resigned from the Society, after having observed, along with Judge R.B. Westbrook, the fraudulent acts Mme Blavatsky committed with the help of a certain Mrs Phillips and her servant.[17]

The declaration of principles of the first Theosophical Society began as follows:

17. Communication already mentioned, by William Emmett Coleman at the Chicago Congress, 1893.

> The title of the Theosophical Society explains the goals and desires of the founders: they aspire to attain knowledge of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Power and of the highest spirits by means of physical procedures [*sic*]. In other words, they hope that by going deeper into ancient philosophies than modern science has done, they will be rendered capable of gaining—for themselves and for other investigators—proof of the existence of an invisible universe, of the nature of its inhabitants if there are any, of the laws ruling them, and of their relationships with mankind.

This proves that the founders knew hardly anything of theosophy, as shown by the whimsical definition given in Webster's Dictionary:

> Alleged relation to God and the higher spirits, and subsequent acquisition of a superhuman science through physical procedures, the theurgic operations of the ancient Platonists or the chemical methods of the German fire philosophers.

From the declaration of principles we again extract the following:

> Regardless of the private opinions of its members, the Society has no dogma to impose, no worship to propagate.... Its founders, starting with the hope rather than the certitude of reaching the goal of their desires, are motivated solely by the sincere intention to learn the truth, wherever it may come from, and they consider that no obstacle, however serious, no affliction, however great, could ever be an excuse for giving up their aim.

This is indeed the language of people who seek, and not of those who know; how then can all this be reconciled with the extraordinary claims later expressed by Mme Blavatsky? It seems more and more clear that the initiation she supposedly received in Tibet was a pure invention, and that contrary to Countess Wachtmeister's allegations she had not studied in Egypt the mysteries of the *Book of the Dead*, which was probably first made known to her by Felt.

However, after a short while yet another change took place: Serapis, who had replaced John King, was in turn replaced by a 'Kashmiri brother'. What had really happened? Through the agency of a

certain Hurrychund Chintamon[18] (who for reasons unknown to us later inspired real terror in Mme Blavatsky), Olcott and Blavatsky had concluded an 'offensive and defensive alliance'[19] with the *Arya Samāj*, an association founded in 1870 in India by Swāmi Dayānanda Saraswatī, and their Theosophical Society was to be regarded from then on as constituting a section of this association. When her *Isis Unveiled* appeared, Blavatsky, distorting the truth as she so often did, wrote regarding this:

> I have been given the rank of *Arch Auditor* by the chief Masonic Lodge of India; this is the oldest of all Masonic Lodges and is said to have existed before Jesus Christ.[20]

Now the *Arya Samāj* had only recently been created and had no Masonic character whatsoever; and furthermore, there has never been any Masonry in India other than that introduced by the English. The goal of the *Arya Samāj* was 'to bring religion and worship back to the primitive Vedic simplicity.' Like several other organizations formed in the same country during the nineteenth century, particularly the *Brahma Samāj* and its various branches (which all failed in spite of the support provided by the English because of their anti-traditional tendencies), the *Arya Samāj* proceeded from a 'reforming' spirit quite comparable to Western Protestantism. Was not Dayānanda Saraswatī called 'the Luther of India'?[21] Such a man certainly cannot be regarded as an authority on the Hindu tradition; some people went so far as to say that 'his philosophical ideas did not even go as far as those of Herbert Spencer,'[22] which we believe is a little exaggerated.

18. The partial similarity of the names Chintamon and Metamon seems to have caused some confusion; we do not see any other possible explanation for the bizarre assertion contained in an article—full of erroneous and tendentious information, moreover—which appeared in the *Occult Review* of London in May 1925, where this Chintamon (whose name had been corrupted into Christamon, which has nothing Hindu about it), is presented as having been the more or less hidden head of the 'H B of L.'

19. Letter by Mme Blavatsky to her sister, October 15, 1877.

20. Letter dated October 2, 1877.

21. Article by Lalchand Gupta in the *Indian Review*, Madras 1913.

22. *The Vedic Philosophy*, by Har Nārāyana, Introduction, pXLI.

But why should Dayānanda Saraswatī want to attach himself to Blavatsky and her Society? In the declaration of principles of November 17, 1875, after having written that 'the *Brahma Samāj* has made a serious start at the colossal work of purifying the Hindu religions from the froth that centuries of scheming priests had infused into them', the following was added:

> The founders, seeing that all attempts to acquire the desired science is thwarted in other countries, turn to the East, whence all religions and philosophical systems are derived.

If the *Brahma Samāj*, already quite divided at the time, did not respond to these proposals, the *Arya Samāj* did, and as we have just said, these two organizations arose from the same original tendencies and had an almost identical goal. Besides, Mme Blavatsky herself gave as another reason for this alliance that

> all Brahmins—orthodox or otherwise—are terribly opposed to spirits, mediums, necromantic evocations, or relations with the dead in whatever form.[23]

This assertion is perfectly correct, and we have no difficulty believing that no such alliance would ever have been possible were it not for the anti-spiritualist attitude that Mme Blavatsky had proclaimed for some time—more precisely since her affiliation to the 'H B of L.' However, whereas orthodox Brahmins would have considered such an agreement on a purely negative point a highly inadequate guarantee, it was not the same for the 'others', or at least for one of them, this Dayānanda Saraswatī whom Olcott at the time called 'one of the noblest living Brothers';[24] and whose correspondence in fact, transmitted in a completely natural way, was soon to be transformed into 'astral messages' emanating from Tibetan 'Mahātmās'. However, this same Dayānanda Saraswatī was to put an end to his alliance with the Theosophical Society in 1882 by denouncing Blavatsky, with whom he had meanwhile come into close contact, as a 'trickster', declaring that 'she knew nothing of the occult science of the ancient Yogis

23. Letter already cited October 15, 1877.

24. Letter to Stainton Moses, 1876.

and her so-called phenomena were nothing but mesmerism, skilful preparations and dexterous conjuring,' which was indeed the truth.[25]

This is an opportune place to point out that the names of Mme Blavatsky's so-called 'spiritual guides'—first John King, then Serapis, and finally the 'Kashmiri brother'—in short only express the various influences that successively worked on her. This is the very real backdrop to the wild imaginings with which she surrounded herself, and till now too little notice has generally been taken of these relationships which existed at the beginning, as well as later on, between the Theosophical Society and certain other more or less secret organizations. This all too neglected side of its history is however most revealing. From all that we have shown, one can rightly conclude that in many circumstances Mme Blavatsky was above all a 'subject' or an instrument in the hands of occult individuals or groups using her personality as a cover, while others in turn were instruments in her hands. This explains although it does not excuse her impostures, and those who believe that she made it all up, that she did everything by herself and on her own initiative, are nearly as mistaken as those who, on the contrary, have faith in her claims concerning the alleged 'Mahātmās'. There is still something else that may shed fresh light on these aforesaid influences: we mean the action of certain Rosicrucian or supposedly Rosicrucian organizations which moreover have always maintained excellent relations with the Theosophical Society, contrary to those we have been speaking about.

25. Dayānanda Saraswatī died October 30, 1883.

3

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND ROSICRUCIANISM

In 1876, Olcott writes to Stainton Moses that he is 'duly registered as a novice in the Brotherhood,' that he has been 'for a long time in personal touch by mail' with its leaders, and that they have written to him regarding 'certain things that Mme Blavatsky does not even suspect he knows.' What kind of 'Brotherhood' is involved here? It is certainly not the 'H B of L', nor can it be the *Arya Samāj* either, with which the final alliance was concluded only the following year; and there was as yet no question of the famous 'Great White Lodge' or 'Brotherhood of Tibet', but the terms used were vague enough to leave room for all the subsequent confusion, whether intentional or not. In another letter addressed a little later to the same correspondent—from which it seems to follow that Moses had agreed to enter the society to which Olcott belonged—one reads this:

> In presenting my compliments I would like you to ask the *Imperator* whether he could do something in the psychological way [*sic*] in order to prevent Mme Blavatsky from going to India. I am very anxious about this. I cannot do anything myself.... The slander circulating here and in Europe has disheartened her so profoundly... that I am afraid *we* might lose her. This may be a petty thing for the spiritualists, but it is an important thing *for*

> *the three of us*.... Ask the *Imperator* what I suggest.... He seems to be a wise spirit and maybe he is a powerful one. Ask him whether he is willing and able to help us.... We have here a Mrs Thompson, a rich widow worth seven million dollars, who is preparing the ground for Mme Blavatsky. This lady is offering her money and all the rest to go to India, thus giving her an opportunity to study and see for herself.... Do not forget the *Imperator*.[1]

This time we have formal proof that Mme Blavatsky had never been to India prior to her stay in America. However it was her wish to go there because she felt the need 'to study and see for herself,' proof that she was not all that 'initiated' and had not yet reached the point of having a set of firm and fixed convictions. However, there was at that time an influence of which Olcott and Stainton Moses were the agents and which was opposed to Mme Blavatsky's departure for India, and it was thus neither the influence of the *Arya Samāj* nor that of any other Eastern organization. Now why does Olcott say 'for the three of us'? He and his correspondent—that makes only two; the third might well be this *Imperator* for whose support he so insistently asks. Who was this mysterious being? Apparently, it was a 'spirit' that used to manifest itself in the circle run by Stainton Moses and his friend Dr Speer. But what is strange and may provide a key to many things is that this 'spirit' claims the name, or rather the title, of *Imperator*, that is, the title of the head of an English secret society, the *Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer.*

This Order claims to be a 'society of occultists studying the highest practical magic,' which 'functions in parallel so to speak with the true *Rosicrucianism.*' Women are admitted on an equal footing with men and membership remains secret. There are three chief officers:

1. Regarding the letter from Olcott to Stainton Moses, we do not believe it necessary to dwell on the objection raised by Theosophists, who seem to find it especially troublesome, and who claim that 'Col. Olcott was reproducing Mrs Thompson's, and not Mme Blavatsky's idea'; this changes absolutely nothing about it, and we can only say that this letter would have no meaning if Mme Blavatsky had already been in India before this time; in any case, Olcott would not have failed to point out to his correspondent that Mrs Thompson's opinion did not conform to reality.

the *Imperator*, the *Praemonstrator*, and the *Cancellarius*. This same Order is closely related to the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, founded in 1867 by Robert Wentworth Little; it has nine ranks divided in three orders; its leaders are three in number, like those of the *Golden Dawn*, and hold the title of *Magus*.[2] The *Societas Rosicruciana* accepts as members only Masons holding the grade of Master, and their number is limited to 144, apart from honorary members. It has four 'Colleges', established in London, York, Bristol, and Manchester. A similar organization has existed in Scotland since 1877 and another branch was formed in America in 1880; these are two branches of the English society, although they are administratively independent.

A letter addressed to the director of the Theosophical review *Lucifer* in July 1889 by Count MacGregor Mathers, who was then secretary of the Metropolitan College of the *Societas Rosicruciana* and a member of the High Council of England, says among other things that

> this Society studies the Western tradition.... Knowledge regarding practice is the privilege of the highest initiates, who keep it secret; all the Brothers keep their grade secret. The Theosophical Society entertains friendly relations with them.... The Hermetic students of the Rosicrucian G.D. [*Golden Dawn*] are, so to speak, its representatives *in the outer.*

The main aim behind publishing this kind of manifesto was to disavow a certain 'Order of the Dew and Light' (*Ordo Roris et Lucis*), another so-called English Rosicrucian society mentioned earlier in the same review.[3] This society was in direct competition with the *Golden Dawn* and the *Societas Rosicruciana*, and its members, who were mostly spiritists, were accused of practicing 'black magic', following a custom which is in fact widespread in Theosophical circles,

2. In 1901 its leaders were: W. Wynn Westcott, *Supreme Magus*; J. Lewis Thomas, *Senior Substitute Magus*; S.L. MacGregor Mathers, *Junior Substitute Magus* (*Cosmopolitan Masonic Calendar*, p59).

3. *Lucifer*, June 15, 1889.

as we shall see later on. Count MacGregor's letter carries the following mottoes *Sapiens dominabitur astris—Deo duce, comite ferro—Non omnis moriar—Vincit omnia veritas*; curiously, this last motto is also that of the 'H B of L', an avowed enemy of the Theosophical Society and the *Societas Rosicruciana*.[4] The letter ends with these words which confer an official character: 'Published by order of the Superior *Sapere Aude*, Cancellarius in Londinense,' followed by this rather enigmatic postscript: 'Seven adepts who possess the *elixir of long life* are currently alive and meet every year in a different town.' Was the *Imperator* of the G.D. one of these mysterious 'seven adepts'? This is quite possible, and we even have other indications that tend to confirm it; but the 'Superior *Sapere Aude*' might not have authorized more explicit revelations on this subject.[5]

The author of the above letter, who died a few years ago, was the elder brother of another MacGregor, representative of the *Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer* in France and also a member of the Theosophical Society. In 1899 and 1903, there was some fuss in Paris about the attempts made by Mr and Mrs MacGregor Mathers to restore the cult of Isis under the patronage of the occultist writer Jules Bois,[6] attempts which moreover were rather fanciful although

4. The 'H B of L' had a special understanding of Rosicrucianism, derived mainly from the theories of P.B. Randolph and the 'Brotherhood of Eulis'. A book entitled *The Temple of the Rosy-Cross* was published in Philadelphia 1882; its author was F.B. Dowd, a member of the 'H B of L'.

5. In 1894, under the name of '*Sapere Aude*, Fra. R.R. and A.C.', a book entitled *The Science of Spiritual and Material Alchemy* was published, which contains a considerable number of historical errors and an annotated translation of the Kabbalistic treatise *Aesh Mezareph*, in which there is not even a mention of Éliphas Lévi's commentary, in attributing it, rather gratuitously moreover, to Abraham the Jew, the alleged initiator of Nicolas Flamel.

6. Jules Bois was himself a member of the *Golden Dawn*; compromised during the war and accused of having received funds for German propaganda, he remained in America where he had given a series of lectures (see an article entitled *Qu'est devunu Jules Bois?* which appeared in *Comoedia*, September 14, 1923), and he even founded a society for psychic studies in New York; he returned to France in 1927, however, many of the events although still quite recent having dropped into oblivion. — Another eminent member of the *Golden Dawn* was Countess Editha-Lolita de Landsfeldt-Rosenthal, illegitimate daughter of King Louis I of Bavaria and

in their time they had a certain success as a curiosity. We may add that Mrs MacGregor, the 'Great-Priestess Anari', is [Henri] Bergson's sister. We point this out as secondary information without wishing to draw any conclusions, although in one respect there may unquestionably be more than a mere resemblance between the tendencies of Theosophism and those of Bergsonian philosophy.[7] Some have gone even further. Thus, in an article relating to a controversy on Bergsonism, Georges Pécoul writes that

> the theories of the Theosophical Society are so strangely similar to those of Bergson that one may wonder whether they do not both derive from a common source, and whether Bergson, Olcott, Leadbeater, Mme Blavatsky, and Annie Besant all went to the school of the same Mahātmā, Koot Hoomi or . . . someone *Else*. [And he adds] I am bringing this problem to the researchers' attention; its solution could perhaps shed additional light on the very mysterious origin of certain movements of modern thought and on the nature of the 'influences' that they all come under—often unconsciously—and which are themselves agents of intellectual and spiritual influences.[8]

We certainly agree with Pécoul as regards these 'influences', and even think that their role is as considerable as it is generally unsuspected. Besides, we never had any doubt as to the affinities of Bergsonism with the 'neo-spiritualist' movements,[9] and we would not even be surprised to see Bergson, following the example of William James, finally end up in spiritism. In this connection, we have particularly

of Lola Montes, godchild of Pope Pius IX and a great friend of Mme Blavatsky; she spent quite a long time in Paris, where she lived with Mr and Mrs MacGregor. The latter, now a widow, has retired to London; she seems to be on rather bad terms with her brother, and we have been told that she affects to speak of his philosophical works in a somewhat contemptuous tone.

7. In an article published in the *Theosophical Bulletin* of Jan–Feb–Mar 1918, G. Chevrier seems to be particularly concerned to bring out the affinities of Bergsonism with Theosophy.

8. *Les Lettres*, December 1920, pp669–70.

9. The *Vahan*, organ of the English section of the Theosophical Society, has carried and given high praise to lectures given by Bergson in England.

striking evidence in a sentence from *Energie Spirituelle*, the latest book by Bergson, in which, while admitting that 'immortality itself cannot be proven experimentally,' he declares that 'this would already be something, it would even mean a lot to be able to establish on the experimental level the probability of survival for a time *x*.' Is that not exactly what the spiritualists claim to do? A few years ago we even heard that Bergson took an active interest in 'experiments' of this kind, in the company of several renowned scientists among whom, we were told, were Professor d'Arsonval and Mme Curie. We would like to believe that his intention was to study these things as 'scientifically' as possible, but how many other men of science—like William Crookes and Lombroso—after having started in this manner, were 'converted' to the spiritist doctrine! It can never be said too often how dangerous these things are; certainly, it is neither science nor philosophy which can provide a sufficient guarantee to enable one to handle them with impunity.

Returning now to Rosicrucianism, which comes into the picture here for the first time and which was the reason for this digression, we will point out that on several occasions in the *Theosophist* and in his books Olcott wrote that Mme Blavatsky always wore a Rose-Cross jewel 'that she had received from an adept.' Yet when he was under the influence of the 'H B of L', Olcott only had disdain for the modern Rosicrucians. He wrote to Stainton Moses in 1875 that

> the The Brotherhood [of the Rose-Cross], considered as the active branch of the true Order, died away with Cagliostro, just as did [operative] Freemasonry with Wren.[10] All that remains is merely the shell.

10. Christopher Wren, the last Grand-Master of the old English Masonry, died in 1702. The fifteen years that elapsed between this date and the foundation of the new Grand Lodge of England (1717) were turned to good account by the Protestants who engaged in a labor of misrepresentation leading to the writing of these Constitutions, published in 1723. The Rev. Anderson and Desaguliers, authors of these Constitutions, disposed of all the old documents (*Old Charges*) on which they could lay their hands, so that the innovations that they introduced went unnoticed, and also because these documents contained phrases they considered very embarrassing, such as the obligation of faithfulness 'to God, *to the Holy Church*, and to the King,' an incontestable sign of the Catholic origin of Masonry. This is why Joseph de Maistre wrote in his Report to the Duke of Brunswick (1782): 'Everything points to common Freemasonry being a detached and perhaps corrupted branch of an ancient and respectable stock'; and Olcott's phrase may indicate that he also had some knowledge of this deviation, but this is something of which the immense majority of 'modern' Masons, even in the Anglo-Saxon countries, are completely unaware.

Here, the words 'active branch of the true Order' refer to a passage from the teachings of the 'H B of L' where it is said that

> the term Rose-Cross does not indicate the whole Order, but only those who received the first teachings in its prodigious system; this is only a password with which the Brothers beguile and at the same time fool the world.

It is not our intention here to go into the controversies related to the origin and the history of the true and false Rose-Cross. These are veritable puzzles that have never been satisfactorily resolved, and about which writers who claim to be more or less Rosicrucian seem not to know much more than any others.

In writing these last words, we have especially in mind Dr Franz Hartmann, who played an important role in the Theosophical Society when its headquarters was transferred to India, and with whom Mme Blavatsky does not always seem to have been on the best of terms, as we shall see in connection with the affair of the Society for Psychical Research. This individual, born in 1838 at Donauwerth in Bavaria, claimed to be a Rosicrucian, but of another branch than the English societies mentioned above. If we are to believe him, he had 'discovered' a Brotherhood of the true Rose-Cross in Kempten, a town famous for its haunted houses, where he died in 1912. In truth, we think that this is only a legend he tried to substantiate in order to give the appearance of a serious foundation to a certain 'Order of the Esoteric Rose-Cross', which he promoted. This Dr Hartmann published quite a number of works[11] which were not so

11. Here are the titles of some of his major works, besides those mentioned in the text: *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*, re-edition of an old book with commentaries, published in Boston; *The Life of Jehoshua the Prophet of Nazareth: An Occult Study and Key to the Bible, Containing the History of an Initiate*; *Magic, White and Black*; *Occult Science in Medicine*; *The Principles of Astrological Geomancy*: *The Art of Divining by Punctuation According to Cornelius Agrippa and Others.*

well received by the leaders of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, although they too were Theosophists. They were particularly hard on the book entitled *In the Pronaos of the Temple of Wisdom*, 'containing the history of the true and false Rosicrucians, with an introduction to the mysteries of Hermetic philosophy,' and dedicated to the Duchess of Pomar. In 1887, in Boston, the center of the American branch of the *Order of the G.D. in the Outer*, Hartmann published a kind of novel entitled *An Adventure Among the Rosicrucians*, containing the description of an imaginary Theosophical monastery, supposedly located in the Alps. The author relates that this monastery is attached to the Order of the 'Brothers of the Golden Cross and the Rose-Cross,' and that its head holds the title of *Imperator*. This calls to mind the old German 'Golden Rose-Cross' founded in 1714 by the Saxon priest Samuel Richter, better known under the pseudonym Sincerus Renatus, the head of which actually held the title of *Imperator*, as did the head of the *Golden Dawn* later on. This title was inherited from earlier Rosicrucian organizations, and if we are to believe certain legends, its origin would even date back to the origin of the world, for in the *Clypeus Veritatis* dating back to 1618, we find a chronological list of *Imperators* since Adam! These exaggerations and fabulous genealogies are moreover common to most secret societies, including Masonry, in which the Misraïm Rite is also supposed to date back to Adam. More interesting is the fact that while speaking of the 1714 Rosicrucian organization, an occultist writer makes the following statement: 'A tradition says that this *Imperator* still exists; his action is believed to have become political.'[12] Is this same person the head of the *Golden Dawn*? In fact, this 'Golden Rose-Cross', which some people had earlier suspected of having a political character, has not existed for a long time. It was replaced in 1780 by the 'Initiate Brothers of Asia', whose center was established in Vienna and whose superiors were called 'Fathers and Brothers of the Seven Unknown Churches of Asia',[13] in an allusion to the beginning of the Apocalypse. We cannot help but

12. *Histoire des Rose-Croix*, by Sédir, p103, note.

13. In this connection, let us point out a remarkable mistake made by Papus. Having found a text by Wronski which mentions the 'Initiate Brothers of Asia', he thought that this title indicated a truly Eastern organization and that the 'Brothers' were the 'Mahâtmâs', a Mahâtmâ being, according to him, 'a superior grade of the Brahmanic Church' (*Glossaire des principaux termes de la Science Occulte*, article entitled 'Mahâtmâ: Traité méthodique de la Science Occulte', p1,052).

wonder whether the 'seven adepts' of Count MacGregor were their successors. Be that as it may, what is certain is that many of the associations claiming to be related to Rosicrucianism still make their members take an oath of allegiance to the *Imperator*.

A consequence of Hartmann's romantic account shows that the author's goal was not entirely disinterested: in September 1889 a joint stock company was formed in Switzerland, bearing the name *Fraternitas*, for the purpose of creating and operating the theosophico-monastic establishment he had imagined. In this venture Hartmann had as associates Dr Thurmann, Dr A. Pioda, and Countess Wachtmeister; the latter, whom we mentioned earlier, was a Swede and a close friend of Mme Blavatsky. As for the 'Order of the Esoteric Rose-Cross', Hartmann's other creation, it seems to have had a close relation with the 'Renovated Order of the *Illuminati Germaniae*', founded and reorganized by Leopold Engel of Dresden, which played an extremely suspect political role. This latter Order obviously took its name from the Illuminism of Weishaupt, although there was no direct filiation between them. There was also some connection between this 'Esoteric Rose-Cross' and a certain 'Order of the Eastern Templars' founded in 1895 by Dr Karl Kellner and, after his death in 1905, spread especially by Theodor Reuss, a Theosophist whom we shall meet again later on; it even seems that the 'Esoteric Rose-Cross' finally became the 'inner circle' of the 'Eastern Templars'.

These various associations should not be mistaken for another recently created Austro-German Rosicrucian organization, whose head is Rudolf Steiner. We shall speak about this later. Moreover, the truth is that Rosicrucianism no longer has any well-defined significance today. Many people call themselves 'Brothers of the Rose-Cross' or 'Rosicrucians', but have no connection between them, nor with the ancient organizations of the same name, and it is exactly the same with those who call themselves 'Templars'. Without even taking into account the Masonic grades in various rites called Rose-Cross, or some others derivative of it, we could give—were it not

out of context here—a long list of more or less secret societies that have nothing much in common except for the same name, most often accompanied by one or more distinctive epithets.[14] As in the case of Masonry, then, one must always be careful when dealing with Rosicrucianism not to attribute to one group what belongs to another group with which it may be completely unfamiliar.

14. We shall mention only one of these societies, called the *A.M.O.R.C.* (*Ancient Mystic Order of the Rosy-Cross*), founded in 1916 'with the aim of saving Civilization [*sic*].' We have in our hands a circular announcing that a French branch is under formation, and that 'a special Envoy will be coming from the United States in May [1921] to give the Initiation and inaugurate the work' (since then we have been told that the latter could not make the journey). This organization is headed by an *Imperator*, but naturally he is not the same as the one from the *Golden Dawn*. It has no connection with Theosophism, although we know that its members already count quite a few Theosophists among them.

* The *A.M.O.R.C.* does not seem to have had great success in France; however, its head came to Paris in 1927, and on July 12 was even received officially by the 'Grand Collège des Rites', that is, the Suprême Conseil du Grand-Orient de France. This is all the more unusual as the latter has no relation with the American Masonic organizations, which regard it as 'irregular'. Perhaps the Rosicrucian Order in question has no more 'regularity' itself.

4

THE QUESTION OF THE MAHĀTMĀS

We left Mme Blavatsky in 1876 at the point where she was thinking of going to India. This departure, which was not to take place before November 18, 1878, seems to have been determined above all, if not exclusively, by the quite justified attacks to which she had been subject. Referring to the publication of *Incidents in My Life* by Dunglas Home, she wrote:

> It is because of this that I am going to India for good. Out of shame and grief, I need to go where nobody knows my name. Home's spitefulness has ruined me forever in Europe.[1]

She always harbored resentment against the medium who, at the instigation of the mysterious M..., whom she called 'the Calvin of Spiritism', had denounced her trickery. Much later, she wrote the following about the dangers of mediumship:

> Look back over the life of Dunglas Home, a man whose mind was steeped in gall and bitterness, who never had a good word to say of anyone whom he suspected of possessing psychic powers, and who slandered even other mediums to the bitter end.[2]

At a certain point and for the same reasons, Mme Blavatsky had also thought of 'going to Australia and changing her name for good.'[3]

1. Letter dated November 6, 1877.
2. *The Key to Theosophy*, p195.
3. Letter dated June 25, 1876.

Then, probably in 1878, having given up this idea, she became a naturalized American citizen; finally, she decided to go to India in accordance with her initial intention. Thus she wished to undertake this journey in her own interest, not in the interest of her society, and despite Olcott's opposition. She ended up taking him along however and he abandoned his family in order to follow her. In fact, three years earlier she had said of Olcott: 'He is far from being rich and has nothing to leave behind except his literary works, and he has to support his wife and many children.'[4] We never hear of them again, and Olcott himself does not seem to have been the least bit concerned to know what became of them.

On their arrival in India, Blavatsky and her associate first settled in Bombay, and then in 1882 in Adyar, near Madras, where the headquarters of the Theosophical Society were established and are still to be found today. An 'esoteric section' was founded and the fantastic phenomena multiplied in a prodigious manner: knocking at will, tingling of invisible bells, the carrying and 'materialization' of all sorts of objects, and above all, 'precipitation' of letters sent by 'astral' means. Many such examples can be found in *The Occult World* by A.P. Sinnett; it seems that this author, who at the beginning probably contributed more than anybody else to make Theosophism known in Europe, was genuinely fooled by all of Mme Blavatsky's tricks. Not only letters were 'precipitated', but also drawings and even paintings; the latter were doubtless produced through the same methods as the so-called mediumistic paintings that Blavatsky formerly devised in Philadelphia and sold at a high price to those she had taken in—among others General Lippitt, who ended up being disillusioned. Furthermore, all these phenomena were not entirely new, 'astral bells' having already been heard in America before Olcott and the Baron of Palmes. Curiously enough, at that time they were also heard in England in the homes of Dr Speer and Stainton Moses; perhaps this is even one of the circumstances that made Olcott later say that 'Stainton Moses and Mme Blavatsky were inspired by the same intelligence',[5] probably the enigmatic *Imperator*

4. Letter dated March 25, 1875.
5. *Theosophist*, December 1893.

mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, toward the end of his life, Stainton Moses had written to his friend William Oxley that 'Theosophy is an hallucination.'[6]

During this period the Tibetan 'Mahātmās' appeared on the scene, and thenceforth the production of all the phenomena would be attributed to them, the first and foremost being the famous Koot Hoomi Lal Singh, Mme Blavatsky's new 'Master'. It was said that the name under which this personage was known was 'his "Tibetan Mystic name", for occultists, it would seem, take new names on initiation.'[7] However, if Koot Hoomi may be a Tibetan or Mongol name, Lal Singh is certainly a Hindu 'kshatriya' or Sikh name, which is not the same thing at all. It is nonetheless true that a change of name is a practice that exists in many secret societies, in the West as well as in the East; thus, in the 1714 statutes of the Golden Rose-Cross, one reads that 'every Brother shall change his first name and surname after he has been accepted, and shall do the same each time he changes countries.' This is only one example among many others, and is the kind of thing which Mme Blavatsky could easily have been aware. Here is what Sinnett has to say of Koot Hoomi in relating how he entered into correspondence with him:

> I may here explain, what I learned afterwards, that he was a native of the Punjab who was attracted to occult studies from his earliest boyhood. He was sent to Europe whilst still a youth at the intervention of a relative—himself an occultist—to be educated in Western knowledge, and since then has been fully initiated in the greater knowledge of the East.[8]

Later on, it was held that he had already attained this full initiation in the course of his previous incarnations; but since contrary to the case of ordinary people the 'Masters' preserve the memory of all their existences (and some say that Koot Hoomi had around eight hundred), it seems difficult to reconcile these various assertions.

6. *Light*, October 8, 1892.
7. *The Occult World*, p84.
8. *The Occult World*, pp83–84.

The 'Mahātmās' or 'Masters of Wisdom' are the highest-ranking members of the 'Great White Lodge', that is to say of the occult hierarchy which according to Theosophists secretly governs the world. At the beginning, it was conceded that they themselves were subordinates of a single supreme head;[9] now, it seems that the heads are seven in number, like the 'seven adepts' of the Rose-Cross who possess the 'elixir of long life' (an extraordinary longevity being also one of the qualities attributed to the 'Mahātmās'), and that these seven heads represent 'the seven centers of the Heavenly Man' whose 'brain and heart are formed respectively by the *Manu* and the *Bodhisattva* who guide every human race.'[10] The union of the two concepts of the *Manu* and the *Bodhisattva*—who do not belong to the same tradition, since the first is Brahmanic and the second Buddhist—gives quite a remarkable example of the 'eclectic' fashion in which Theosophism makes up its so-called doctrine. Initially the 'Mahātmās' were sometimes also called by the simple name of 'Brothers'; today, the term 'Adepts' is preferred, a term borrowed by Theosophists from Rosicrucian language in which in fact it properly designates initiates who have attained the highest grades of the hierarchy. Dr Ferrand, in the article we have already mentioned, thought it appropriate to make a distinction between the 'Mahātmās' and 'the masters or adepts', and he believes that the latter are the only real heads of the Theosophical Society;[11] but this is a mistake, for the latter, on the contrary, modestly affect to call themselves mere 'students'. For the Theosophists, the 'Mahātmās' and the 'Adepts' are one and the same thing, this identification having already been suggested by Dr Franz Hartmann.[12] It was also to them that the title of 'Masters' was applied,[13] at first generally, and later with a restriction: for Leadbeater, 'all the Adepts are not Masters, because all do not accept students,' and strictly speaking one should

9. *Esoteric Buddhism* p54 [this and all subsequent references refer to the sixth American edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912)].

10. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature* (Adyar interviews, 2nd series), by C.W. Leadbeater, p276 of the French translation.

11. *Revue de Philosophie*, August 1913, pp15–16.

12. *In the Pronaos of the Temple of Wisdom* [Chicago: Aries Press, 1941], p102.

13. *The Key to Theosophy*, p289.

call Masters only those who, like Koot Hoomi and some others, 'agree, under certain conditions, to accept as students those who prove themselves worthy of this honor.'[14]

The question of the 'Mahātmās', which occupies a considerable place in the history of the Theosophical Society and even in its teachings, can be greatly clarified by everything we have summarized earlier. Indeed, this question is more complex than one would normally think, and it is not enough to say that the 'Mahātmās' existed merely in the imagination of Mme Blavatsky and her associates; no doubt the name Koot Hoomi, for example, may be a mere invention, but like those of the 'spiritual guides' who were his predecessors, it may very well have served as a mask for a real influence. However, it is certain that Mme Blavatsky's true inspirers, whoever they may have been, did not fit the description she gives of them; and from another point of view, in Sanskrit, the very word 'Mahātmā' never had the meaning she attributed to it, for in reality this word indicates a metaphysical principle and cannot be applied to human beings. Perhaps it is even because this mistake was noticed that the use of the term was almost completely abandoned. As for the phenomena that were allegedly produced by the intervention of the 'Masters', they were of exactly the same nature as those of the 'miracles clubs' of Cairo, Philadelphia, and New York. This was largely confirmed by Dr Richard Hodgson's enquiry, as we shall see further on. The 'precipitated messages' were fabricated by Mme Blavatsky with the complicity of Damodar K. Mavalankar (a Brahmin who had publicly forsaken his caste) and some others, as was stated as early as 1883 by Allen O. Hume, who after having started his collaboration with Sinnett in editing *Esoteric Buddhism* withdrew when he discovered the numerous contradictions contained in Koot Hoomi's so-called correspondence, which was to serve as the basis for this book. Moreover, Sinnett himself admitted that

> the more my readers will be acquainted with India, the less they will be willing to believe, except on the most positive testimony,

14. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp377–78.

> that the letters from Koot Hoomi . . . have been written by a native of India![15]

Already at the very time of the split with the *Arya Samāj*, it was discovered that one of the letters in question, reproduced in the June 1881 issue of the *Occult World*,[16] was for the most part quite simply the copy of a lecture given at Lake Pleasant in August 1880 by Professor Henry Kiddle from New York, and published the same month in the spiritist review *Banner of Light*. Kiddle wrote to Sinnett asking for an explanation; Sinnett did not even deign to reply, and meanwhile branches of the Theosophical Society were founded in London and Paris. However it was not long before the scandal broke: in 1883, his patience exhausted, Kiddle decided to go public with his protest,[17] which immediately caused numerous and sensational resignations, particularly in the London branch. Among others were those of C.C. Massey, the then President (replaced by Sinnett), Stainton Moses, F.W. Percival, and Mabel Collins, author of *Light on the Path*[18] and *Golden Gates*. Dr George Wyld, who had been the first President of the same London branch, had already withdrawn in May 1882 because Mme Blavatsky had said in an article in the *Theosophist* that 'there is no personal or impersonal God,' to which he had quite logically retorted, 'If there is no God, there cannot be a *Theo*-sophical teaching.' Furthermore, everywhere and at all times, large numbers of people who had imprudently entered the Theosophical Society also withdrew when they were sufficiently informed about its leaders or the worth of its teachings.

These facts led, at least temporarily, to the replacement of Koot Hoomi by another 'Mahātmā' named Morya, the very same whom Mme Blavatsky later claimed to have met in London in 1851, and with whom Mrs Besant was also to communicate a few years later. If

15. *The Occult World*, pp88–89.
16. p102 (pp196–197 of the French translation).
17. *Light*, September 1, 1883 and July 5, 1884.
18. The question of the origin of *Light on the Path* has never been clarified. Mabel Collins claimed to have read this treatise 'on the walls of a place she visits spiritually [*sic*],' and for her part Mme Blavatsky verified that its true author was an 'Adept' by the name of Hilarion (*Le Lotus*, March 1889).

we are to believe Leadbeater, there were very close and very old ties between Morya, Mme Blavatsky, and Colonel Olcott. In this connection, he recounts something supposed to have taken place a few thousand years ago in Atlantis, where these three characters were already together![19] Morya, whom Sinnett called 'the Illustrious' and whom Mme Blavatsky, more familiarly, called 'the general', is never referred to other that by his initial in the appendices of the new editions of the *Occult World* (there was as yet no mention of him in the first edition). Here is the reason given:

> It is difficult sometimes to know what to call the Brothers, even when one knows their real names. The less these are promiscuously handled the better, for various reasons, among which is the profound annoyance which it gives their real disciples if such names get into frequent and disrespectful use among scoffers.[20]

Mme Blavatsky also said: 'As for our best Theosophists, they would also in this case far rather that the names of the Masters had never been mixed up with our books in any way.'[21] This is why the custom that prevailed was to speak only of the 'Masters' K.H. (Koot Hoomi), M. (Morya) and D.K. (Djwal Khūl). This last named, presented as the reincarnation of Aryasanga, a disciple of Buddha, is a newcomer among the 'Mahātmās'; he has attained 'Adepthood' only very recently, since Leadbeater says that he had not yet reached that stage when he appeared before him for the first time.[22]

Koot Hoomi and Morya are still considered the two main guides of the Theosophical Society, and it appears that they are destined to a still more elevated position than the present one. It is Leadbeater again who informs us of this:

> Many of our students know that Master M., the Great Adept to whom our two founders are especially connected, was chosen to be the Manu of the sixth root-race (the one that is to follow

19. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp408–409.
20. *The Occult World*, p165, note.
21. *The Key to Theosophy*, p300.
22. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp403–404.

> ours), and that his inseparable friend the Master K.H. is to be its religious teacher,[23]

that is to say the Bodhisattva. In the *Lives of Alcyone* which we shall discuss later, Morya is designated under the name of *Mars* and Koot Hoomi under that of *Mercury*. Djwal Khūl is called *Uranus* and the present Bodhisattva is called *Sūrya*, the Sanskrit name for the sun. According to Theosophical teachings, Mars and Mercury are among the physical planets of the solar system belonging to the same 'chain' as the earth, terrestrial humanity having previously been incarnated on Mars, and in future to be incarnated on Mercury. The choice of these two names of the planets to designate respectively the future Manu and the Bodhisattva seems to have been determined by the following passage from the *Voice of Silence*:

> See *Migmar* (Mars) whilst through its crimson veils its 'Eye' caresses the sleepy earth. See the flamboyant aura of the 'Hand' of *Lhagpa* (Mercury) stretched with protective love upon the head of its ascetics.[24]

Here, the eye corresponds to the brain and the hand to the heart; on the other hand, in the order of faculties, these two main centers of 'Celestial Man' represent memory and intuition, of which the first refers to the past of mankind, and the second to its future. For the sake of curiosity, as well as for information, it is interesting to mention these concordances, and in addition that the Sanskrit name for the planet Mercury is *Budha*. In connection with Mercury, it is worth noting a story from the serial *Lives of Alcyone*, where the latter appears in the form of a Greek fisherman whose body he had taken over after having been killed by barbarians. Let us take advantage of the occasion to quote a passage from Fénelon,[25] where it is said that

23. Ibid., p381.

24. Page 54 of the French translation by Amaravella (E.-J. Coulomb). — The translator of this book (who, by the way, like many others, eventually left the Theosophical Society) has nothing in common, but for the name, with the Coulomb couple that Mme Blavatsky had known in Cairo, and with whom she will meet again later in India.

25. *Abrégé de la vie des plus illustres philosophes de l'antiquité*, published in 1823.

the philosopher Pythagoras had formerly been the fisherman Pyrrhus and that he was said to be the son of Mercury, with the added comment that 'it is an interesting parallel.'[26] It must indeed be so for Theosophists, who have a firm belief that their 'Master' Koot Hoomi is the reincarnation of Pythagoras.

The Theosophists regard the 'Adepts' as living men, but men who have developed faculties and powers that may seem superhuman. Such for example is the possibility of knowing the thoughts of others and of communicating directly and instantly through 'psychic telegraphy' with other 'Adepts' or their disciples, wherever they may be, and the power of traveling in their 'astral' form, not only from one end of the earth to the other, but even to other planets. However, knowing what the Theosophists mean by 'Mahātmās' is not enough; in fact, it is not even what matters most. Above all, we must also know what all of this corresponds to in reality. Indeed, even having taken account of the very large measure of fraud and trickery—and we have shown that this must be done—not everything has yet been said about these fantastic personages, for it is quite rare that impostures are not based on imitation or deformation of reality. When cleverly done, moreover, it is the mixture of truth and falsehood which makes them more dangerous and more difficult to unmask. The famous hoax of Léo Taxil provides a good series of instructive examples in this connection; and this parallel comes quite naturally to mind[27] because, just as Taxil finally admitted that he had made everything up, so also did Mme Blavatsky in certain moments of anger and discouragement, although less publicly. Not only did she write in one of her last books that far from harming her, the accusation that she had invented the 'Mahātmās' and their teachings was an excessive honor to her intelligence—which by the way is questionable—but also that 'she almost prefers that people should not believe in the Masters.'[28] Furthermore, regarding 'phenomena', there is a very clear statement by Olcott:

26. *De l'an 25000 avant Jésus-Christ à nos jours*, by G. Revel, p284.

27. This idea also struck other people besides ourselves (see an article by Eugène Tavernier in the *Nouvelliste du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais*, June 29, 1921).

28. *The Key to Theosophy*, pp297–98.

> On certain days, her state of mind was such that she would start denying the very powers of which she had given us the most proof, under our careful control; she would then contend that she had fooled the public.[29]

In this connection, Olcott wonders 'whether she sometimes wanted to make fun of her own friends.' This is certainly possible; but was she mocking them when she displayed 'phenomena' or when she claimed that they were false? In any case, Mme Blavatsky's denials almost ended up spreading beyond her familiar circle, for one day she wrote to her compatriot Soloviоff:

> I shall say and publish in the *Times* and in all the papers that the 'Master' [Morya] and the 'Mahātmā Koot Hoomi' are solely the product of my own imagination—that I invented them—that the phenomena are more or less spiritualist apparitions, and I shall have twenty million spiritualists behind me.[30]

If this threat had not been enough to produce the intended effect on certain circles through the recipient of this letter, Mme Blavatsky would doubtless not have hesitated to carry it out, with the result that her venture would have met the same end as that of Taxil. However, one who has deceived by claiming that all that was said was true can deceive again in claiming that it was declared false in order to escape probing questions, or for some completely different reason. In any case, it is quite obvious that one can imitate only what exists; this can be noted especially in connection with so-called 'psychic' phenomena, the imitation of which presumes that at least some real phenomena exist in this domain. Similarly, if the so-called 'Mahātmās' were invented—which for us is not in doubt—not only was it for the sake of masking the influences that were really at work behind Mme Blavatsky, but this invention was conceived according to a preexisting model. The Theosophists like to present the 'Mahātmās' as the successors of the Vedic *Rishis* of India and the *Arhats* of

29. Excerpt from the *Old Diary Leaves* reproduced in the *Blue Lotus*, November 27, 1895, p 418.

30. Letter dated February 1886.

original Buddhism.[31] In fact they know little about either, but the distorted ideas they have formed may very well have been the source of some of the features they claim for their 'Masters'. However, the essential aspect has come from elsewhere, somewhere much closer: almost all initiatic organizations, even Western ones, have always invoked certain 'Masters', whom they call by different names. Such were the Rosicrucian 'Adepts' as well as the 'Unknown Superiors' of eighteenth-century high Masonry. Here also we have living men who possess certain transcendental or supranormal faculties; and although she certainly never had the least connection with 'Masters' of this kind, Mme Blavatsky was able to gather more information on them than on the *Rishis* and *Arhats*, who, never having been regarded in any way as the heads of some organization, could not be used as a model for the 'Mahātmās'.

We have seen that Blavatsky was in touch with Rosicrucian organizations which, although in all respects very distant from the original Brotherhood of the Rose-Cross, had nevertheless preserved certain notions related to the 'Adepts'. Moreover, she knew of various works containing information on this question; thus, among the books she studied with Olcott in America, of which we shall speak again, there is mention of *L'Etoile Flamboyante* by the baron of Tschoudy and *Magia Adamica* by Eugenius Philalethes.[32] The first of these two books, published in 1766, the author of which was the creator of several high Masonic grades, contains a 'Catechism of the Unknown Philosophers',[33] of which the major part is drawn from the writings of the Rosicrucian Sendivogius, also called the Cosmopolitan, and who some believe to be Michael Maier.[34] The author of the second book, dating from 1650, is another Rosicrucian

31. *Esoteric Buddhism*, pp 49–53.

32. Olcott's letter to Stainton Moses, June 22, 1875.

33. This denomination is that of a rank which exists in several rites, especially in that of the *Philalethes*; it is known to have been used as a pseudonym by Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin.

34. The identification of Sendivogius with Michel Maier, which seems to us rather doubtful, is put forward notably, although with no justification, by Oswald Wirth in *Le Symbolisme hermétique dans ses rapports avec l'Alchimie et la Franc-Maçonnerie*, p 83.

whose real name was said to be Thomas Vaughan even though he was known under other names in various countries: Childe in England, Zheil in America, Carnobius in Holland;[35] he is in any case a very mysterious character, and what is most curious is 'the tradition that claims he has not yet left this world.'[36] Stories of this kind are not so rare as one might think, and one hears of 'Adepts' said to have lived for many centuries and who, appearing at different times, always seem to be the same age. As examples we may mention the affair of the Count of Saint-Germain, which is certainly the most famous, and that of Gualdi, the alchemist from Venice. The Theosophists say exactly the same things about the 'Mahātmās',[37] and there is thus no reason to look elsewhere for their origin. The very idea of locating their abode in India or in Central Asia comes from the same sources; indeed, a work published in 1714 by Sincerus Renatus, the founder of the 'Golden Rose-Cross', states that the Masters of the Rose-Cross left for India some time since and that none were left in Europe. The same thing had been announced earlier by Henri Neuhaus, who added that this departure took place after the declaration of the Thirty Years War. Whatever one thinks of these assertions (which should be compared with Swedenborg's claim that from now on one must look for the 'lost Word'—that is, the secrets of initiation—among the sages of Tibet and Tartary), it is certain that the Rose-Cross had links with Eastern organizations, especially Islamic ones. Apart from their own affirmations, there are some remarkable parallels: the traveler Paul Lucas, who traveled through Greece and Asia Minor during the reign of Louis XIV, recalls meeting four dervishes in Brousse, one of whom seemed to speak all the languages of the world (a faculty

35. He was sometimes mistaken for another Rosicrucian whose pseudonym was Eirenaeus Philalethes. According to some, the latter is George Starkey, who lived in America, whereas according to others it is the person whose real name is supposed to have been Childe, so that Starkey would have been his disciple instead of Thomas Vaughan's, as some think.

36. *Histoire des Rose-Croix*, by Sédir, p158. — Léo Taxil alleged that his famous Diana Vaughan was a descendant of this character (see *Lotus Bleu*, December 27, 1895).

37. *The Occult World*, pp179–180.

also attributed to the Brothers of the Rose-Cross), and said that he belonged to a group of seven people who meet every twenty years in a town chosen in advance. This dervish assured him that the philosopher's stone enabled one to live a thousand years, and told him the story of Nicolas Flamel, who was believed dead but who in fact lived in India with his wife.[38]

Our purpose here is not to give an opinion on the existence of the 'Masters' and the reality of their extraordinary faculties, although we may have the opportunity to reconsider this question one day. In order to adequately address this subject, which is one of crucial importance for all those interested in the study of questions related to Masonry—particularly the controversial issue of 'occult powers'—we would have to go into a lengthy exposition. Our sole intention was to show that Mme Blavatsky simply attributed to the 'Mahātmās' what she knew or thought she knew about the 'Masters', and that in doing so she committed certain mistakes and took literally accounts that were above all symbolic. However, it did not take too much effort of imagination to compose the portrait of these personages whom she finally relegated to an inaccessible region of Tibet in order to make verification impossible. But she went too far when she wrote the above-mentioned sentence to Solovioff, for the model according to which she had conceived the 'Mahātmās' was in no way her own invention. She had merely distorted it through her imperfect understanding, and because her attention was primarily focused on 'phenomena' which serious initiatic associations on the contrary have always regarded as something quite negligible. Besides, she would more or less deliberately confuse these 'Mahātmās' with her real hidden inspirers, who certainly did not possess any of the characteristics she so baselessly attributed to them. Subsequently, whenever Theosophists came across any references to 'Masters', in Rosicrucianism or elsewhere, and whenever they could find anything similar in the scanty knowledge they managed to gather on Eastern traditions, they contended that it concerned the 'Mahātmās' and their 'Great White Lodge'. This is really a reversal of

38. *Voyage du sieur Paul Lucas par ordre du Roi dans la Grèce, l'Asie Mineure, la Macédoine et l'Afrique* (1712), chap. 12.

the natural order of things, since it is obvious that the copy cannot be prior to the model. Similarly, these same Theosophists tried to make use of elements of most diverse and sometimes unexpected provenance. Thus they sought to take advantage of the visions of Anne-Catherine Emmerich by identifying the place—perhaps symbolic—described by the Westphalian nun as the 'Mount of the Prophets', with the mysterious abode of their 'Masters of Wisdom'.[39]

As we have said, most of the 'Masters' are supposed to abide in Tibet. Such is the case for those mentioned so far, and these Tibetan 'Masters' are the actual 'Mahātmās', although as has been pointed out this term is somewhat obsolete. However according to the Theosophists there are some others who reside not so far away, at least since the 'Mahātmās' have been undoubtedly identified with the 'Adepts' in the Rosicrucian sense of the word. One of them in particular is said to reside customarily in the Balkans, although it is true that his supposed role is related more to Rosicrucianism in the strict sense than to ordinary Theosophy.[40] We have a personal recollection of this 'Master', who seems to be one of the 'seven adepts' mentioned by Count MacGregor: a few years ago, in 1913 if we remember correctly, it was proposed that we meet him (the matter in question had in principle nothing to do with Theosophy). Since it did not commit us to anything we accepted readily, without any illusion regarding the probable result. On the day of our meeting

39. See in particular *The Theosophist*, February 16 and March 1, 1912, August 16, 1913. — The accounts of visions relative to the 'Mountain of Prophets' are found scattered through the three volumes of *La Vie d'Anne-Catherine Emmerich*, by Père K.E. Schmöger, translated into French by Abbé E. de Cazalès. [The passage Guénon cites here regarding the 'Mount of the Prophets' is found in the Very Reverend Karl E. Schmöger's *The Life of Anne Catherine Emmerich*, vol. 1 (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1976), chap. XLI. See also *The King of the World*, chap. 8, n13. ED.]

40. The 'Master' is question is the one Theosophists usually designate by the initial R., namely the Count Rakoczi (François II, prince of Transylvania), whom they identify with the famous Count of Saint-Germain, and also with Count Ferdinand de Hompesch, the last Grand-Master of the Knights of Malta who occupied the isle (see J.I. Wedgwood's article, with portraits, in the *Lotus Bleu* of November 1926, and also the work entitled *Le Christianisme primitif dans l'Evangile des Douze Saints*, by E.F. Udny, which we shall have to speak about again in the continuation of these notes.

(which was not supposed to take place 'in the astral'), only a single influential member of the Theosophical Society showed up; one who, coming from London, where the 'Master' was supposed to be, claimed that the latter had been unable to accompany him on the journey, and found some pretext as an excuse. Since then there has been no further news of any kind, except that we learned that the correspondence addressed to the 'Master' was intercepted by Mrs Besant. Of course this does not prove the non-existence of the 'Master' in question, and we will not draw the least conclusion from this story in which the name of the mysterious *Imperator* was involved as if by chance.

Faith in the 'Masters'—we mean 'Masters' strictly in the sense defined by Mme Blavatsky and her successors—is in a way the very basis for the whole of Theosophy, of whose teachings they are the sole guarantee: either these teachings express knowledge acquired and communicated by the 'Masters', or they are a mass of worthless fantasies. This is why Countess Wachtmeister said that 'if there were no Mahātmās or Adepts . . . the teachings of that system which has been called "Theosophy" would be false,'[41] while for her part Mrs Besant formally declared: 'Without the Mahātmās, the Society is an absurdity.'[42] On the contrary, with the Mahātmās the Society is endowed with a unique character, an exceptional importance: 'it occupies a very special place in modern life, for its origin is entirely different from that of all existing institutions,'[43] 'it is one of the great monuments of world history,'[44] and 'the fact of joining the Theosophical Society amounts to placing oneself under the direct protection of the supreme guides of mankind.'[45] Thus, if the 'Masters' seemed at certain moments to retreat from view, it is nevertheless true that they never disappeared, and in fact they could not disappear from Theosophy; they may not manifest themselves through such striking 'phenomena' as at the beginning, but in the

41. *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky*, p22.
42. *Lucifer*, December 11, 1890.
43. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p377.
44. Ibid., p380.
45. *De l'an 25000 avant Jésus-Christ à nos jours*, pp66–67.

Society one speaks of them as much today as during Blavatsky's own time.

In spite of this, ordinary members of the Theosophical Society transfer to their visible leaders the veneration originally reserved to the 'Masters', a veneration amounting to a real idolatry. Is it because they find the 'Masters' too distant and inaccessible, or because the prestige of these extraordinary beings is reflected on those who are believed to be constantly in touch with them? Perhaps both these reasons play a part. The 'student' who desires to get in touch with the 'Masters' is advised first to contact them through the intermediary of their disciples, and above all through the President of the Theosophical Society. Mr Wedgwood says:

> He will be able to unite his mind with hers—that is, Mrs Besant's—by means of her works, her writings, or her lectures. With the help of her image, he will reach her in his meditation. Every day, at regular intervals, he will fix her image in his mind and will send her thoughts of love, devotion, gratitude, and strength.[46]

One should not believe that there is the least exaggeration on our part when we speak of idolatry; in addition to the preceding text, where the use of the word 'devotion' is already quite significant, one may judge by these two examples. A few years ago, in a confidential letter sent to his colleagues in a critical circumstance, George S. Arundale, principal of the 'Central Hindu College' of Benares, called Mrs Besant 'the future leader of gods and men,' and more recently, in a town in southern France during the 'White Lotus' festival (commemorating Mme Blavatsky's death), a delegate from the 'Apostolic Center' cried out in front of the founder's portrait: 'Adore her, as I myself adore her!' This needs no further comment, and we will only add a word in this connection: however absurd such things may be, it is not all that surprising, for when one knows on what ground the 'Mahātmās' stand, one is allowed, by Mrs Besant's own declaration, to conclude that Theosophy is nothing but an 'absurdity'.

46. *Revue Théosophique française*, January 27, 1914.

5

THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AFFAIR

THE PROFESSOR KIDDLE incident was the first blow to hit the Theosophical Society publicly. Sinnett, who had at first remained silent over this affair, decided in the fourth edition of *The Occult World* to present a rather awkward explanation given by Koot Hoomi himself.[1] According to him, the fact that it looked like plagiarism was due to the clumsiness and negligence of a 'chela' (disciple) charged with 'precipitating' and transmitting his message who had omitted precisely the part showing the incriminating passage to be merely a quotation. The 'Master' was forced to admit that he had been 'careless' in letting his letter be sent without having proofed it for corrections. It seems he was very tired, and one must believe him, for he was strangely lacking in 'clairvoyance' on this occasion.[2]

1. Regarding Koot Hoomi's letter relating to the Kiddle affair, we should point out that in 1923 A.T. Barker published the letters of the 'Mahātmās M and K.H.' to A.P. Sinnett, and in 1925 Mme Blavatsky's letters to Sinnett, this latter coinciding, no doubt intentionally, with the Jubilee Anniversary of the Theosophical Society. The first of these two books raised some protests, especially in the French branch of the 'Liberal Catholic Church', as we shall see further on. Moreover, when it was translated into French something rather singular occurred: Barker opposed publication of the translation, and the whole edition had to be destroyed. It seems that all the passages which could be interpreted as an anticipated condemnation of 'ecclesiastical' undertakings of contemporary Theosophy had been suppressed.

2. *Le Monde Occulte*, pp279–284. — On this subject see also a chronicle by Anatole France in *Temps*, April 24, 1887 and another by Georges Montorgueil in *Paris*, April 29, 1887.

After having restored what was supposed to be the complete version of the message and having presented a much belated apology to Kiddle, Sinnett made the best of his misfortune, closing in these terms:

> We must not regret the incident too much, because it provided an opportunity to offer some useful explanations and thus enabled us to know more intimately details, which are full of interest, relating to the methods which the adepts sometimes use for their correspondence.[3]

Sinnett was referring to the explanations of the so-called Koot Hoomi regarding the methods of 'precipitation'. But the methods that were really used for this correspondence began to be made known around this time, in the statements of Allen O. Hume. If the phenomena occurred more easily and were more plentiful in the headquarters of the Society than anywhere else, the causes behind this were probably not

> the constant presence of Madame Blavatsky and one or two other persons of highly sympathetic magnetism, the purity of life of all habitually resident there, and the constant influences poured in by the Brothers themselves. . . .[4]

The truth is that in Adyar, Blavatsky was surrounded by accomplices she could not have brought everywhere with her without arousing suspicion. Not to mention Olcott, there was first of all the Coulomb couple, her former associates of the 'miracles club' of Cairo, whom she met in India shortly after her arrival. There was also a certain Babula who had been in the service of a French conjurer and who had himself boasted of having 'fabricated and shown Mahātmās out of muslin' in the same manner as fake mediums with their 'materializations'. There were also several so-called 'chelas', such as Damodar K. Mavalankar, Subba Rao, and Mohini Mohun Chatterjee, who helped Mme Blavatsky write the 'precipitated letters', as she herself

3. *Le Monde Occulte World*, p295.
4. *The Occult World.*, p162.

admitted later on to Solovioff.[5] Finally, when all these conscious aides were not sufficient, there were still the unconscious and unwitting accomplices, such as Dhabagiri Nath Bavaji, who according to his own written declaration dated September 30, 1892, was totally under the magnetic influence of Mme Blavatsky and Damodar K. Mavalankar, believing everything they told him and doing everything they suggested. Given such an entourage, many things were possible, and Blavatsky knew perfectly well how to make use of her wonders when it came to converting people to her theories or even to drawing from them tangible profits: 'Now my dear,' she wrote to Mrs Coulomb one day while speaking of a certain Jacob Sassoon, 'let us change the program; he is willing to give ten thousand rupees if only he sees a little phenomenon.'[6]

However, the very multiplicity of accomplices was bound to create certain problems, for it was difficult to ensure their full discretion, and it seems that in this respect the Coulombs were not above reproach. Thus, on noticing that things were turning out badly, Blavatsky embarked for Europe along with Olcott and Mohini Mohun Chatterjee after forming a board of governors composed of Saint-George, Lane Fox, Dr Franz Hartmann, Devan Bahadur Ragunath Rao, Srinivas Rao, and T. Subba Rao. She had asked Lane Fox to get rid of the Coulombs for her. This was done under some pretext or other in May 1884, at the very moment when Blavatsky had just proclaimed in London: 'My mission is to overthrow spiritualism, convert the materialists, and prove the existence of the Brothers of Tibet.'[7] It was not long before the infuriated Coulombs took their revenge. It is said that they sold the Blavatsky letters they had in their possession to missionaries; in any event, these letters were soon after published in a Madras newspaper.[8] Apparently, Mme Blavatsky was extremely sensitive about this counterattack, for as

5. *A Modern Priestess of Isis* [tr. Walter Leaf (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1895)] p157.
6. *Some account of my intercourse with Mme Blavatsky*, by Mrs Coulomb.
7. *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 26, 1884.
8. *Christian College Magazine*, September to December 1884.

soon as she received the earliest reports of it she sent Olcott to Adyar in order to 'set things right' and wrote to Solovioff:

> I am ready . . . to give up not only my life but my honour. I have sent in my resignation, and shall retire from the scene of action. I will go to China, to Thibet, to the devil, if I must, where nobody will find me, where nobody will see me or know where I am; I will be dead to everyone but two or three devoted friends like you, and I wish it to be thought that I am dead; and then in a couple of years, if death spares me, I will reappear with strength renewed. This has been decided and signed by the 'general' [Morya] himself. . . . The effect of my resignation publicly announced by myself will be immense.[9]

A few days later, she wrote again:

> I have resigned and now there is the strangest mess. The general ordered this strategy, and he knows. I have, of course, remained a member, but merely a member, and I am going to vanish for a year or two from the field of battle. . . . I should like to go to China, if the Mahatma will permit; but I have no money. If it is known where I am, all is lost. . . . But my programme, if you approve, is this: let us as be heard of as mysteriously as possible, and vaguely too. Let us Theosophists be surrounded now by such mystery that the devil himself won't be able to see anything, even through a pair of spectacles.[10]

However, she had a sudden change of mind: from Paris, where she had been staying, she went to London for a fortnight, and then left for Adyar, where she arrived at the beginning of December 1884.

Meanwhile, the Society for Psychical Research of London, whose attention had been drawn by the propaganda spread throughout most of Europe by the Theosophical Society, had formed a commission to study the nature of Mme Blavatsky's 'phenomena'. Delegated by this commission, Dr Richard Hodgson traveled to Adyar. He arrived there in November 1884 and made a meticulous inquiry

9. *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, pp94–95.
10. Ibid., pp99–100.

lasting until April 1885. The result was a lengthy report in which all the 'tricks' Mme Blavatsky used were exposed in detail, and which ended with the formal conclusion that 'she is not the mouthpiece of clairvoyants unknown to the public, nor a common adventurer, but has won her place in history as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters whose name deserves to go down in history.'[11] This report was published only in December 1885, after careful examination by the Society for Psychical Research, which consequently declared Mme Blavatsky 'guilty with others of a long-continued scheme to produce through ordinary means a series of apparent wonders in support of the Theosophical movement.' This new affair had far greater repercussions than the former ones. Not only did it bring about many more resignations in London, but it soon became known outside England,[12] and in conjunction with other incidents which we shall report further on it was the cause of the almost total ruin of the Paris branch.

Dr Hodgson's report was supported by a number of convincing documents, in particular the correspondence between Mme Blavatsky and the Coulombs, the authenticity of which can in no way be questioned. Alfred Alexander, who published these letters,[13] challenged Blavatsky to sue him in court. Later on, although ill, she hurried back to Europe upon being cited by the Coulombs as witness in a lawsuit they had filed against a member of the Theosophical Society (General Morgan against whom they had some grievance), this time leaving Olcott behind in Adyar; this was at the beginning of April 1885. Furthermore, this correspondence was carefully examined by two of the most skilful experts in England, who acknowledged its authenticity. It was also acknowledged by Mr Massey, former president of the London branch, who at the time of the Kiddle affair had discovered that the appearance of the 'precipitated letters' in his home was due only to the skills of a servant in the pay of

11. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, December 1885, p207.
12. See *Revue Scientifique*, April 16, 1887, p503; *Revue Philosophique*, April 1887, p402; and *Revue de l'Hypnotisme*, February 1887, p251.
13. This Alfred Alexander is also the Alexander of Corfu mentioned in the letter addressed by Peter Davidson to F.-Ch. Barlet in 1887, which we have cited above (additional note from p18, n15).

Mme Blavatsky.[14] In addition, the English experts also examined the letters by the 'Mahātmās' which Dr Hodgson had managed to acquire, and affirmed that they were written by Mme Blavatsky and Damodar K. Mavalankar, which is perfectly in keeping with the various statements we have already quoted.[15] Moreover, Mavalankar left Adyar at the same time as Blavatsky, and was alleged to have gone to Tibet.

We have just said that Mme Blavatsky was ill at the time of her departure. She took advantage of this circumstance to take Dr Hartmann along with her, as she wanted to keep him away from Adyar because of his very ambiguous role, even accusing him bluntly of double-dealing and of having provided weapons to her foes. She wrote of him:

> This awful man has done me more harm by his defence, and often with his deceitfulness, than the Coulombs through their open lies.... He once defended me in his letters to Hume and to other Theosophists and then insinuated such vile things that all his correspondents turned on me. It is he who converted Hodgson, the representative sent by the London Psychical Society to investigate the phenomena in India, from friend into foe. He is a cynic, liar, shrewd and vindictive; his jealousy toward the Master [*sic*] and his envy of anyone who receives the least bit of attention from the Master are simply repulsive.... At present I have been able to rid the Society of him by agreeing to take him along with me on the pretext that he is a doctor. The Society with Olcott at its head was so afraid of him that they did not dare expel him. He

14. *Daily Chronicle* of London, September 17 and 28, 1893; *Religio-Philosophical Journal* of Chicago, June 1885, article by William Emmett Coleman.

15. It seems that a handwriting expert was of a contrary opinion to that of his colleagues and declared that Mme Blavatsky's writing had nothing in common with that of the 'Masters'. We were unaware of this fact at the time of the first edition, otherwise we would not have 'passed it by in silence,' as we have been reproached for doing. But this does not prove much anyway, especially when one knows how frequent these kinds of differences are. — The Massey incident had been reported by Sinnett himself in *The Early Days of Theosophy in Europe*, pp 69–71 (see also 'Mme Blavatsky and the Jubilee of Theosophy', by Fr. Herbert Thurston, in *The Month*, January 1926).

> did all this with the intention of dominating me, to draw out of me all that I know, forbidding me to allow Subba Rao to write *The Secret Doctrine,* and instead to write it himself under my guidance. But he made a great mistake. I brought him here, and told him that I would not write *The Secret Doctrine* now but that I would write for the Russian reviews, and I refused to speak a single word of occultism to him. Seeing that I had decided to keep silent and not teach him anything, he has finally left. He will no doubt start spreading lies about me in the German Society, but I don't care any more now; let him lie.[16]

Really, one must admit that these apostles of 'universal brotherhood' have quite a charming way of treating one another! The facts which triggered Mme Blavatsky's accusations are rather unclear. Upon the order of the 'Mahātmās', Hartmann had prepared a response to Hodgson's report, but since General Morgan had threatened to raise a fuss because his name was mentioned, Olcott destroyed it.[17] The role of Morgan, a general from the British army of India, is again an enigmatic issue. A few years later, in 1889, Hartmann took his revenge by publishing (one wonders how he managed to do so) a short story entitled 'The Speaking Image of Urur', in *Lucifer*, the Theosophical review which was also Mme Blavatsky's mouthpiece: it was nothing but a bitter satire of the Society and its founders under the guise of an all too obvious allegory (Urur being the name of a place near Adyar).

According to Mme Blavatsky, all that happened was the fault of the Society she had founded and of its members who were unceasingly asking her for wonders. To Countess Wachtmeister she said:

> This is the karma of the Theosophical Society, and it falls upon me. I am made to bear all the sins of the Society.... O! cursed phenomena, which I only produced to please private friends and instruct those around me....[18]
>
> People were continually bothering me. It was always, 'Oh! do

16. Letter from Naples, dated May 23, 1885.

17. *Le Lotus*, March 1889, p 708.

18. *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky*, p 18.

materialize this,' or, 'do let me hear the astral bells,' and so on, and then I did not like to disappoint them. I acceded to their requests. Now I have to suffer for it![19]

A little later she again wrote to the Countess:

> These accursed phenomena have ruined my character, which is a small thing and welcome, but they have also ruined Theosophy in Europe.... Phenomena are the curse and ruin of the Society.[20]

However unhappy Mme Blavatsky may really have been at the time, it may be assumed that if her 'phenomena' were genuine, on her return to Europe she would not have missed the opportunity of asking to demonstrate them in front of the Society for Psychical Research, which had not yet rendered its final judgment, and of which moreover several of its members were simultaneously members of the London branch of the Theosophical Society.[21] But she carefully avoided such an experiment even though it would have been the only valid answer she could have furnished to her accusers. Instead, she was content to say that 'if she were not restrained' and 'if these questions were not among those she had solemnly vowed never to answer,' she would sue them in court. Now that she was far away from them she simply called the Coulomb's revelations 'lies',[22] and the 'phenomena' ceased almost completely, whereas they had been abundant during her stay in Europe the preceding year.[23]

In this connection we may add that some people believe there is no role today in Theosophy for these occult phenomena which played such an important role at the beginning, either because the study thereof has lost interest or because basically they only serve to

19. Ibid., p37.

20. Ibid., pp54–55.

21. Myers himself, the founding president, had belonged to the Theosophical Society for three years.

22. See the protestation dated January 14, 1886, which she had inserted in a brochure by Sinnett entitled *The Occult World Phenomena and the S.P.P.R.* Also an article entitled 'Judges or Slanderers?' that she published a little later in *Le Lotus* (June 1887).

23. See *Le Monde Occulte*, translator's postscript, pp327–349.

attract members—a function attributed to them by Mme Blavatsky, according to Countess Wachtmeister—and are therefore now useless.[24] Indeed, if Blavatsky's mishaps had put an end to the showy displays, since it had been shown only too clearly how dangerous certain blunders could be for the reputation of their authors, the Theosophists nevertheless continued to take an interest in the 'development of the latent powers of the human organism,' as this had always been the essential goal of the 'esoteric section', or the 'Eastern Theosophical School'. As proof, here is an excerpt from the statement of principles of the Theosophical Society (which is quite different from the initial proclamation made in New York):

> The goal of the Theosophical Society is: (1) to form the nucleus of a universal brotherhood without distinction of gender, color, race, rank, creed, or party; (2) to promote the study of Aryan and Eastern literature, religions, and sciences; (3) to examine in depth the unexplained laws of nature and the latent psychic powers in man. The first two objects are *exoteric* and are based on the oneness of Life and Truth beyond all differences of form and epoch. The third one is *esoteric* and is based on the possibility of realizing this unity and understanding this truth.

Besides, in order to convince oneself that such is still the case, it is enough to go through Leadbeater's works, even those that are most recent, which make repeated references to 'clairvoyance', manifestations of 'Adepts', 'elementals', and other entities of the 'astral world'. These matters are indeed of very limited interest as such, but the Theosophists have a different view; they hold the most keen attraction for the majority of Theosophists and there are even those who have no interest in anything else. In any event, in comparison with theories even of a low order, these phenomena have the great advantage of being within the reach of all levels of intelligence and of being able to give seeming satisfaction to the most coarse and limited minds.[25]

24. *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky*, p38.

25. A Hindu once spoke to us of Leadbeater in the following terms: 'He is one of the most coarse-minded men I ever knew.'

There are those who believe that the 'esoteric section' no longer exists in the Theosophical Society, but this is not so. The truth is that in order to allay suspicion it has been turned into an organization that is nominally distinct from the Society, but is nevertheless subject to the same leadership. Following the example of Masonry and many other secret societies, it was deemed preferable to do away with the signs of recognition formerly in use among the members of the Theosophical Society and commonly regarded, although wrongly, as one of the essential characteristics of any secret society. We say 'wrongly' because we know that there are certain organizations, especially in the East, which are clearly among the most closed of all, and do not use any external means of recognition; perhaps the Theosophists are unaware of this, and their organization can in no way be compared to these. We wish only to make the point that the suppression of signs proves absolutely nothing, and that no importance need be attached to this, all the more so in that these signs, contrary to situations elsewhere—within Masonry for instance—could never have the least traditional symbolic value in this so recently created society.

6

MADAME BLAVATSKY AND SOLOVIOFF

ON HER RETURN TO EUROPE, Mme Blavatsky first settled at Würzburg, in Germany. Once again, certain noteworthy events took place there. Blavatsky had invited Solovioff to spend some time with her, with the promise that she would teach him everything and show him as many phenomena as he liked;[1] but Solovioff was suspicious, and each time Blavatsky tried something she was caught out and her fraud exposed.[2] This was all the easier because her only available accomplices at the time were Bavaji, who had accompanied her on her trip, Dr Hartmann, and a certain Miss Flynes. During a visit to Paris in September 1885, Bavaji had told Mme Emilie de Morsier, then secretary of the Paris branch who was soon to resign, that 'as Mme Blavatsky knew that she could only win over Solovioff through occultism, she kept on promising to teach him new mysteries,' and that she would sometimes ask, 'But what more can I tell him? Bavaji, save me, find something; I don't know what to invent.' Mme de Morsier wrote down these statements and some

1. *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, p138.

2. We have been reproached for making ample use of what has been called 'Solovioff's scurrilous tract *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, the work of a man who shamefully abused the trust Mme Blavatsky had placed in him.' Our reply is that Solovioff was more or less a philosopher of merit, perhaps the only one Russia has had, and that people who know him well have confirmed to us that his intellectual integrity was above suspicion. His Slavonic tendency toward a certain mysticism has sometimes been held against him, but one would certainly not be justified in addressing such a reproach from the Theosophist side.

while later handed them to Solovioff under her signature. In 1892 Solovioff in turn published the account of all he had seen, along with Mme Blavatsky's letters and the oral confessions she had made to him, in the form of articles later compiled in a book and translated into English by Dr Leaf under the title *A Modern Priestess of Isis*; this translation was published under the auspices of the Society for Psychical Research.

One day, Solovioff found Bavaji in a hypnotic trance, struggling to write something in Russian, a language totally unknown to him; it was allegedly a message dictated by a 'Mahātmā', but unfortunately a gross error had slipped into the text: because of a few missing letters, the sentence 'Blessed are they that believe' had become 'Blessed are they that *lie*.'[3] On seeing this, Mme Blavatsky flew into a terrible rage and contended that Bavaji had been fooled by an 'elemental'.[4] On another occasion an involuntary blunder by Mme Blavatsky revealed to Solovioff the secret of the 'astral hand-bell':

> One day her famous 'silver bell' was heard, when suddenly something fell beside her on the ground. I hurried to pick it up—and found in my hands a pretty little piece of silver, delicately worked and strangely shaped. Helena Petrovna changed countenance, and snatched the object from me. I coughed significantly, smiled, and turned the conversation to indifferent matters.[5]

On another occasion, Solovioff found a packet of Chinese envelopes in a drawer, just like those which usually contained the so-called letters of the 'Masters'.[6]

Solovioff ended by telling Mme Blavatsky that it was time to put an end to this sham and that he had been convinced of the falsehood of these phenomena for a long time; but in order to provoke her to confide further, he added:

> To play the part you play, to make crowds follow you, to interest the learned, to found 'societies' in distant lands, to start an entire movement—good gracious! Why, it is all so out of the common, that I am enraptured at you against my will! In all my life I have never met so extraordinary a woman as you, and I am sure I shall never meet another. Yes, Helena Petrovna, I admire you, as a real, mighty, Herculean force....[7]

3. It seems that a similar pun is also possible in Russian. [Ibid., p147.]
4. Ibid., p147.
5. Ibid., pp149–50.
6. Ibid., p152.

Taken in by such flattery, Mme Blavatsky answered:

> It was not for nothing that we met.... Olcott is useful in his place; but he is generally such an ass [*sic*], such a blockhead! How often he has let me in, how many blunders he has caused me, by his incurable stupidity! If you will only come to my aid, we will astonish the world between us, we shall have everything in our hand![8]

It was at this juncture that Solovioff obtained the names of the real authors of Koot Hoomi's letters; he even persuaded Mme Blavatsky to show him the magical hand-bell she concealed under her shawl; but she did not let him examine the mechanism at leisure. In conclusion, Blavatsky said to him:

> Prepare the ground for me to work in Russia. I thought I should never go back to my own land; but now it is possible. Some people are doing all they can there, but you can do more than any one now. Write more, louder, about the Theosophical Society, rouse their interest. And 'create' Koot Hoomi's Russian letters; I will give you all the material for them.[9]

Solovioff could certainly have done all that Mme Blavatsky asked, for he was the son of a famous historian, and himself a writer he also held position in the Russian Court. But far from accepting, he took leave of her two or three days later and left for Paris, vowing that he would not attempt anything in her favor either in literary circles and the Russian newspapers, or with the Society for Psychical Research, whose report was then ready for printing.

7. Ibid., p153.
8. Ibid., p154.
9. Ibid., p158.

After some time Blavatsky sent Solovioff the letter from which we have already produced some excerpts, and thinking that he would communicate it to some members of the Society, she threatened to proclaim publicly the nonexistence of the 'Mahātmās', all the while talking a great deal about her private life, which was of no interest to anyone. A few days later she wrote yet another letter, begging her compatriot not to 'betray' her. In reply to this, on February 16, 1886, Solovioff sent his resignation to Oakley, secretary of the Society of Adyar, giving as his main reason that 'Mme Blavatsky wanted to make use of my name and made me sign and publish the account of a phenomenon obtained fraudulently in the month of April 1884.' Blavatsky habitually behaved in this manner and thought she had her dupes under her control because of their signatures. She had said to Solovioff:

> Would you believe that all this time, before and after the Theosophical Society's foundation, I have not met more than two or three men who knew how to observe and see and remark what was going on around them? It is simply amazing. At least nine out of ten people are entirely devoid of the capacity of observation and of the power of remembering accurately what took place even a few hours before. How often it has happened that, under my direction and revision, minutes of various occurrences and phenomena have been drawn up; lo, the most innocent and conscientious people, even skeptics, even those who actually suspected me, have signed *en toutes lettres* as witnesses at the foot of the minutes! And all the time I knew that what had happened was not in the least what was stated in the minutes.[10]

If like many others Solovioff had signed, there were still some exceptions; indeed, this is what Dr Charles Richet wrote to Solovioff on March 12, 1893:

> I met Mme Blavatsky in Paris in 1884, through Mme de Barrau. . . .[11] When I saw you, you told me: 'Reserve judgment. She has shown me things that appear to be really astonishing, I have not yet made up my mind, but I do believe this is an extraordinary woman, endowed with exceptional faculties. Wait and I will give you more detailed explanations.' I waited and your explanations were quite in conformity with what I had first supposed, that she was undoubtedly a hoaxer—certainly very intelligent, but of questionable integrity. The examinations published by the English Society for Psychical Research were soon released and there was no more room for doubt. This whole thing appears quite simple to me. She was clever, shrewd, sometimes juggled ingeniously, and at first baffled us all. However, I defy anyone to quote one single line by me, printed or handwritten, which conveys anything but enormous doubt and prudent reserve. To be truthful, I never believed seriously in her power, because in terms of experience, the only true observation that I could admit, she never showed me anything conclusive.[12]

10. Ibid., pp156–157.

11. On Mme de Barrau, see *Le Spiritisme*, by Dr Paul Gibier, p110; in the same work (pp328–329), designated simply by her initials, she is mentioned as having assisted at several 'séances' of the medium Slade. — Cf. *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pt.1, chap. 6, for the practical joke to which Dr Richet fell victim at the Villa Carmen in Algiers.

12. According to Mme Blavatsky, however, it seems, that Solovioff and Mme de Barrau had persuaded Dr Richet, then director of the *Revue Scientifique*, to join the Theosophical Society (*Le Lotus*, June 1887, p194). Later on, when he sided against Blavatsky, she called him a 'mad sorcerer' (ibid., October–November 1888, p389).

13. We must rectify a minor inaccuracy that escaped us: the first French branch of the Theosophical Society, founded in 1884, did not originally bear the name *Isis*; it was only in 1887, after the resignation of Mme de Morsier and others, that it was

It would have been preferable had Dr Richet always shown as much precaution and insight as he did at that time, but he too was later reduced to signing statements about mediumistic phenomena that were of as much worth as those of Mme Blavatsky, and about 'materializations' that were in every respect comparable to those of John King and Babula's 'Mahātmās out of muslin'.

Solovioff's information confirming Hodgson's report brought about the resignation of Mme de Morsier, Jules Baissac, and the other most committed members of the Paris branch *Isis*,[13] which was organized in 1884 under the presidency of a former member of the Commune, Louis Dramard, a close friend of Benoît Malon and

his colleague at the *Revue Socialiste*;[14] and it was not long before this branch had to be dissolved, Dramard attributing this outcome to the machinations of the 'clerics'.[15] To replace *Isis*, another branch was formed a little later by Arthur Arnould,[16] also a former 'Communard'[17] (as was also Edmond Bailly, editor of Theosophist publications); it was given the distinctive title *Hermes*. Among its early members were Dr Gérard Encausse (Papus) who acted as secretary, and several occultists from his school.[18] However, in 1890 Papus and his followers resigned or were expelled following a disagreement of which the causes were never completely clarified. Papus himself later claimed that after resigning he had discovered extremely serious facts which supposedly drove him to request expulsion.[19] In any event, this incident brought about the dissolution of *Hermes* in turn, which was decided on September 8, 1890, and almost immediately another reshuffling took place. The new branch, called *Le Lotus*, was also presided over by Arthur Arnould, 'under the supreme guidance of Mme Blavatsky,' and in 1892 it was in turn transformed into 'Loge *Ananta*'. Subsequently, on several occasions the Theosophists accused the French occultists of 'practicing black magic'; their adversaries responded by reproaching them for their 'pride' and 'mental intoxication'. Quarrels of this kind are far from

re-formed under this name. Moreover, within the space of a few years there were so many reorganizations and dissolutions that it is rather difficult to identify them all. We have given only a brief summary of the disputes that took place among the French Theosophists at this time, and on which the review *Le Lotus* gives the most edifying details.

14. The *Revue Socialiste* was especially recommended to Theosophists in *Lucifer*, May 15, 1888, p229.

15. Letter dated March 8, 1886 and published in *Lotus Bleu*, September 7, 1890. This same Dramard wrote in another letter: 'Nothing good can come to us from Christianity, however disguised it may be' (*Le Lotus*, January 1889, p633).

16. For reasons unknown to us, Arthur Arnould had taken the pseudonym Jean Matthéus. This was the name of a merchant from Rouen who in 1786 was designated as the Provincial Grand Master of the 'Royal Order of Scotland' for France.

17. The Communards were members of the Paris revolutionary movement known in 1848 as 'la Commune'. ED.

18. Papus and a few others had already left *Isis* (*Le Lotus*, July 1888) but not the Theosophical Society.

19. *Le Voile d'Isis*, February 11 and 18, 1891.

rare among the different schools that can be called 'neo-spiritualist', and they almost always exhibit violence and incredible bitterness. As we remarked earlier, all of these people preaching 'universal brotherhood' would do well to begin by showing more 'fraternal' feelings in their relationships with one another.[20]

As for the accusation of 'black magic' in particular, this is a charge levelled most frequently and almost indiscriminately by the Theosophists against all those whom they consider their enemies or rivals. We have already seen this accusation raised against the members of the 'Order of the Dew and Light', and we shall find another such instance further on in a dispute between Theosophists themselves. Moreover, Blavatsky herself was the first to set an example of a similar attitude, for in her works she often refers to 'black magicians', whom she also calls *Dougpas* and 'Brothers of the Shadow', and whom she opposes to the 'Adepts' of the 'Great White Lodge'. In reality the *Dougpas* are the red Lamas of Tibet, that is, Lamas of the original rite prior to Tsongkhapa's reform; the yellow Lamas of the reformed rite are called *Gelougpas*, and moreover there is no antagonism between the two. One may wonder why Mme Blavatsky harbored so much hatred toward the *Dougpas*; perhaps it was simply because she had failed in an attempt to establish relations with them, which might have led her to feel deep frustration. We cannot assert this definitively, but at least it seems the most likely explanation; it also corresponds most clearly to the irascible and vindictive character that even her best friends could not fail to recognize in the founder of the Theosophical Society.

20. See *Traité méthodique de Science Occulte*, by Papus, pp997–998, 1,021–22, and 1,061.

7

MADAME BLAVATSKY'S POWER OF SUGGESTION

IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING THAT CAN BE SAID against Mme Blavatsky, it nevertheless remains true that she possessed a certain aptitude, and even some intellectual capacity, however relative it undoubtedly was, that really seems quite lacking in her successors, for whom the doctrinal side of Theosophy has indeed tended more and more to pass into the background, yielding to sentimental declamations of the most deplorable banality. What cannot be denied the founder of the Theosophical Society is that she exercised a strange power of suggestion—of fascination so to speak—over her entourage, and that it sometimes pleased her to emphasize this in most offensive terms regarding her disciples. Concerning Judge, who fasted and saw apparitions, she wrote, 'You see how foolish they are, and how I lead them by the nose.'[1] We have already seen how, later, she appreciated Olcott,[2] whose stupidity proved not to be so 'incurable' as some others', but who sometimes behaved tactlessly in the presidential functions she had confided in him in order to provide cover for herself, and who trembled before all those who,

1. Letter dated New York, June 15, 1877.

2. At the end of an article published in *Le Lotus*, February 1889 (see on this subject p 85), F.-K. Gaboriau appeals to Olcott in these terms:

> Believe me, dear sir, do not compel me to remind you of the little domestic row that took place on the 2nd and 8th of October 1888 in London between you, Mme Blavatsky, and me. On that day you hung your head under the scathing fury of the amazon who subdues men as well as animals. You seem to forget that the Adepts placed you at the door of the booth to beat the big drum and to do two or three somersaults; do not miss the beat and show off too much.

like Franz Hartmann, knew too much about the hidden side of the Society.

In the course of her disclosures to Solovioff, Mme Blavatsky says again:

> What is one to do . . . when in order to rule men it is necessary to deceive them, when in order to persuade them to let themselves be driven where you will, you must promise them and show them playthings? Why, suppose my books and the *Theosophist* had been a thousand times more interesting and more serious, do you imagine I should have had any sort of success anywhere, if behind all that there had not been the 'phenomena'. . . ? Do you know that almost invariably the more simple, the more silly and the more gross a 'phenomenon', the more likely it is to succeed. . . ? The vast majority of people who are reckoned clever by themselves and others are inconceivably silly. If you only knew how many lions and eagles in every quarter of the globe have turned into asses at my whistle, and obediently wagged their great ears in time as I piped the tune![3]

These passages are quite characteristic of Mme Blavatsky's mentality, and they admirably define the true role of the 'phenomena' which were always the principal element of success of Theosophy in certain circles, and which contributed powerfully in supporting the Society... and its leaders.

Thus, as Solovioff recognized, Mme Blavatsky was endowed with 'a kind of magnetism, which attracted to her with an irresistible force';[4] if finally he knew enough to free himself from this influence, Solovioff himself had not always escaped so completely, for he signed at least one of the famous statements that Mme de Morsier, with the utmost sincerity, had written out under Mrs Blavatsky's supervision and revision. Arthur Arnould, too, has said that 'her power of suggestion was formidable'; in this connection he used to recount that in London she would sometimes say to someone, '"Look at your knees," and the person who looked saw, terrified, an

3. *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, pp155–156.

4. Ibid., p220.

enormous spider. Then she would smilingly say, "That spider does not exist, I made you see it." Olcott, for his part, wrote as follows in his *Old Diary Leaves*:

> No one was more captivating than she when it suited her purpose, which was when she wished to attract people in her public work. Then she was affectionate in tone and manners, making one feel oneself her best if not her only friend. . . . I could not say that she was straightforward. . . . I believe we were for her nothing more than pawns in a game of chess, for she was not sincerely fond of us.[5]

We have mentioned above the case of Bavaji, who was led by hypnotic suggestion to become as it were an unconscious accomplice in Mme Blavatsky's frauds for nearly the entire time he was at Adyar. Ordinarily, however, Blavatsky used suggestion in the waking state, as is seen in the anecdote reported by Arthur Arnould. This kind of

5. In 1922 the Theosophists published a booklet entitled *Theosophy and Theosophism,* signed by Paul Bertrand (pseudonym of Georges Méautis, lecturer at the University of Neuchâtel and president of the 'Swiss Society of Theosophy'), which was intended to be a response to our book. The author discovered some alleged inaccuracies, but only in the first one hundred pages, an arbitrary stopping-point we are at a loss to explain. We have already responded in these notes to most of the criticism formulated in the booklet in question, which is really the most pitiable defence imaginable, and the Theosophists have no reason to be proud of it. It contains some remarkably clumsy 'corrections', notably one concerning the passage cited from Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves.* We are said to have 'completely misrepresented' the meaning of this passage, which in the three-volume French translation published under the title *Histoire authentique de la Société Théosophique,* is restored as follows:

> HPB made countless friends but often lost them again and saw them turn into bitter enemies. No one was more charming than she when she wanted to be, and she always wanted to be when she sought to attract someone into Theosophical work; her tone and her affectionate manners convinced that person that he was someone she considered her best, if not her only, friend. She wrote in the same style, and I believe I could name a number of women in possession of letters saying that they will be her successor in the Theosophical Society, and even more of men whom she treated as her 'sole *true* friends and recognized disciples.' I have a certain number of attestations of this kind, and I took them for precious treasures until, while comparing them to others, I noticed that these compliments were worthless. I cannot say that she showed herself faithful or strongly attached to ordinary people like me and her other close friends. I believe that for her we were only pieces in a game of chess and that she did not harbor any deep affection for us. She repeated to me secrets of people of both sexes—even the most compromising—which they had confided to her, and I am convinced that she would do the same with mine, if I had any. But she was of an unflinching faithfulness to her aunt, her parents, and her Masters. For them she would have sacrificed not one, but twenty lives, and watched the whole human race burn if need be.

This text is in fact more complete and contains phrases much harder still on Mme Blavatsky than the passage we had reproduced from a partial translation that appeared earlier in *Lotus Bleu.*

suggestion is usually more difficult to execute than the other and requires much greater will-power and training, but it was generally facilitated by the very restricted diet Mme Blavatsky imposed on her disciples under the pretext of 'spiritualizing' them. Such things as this were already happening in New York:

> Our Theosophists are in general required not only to swear off even a drop of liquor but to fast continually. I teach them not to eat this or that, and if they don't die they will learn; but they cannot resist, which is so much better for them.[6]

It goes without saying that Blavatsky herself was far from adopting a similar regime. While energetically recommending vegetarianism and even proclaiming it indispensable to 'spiritual development', she never adopted it herself, nor did Olcott; moreover she smoked almost continually from morning till night. Not everyone is equally amenable to suggestion, however, and it was probably when Mme Blavatsky was powerless to bring about hallucinations of sight and hearing that she had recourse to 'Mahātmās in muslin' and her silver bell.

The attraction exercised by Mme Blavatsky is all the more astonishing in that her physical appearance was far from pleasant. W.T. Stead went so far as to say that she was 'hideously ugly-looking, monstrously obese, of crude and violent manners, a dreadful character, and a profane tongue'; and again that she was 'cynical, mocking, absurd, and impassioned,'—in a word that she was 'everything that a hierophant of the divine mysteries must not be.'[7] In spite of this, her magnetic action is undeniable, a striking example being the

6. Letter of June 15, 1877.
7. *Borderland,* July 1895, pp 208–209.

immediate influence she exerted over Annie Besant when in 1889 the latter was introduced to her by the socialist Herbert Burrows. This future President of the Theosophical Society, who till then had been a fierce free-thinker, was won over from the first meeting in a 'conversion' so sudden that it would have been difficult to credit had she herself not recounted all the circumstances with a truly disconcerting innocence.[8] It is true that at the time Mrs Besant seems at the very least to have been especially unsettled and impressionable, one of her old friends having said that 'she does not have the gift of originality; she is at the mercy of her emotions and especially of her most recent friends.'[9] Also, she was in all likelihood sincere in the beginning, perhaps even throughout the remaining life of Mme Blavatsky, whose secretary she became and who, in the course of a journey to Fontainbleau, made 'Mahātmā' Morya materialize before her. On the other hand it is extremely doubtful, to put it mildly, that she continued to be as sincere afterward, although like Blavatsky herself, and like Olcott and yet others, she may often have been influenced before influencing others. What makes one hesitate to form an absolute judgment in such a matter is that all these personages seem to have been neither truly unconscious of the role they played nor altogether free to withdraw voluntarily.

8. *Weekly Sun*, October 1, 1893. — This account was later reproduced by Mrs Besant in her book *An Autobiography*, published in 1895.

9. *Mrs Besant's Theosophy*, by G.W. Foote, director of the *Freethinker*.

8

MADAME BLAVATSKY'S LAST YEARS

AFTER HER STAY AT WURTZBOURG, which had been interrupted by several trips to Elberfeld where she visited her friends Mr and Mrs Gebhard,[1] former disciples of Éliphas Lévi, Mme Blavatsky went on to Ostende, where she lived for some time with the Countess Wachtmeister and where she also resumed writing *The Secret Doctrine*. According to witnesses she worked furiously, writing from six in the morning until six at night, scarcely stopping to take her meals. At the beginning of 1887 she returned to settle in England, first at Norwood and then, in September of the same year, in London. She was helped in her work at this time by the brothers Bertram and Archibald Keightley, who corrected her poor English, and by D.E. Fawcett, who collaborated on the portion of the work

1. Gebhard had been Consul for Germany in Persia; his wife, who was of Irish origin, met Eliphas Lévi for the first time in 1865, and from 1868 to 1874 she spent a week in Paris every year in order to converse with him. For her benefit Eliphas Lévi wrote two series of lectures entitled *Le Voile du Temple déchiré*, which appeared in the *Theosophist* from February 1884 to April 1887, and in the Duchess of Pomar's *Aurore* from December 1886 to April 1887. Mary Gebhard had also received from Eliphas Lévi the manuscript of a work entitled *Les Paradoxes de la Haute Science* which was published in Madras in 1883. She published a note entitled *My Personal Remembrance of Eliphas Lévi* in the *Theosophist* (January 1886), and died in Berlin in 1892 (P. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp264–265). — It seems that the title of the review *Lucifer* signifies that it was 'intended to bring light to things hidden in darkness, on the physical and psychic planes of life' (*Le Lotus*, September 1887). This review had as co-director Mabel Collins, who had reconsidered her previous resignation (see p47), but who soon had new disagreements with Mme Blavatsky.

concerned with evolution.[2] It was also in 1887 that the English review *Lucifer* was founded under Blavatsky's immediate direction, the Society having had until then only one official organ, the *Theosophist*, published at Adyar, to which must be added the *Path*, the special organ of the American section.

1887 also saw the appearance of the first French Theosophist review, entitled *Le Lotus*. Lacking official status, this review showed a certain independence and ceased publication after two years, in March 1889.[3] Its director, F.-K. Gaboriau, expressed himself emphatically on what he called the 'pathological case' of Mme Blavatsky, admitting that he had been completely deceived when in November 1886 he saw her at Ostende,

> refuting with wonderful skill, which at the time we took for sincerity, all the attacks made against her, misrepresenting things, attributing to people words that long afterward we recognized to have been false; in brief, during the eight days we spent alone with her offering us the perfect type of innocence, of the superior being—good, dedicated, poor, and maligned.... As I am more inclined to defend than to accuse, it took irrefutable proofs of the duplicity of this extraordinary person to convince me of what I am about to assert here.

And the following is his scarcely flattering judgment on *The Secret Doctrine*, which had just been published:

> It is a wide-ranging, disordered encyclopedia, with an incorrect and incomplete table of contents, of everything that has been stirring for ten years or so in Mme Blavatsky's brain.... Subba Rao, who had to correct *The Secret Doctrine*, denounced it as an 'inextricable muddle'....[4] Certainly, this book could not prove the existence of the Mahātmās; rather, it made one doubt their existence.... I like to believe that the Tibetan adepts do not exist elsewhere than in the *Dialogues philosophiques* of Renan, who, before Mme Blavatsky and Olcott, invented a factory of Mahātmās in central Asia under the name of *Asgaard*, and gave interviews in the style of Koot Hoomi before the latter's manifestation.

2. At the seventeenth convention of the Theosophical Society, held at Adyar in December 1891, Colonel Olcott said the following: 'I helped HPB in the compilation of her *Isis Unveiled*, while Keightley, with several others, did the same for the *Secret Doctrine*. Each of us knows full well how far from infallible are parts of these books, owing due to our collaboration, not to mention those parts written by HPB.

3. *La Revue Théosophique*, directed by the Countess d'Adhémar, and which appeared a little later, only lasted for one year; the publication *Lotus Bleu* first began in 1890, and still exists today under the title *Revue Théosophique française*, which it took in 1898.

Finally, here is his appraisal of Olcott:

> The day he came in person to Paris to meddle in our work was a total disillusionment for all the Theosophists, who then withdrew, leaving room for more novices. A self-assured imperturbable American, an iron constitution, not the least eloquent, not the least educated, but with the special qualities of a compiler [another American trait], not well-mannered, a credulity bordering on complicity and excusing if need be his blunders, and I must add—for it contrasts with his domineering former associate—a certain kindness or rather good-naturedness: such is the man who is at present the traveling salesman of Buddhism.[5]

While abandoning administrative functions to Olcott, who was permanently installed in the headquarters in Adyar, Blavatsky kept for herself what concerned the 'esoteric section', to which none could be admitted without her approval. However, on December 25, 1889 she named Olcott 'secret agent and sole authorized representative of the esoteric section for the countries of Asia'; and on the same date Olcott, then in London, named her in return director of a section

4. However, Subba Rao did not abandon Theosophy; moreover, he died in 1890 at age thirty-four of a very mysterious illness; some people have not hesitated to use the word poisoning in connection with it.

5. On Olcott's passage to Paris and 'the wholly American way in which he took on our members in a batch,' see also *Le Lotus*, October–November 1888, p510, and February 1989, pp703–704. — Let us again add that on December 12, 1888 F.-K. Gaboriau had addressed his resignation of membership in the Theosophical Society (ibid., December 1888, p575) to Olcott.

with the title 'personal and authorized representative with official powers of President for the U.K. and Ireland,' to which Annie Besant, William Kingsland, and Herbert Burrows belonged. Thus, Mme Blavatsky exercised control over both these sections of the Society for the whole United Kingdom, and it was the same for Olcott in India. We say India only, for we do not think there were at the time any Theosophical branches in the other countries of Asia.[6] On the other hand, in Europe there were of course already branches in several countries; and exactly six months later, on July 9, 1890, Olcott delegated to Mrs Besant full authority to strike an agreement with the various branches and group them into a single European section. This section was to enjoy full autonomy of the kind represented by the American section already constituted under the direction of William Q. Judge, Vice-President of the Society. There were thus three autonomous sections in the Theosophical Society. Today there are as many national 'Theosophical Societies', that is, autonomous sections, as there are countries where Theosophists are found in sufficient numbers to form one; but of course all save the dissident groups are attached to the headquarters in Adyar and receive from it directives which they accept without the least discussion; there is therefore real autonomy only for the truly administrative organization.

By this time some unfortunate incidents had occurred in the American section. Dr Elliott E. Cowes, a scholar of some reputation who had left the beaten path but was nevertheless not slow to notice many things, formed an independent Society which a number of the branches in the United States joined, and naturally he was hurriedly expelled.[7] He retaliated by publishing an article in which he

6. We did not think that in 1887 there were any branches of the Theosophical Society in Asia apart from India; according to information we have discovered since the publication of our book, one was founded in 1887 in Kyoto, Japan by Kinzo Hirai.

7. Regarding Dr Elliott E. Coues (the name has been misspelled 'Cowes'), whom Paul Bertrand contemptuously called 'a certain Cowes', we believe it useful to reproduce the following two extracts:

> On March 16, [1887] our brother in Theosophy, Dr El. Coues, gave a speech on Theosophy and the advancement of women at the annual meeting of the Medical College of Washington. The charter of the college forbids all religious discussion, but since all the meetings commenced with prayers to the Christian gods [*sic*], Dr Cowes took advantage of the occasion to enunciate some beautiful truths. The Faculty refused to publish any speech, so that the valiant doctor published his own which scandalized the body of doctors (*Le Lotus*, July–August 1887).
>
> In the June 1, 1889 issue of *Light* there is a short and very edifying correspondence between the charming and sympathetic editor of *Light on the Path*, Mabel Collins, and Elliott Coues of Washington, a man of great scientific and literary worth, like us former defender of the two personages who are given credit for the creation of the Theosophical movement [Mme Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott]. Coues is not fond of Mme Blavatsky, who had tried to make him swallow one of those nice lies common to most mediums (final issue of *Le Lotus*, dated March 1889, but which appeared in fact several months later).

let it be known that the alleged revelation of the 'Mahātmās', to whom were now attributed the inspiration for both *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, had been drawn in good part, at least as regards the first of these two works, from books and manuscripts bequeathed to Mme Blavatsky by the Baron de Palmas; and he pointed out that this should have been obvious from the fact that one of the authors most frequently cited in these alleged communications from Tibet was the French occultist Éliphas Lévi.[8] Baron de Palmas had died in New York in 1876, bequeathing all he possessed to the Theosophical Society.[9] Sinnett claimed that apart from his library he had absolutely nothing left, but in July 1876 Mme Blavatsky wrote that 'he left all his property to our Society,' and on the following October 5th following that 'the property consists of a good number of rich silver mines and seventeen thousand acres of land.' Doubtless this was not to be spurned, but in any case what

8. *New York Sun*, July 20, 1890.

9. Baron de Palmes, whom some have also called Palma and whose real name was von Palm, was a former Bavarian officer dismissed from the army for debts. After a stay in Switzerland, where he committed several frauds, he took refuge in America. It appears that the properties mentioned in his will did not exist, but whatever the Theosophists say, Mme Blavatsky was nevertheless able to make use of the contents of his library, as Dr Coues has affirmed, and this is the only thing that matters here. Paul Bertrand states that 'it is unlikely that this German officer . . . was capable of writing *Isis Unveiled*, which is certainly uneven, but original and powerful.' Now, we have never said any such thing, having always maintained on the contrary that this work was really written by Mme Blavatsky with the collaboration of Olcott and no doubt a few others, and that it was only a question of the sources she had drawn from in order to compose it. Has our contradictor read us so badly, or must we question his good faith?

seems well established is that the library played a large part in the writing of *Isis Unveiled*, which appeared the following year. Dr Cowes' disclosures had some repercussions in America, especially owing to the author's personality, and Judge believed he must take action for damages against Cowes and against the journal where the article had appeared for 'libel against the founders of the Society'[10], but nothing came of these proceedings, for they were abandoned upon the death of Mme Blavatsky, in whose name they had been instigated. This last affair was taken as a pretext by Mme Blavatsky to address a lengthy letter to the members of the French branch on September 23, 1890 in which she complained that a similar libel was circulating in London, and said that these 'personal enemies' were aided by 'one of the most active members of the Society in France,' who was none other than Papus, and who had 'once or twice crossed the Channel *in this honorable aim*.' She added that her patience was at an end and threatened to summon to court anyone who dared make similar accusations against her.

Blavatsky died in London on May 8, 1891. She had been ill for some time, and it even appears she had been abandoned two or three times by the doctors,[11] although it was claimed that she was better at the time of her death owing to the intervention of an occult influence. According to Sinnett, she is then supposed to have passed immediately into another body, masculine this time, and already fully mature. More recently, Leadbeater wrote on this same subject:

> Those who were in close contact with our great founder Mme Blavatsky generally knew that when she left the body in which we knew her she entered another body, this having taken place at the very moment that it was relinquished by its initial occupant. As for knowing whether this body had been specially prepared for her use, I do not have any information; but there are other examples known where this was done.[12]

10. *New York Daily Tribune*, September 10, 1890.

11. According to Olcott, she suffered from Bright's Disease, *Le Lotus*, July 1888, p225.

12. *Adyar Bulletin*, October 1913.

We will return later to this singular idea of the replacement of one personality by another, the first having been simply charged with preparing a suitable body for the second to occupy at the requisite moment. In May 1897, barely six years after Mme Blavatsky's death, Mrs Besant announced her next manifestation in a masculine reincarnation;[13] this manifestation has not yet taken place, but on every occasion Leadbeater continues to repeat that Mme Blavatsky has already been reincarnated and that Colonel Olcott must very soon be reincarnated to work at her side once again.[14]

These are remarkable exceptions to the law which had been formulated both by Mme Blavatsky herself and Sinnett whereby twelve or fifteen hundred years must normally elapse between two successive lives; it is true that even in ordinary cases this alleged law has been abandoned, and this is a rather interesting example both of the variation of Theosophical doctrines and of efforts made to conceal this variation. Mme Blavatsky wrote in the *Secret Doctrine* that

> save in the case of young children, and of individuals whose lives have been violently cut off by some accident, no Spiritual Entity can reincarnate before a period of many centuries has elapsed. . . .[15]

Now, Leadbeater has disclosed that the expression *spiritual entities* appears to mean that Mme Blavatsky had in view only highly developed individuals![16] And he gives a table in which, according to the 'degree of evolution' of individual humans, the intervals go from two thousand years or more for 'those who have entered on the Path' (allowing for exceptions), to twelve hundred years for 'those who approach it', to forty or fifty years, and so on to as low as five

13. Mrs Besant maintained that Colonel Olcott's reincarnation, like Mme Blavatsky's, was a *fait accompli*: 'H. S. Olcott . . . threw off his mortal body, rested a few short years, then returned as a little child, now a small boy full of promise for the future' (*Bulletin Théosophique*, January–February–March 1918, according to the *Adyar Bulletin*, January 1918).

14. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp72 and 414.

15. *The Secret Doctrine* [London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1921], vol. 2, p317.

16. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p325.

years in the case of the 'dregs of humanity'.[17] As for the passage where Sinnett clearly states that '1500 years, if not an impossibly short, would be a very brief, interval between two rebirths,'[18] here is the explanation given by the same author:

> One is justified in believing that the letters which served as a basis for *Esoteric Buddhism* were written by different disciples under the general direction of the Masters; therefore, even taking account of inaccuracies that have been introduced (we know they have crept in), it is impossible to suppose that the authors ignored facts easily accessible to whoever can observe the process of reincarnation.[19] Let us recall that the letter in question was not written for the public but was addressed especially to Sinnett, so that doubtless it was communicated to some persons who worked with him. Such a means established *for them*, would be exact, but we cannot admit it at the present time for the whole human race.[20]

It is really too convenient to explain things away like this, and the same method could serve to efface all the contributions that Hume had noted from 1883. As for the 'inaccuracies' attributed to foolish disciples, was it not Koot Hoomi himself who, in the Kiddle affair, gave the example on this point? We know on the other hand that Mavalankar, Subba Rao, and others worked as 'chelas' or direct disciples of the 'Masters', so that according to the passage just cited there is no conflict as to the authors of the letters in question, since they were indeed only 'under the direction' of Mme Blavatsky. Since that time the 'Masters' are no longer accorded any more than a 'general supervisory role' in the writing of these messages; by keeping silent on the process of 'precipitation' it clearly becomes much more difficult to denounce an obvious fraud. Thus it must be admitted that this tactic does not lack a certain cleverness; but to let oneself be taken in one must ignore, as perhaps many present Theosophists

17. Ibid., pp327–333.
18. *Esoteric Buddhism*, p186; cf. ibid., chap. 10.
19. By means of 'clairvoyance' in which Leadbeater is especially interested.
20. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp325–326.

do, the entire history of the first period of the Theosophical Society. It is truly regrettable for the latter that, contrary to the practice of the ancient secret societies of which they claim to be the inheritors, it has left behind such an abundance of written documents.

9

THE SOURCES OF MME BLAVATSKY'S WORKS

NOW THAT ENOUGH HAS BEEN SAID about Mme Blavatsky's life and character, we must say something about her works. If they do not derive from the revelations of any authentic 'Mahātmā', whence comes the rather varied knowledge to which they bear witness? She acquired this knowledge quite naturally during her many travels and also through her wide though unmethodical and rather poorly assimilated reading; she possessed 'a powerful mind, widely if erratically cultivated,' as Sinnett himself said.[1] It is related that during her first wanderings in the Levant in the company of Metamon she made her way into certain monasteries on Mount Athos,[2] and that it was in their libraries that, among other things, she discovered the Alexandrian theory of the *Logos*. During her stay in New York she read the works of Jacob Boehme, which were doubtless all she ever actually knew of authentic theosophy, as well as those of Éliphas Lévi, which she cites so often; she probably also read the *Kabbala Denudata* of Knorr de Rosenroth and various other kabbalistic and Hermetic treatises. In the letters that Olcott sent to Stainton Moses at the time mention is made of other works of rather varied character. For example, we read this:

1. *The Occult World*, p30.

2. Women are not admitted to Mt Athos, but it is likely that in order to enter there Mme Blavatsky had adopted male attire, as she did on other occasions, particularly when she fought in the ranks of the Garibaldians (see p14 of French text).

> For an interesting compilation of factual data on magic I refer you to the works of [Gougenot] of the Mousseaux, who although a blind Catholic and an implicit believer in devil worship has gathered a wealth of valuable facts which your most enlightened and emancipated spirit will value highly. You will also find it beneficial to read the works of the Eastern sects and the sacerdotal orders; some interesting particulars are also found in Lane's *Modern Egyptians*.[3]

In addition to the already mentioned *Etoile Flamboyante* and the *Magica Adamica*, a subsequent letter makes reference to an anonymous Hermetic treatise entitled *The Key to the Concealed Things Since the Beginning of the World*.[4] In yet another letter Olcott recommends to his correspondent Jacolliot's *Spiritisme dans le Monde* and other works on India by the same author, books moreover which contain absolutely nothing serious;[5] and all these works were no doubt ones which Olcott himself read along with Mme Blavatsky, of whom he said in this same letter written in 1876:

> Wait until *we* have time to finish *her* book, and you will then find occultism dealt with in good English; many of the mysteries of Fludd and Philalethes, of Paracelsus and Agrippa, interpreted in a way that anyone searching can read.

According to this last sentence, then, Olcott and others collaborated in the compilation of *Isis Unveiled*, just as, later, Subba Rao and others contributed to *The Secret Doctrine*, this being a quite simple explanation of the variations in style to be noticed in these works, and which Theosophists attribute to dictation by different 'Masters'. In this respect it has even been said that upon waking Mme Blavatsky sometimes found twenty or thirty pages of writing, in a hand differing from her own, following hers of the previous day. We do

3. Letter of May 18, 1875.

4. Letter of June 22, 1875.

5. We also read in the *Lotus Bleu* of November 7, 1890 that the 'Blavatsky Lodge' of London recommended reading English translations of this author. It is true that in the following number a 'correction' states that the publication of these translations had simply been announced by *Lucifer*.

not contest this fact in itself, for it is quite possible that she had been sleepwalking and may really have written during the night what she thus found the next day; indeed, cases of this kind are common enough that there is no cause to marvel at them. Furthermore, natural sleepwalking and mediumship often go together, and we have already explained that Mme Blavatsky's duly noted frauds need not necessarily deny her any mediumistic ability. We can therefore admit that she sometimes played the role of 'writer medium', but as so often happens in such circumstances what she wrote was finally nothing but the reflection of her own thoughts and those of her entourage.

Concerning the provenance of the books Mme Blavatsky made use of in New York, some of which would have been rather difficult to obtain, we know from Emma Hardinge-Britten, former member of the first Theosophical Society, and also a member of the 'H B of L',[6] that 'with the Society's money Mme Blavatsky purchased and kept, in her capacity as librarian, many rare books the contents of which appeared in *Isis Unveiled*.'[7] Moreover, we have seen that she inherited Baron de Palmes' library and that in particular this library contained manuscripts which were equally useful, as Dr Cowes said, and which together with the letters of Swāmi Sarasvatī Dayānanda shared the honor of later being transformed into communications from the 'Mahātmās'. Finally, Mme Blavatsky had been able to find various pieces of information in Felt's papers and in the books which the latter used to prepare his talks on magic and the 'Egyptian Kabbala', and which he left to her when he died. It seems that the first idea of the theory of the 'elementals', which he attributed rather gratuitously to the ancient Egyptians, can be attributed to Felt.[8]

As for strictly Eastern doctrines, Blavatsky knew of Brāhmanism and Buddhism only what is commonly known, and understood little even of that, as is proved both by the theories she ascribed to

6. Some regard her as the author of anonymous works entitled *Art Magic* and *Ghostland*, which are linked to the theories of this school. For more on Miss Hardinge-Britten and the works attributed to her, see *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pt. 1, chap. 2.

7. Letter to the journal *Light*, of London, December 9, 1893.

8. Cf. *Old Diary Leaves*, by Olcott.

them also by her continual mistranslation of Sanskrit terms. Furthermore, Leadbeater explicitly acknowledged that 'she did not know Sanskrit' and that 'Arabic seemed to be the only Eastern language she knew' (she no doubt learned it during her stay in Egypt);[9] and he attributes most of the difficulties of Theosophical terminology to this ignorance of Sanskrit, difficulties which were such as to resolve Mrs Besant to replace most of the terms of Eastern origin by their English equivalents.[10] The former were very often given a meaning they never really had; we have seen an example of this in the word Mahātmā, which was replaced by 'Adept', and we shall find another in the word 'karma', which however has remained unchanged. Mme Blavatsky sometimes contrived words that do not exist in Sanskrit under the form she gives them, such as 'Fohat', which really seems to be a corruption of 'Mahat'. On other occasions she concocted them of elements borrowed from other Eastern languages: thus one comes across compounds which are half-Sanskrit and half-Tibetan or Mongol, such as 'Devachan' for the Sanskrit 'deva-loka', or again 'Dhyan-Chohan' for 'Dhyanī-Buddha'. Generally, these Eastern terms used at random almost always serve to disguise purely Western conceptions; ultimately they exist only to play a role analogous to that of 'phenomena', which is to attract a clientele easily swayed by appearances, and this is why Theosophists will never be able to renounce them completely. Indeed, many people are seduced by exoticism, even of the most mediocre quality, and moreover are completely incapable of assessing its value; a 'snobbism' of this kind is not foreign to the success of Theosophy in certain circles.

We shall add yet another word specifically on the origin of the so-called highly secret Tibetan texts used by Mme Blavatsky in writing her works, notably the famous *Stanzas of Dzyan*[11] incorporated in *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Voice of Silence*. These texts

9. *L'Occultisme dans la nature*, p 404.

10. Ibid., pp 222 and 263.

11. *Dzyan* must be a corruption of a Sanskrit word, either *jñāna*, 'knowledge', or *dhyāna*, 'contemplation'; Blavatsky has herself pointed out the two derivations (the first in *Lotus*, December 1887, the second in the introduction to *The Secret Doctrine*), without appearing to realize their incompatibility.

contain many passages which are obviously 'interpolated' or even wholly invented, as well as others that at the very least are 'arranged' to accommodate Theosophical ideas. As regards the authentic parts, they are quite simply borrowed from a translation of extracts from the *Kandjur* and *Tandjur*, published in 1836 in the twentieth volume of the *Asiatic Researches* of Calcutta, by Alexander Csoma de Körös.[12] The latter, of Hungarian origin, called himself Skander-Beg, and was an eccentric who traveled for a long time in central Asia seeking to discover through a comparison of languages the tribe from which his nation had come.[13]

Such is the strange mix of heterogeneous elements behind Blavatsky's major works, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. These works were just what might be expected given the circumstances: indigestible compilations without order, a true chaos in which some interesting documents are awash in a mass of worthless assertions; it would certainly be a waste of time to look here for what can be found much more easily elsewhere. Besides, it abounds in errors as

12. In 'From *Kandjur* and from *Tandjur*, Alexandre Csoma de Körös published an analysis and translated fragments in the twentieth volume of *Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta, 1836, in quarto, and it is from this that the famous Mme Blavatsky has borrowed at random a good part of the famous *theosophy* which she claims to have received through telepsychy from stylites hidden in the heart of Tibet, no doubt not far from Renan's *Asgaard* (see *Dialogues et Fragments*, Paris, 1876)' [Augustin Chaboseau, *Essai sur la Philosophie buddhique*, p97].

Let us also cite this other extract from the same work, which perfectly defines Theosophist 'syncretism':

> The latter [the founders of the Theosophical Society], summoning vague recollections of numerous, though hasty and poorly understood, readings and appropriating the substance of many forgotten or little-known books plundered haphazardly from religious systems, philosophical doctrines, scientific theories, as they came to mind, have developed compilations where one meets with scraps of Vedāntism, bits of Taoism, shreds of Egyptianism, samples of Mazdaism, fragments of Christianity, tag ends of Brāhmanism, strands of Gnosticism, fragments of Hebraic Kabbalah, trifles of Paracelsus, Darwinism, and Plato, morsels of Swedenborg and Hegel, of Schopenhauer and Spinoza—and have spread that throughout all continents asserting that such was Buddhist Esoterism.... In spite of its perpetual contradictions, its blinding errors, and its undeniable confusion, the *theosophist* school reigned for its moment, in order to pose as revealer of everything hidden, dispenser of all 'latent powers', edifier of the ultimate synthesis' (Foreword pp9–10).

13. See *Correspondence de Victor Jacquemont*, vol. 1, pp226–227, 255, and 337.

well as contradictions, and these latter are such that the most contrary opinions can be satisfied. For example, in succession it is said that there is a God, then that there is not; that 'Nirvāna' is annihilation, then that it is quite the contrary; that metempsychosis is a fact, then that it is a fiction; that vegetarianism is indispensable for 'psychic development', then that it is simply useful; and so on.[14] All this can be understood without too much difficulty, however, for apart from the fact that Mme Blavatsky's actual ideas varied to a great extent, she wrote at prodigious speed and without referring to her sources, probably not even to what she herself had already written. However it is this work, which is so defective, that has always formed the basis of Theosophist teaching; and in spite of everything that has subsequently come to be added to or superimposed upon it, and even the corrections that she was constrained to introduce under the guise of 'interpretations', it always enjoyed an uncontested authority in the Society; and, if it does not embody the whole doctrine, it more or less contains the basic principles, presuming one can speak of doctrine and principles when in the presence of such an incoherent compilation.

When we speak here of uncontested authority, this applies above all to *The Secret Doctrine*, for the case of *Isis Unveiled* seems somewhat different. Thus, in establishing a kind of 'study plan' for Theosophy, Leadbeater strongly recommends the first, which he calls 'the best book of all,' and does not even mention the second.[15] We shall point out one of the main reasons for this reserve, which moreover is easily explained since a comparison of these two works brings out clearly the variations and contradictions noted earlier. Among other things, Mme Blavatsky wrote this in *Isis Unveiled*:

> Reincarnation, that is, the appearance of the same individual or rather of his astral monad twice on the same planet, is not a rule in nature; it is an exception, like the teratological phenomenon of a child with two heads. It is preceded by a violation of the

14. A good number of these contradictions have been set forth by Arthur Lillie in a book entitled *Mme Blavatsky and Her Theosophy* [London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1895)].

15. *L'Occultisme dans la nature*, pp415–419.

> harmonic laws of nature and only happens when nature, seeking to reestablish its disrupted equilibrium, violently pushes back to terrestrial life the astral monad taken away from the circle of necessity by crime or accident.[16]

In this passage it is easy to recognize the influence of the 'H B of L'. Indeed, the teaching of the latter, although absolutely 'anti-reincarnationist' in general, nonetheless admits, though wrongly, some exceptional cases, three to be precise: children stillborn or who die at an early age, idiots from birth, and finally voluntary 'messianic' incarnations, which occur around every six hundred years or so (at the end of each of the cycles called *Naros* by the Chaldeans), but without the same spirit ever being incarnated more than once, and without there being two such incarnations consecutively in the same race; these are the first two of the three cases that Mme Blavatsky has compared to 'teratological phenomena'.[17] Consequently, when Theosophy became 'reincarnationist' these same two cases still remained exceptions, but in the sense that they admit the possibility of an immediate reincarnation,[18] whereas for normal cases, as we have said, an interval of fifteen hundred years is taken for granted. Moreover, when reminded that she had been accused of preaching against reincarnation, Mme Blavatsky came to assert that this was only by those

> who have misunderstood what was said. . . . At the time the work was written, re-incarnation was not believed in by any Spiritualists, either English or American, and what is said there of *re-incarnation* was addressed to the French Spiritists, whose theory is as unphilosophical and absurd, . . . and who believe in an arbitrary and immediate re-incarnation.[19]

16. *Isis Unveiled*, vol. 1, p351 of the English edition.
17. *Isis Unveiled*, vol. 1, p352.
18. *Esoteric Buddhism*, chap. 10.
19. *The Key to Theosophy*, p191. — Cf. *Theosophist*, August 1882; *Le Lotus*, March 1887. In this last article (p16), Mme Blavatsky acknowledges a 'lack of precision' and invokes as an excuse the 'important faults' which have slipped into the edition of *Isis Unveiled*.

However, Mme Blavatsky had borrowed the very idea of reincarnation from these spirits of Allan Kardec's school, to which she formerly belonged, and when, after having temporarily abandoned it under another influence, she readopted the concept, she made some modifications and did some polishing in order to make it more 'philosophical'. As for the passage cited from *Isis Unveiled*, it is clear enough and offers nothing obscure or difficult to understand. There is no question of discussing the modalities of reincarnation, or of knowing whether it is immediate or deferred; it is really reincarnation itself which, for the generality of cases, is rejected purely and simply. Thus here again, Blavatsky's insincerity is obvious, and one sees that she is the first to maintain that her thought has been poorly understood whenever some embarrassing assertion or formal contradiction is found in her writings. Her successors should follow this example assiduously whenever they would like to introduce any important change in Theosophist teaching.

10

ESOTERIC BUDDHISM

WE HAVE SAID FROM THE START that there is no Theosophist doctrine properly speaking, and through some of the examples of the variations and contradictions we have dealt with, whether from Mme Blavatsky herself or between her and her successors, it is already clear enough that the word 'doctrine' cannot be applied to such a case. But the Theosophical Society definitely claims to have a doctrine, or rather, claims to have and yet not have one at the same time. What Mme Blavatsky herself says is this:

> What is meant by the Society having no tenets or doctrines of its own is that no special doctrines or beliefs are *obligatory* on its members; but, of course, this applies only to the body as a whole. The Society, as you were told, is divided into an outer and an inner body. Those who belong to the latter have, of course, a philosophy, or—if you prefer it—a religions system of their own.[1]

Thus, belief in this doctrine is 'obligatory', at least for those members who wish to go further than the 'outer circle'; in the latter they no doubt give proof in principle of the greatest tolerance by admitting people who profess any and every opinion; but even here this tolerance very quickly disappears if these people should dispute certain 'teachings', and as is well known that when this happens, these people are given to understand that their place is not in the bosom of the Society. As for the 'esoteric section', those who have given the

1. *The Key to Theosophy*, p60.

least indication of a critical turn of mind can be sure that they will never penetrate therein; moreover, the request for admission that candidates are required to sign includes a formula by which they must expressly assent to the authenticity of teachings about which they are not yet supposed to know anything![2]

This so-called 'particular religious system', which constitutes the official doctrine of Theosophy and is presented quite simply as 'the essence of all religion and of absolute truth,'[3] bears the most visible traces of the multiple and discordant sources from which it has arisen. Far from being the 'common origin' of all doctrines, as they would have us believe, it is only the result of borrowings made with no great discernment and to which they have tried to give an artificial appearance of unity, a unity which does not hold up under scrutiny. It is after all only a confused mixture of Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Jewish Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and occultism, the whole of it being gathered as well as can be expected around two or three ideas which, whether one likes it or not, are of completely

2. We have personally seen a copy of the declaration required from candidates to the 'esoteric section', known today as the 'Eastern Theosophical School'. One reads first of all the following preamble under Mrs Besant's signature:

> An inevitable disappointment awaits the student who would enter the school without accepting the fundamental facts of the nature on which the teachings of the Theosophical Society rest, without a *belief* in the Teachers and without an ardent desire to learn in order to become more useful to his companions. This is why the following conditions have been laid down; no candidate may be admitted if he does not satisfy them. The text below must therefore be signed and returned to the Corresponding Secretary of the Division.

There follows the declaration itself, expressed thus:

> (1) I sympathize with the three aims of the Theosophical Society. (2) I am convinced of the truth of the principal teachings of Esoteric Philosophy, to wit: One Existence, whence everything proceeds; the Law of Periodicity; the identity of the mind which is in man with the Universal Mind; Reincarnation; Karma; the existence of the Great Brotherhood. (3) I wish to be a member of the E. E. T. in order to purify and spiritualize my life to become a more useful servant of Humanity. (4) I am certain that HPB was in possession of a knowledge that attests to her mission as messenger of the Great Brotherhood and that the School she founded is consequently under the protection of the Great Brotherhood. (5) I recognize Annie Besant as her successor, and as Head of this School under the direction of the Masters and as Their messenger appointed by Them to direct this task.'

3. Ibid., p58.

modern and purely Western origin. From the start this heteroclite mixture was presented as 'esoteric Buddhism'; but since it was still too easy to see that it presented only very vague relationships with true Buddhism, an explanation was needed as to how it might be related to Buddhism even while not being so:

> The mistake [which consists in believing that we are all disciples of Gautama Buddha] has arisen from a misunderstanding of the real meaning of the title of Mr. Sinnett's excellent work, "Esoteric Buddhism," which last word ought to have been spelt *with one, instead of two, d's*, as then *Budhism* would have meant what it was intended for, merely "Wisdom*ism*" (Bodha, bodhi, "intelligence," "wisdom") instead of *Buddhism*, Gautama's religious philosophy. . . .[4]

In order to show the paltry value of this subtle distinction, it is enough to say that in Sanskrit there is also the word *buddhi*, which is written (or rather transcribed) with two *d*'s, to designate intellect; and in connection with this last term let us in passing note that Mrs Besant has elected to translate it as 'pure reason', whereas its exact meaning is 'intellectual intuition'. A change in terminology is not enough to dissipate the confusion! In all strictness, 'Budhism' (with a single *d*) could only mean the 'doctrine of Mercury' (a 'Sanskritized' equivalent), if one can express it so, of Greco-Egyptian 'Hermeticism'; but such an interpretation seems never to have occurred to Theosophists, for we do not think there was an intentional and direct allusion to the teachings of another 'Mercury', who at the time was only known under the name of Koot Hoomi, and this is truly a shame, for such an allusion would not have been devoid of a certain ingenuity.

The remarks cited above did not prevent Mme Blavatsky herself from helping to maintain this equivocation by explaining soon afterward that Buddhism (with two *d*'s) includes at once both exoteric and esoteric teachings, in such a way that one is quite naturally led to ask up to what point 'exoteric Buddhism' and 'esoteric Buddhism' can truly be distinct from each other. Furthermore, Sinnett

4. Ibid., pp12–13.

had in fact presented the so-called 'esoteric doctrine', which he had been charged to expound, as stemming from Buddhism properly speaking, or from one of its branches, and as at the same time forming a link between Buddhism and Brahmanism. He even established this link in the most extraordinary way, making of Shankarāchārya, one of the most intrepid adversaries of Buddhism in India, a 'second incarnation' of the Buddha,[5] and this according to the assertions of a Brahman 'initiate' from southern India, a 'first-rate Sanskrit scholar as well as an occultist,'[6] who was none other than Subba Rao. Despite everything, Sinnett could not avoid acknowledging that 'this manner of seeing things is by no means accepted by non-initiated Hindu authorities,' that is to say, in reality, by non-Theosophists; but no Hindu with any authority has ever had anything but the deepest scorn for Theosophy, and besides, it is certainly not to Madras that one need go to find 'distinguished Sanskritists'. Truly, it is all too easy to forestall the objections of one's adversaries, to proclaim that they are not 'initiated', but perhaps it would be a little less easy to point to initiates of this kind who have no connection with the Theosophic milieu.

Actually, the truth is that there never was any authentic 'esoteric Buddhism'. Should someone wish to find esoterism, this is not where he should turn, for in its origins Buddhism was essentially a popular doctrine serving as theoretical support for a social movement with egalitarian tendencies. In India it was a simple heresy having no real connection with the Brahmanic tradition,[7] a tradition with which on the contrary it had openly broken, not only from the social point of view by rejecting the institution of the castes, but even from the purely doctrinal point of view in denying the authority of the 'Vedas'. Furthermore, Buddhism represents something so contrary to the Hindu spirit that it has long disappeared from the country in which it arose; only in Ceylon and Burma does it still exist in a nearly pure state, for in all the other

5. *Esoteric Buddhism*, pp219–20.

6. Ibid., p224.

7. See *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap 1, and *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*, chap. 6. ED.

lands to which it has spread it has been modified to the point of becoming completely unrecognizable. In Europe one generally has the tendency to exaggerate the importance of Buddhism, which is certainly the least interesting of all the Eastern doctrines, but which precisely because it constitutes a deviation and anomaly for the East can seem more accessible to the Western mentality and less foreign to its customary forms of thinking. This is probably the foremost reason for the penchant a great majority of orientalists have always shown for Buddhism, although some of them also harbored the very different intention of trying to make of it an anti-Christian instrument, which is obviously altogether foreign to it in itself. Emile Burnouf in particular was not exempt from these latter preoccupations, and this is what led him to ally himself with the Theosophists, who were animated by the same spirit of religious rivalry. Some years ago in France an attempt was also made—although without great success—to propagate a certain rather whimsical 'eclectic Buddhism' invented by Léon de Rosny, who, although not a Theosophist,[8] was eulogized by Olcott in an introduction written especially for the French translation of his *Buddhist Catechism.*[9]

On the other hand, one cannot deny that the Theosophical Society did attempt to annex Buddhism, even mere 'exoteric' Buddhism, as shown in the first place by the publication in 1881 of Olcott's just mentioned *Buddhist Catechism.* This tract was adorned with the approval of the Rev. H. Sumangala, head of the *Vidyodaya Parivena* (high school) of Colombo, who for this occasion was styled 'High Priest of the Buddhist Church of the South', a dignity which no one knew to exist until that time. Some years later, after a trip to Japan[10] and a visit to Burma, this same Olcott boasted of having effected

8. In return, he joined Masonry (*Lanterne*, April 18, 1894).

9. A *Buddhist Lodge* currently exists in London, which has as mouthpiece a review entitled *Buddhism in England*; its Buddhism, 'which is not of any school but of all' [*sic*], and which moreover is a little too patently 'adapted' to the European mentality, is somewhat reminiscent of the 'eclectic Buddhism' of Léon de Rosny.

10. Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* was translated into Japanese by Midzutani Ridzen; announcing this news, the *Lotus* of October 1887 added: 'It is to be hoped that Japan will not be Christianized.'

a reconciliation of the Buddhist churches of the North and the South.[11] Sumangala then wrote:

> We owe to Colonel Olcott both this catechism in which our children learn the first rudiments of our religion, and our present fraternal relations with our co-religionists of Japan and other Buddhist lands.[12]

We should add that the schools in which Olcott's catechism was taught were only Theosophist creations. On this point we have the testimony of Mme Blavatsky herself, who in 1890 wrote:

> In Ceylon we have called back to life and have begun to purify Buddhism; we have established high schools, and have taken nearly fifty schools of lesser importance under our supervision.[13]

Moreover, with Sir Edwin Arnold, author of *The Light of Asia*, returning to India about the same time also to work for a reconciliation of the Buddhist churches, is it not permissible to find such Western initiatives very suspect? Was it perhaps to legitimize Olcott's role that Leadbeater said that in one of his previous incarnations he had been King Asoka, the great protector of Buddhism, after having also been, in another incarnation, Gushtasp, king of Persia and protector of Zoroastrianism.[14] The spiritists are not alone, then, in their mania for styling themselves reincarnations of illustrious personalities! When Olcott died they placed on his body, along with the American flag, 'the Buddhist banner which he himself had contrived and upon which the colors of the Lord Buddha's aura' were arranged in proper order[15]—a 'clairvoyant's' fantasy to which authentic Buddhists have never conceded the least importance. Basically, this entire history is connected above all with the political role of the Theosophical Society, which we will have occasion to examine later; besides, it seems not to have had any sequel in

11. See the various reports published on this subject in *Lotus Bleu*, December 27, 1891, April 27, September 27, and December 27, 1892.

12. Message addressed to the Chicago 'Parliament of Religions' in 1893.

13. *Lotus Bleu*, October 7, 1890.

14. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p405.

15. Ibid., p413.

what concerns the union of the different branches of Buddhism, although we have to believe that the Theosophists have not given up using southern Buddhism, for one of them, M.C. Jinarājadāsa,[16] recently announced that he had received from the 'High Priest of Colombo' the power to admit those Europeans desiring it to the Buddhist religion.[17] This reduces the church involved, like certain Christian churches we have mentioned, to the rank of those many organizations used by the Theosophical Society as auxiliaries for its propaganda and for the realization of its special designs.

16. Jinarājadāsa is currently vice-president of the Theosophical Society.
17. *Revue Théosophique française*, September 1920.

11

PRINCIPAL POINTS OF THEOSOPHICAL TEACHING

IF SO-CALLED THEOSOPHICAL DOCTRINE is examined as a whole, it is at once apparent that the central point is the idea of 'evolution'.[1] Now this idea is absolutely foreign to Easterners, and even in the West it is of quite recent date. In fact even the idea of 'progress',[2] of which evolution is only a form more or less complicated by spurious 'scientific' considerations, hardly goes back before the second half of the eighteenth century, its real promoters having been Turgot and Condorcet. There is no need therefore to go back very far to find the historical origin of this idea which because of their mental habits many men have come to believe essential to the human mind, whereas the greater part of humanity continues to ignore it or to take no account of it. A very clear conclusion results from this: as long as Theosophists are 'evolutionists' (and they are generally such even to the point of admitting transformism, which is the crudest aspect of evolutionism if we leave aside certain points of the Darwinian theory),[3] they are not what they claim to be and

1. A Theosophist has expressly declared that '*The Secret Doctrine* would not have been published if the theory of evolution had not come to light in the human brain' ('Les Cycles', by Amaravella, in *Lotus Bleu*, April 27, 1894, p78); we would say, rather, that without it, it would not have been imagined.
2. Prior to the eighteenth century one could hardly find any traces of the idea of 'progress' except in the writings of Bacon and Pascal; later we shall see that the Theosophists look on Bacon as an 'incarnation' of one of their 'Masters'.
3. See *The Pedigree of Man*, by Mrs Besant.

their system cannot 'have as its foundation the most ancient philosophy in the world.'[4] No doubt Theosophists are far from being alone in taking for a 'law' something that is no more than an hypothesis, and in our view even a wholly useless hypothesis; their entire originality consists in presenting this so-called law as a traditional datum, while the truth is quite the contrary. Moreover, it is hard to see how belief in 'progress' can be reconciled with attachment to an 'archaic doctrine' (the words are those of Mme Blavatsky); for anyone who admits evolution, the most modern doctrine ought logically to be the most perfect; but the Theosophists, to whom a contradiction makes little difference, seem not even to have posed the question.

We will not linger very long over the fantastic story of the evolution of humanity as the Theosophists describe it: seven 'mother-races' succeed one another in the course of a 'world period', that is to say while the 'wave of life' sojourns on a given planet. Each 'race' includes seven 'sub-races', each of which is divided into seven 'branches'. On the other hand, the 'wave of life' successively runs through seven globes in a 'round', and this 'round' is repeated seven times in a same 'planetary chain', after which the 'wave of life' passes to another 'chain', composed likewise of seven planets which will be traversed seven times in their turn. Thus there are seven 'chains' in a 'planetary system', also called an 'enterprise of evolution'; and finally, our solar system is formed of ten 'planetary systems', though there is some ambiguity on this last point. We are presently in the fifth 'race' of our 'world period', and in the fourth 'round' of the 'chain' of which the earth forms part and in which it occupies the fourth rank. This 'chain' is also the fourth of our 'planetary system' and it includes, as we have already indicated, two other physical planets, Mars and Mercury, plus four globes which are invisible and which belong to 'superior planes'. The preceding 'chain' is called the 'lunar chain' because it is represented on the 'physical plane' only by the moon. Some Theosophists interpret this data quite a different way and claim that it is only a question of different states and successive 'incarnations' of the earth itself, the names of other planets

4. *The Key to Theosophy,* p62.

in this context being purely symbolic designations; these things are truly very obscure, and we would never finish if we wished to raise all the contradictory assertions which they have occasioned. It must also be added that there are seven kingdoms, the three 'elemental' kingdoms, then the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms, and when beings of one kingdom pass from one 'chain' to the following, they generally pass to the immediately superior kingdom; in fact, it is always the same beings who are supposed to accomplish their evolution by multiple incarnations during the different periods that we have enumerated.

The figures that are given for the duration of these periods are no less improbable than all the rest. Thus according to *The Secret Doctrine,* the appearance of man on earth in the fourth 'round' occurred eighteen million years ago, and it was three hundred million years ago that the 'wave of life' reached our globe in the first 'round'. It is true that today this is much less confidently affirmed than at the beginning, for Leadbeater even declares that 'we do not know if all the rounds and all the racial periods are of equal length', and that in any case 'it is useless to try to measure in years these enormous periods of time.'[5] As regards the more limited periods, Sinnett affirms that 'the present *race* of humanity, the fifth *race* of the fourth-round, began to evolve about one million years ago,' and that this is 'a simple fact which has been definitively stated on the highest occult authority we are concerned with.'[6] On the other hand, according to the authors of the 'Lives of Alcyone', which we have mentioned, 'the foundation of the fifth race dates back to the year 79,997 before Jesus Christ.'[7] This last assertion, which is astonishingly precise, hardly seems to agree with the preceding one, and it is hardly worth the trouble to mock the savants who doubtless are in no greater agreement in their evaluations of geological periods but who at least offer their calculations as purely hypothetical. Here

5. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature,* p235.

6. *Esoteric Buddhism,* p185. [For the second phrase Guénon has in the French text 'a true number that one can take *literally* (his emphasis)', but the English originals consulted all have the phrase as above. ED.]

7. *De l'an 25000 avant Jésus-Christ à nos jours,* p65.

on the contrary we have people who claim they are able to directly verify their assertions and in recreating the history of vanished races have at their disposition the 'akashic records',[8] that is to say the very images of past events, faithfully recorded in an indelible manner in the 'invisible atmosphere' of the earth.

The conceptions which we have just sketched are basically only an absurd caricature of the Hindu theory of cosmic cycles; this theory is in fact entirely different and has nothing evolutionist about it; moreover, the numbers relating to this theory are essentially symbolic; to take them literally for actual numbers of years can only be the effect of a crude ignorance, of which not only the Theosophists give proof. We can even say without further emphasis that this theory is one of those whose true meaning is most difficult for Westerners in general to come to. But to return to the conceptions of the Theosophists, if these were to be examined in detail, many more singularities would be found; for example, the description of the first human races and their progressive solidification; further, in the present 'round', the separation of the sexes was not effected until around the middle of the third race. It also seems that each 'round' is devoted especially to the development of one of man's constituent principles; some even add that a new sense faculty develops with the appearance of each race. How does it happen then that peoples who are portrayed as vestiges of prior races, more precisely of the third or fourth, nevertheless have five senses just as we do? This difficulty is no obstacle to specifying that 'clairvoyance' (which is particularly sought after in the 'esoteric section') is the seed of the sixth sense, which will become normal in the sixth 'mother-race', the one which will immediately follow our own. Naturally, the investigations of 'clairvoyants' are credited with all this prehistoric romance, where what is related of ancient civilizations resembles rather too closely the inventions and discoveries of modern science; one even finds, for example, aviation and radioactivity,[9] which shows well enough the preoccupations which really influence these authors, and the

8. See for example *The Story of Atlantis and the Lost Lemuria*, by W. Scott-Elliot (Chicago: The Theosophical Press, 1968).

9. *De l'an 25000 avant Jésus-Christ à nos jours*, pp222–232.

considerations relating to social organization are no less characteristic in this respect.[10] In the same order of very modern preoccupations one must also include the role played in Theosophical theories as well as in spiritist theories by the 'fourth dimension' of space; the Theosophists go even further with these 'higher dimensions', and categorically declare that 'space has seven dimensions,'[11] which mathematicians would find quite arbitrary, for they conceive of geometries of any number of dimensions even while regarding them as simple algebraic constructions translated in spatial terms by analogy with ordinary analytic geometry. The detailed description of different kinds of atoms[12] can also be ranked among these pseudo-scientific fantasies; and again, it is by 'clairvoyance' that these atoms have allegedly been observed, just as it is to this faculty that one owes the knowledge of the colors of the invisible elements of man's constitution;[13] one is to believe that these 'hyper-physical organisms' are endowed with physical properties! We will also add that it is not only among the Theosophists that there are 'clairvoyants', for they are not lacking among the occultists and spiritists. The unfortunate thing is that they do not understand each other, and the visions of each always conform to the theories professed by the school to which he belongs. In such conditions it surely requires much good will to accord any importance to these reveries!

We just alluded to the elements or constituent principles of the human being; the question of man's constitution holds a great place in the 'teachings' of the Theosophists, who have devoted a number of special treatises to it;[14] it is far from being as simple as one might

10. See in particular 'Le Pérou antique', by C.W. Leadbeater, *Revue Théosophique française*, 1901.

11. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp82–85.

12. *Occult Chemistry: Clairvoyant Observations on the Chemical Elements*, by Mrs Besant and C.W. Leadbeater (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1919).

13. *Man Visible and Invisible*, by C.W. Leadbeater (Chicago: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975).

14. Besides the work by Leadbeater already mentioned, see especially various 'manuals' by Mrs Besant: *Man and His Bodies* (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1952), *The Seven Principles of Man* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904), etc.

often imagine. In fact, some few lines cannot suffice to show how the Theosophists have denatured Eastern conceptions in this area as everywhere else. When circumstances permit, we propose to publish a work in which we will outline the true Hindu conceptions on this question,[15] and one will then see how the Theosophists have drawn from them nothing but a terminology which they have appropriated without understanding it. We will therefore limit ourselves here to stating that for the Theosophists there are seven distinct principles in man; there are some divergences, it is true, not only as to the nomenclature (we have noted that Mrs Besant finally abandoned Sanskrit terms) but, what is more serious, as to the order into which they must be ranked. However, these principles are regarded as so many 'bodies' which as it were are enclosed within one another or which at least interpenetrate, and which differ in sum only by their greater or lesser subtlety. This is a conception which singularly materializes things, and naturally nothing like this exists in the Hindu doctrines. Moreover, the Theosophists willingly characterize their theory as 'transcendent materialism'; for them, 'all is matter' in different states, and 'matter, space, motion, and duration constitute the unique and one and the same eternal substance of the universe.'[16] It may be that propositions such as this have some meaning for modern Westerners, but it is certain that they are totally without meaning for Easterners who, properly speaking, do not even have the notion of 'matter' (there is no word in Sanskrit that corresponds to it, even approximately); and for us, such propositions only show the very narrow limitations within which Theosophical thought is confined. What must be retained from all of this is that the Theosophists all agree that the constitution of man is sevenfold (which is not true of any Hindu school); it is only afterward that some occultists have sought to establish a correspondence between this and their own ternary conception by grouping together discrete elements that are distinguished in the first; and they have not always

15. The work announced here on Hindu conceptions concerning the composition of the human being has since appeared under the title *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta.* [See also *Studies in Hinduism.* ED.]

16. *Esoteric Buddhism,* p261.

succeeded in the happiest way. This should be noted in order to avoid confusion between the theories which, though having obvious points of contact, nevertheless have important divergences. Moreover, the Theosophists are so eager to find septenaries everywhere (this could already be seen in the discussion of the periods of evolution) that wherever they find classifications comprising only five principles or five elements, which is frequently the case in India as well as in China, they claim that two other hidden terms exist; naturally, no one can furnish a reason for such a singular discretion.

Another question linked to the preceding concerns the states that man must traverse after death;[17] to understand what they say about this it is necessary to know that the human septenary is regarded as comprising, on the one hand, an inferior quartenary formed of perishable elements, and on the other a superior ternary formed of immortal elements. Let us add here that the higher principles are fully present only in the most 'evolved' men, and that they will not be fully present in all men until the end of the 'seventh round'. Man must successively shed each of his inferior 'bodies' after a more or less lengthy sojourn on the corresponding 'plane'. Then comes a period of repose called the 'devachanic state' where he enjoys what he has acquired during the course of his last earthly existence and which comes to an end when he must again put on inferior 'vehicles' in order to 'return to incarnation'. It was for this 'devachanic' period that it was at first claimed that a uniform period had been established; we saw how this first opinion was reconsidered; but what is remarkable is that the duration of such a state, qualified moreover as 'subjective', is measured in units of earthly time! It is always the same pattern of materializing everything, and from such a background it is quite inappropriate to ridicule the 'Summerland' of the Anglo-Saxon spiritists,[18] which is only a little more grossly material; as between the two conceptions there is, after all, only a

17. *Death–And After?,* by Mrs Besant (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901); *The Other Side of Death, Scientifically Examined and Carefully Described,* by C.W. Leadbeater (Chicago: Theosophical Book Concern, 1903).

18. *The Key to Theosophy,* pp191–2; *Death–And After?,* p85 of the French translation.

difference of degree; on the one side as on the other there are a host of examples of preposterous representations that the imagination can produce in this order of ideas by transposing to other states what is essentially proper to terrestrial life. Moreover, it would be useless to discuss this theory, which we have summarily outlined by simplifying it as much as possible and neglecting exceptional cases; in order to show that it has absolutely no foundation it suffices to say that it presupposes above all the reality of something that is intrinsically absurd; we mean reincarnation.

We have already had more than one occasion to mention this notion of reincarnation, which is regarded as the means by which evolution is effected, first for each particular human and consequentially for all humanity and even for the entire universe. Some go so far as to say that reincarnation is the 'obligatory corollary of the law of evolution',[19] which must be an exaggeration as there are evolutionists who in no way admit reincarnation. It would be rather interesting to see this question discussed among evolutionists of different schools, though we greatly doubt that any light would come from such a discussion. However that may be, the idea of reincarnation too, like that of evolution, is a very modern idea; it appears to have materialized around 1830 or 1848 in certain French socialist circles. Most revolutionaries of that time were 'mystics' in the worst sense of the word, and everyone knows of the extravagances occasioned among them by the theories of Fourier, Saint-Simon, and others of this kind. For these socialists the idea in question, whose inventors were probably Fourier and Pierre Leroux,[20] had as its sole purpose to explain the inequalities of social conditions, or at least to allay what they found shocking in them, by attributing them to the consequences of actions accomplished in some prior existence. The

19. *Essai sur l'Evolution,* by Dr Th. Pascal; *La Théosophie en quelques chapitres,* by the same author, pp28 and 35.

20. At least they seem to have been the first in France to express it; we must add, however, that the same idea was formulated earlier in Germany by Lessing in the second half of the eighteenth century. We have been unable to find any older source, or to learn whether the French socialists were inspired by Lessing, directly or indirectly, or whether on the contrary they themselves 'reinvented' the reincarnationist theory to which they in any case gave a diffusion not previously attained.

Theosophists sometimes also proffered this 'reason'[21] although they generally stressed it less than the spiritists. At root, a theory such as this explains nothing, only serving to push back the difficulty, if indeed there is a difficulty; for if there was really equality at the outset it could never have been broken at least as long as one does not formally contest the principle of sufficient reason; but in this last case the question no longer arises and the very idea of natural law which was to figure in the solution no longer means anything. Moreover, there is still much more than this to say against reincarnation; for from the viewpoint of pure metaphysics one can demonstrate its absolute impossibility,[22] and do so without any exceptions like those conceded by the 'H B of L'. [23] Moreover, here we mean the impossibility of reincarnation, not only on earth but also on any other planet,[24] as well as of bizarre notions like the multiplicity of simultaneous incarnations on different planets;[25] for the Theosophists, as we have seen, there are very long series of incarnations on each of the planets that are part of the same system. The same metaphysical demonstration is equally valid against such theories as the 'eternal return' of Nietzsche; but even though quite simple in itself, an exposition of this demonstration would take us much too far afield because of all that is presupposed to understanding it well. We will only say, in order to reduce the claims of the Theosophists to their just value, that no traditional doctrine has ever admitted reincarnation and this idea was entirely foreign to all of antiquity, even though some have wished to support it by tendentious interpretations of certain more or less symbolic texts. Even in Buddhism it is

21. *Esoteric Buddhism,* chap. 5; *La Théosophie en quelques chapitres,* p40.

22. We gave the metaphysical demonstration of the impossibility of reincarnation in *The Spiritist Fallacy,* pt 2, chap. 6, where we also indicated the chief differences between this conception and those of 'metempsychosis' and 'transmigration'. —An account of all the Theosophist ideas on this question can be found in a small volume entitled *Reincarnation, the Hope of the World,* by Irving S. Cooper [Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Press, 1965].

23. Guénon provides this demonstration in *The Spiritist Fallacy,* pt 2, chap. 6. ED.

24. *Le Lendemain de la Mort ou la Vie Future selon la Science,* by Louis Figuier.

25. *L'Eternité par des Astres,* by Blanqui.

only a question of 'changes of state', which obviously is in not the same thing as a series of earthly lives; and, we repeat, it is only symbolically that different states have sometimes been described as 'lives' by analogy with the present state of the human being and with the conditions of his terrestrial existence.[26] The truth is therefore simply this: the first spiritists of Allan Kardec's school belonged to the socialist circles we spoke of, and it is there that they borrowed this idea, as did certain writers of the same period;[27] and it was in the French spiritist school that Mme Blavatsky in turn found this idea as the occultists of the Papusian school did a bit later; what we know of the first part of her life permits no doubt in this connection. We have seen, however, that sometimes the founder of the Theosophical Society had hesitations and that she even abandoned the theory of reincarnation during a certain period even though her disciples on the contrary made of it a veritable article of faith that must be affirmed without any attempt to justify it. But generally, and leaving aside the period when she was under the influence of the 'H B of L', she could have made her own the device of Allan Kardec: 'Birth, death, rebirth, and endless progress, that is the law.' If there were divergences of views between Blavatsky and French spiritists it was not about the principle but only about the modalities of reincarnation, and this last point is of quite secondary importance in relation to the first; moreover, we have seen that contemporary Theosophists have introduced further modifications. It is rather interesting, on the other hand, that English and American spiritists have formally rejected reincarnation, contrary to the French spiritists; at least they all did so during the time of Mme Blavatsky, although today some probably allow it, but without acknowledging this, under the influence of the Theosophist ideas that have so prodigiously spread in Anglo-Saxon countries. Of course, here exactly as with the experiences of 'clairvoyants', the 'communications'

26. Let us also explain that despite the false interpretations current today, reincarnation has nothing to do with the 'metempsychosis' of the Orphics and Pythagoreans, any more than with the theories of certain Jewish Kabbalists on the 'embryonic state' and the 'revolution of souls'.

27. *Terre et Ciel* by Jean Reynaud; *Pluralité des Existences de l'Âme,* by Pezzani.

received by any one spiritist confirms each in his own theory, as if they were merely a reflection of his own ideas. We do not want to say that there is only this in all such 'communications', but there is certainly a great deal of this ordinarily.

Attached to the alleged 'law of reincarnation' is the so-called law of 'karma', by which the conditions of each existence are determined by actions committed during previous existences; this is 'that unseen and unknown[28] law *which adjusts wisely, intelligently, and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer.'[29] Mme Blavatsky calls it the 'law of retribution', and Sinnett 'the law of ethical causality'; it is surely causality of a special kind, the conception of which is subordinated to moral preoccupations; it is, if one will, a kind of 'immanent justice'. A similar conception is also found, without the word that designates it here, among occultists and spiritists, many of whom even claim to determine with an extraordinary precision and down to the least detail the relationship between what happens to an individual in his present life and what he did in his previous lives; these considerations abound especially in spiritist works, attaining at times the summit of absurdity.[30] It must be recognized that in general the Theosophists do not go quite so far; but they elaborate just as much on the theory of 'karma', the moral character of which explains the ever greater place that it holds in their teachings, for Theosophy in the hands of Mme Blavatsky's successors tends to become ever more 'moralistic' and sentimental. On the other hand, some have gone to the point of personifying 'karma', and this more or less vague and mysterious power has become for them a veritable entity, a kind of agent charged with applying sanctions for each act. Mme Blavatsky was content to attribute this role to special beings she called the 'Lords of karma' and to which she also gave the name of 'Lipikas', that is to say 'those who write' or who register human actions.[31] In this Theosophical

28. How then can one speak of it?

29. *The Key to Theosophy,* p201.

30. On the idea of 'karma' and the extravagance to which it gives rise, see again *The Spiritist Fallacy,* pt. 2, chap. 7.

31. The correct Sanskrit form of the word is 'lipikāra'; it has never really designated anything other than 'writers' and 'scribes' in the purely human sense.

conception of 'karma' we find an excellent example of the abuse of poorly understood Sanskrit terms, as we have previously noted, for the word 'karma' quite simply means 'action' and nothing else. It has never had the sense of causality ('cause' in Sanskrit is 'kārana'), and even less has it ever designated that special causation whose nature we have just indicated. Mme Blavatsky has therefore quite arbitrarily assigned the Eastern word 'karma' to a thoroughly Western conception which in fact is not entirely her own fabrication but a deformation of certain preexisting ideas, beginning with the very idea of causality. Further, this deformation is at least in part a borrowing from spiritism because it goes without saying that it is closely linked at root to reincarnationist theory itself.

We will not give further attention to other 'teachings', which are of less importance and of which we will only indicate a few points when the occasion arises in what follows; besides, there are some that must not be attributed to Mme Blavatsky herself but which belong to her successors. In any case, the outline which we have given, however succinct, seems to us sufficient to show the lack of seriousness of so-called Theosophist doctrine, and especially to prove that, despite its pretensions, it does not rest on any genuine traditional base. It must be placed quite simply, along with spiritism and the different occultist schools to which it is obviously related, in the collection of bizarre productions of the contemporary mentality to which may be given the general name of 'neo-spiritualism'. Most occultists also like to invoke the name of a 'Western tradition', which is as fantastic as the 'Oriental tradition' of the Theosophists, and likewise formed of disparate elements. It is one thing to seek the selfsame foundation which in many cases may really hide itself under the variety of forms of the traditions of different peoples; but it is quite another to fabricate a pseudo-tradition by borrowing more or less ill-formed scraps from one and another, gathering them together no matter how, especially when nothing is really understood either of their compass or of their meaning, which is the case with all these schools. These, apart from objections of a theoretical order which can be directed at them, all have in common a defect whose gravity cannot be concealed: they irremediably upset and unbalance the weak minds who are drawn to these circles;

the number of unfortunates who have been lead to ruin, to madness, and sometimes even to death by these things is much more considerable than the uninformed might think, and we have known the most lamentable examples. It can be said without the least exaggeration that the diffusion of 'neo-spiritualism' in all its forms constitutes a real public danger which cannot be too insistently denounced. The ravages accomplished especially by spiritism, which is the most widespread and the most popular form of 'neo-spiritualism', are already too great, and what is most disquieting is that they seem to be growing day by day.

A difficulty of another order, special to Theosophy by reason of the particular claims that it advertises in this connection, is that by the confusion it creates and maintains it discredits the study of Eastern doctrines and turns away many serious minds; it also gives Easterners the most unfortunate idea of Western intellectuality, for the Theosophists appear to them as its sad representatives. Not that they alone demonstrate a total incomprehension as regards certain things, but the allure of being 'initiates' that they give themselves renders this incomprehension the more shocking and inexcusable. We cannot insist too much on the point that Theosophy represents absolutely nothing in fact of authentic Eastern thought; it is thoroughly deplorable to see how easily, because of their generally complete ignorance of these things, Westerners allow themselves to be abused by audacious charlatans. This even happens to professional orientalists whose competence, it is true, seldom goes beyond linguistics or archeology. As for ourselves, if we are so assertive on this subject, it is because the direct study we have made of true Eastern doctrines gives us the right. Moreover, we know exactly what is thought of Theosophy in India,[32] where it never had the least success outside English or Anglophile circles; only the present Western

32. We have found this small but very significant note on the way in which Theosophy was received in India from its beginnings:

> The American Theosophists have just sent a collective letter to Mme Blavatsky, urging her to publish her *Secret Doctrine*. It seems that the Brahmins have been strongly opposed to its publication, and there was a threat that this work would not appear' (*Le Lotus*, April 1888).

mentality is susceptible of receiving favorably productions of this kind. We have already said that when true Hindus know what Theosophy is, they hold it in profound contempt; and the heads of the Theosophical Society are so aware of this that in their Indian offices one cannot obtain any of their treatises of so-called oriental inspiration, nor any of the ridiculous translations they have done of certain texts, but only works relating to Christianity.[33] Thus in India Theosophy is commonly regarded as a somewhat peculiar Protestant sect; and it must be recognized that, today at least, it offers all the appearances—more and more exclusive 'moralizing' tendencies, systematic hostility toward all traditional Hindu institutions, British propaganda exercised under the cloak of works of charity and education; but what follows will make all this still better understood.

33. An article of Zeaeddin Akmal of Lahore, published in the review *Zeit* of Vienna, in 1897. More recently this information has been confirmed to us personally by several Hindus.

12

THEOSOPHY AND SPIRITISM

IN ORDER TO SHOW its essentially modern character and to distinguish it from 'spiritism' understood in its ordinary and properly philosophical, or classical, sense, we have said that Theosophy should to be classified under what is generally called 'neo-spiritualism'. We must now specify that the things that we include under this name because they have enough shared characteristics to be regarded as of the same kind and above all because fundamentally they proceed from a common mentality, are nevertheless distinct. What compels us to insist on this is the fact that these strange unseen aspects of the contemporary world, of which we intend to expose only a small part here, can have the effect of a true phantasmagoria on those unused to them. At first glance it is certainly very difficult to get one's bearings in such chaos, whence arise frequent muddles that are no doubt excusable but that it would be better to avoid as much as possible. Theosophy, spiritism, and the various schools of occultism certainly look alike in some respects and up to a certain point, but they also differ on other points and ought to be carefully distinguished even while trying to establish their connection.[1] Moreover, we have already had the opportunity to see that the leaders of these schools are frequently in conflict and at times abuse each other publicly, although it is also true that this does not prevent them from occasionally becoming allies and finding themselves united in certain Masonic or other groups. In view of this, it

1. On the connection between occultism and spiritism, see *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pt. 1, chap. 5.

is tempting to wonder whether their quarrels are really serious, or whether they are not meant to conceal an agreement which prudence demands ought to remain outwardly unknown. We do not claim to answer this question here, all the more since it would probably be wrong to generalize what, in such matters, pertains to certain special cases. It may happen, for example, that without ceasing to be enemies or rivals people may nonetheless enter into an agreement to accomplish some specific task; this can be seen daily in politics, for instance. What seems to us most real in the quarrels we are speaking of is the pride-based rivalry between the leaders of different schools, or between those who aspire to be leaders. What happened in Theosophy after Mme Blavatsky's death provides a typical example. In brief, one tries to furnish an admissible pretext by advancing theoretical differences which though quite real are probably of secondary importance to people who seem devoid of steady principles and a well-defined doctrine, and whose primary concerns are surely not of the order of pure intellectuality.

Be that as it may, regarding the relations between Theosophy and spiritism in particular, we have shown how, since the foundation of her Society at least (for it is hard to know what she really thought prior to that), Mme Blavatsky openly opposed spiritist theories—or 'spiritualist' theories, as is said in Anglo-Saxon countries. It would be easy to multiply the texts where this attitude is affirmed, but we will limit ourselves to quoting some further excerpts:

> If by 'Spiritualism' you mean the explanation which Spiritualists give of some abnormal phenomena, then decidedly *we do not* [believe]. They maintain that these manifestations are all produced by the 'spirits' of departed mortals, generally their relatives, who return to earth, they say, to communicate with those they have loved or to whom they are attached. We deny this point-blank. We assert that the spirits of the dead cannot return to earth—save for rare and exceptional cases... nor do they communicate with men except by *entirely subjective means.*[2]

2. *The Key to Theosophy,* p27. — We demonstrated the impossibility of communicating with the dead through material means in *The Spiritist Fallacy,* pt. 2, chap. 5.

Mme Blavatsky further explains that spiritist phenomena are due either to the 'astral' or 'double' body of the medium or one of the people present, or to 'elementals' or 'shells', that is, 'astral remains' abandoned by the dead as they leave the corresponding 'plane', and which, until they decompose, remain endowed with a certain automatism enabling them to answer questions with a semblance of intelligence. Further on, she says: 'If by "philosophy" you mean their [the Spiritualists'] crude theories, we do [reject them]. But they have no philosophy in truth. Their best, their most intellectual and earnest defenders say so' [p31]. In this connection she reproduces 'what "M.A. Oxon" [Stainton Moses], one of the very few *philosophical Spiritualists,* writes, with respect to their lack of organization and blind bigotry.'[3] Elsewhere, she treats the doctrine of the 'return of the spirits' as 'egoistic and cruel,' because, according to this doctrine,

> unfortunate man is not liberated even by death from the sorrows of this life. Not a drop from the life-cup of pain and sufferings will miss his lips; and, *nolens volens,* since he sees everything now [after death], shall he drink it to the bitter dregs.... Is such a state of knowledge [of the sufferings of those he left behind on the earth] consistent with bliss? Then 'bliss' stands in such a case for the greatest curse, and orthodox damnation must be a relief in comparison with it![4]

To this spiritist doctrine, she contrasts the conception of the 'Devachan', in which,

> as to the ordinary mortal, his bliss in it is complete. It is an *absolute* oblivion of all that gave it pain or sorrow in the past incarnation, and even oblivion of the fact that such things as pain and sorrow exist at all.[5]

Mme Blavatsky admitted only 'the possibility of communications between the living and the disembodied spirits' in cases that she

3. Ibid., p31.
4. Ibid., pp146–47.
5. Ibid., p148

considered to be quite exceptional, such as the following:

> The first exception is during the few days that follow immediately the death of a person and before the *Ego* passes into the Devachanic state. Whether any living mortal... has derived much benefit from the return of the spirit into the *objective* plane is another question.... The second exception is found in the *Nirmanakayas*, [that is], those who, though they have won the right to Nirvana and cyclic rest... have out of pity for mankind and those they left on earth renounced the Nirvanic state.[6]

However rare it may be, the first of these two exceptions is nonetheless a serious concession that opens the gate to all sorts of compromises, for once the least possibility of communicating with the dead through material means is admitted, it is difficult to know where it will stop.[7] In fact, there are Theosophists who adopted a much less uncompromising attitude than did Mme Blavatsky, and who, like certain occultists, ended by admitting that 'spirits' actually do manifest themselves—and quite frequently—during spiritist séances. It is true that they add that these 'spirits' are 'elementaries', that is, human beings of the lowest order with whom it is rather dangerous to communicate, but we very much doubt that concessions of this kind will be able to attract the favors of spiritist hard-liners, who will never bring themselves to consider them true 'believers'.

In practice, Theosophist leaders have always advised against indulging in spiritist experiments, often trying to highlight the dangers. In her last years, forgetting or pretending to forget her original beliefs, Mme Blavatsky wrote:

> It is because I believe in [these phenomena]... that all my being revolts against them.... That only opens the door to a swarm of 'spooks', good, bad and indifferent, to which the medium becomes a slave for life. It is against such promiscuous mediumship and intercourse with goblins that I raise my voice, not against spiritual mysticism. The latter is ennobling and holy; the former is of just the same nature as the phenomena of two centuries ago for which so many witches and wizards have been made to suffer.... What I mean is that, whether conscious or unconscious, all this dealing with the dead is *necromancy*, and a most dangerous practice.... The collective wisdom of all past centuries has ever been loud in denouncing such practices. Finally, I say, what I have never ceased repeating orally and in print for fifteen years: While some of the so-called 'spirits' do not know what they are talking about, repeating merely—like poll-parrots—what they find in the mediums' and other people's brains, others are most dangerous, and can only lead one to evil.[8]

As proof of the first case she cites the fact of reincarnationist 'communications' in France and anti-reincarnationist 'communications' in England and America. As for the second, she asserts that 'your best, your most powerful mediums, have all suffered in health of body and mind,' [p195] giving as examples some who were epileptic and others who died of lunacy. And finally:

> Behold the veteran mediums, the founders and prime movers of modern spiritualism—the Fox sisters. After more than forty years of intercourse with the 'Angels', the latter have led them to become incurable sots who are now denouncing, in public lectures, their own life-long work and philosophy as a fraud. What kind of spirits must they be who prompted them, I ask you?[9]

All the same, this last line seems to call for a conclusion which is lacking, because Mme Blavatsky professes not to believe in the Devil; it is no less true that there are some very sound things here, although some of them might be turned against the woman who wrote them: were her own 'phenomena'—insofar as their reality is admitted—so very different from those that she likens purely and simply to sorcery? It also seems that she is faced with the following dilemma: either she was only a fake medium at the time of her

6. Ibid., pp151.

7. In reality, as in the case of reincarnation this again is a metaphysical impossibility, which could not suffer the least exception.

8. *The Key to Theosophy*, pp193–94. ED.

9. Ibid., pp195–96.

'miracles clubs' or else she was a sick person. Does she not go so far as to say that epilepsy is 'the first and strongest symptom of genuine mediumship'? [p195] In any case, we also think that a medium is always a more or less abnormal and unbalanced being (which explains certain facts of unconscious fraud); this is in sum what Sinnett expressed in the following terms:

> A medium . . . is a person whose principles are loosely united and susceptible of being borrowed by other beings, or floating principles, having an attraction for some of them or some part of them [and constantly seeking to live as parasites of the man so badly constituted as to be unable to resist them],[10]

whence numerous cases of obsession. According to the author, these 'floating principles' are above all 'astral shells', but in reality they could actually be something entirely different: the true nature of the 'powers of the air' should be clear enough. Let us now see what Leadbeater, one of those who nevertheless made the most concessions to spiritism, says:

> Physical mediumship [that of materialization séances] is the crudest and the most injurious for health. In my opinion, the fact of speaking and giving communications in a state of trance is not so harmful for the physical body, although if one considers the minimal value of most of these communications, one is tempted to believe that they weaken intelligence . . . ! Of the mediums with whom I sat in séances thirty years ago, one is now blind, another an inveterate drunkard, and a third, threatened with apoplexy and paralysis, saved his life only by giving up spiritism completely.[11]

> The leaders of Theosophy are certainly absolutely right to denounce the dangers of mediumship in this way, and we can only agree with them, but unfortunately they are very little qualified for such a role, since the dangers they point out to their disciples are scarcely more

10. *Esoteric Buddhism*, pp155–56. [The phrase in brackets is not found in the English edition consulted. Ed.]

11. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp121–123.

> to be feared than those of the 'psychic training' they themselves impose, in either case, the most obvious result is to unbalance a good number of feeble-minded people.

It should be added that warnings such as the above are not always listened to in spite of the authority which those who issue them usually exert upon their followers. Among the majority of both Theosophists and occultists we meet many people who also practice spiritism without being too concerned as to how these things can be reconciled, and perhaps without even wondering if they can be. This is not too surprising, given the many contradictions within Theosophy itself, which neither stop these people nor seem to embarrass them or make them think. Since they are basically far more sentimental than intellectual, they appear to be attracted indifferently toward anything that appears capable of satisfying their vague pseudo-mystical aspirations. This restless and misguided religiosity is one of the most striking characteristics of many of our contemporaries, and it is especially in America that its most varied and extraordinary manifestations can be seen, although Europe is far from immune to it. This same tendency has also contributed greatly to the success of certain philosophical doctrines, such as Bergsonism, whose affinities with 'neo-spiritualism' we mentioned previously. The pragmatism of William James, with his theory of 'religious experience' and his appeal to the 'subconscious' as a means for the human being to communicate with the Divine (which seems to us a true case of unconscious satanism), also proceeds from this source. In this connection it is useful to recall the degree of the eagerness with which such theories were adopted and used by the majority of modernists, whose mental make up is quite similar to that of the people presently under discussion. Moreover, the modernist mentality and the Protestant mentality differ only in nuance, even if they are not basically identical, and 'neo-spiritualism' in general is very close to Protestantism. As regards Theosophy in particular, the second part of its history will enable the reader to understand this point.

In spite of all the similarities that can be established, it is to be noted that generally speaking Theosophists hold spiritists in a certain contempt, an attitude motivated by their claims to esoterism.

On the contrary, nothing of the sort exists for spiritists, who admit neither initiation nor hierarchy of any kind, and this is why it is sometimes said that with regard to spiritism, Theosophy and occultism are somewhat in the position of aristocracy to democracy. Yet esoterism, which should normally be considered as the prerogative of an elite, seems to fit poorly with propaganda and popularization. However, the extraordinary thing is that Theosophists are almost as much propagandists as are the spiritists, even though in a less direct and more insinuating manner, this being yet another of the contradictions which abound with them, whereas in this respect the spiritists are perfectly logical. Moreover, the Theosophists' disdain of the spiritists has little justification, not only because their so-called esoterism is of the most inferior quality, but also because whether they like it or not many of their ideas were initially borrowed from spiritism: all the modifications they underwent do not succeed in hiding this origin entirely. Moreover, one must not forget that the founders of the Theosophical Society began by professing spiritism (we have enough evidence on the subject not to pay heed to their later denials) and that later other notable Theosophists also had their origins in spiritism, such being Leadbeater's case in particular. He was a former Anglican minister, and in his own words attracted to Theosophy after reading Sinnett's *Occult World*, which is quite characteristic of his mentality since this work deals exclusively with 'phenomena'. At that time, he assiduously followed the seances of the medium Eglinton. It should be added that following a stay in India in 1882, during which he visited various Theosophists, and while aboard the boat that brought him back to Europe, Eglinton was gratified by an apparition of Koot Hoomi, who presented himself 'through the signs of a Master Mason'; it is true that after initially attesting the reality of this manifestation, he later regained his self-control and declared that he had only witnessed a spiritist 'materialization'.[12] Whatever may have been the truth behind this story—where autosuggestion probably played the greatest role—at the time of his contact with Leadbeater, Eglinton was 'controlled' by

12. *Le Monde Occulte*, pp254–264; ibid., postface of the translator, pp319–326; letter of Eglinton in *Light*, January 1886.

a 'spirit' named Ernest, whom Mme Blavatsky had placed on the same level as her former 'guide' John King. As one day this Ernest had proudly boasted that he knew the 'Masters of Wisdom', Leadbeater got the idea of taking him as an intermediary in order to send a letter to Koot Hoomi; it was only after several months and 'not through Ernest' that he received an answer in which the 'Master' told him that he 'had not received his letter and could not do so because of the messenger's nature', advising him to spend some time in Adyar. Thereupon, near the end of 1884, Leadbeater went to meet Mme Blavatsky, who was then in London but on the point of returning to India the next day. During an evening at Mrs Oakley's, Mme Blavatsky 'materialized' a new letter from the 'Master', and following the advice it contained Leadbeater suddenly left his ministry and took a boat a few days later, joining Mme Blavatsky in Egypt and accompanying her to Adyar. By then he had become one of the most zealous members of the Theosophical Society.[13]

In ending this chapter we should add that there was at least one attempt by the Theosophists to forge an alliance with the spiritists, perhaps, we should say, primarily in order to monopolize the spiritist movement for their own benefit. We refer to a lecture given by Mrs Besant on April 7, 1898 at a meeting of the 'Spiritualist Alliance' of London, of which Stainton Moses was formerly President; we are therefore anticipating a little what followed, so as not to be forced to go back over the present topic. In stark contrast with all that we have seen up to now, this speech seems to us a real masterpiece of insincerity. While acknowledging that there had been 'misunderstandings' and that 'hasty words had been uttered on both sides,' Mrs Besant proclaimed that 'in the numerous issues of the journal which she published with Mead, not a single harsh word will be found against the spiritist movement.' This is possible, but what she had not written in this journal, she had said elsewhere.[14] In fact, on

13. *L'Occultisme dans La Nature*, pp396–403.

14. It is interesting to compare some statements by Mrs Besant with this passage from the talk given by Colonel Olcott at the twelfth annual convention of the Theosophical Society, held at Adyar from the 27th to the 29th of December 1887:

> From the fact that several principal members of our Society, myself included, are former spiritists, many conclude that the Society is only a branch of spiritism. It is not.

April 20, 1890, at the 'Hall of Science' in London, she declared, word for word, that 'mediumship is dangerous and leads to immorality, insanity and vice,' which is in perfect accordance with the opinion of all the other leaders of Theosophy. But let us cite some of the most interesting passages of her 1898 lecture:

> To start out with, I shall address the question of the guiding forces of our two movements, the spiritualist and the Theosophical. I regard these two as part of the same attempt to urge the world to combat materialism and guide human thought in a spiritual direction. This is why I regard them both as originating from those who work for the moral upliftment and progress of mankind. In short, I believe that these two movements proceed from highly evolved men who though they live on the physical plane have the power to pass at will into the invisible world and thus communicate with the disembodied.... Unlike you, I do not attach too much importance to the fact that some who participate in this movement no longer live in physical bodies, for this question is quite unimportant. When communications are received, we are not concerned about knowing whether they come from souls presently embodied or disembodied.... In our view, the spiritualist movement was begun by a Lodge of Adepts (to use the usual term), that is, by highly advanced occultists, men living in a body but whose souls have developed far beyond the present stage of human evolution.... They adopted a system of exceptional manifestations, using the souls of the dead and associating them in their efforts to give to the world the full assurance that death does not end man's life and that except for the loss of his physical body man is not changed by passing from life to death.

It is rather strange to see how Mrs Besant here reproduces the doctrine of the 'H B of L' on the origin of spiritism (with the exception that she introduces 'the souls of the dead'), and even stranger that she thought she could convince spiritists to accept it. But let us go on.

> As for us, we believe that the present Theosophical movement owes its impetus to a Lodge of great occultists... and that this second impetus was rendered necessary by the very fact that the attention of the upholders of the first movement were too overwhelmingly drawn to a great number of phenomena of trivial character. And we may add that when the foundation of the Theosophical Society was planned it was understood that it should work hand in hand with the Spiritist Society.[15] The spiritists began to break away from Mme Blavatsky when she took a stand against the abuse of phenomena. She asserted that it was

If Theosophy were a modern school instead of an archaic school, we could perhaps consider it an evolution of phenomenal spiritism on the higher plane of pure philosophy. However, there cannot be two opinions on the likelihood of the highly favorable effect that our movement will have on spiritism. Ancient philosophy [*sic*] does not deny any of the facts of mediumship; on the contrary, it appears that it offers a truly scientific and reasonable explanation of it, at the same time giving a far nobler idea of human evolution on the ascendant planes. It would be wrong to forecast the future of Theosophy without taking account of the fact that it will inevitably recruit some adherents from the ranks of spiritism. These recruits will be the most distinguished spiritists to be found in this system that has so many adherents. But above all we must strive to show ourselves true Theosophists in word and deed.

And here is another passage, taken from an article in a Theosophist journal:

> It would be wrong... to deny any value or seriousness to spiritism in general. Many Theosophists have in fact passed through spiritism. Studied with *extreme prudence* and rigorous control conditions, it provides absolutely *irrefutable proofs* of the existence of the beyond, and consequently of the truth of a part of the Theosophist teachings. But we must grant and recognize that charlatanism under all its forms is easy from this side, and the chances of deception very great. And if the possibility of fraud, or simply of error in good *faith*, is great on the part of the mediums and assistants, they are much greater still on the part of entities from the astral world, for the latter possess an infinitely greater 'illusionist' power than is ordinarily imagined. These reservations aside, it is certain, I repeat, that through spiritism one can obtain the so frequently requested famous proofs of the existence of a hyper-physical world, and that it is precisely the undeniable reality of these proofs which has led many Theosophists—and not the least important ones—here where they are today. Is this to say that we find spiritism such as it is usually practised commendable? I think not. If I refer to what our teachers say, it would be rather the contrary.... Therefore let us refrain from criticizing the sometimes very useful work of our spiritist brothers, but let us also abstain from participating in it, so as not to risk impeding or retarding the *post mortem* evolution of our late friends.' (A. Janvier, *Le Théosophe*, May 16, 1914).

15. It should be noted that the spiritists have never a formed a 'Society', but that they have always had a multitude of independent groups of one kind or another.

not necessary to believe that the souls of the dead were the only agents of spiritist manifestation; that many other agents could provoke these phenomena; that the most insignificant of them were produced by elementals or nature spirits, entities belonging to the astral world; that only a few of the communications could be the work of the disembodied; that most of these phenomena could be caused by the will-power of a psychically trained man, with or without the help of the souls of the dead or elementals. But when she further claimed that the human soul, in the body as well as out of the body, has the power to provoke many of these conditions, that this power is inherent in it, and that there is no need for it to gain it through death since it can make use of it within its physical body as well as when it has been separated from it, a large number of spiritists protested and refused from then on to have any contact with her.

This is a peculiar way of writing history, and to assess its worth correctly, it is enough to remember Mme Blavatsky's anti-spiritist declarations on the one hand, and on the other the crucial importance attached to 'phenomena' at the beginning of the Theosophical Society. Mrs Besant wanted above all to convince the spiritists that 'the forces guiding the two movements' were basically the same; but this was not enough, and she went on to acknowledge, with only slight reservations, the truth of their fundamental hypothesis:

> We must rid the spiritists of the idea that we deny the reality of their phenomena. In the past, too much importance was given to the theory of shells or astral corpses. It is true that you will find a few writers claiming that almost all spiritist phenomena are caused by the action of these shells, but let me tell you that this opinion is shared by only a very small minority of Theosophists. Judge has made a statement that no well informed Theosophist can accept, for he maintains that all spiritist communications are the work of these agents. This is not the opinion of the majority of Theosophists, and certainly not that of educated Theosophists, nor of all those who, since Mme Blavatsky, have some claim to a knowledge of occultism. We have always affirmed that, while some of these communications could be of this nature, most of them came from the disembodied.

This is a blatant lie. One has only to compare the last sentence with passages from Blavatsky's writings quoted above. But there was no doubt a certain shrewdness in holding Judge, 'then a dissident,' responsible for certain embarrassing assertions, although he was not the only one to have made them. Here, now, is the conclusion:

> For some years we have adopted the policy of never saying a single hostile or disdainful word to our spiritist brothers. Why will you not adopt the same attitude, thus meeting us halfway over this bridge we wish to build together? Why can you not treat us in your journals as we treat you? Why make a habit of always saying something harsh, cutting, or bitter when you mention our books and reviews? I am asking you to adopt our politics, because I feel I have the right to ask this of you, having imposed it on myself for so many years.... I beseech you not to consider us rivals or enemies from now on, but to treat us as brothers whose methods are different from yours but whose goal is identical to yours.... Tonight I have come to you with the goal of making our future union possible, and if it is not possible, then with the goal at least of ridding ourselves of all hostile feelings; and so I hope that our meeting has not been entirely useless.

Mrs Besant's use of the word 'politics' to qualify her attitude is really remarkable. It is indeed the most suitable word, and this politics had as its immediate goal to put an end to the attacks of the spiritists against Theosophy, and as a more distant goal to prepare a real takeover of the 'spiritualist' movement under the pretext of union. As we shall see further on, what happened in other circles leaves no room for doubt on this last point. But we do not believe the spiritists let themselves be outwitted. Mrs Besant's advances could not expunge their memory of so many contradictory statements, and the two parties stood firm on their positions. If we have brought up this subject, it is above all because it provides an excellent example of Theosophist dishonesty.

13

THEOSOPHY AND THE RELIGIONS

BEFORE RETURNING to the history of Theosophy, there are two further questions which we wish to examine briefly. The first is the attitude of Theosophy toward religions; the second relates to the existence of the oath in the Theosophical Society. As regards the first, we have seen that Mme Blavatsky offered her doctrine as 'the essence and common origin of all the religions,' no doubt because she had borrowed something from each of them. We have also noted that in the 'exoteric section' everyone was admitted without distinction as to their opinions, this being boasted of as proof of unlimited tolerance. In order to demonstrate that 'no member of the Society has the right to force another member to adopt his personal opinions.' Mme Blavatsky cited this passage from the regulations:

> It is not lawful for *any officer of the Parent Society* to express by word or act any hostility to, or preference for, any one section, religious or philosophical, more than another. All have equal right to have the essential features of their religious belief laid before the tribunal of an impartial world. And no officer of the Society in his capacity as officer, has the right to preach his own sectarian views or beliefs to members assembled, except when the meeting consists of his co-religionists. After due warning, violation of the rule shall be punished by suspension or expulsion.[1]

It was this article that some Theosophists later reproached Mrs Besant for having violated by propagating a particular religion of

1. *The Key to Theosophy*, p50.

her own invention, to which charge Mr Leadbeater rather peevishly responded that

> this policy is the affair of the president and not theirs, that as the president she knew more of the affair from every angle than her critiques, and that she doubtless had excellent reasons of which these members were completely ignorant.[2]

It seems then that the directors of the Society are above the laws, which are doubtless made only for simple members and subordinate agents; in these conditions it is very doubtful that the loudly proclaimed tolerance is always strictly respected.

Besides, even if one limits oneself to works considered authoritative in the Theosophical Society, one cannot help noticing that impartiality is often lacking. We have already mentioned Mme Blavatsky's avowed enmity toward Christianity, which no doubt was surpassed only by her enmity toward Judaism; moreover, all that displeased her in Christianity she attributed to Jewish origins. It was thus that she wrote:

> All the unselfishness of the altruistic teachings of Jesus has become a merely theoretical subject for pulpit oratory; while the precepts of practical selfishness taught in the Mosaic Bible, against which Christ so vainly preached, have become ingrained into the innermost life of Western nations.... Christian but Biblical people prefer the law of Moses to Christ's law of love. They base upon the Old Testament, which panders to all their passions, their laws of conquest, annexation, and tyranny.[3]

And further:

> What is needed is to impress men with the idea that, if the root of mankind is *one*, then there must also be one truth which finds expression in all the various religions—except in the Jewish, as you do not find it *expressed* even in the Kabala.[4]

2. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p384.
3. *The Key to Theosophy*, pp40 and 42.
4. Ibid., p45.

It was the hatred for all that can be characterized as 'Judeo-Christian' that led to the understanding, to which we have alluded, between Mme Blavatsky and the orientalist Burnouf.[5] For both of them, Christianity was worthless because it had been 'Judaized' by St Paul. They were delighted to oppose this alleged deformation to the teachings of Christ, which they presented as an expression of 'aryan philosophy' which they supposed to have been transmitted by Buddhists to the Essenes. Doubtless it is this community of views which made the Theosophists say that 'the brilliant intelligence of Émile Burnouf was carried on its own wings to those heights bordering the lofty altitudes from which radiate the teachings of the Masters of the Himalayas.'[6]

But this is not all, and we are now going to see Sinnett, who was always directly inspired by Mme Blavatsky (under the mask of the 'Masters'), attack not only the Jewish religion but all religions in general,[7] not even sparing 'exoteric' Buddhism:

> Nothing can produce more disastrous effects on human progress as regards the destiny of individuals than the very prevalent notion that one religion, followed out in a pious spirit, is as good as another, and that if such and such doctrines are perhaps absurd when you look into them, the great majority of people will never think of their absurdity, but will recite them in a blamelessly devoted attitude of mind.[8]

5. On this subject see an article by Burnouf entitled 'Le Bouddhisme en Occident', in *Revue des deux Mondes*, July 15, 1888, and an article by Mme Blavatsky entitled 'Théosophie et Bouddhisme' in *Lotus*, September 1888.

6. *Lotus Bleu*, May 27, 1895.

7. One wonders how attacks against all religions, considered as equally harmful to humanity, can be reconciled with the theory according to which the birth of these same religions was due to the direct influence of the 'Great White Lodge' (see chap. 13), and also with the statement, contained in a letter from a 'Master' (*Le Lotus*, September 1888) and reproduced later by Mrs Besant (see chap. 20), that the Theosophical Society is the cornerstone of the future religions of humanity.

8. *Esoteric Buddhism*, p244. [Guénon quotes a French original of this work that, while generally the same as the English original quoted in our translation just above and in what follows, is in places considerably longer and sometimes different in meaning. Thus we have thought it worthwhile to add our translation of the text quoted by Guénon from the French *Le Bouddhisme Ésotérique*, which is as follows: 'Religious ideas according to theologians, and spiritual faculties according to esoteric science, are things completely opposed.... Nothing can be more disastrous for human progress as regards the destiny of individuals than this notion, still so widespread, that a religion, whatever it may be, followed with a pious and sincere spirit, is a good thing for morality, and that if this or that point of doctrine appears absurd, it is still no less useful to preserve, in the great majority of people, religious practices that, observed with devotion, can only produce good results. Certainly all religions are valid; they are all equally dangerous for the *Ego* whose loss is as well assured in one as in another by being completely enmeshed in their practices. And here there is no exception, even for religions that have nothing but kindness, gentleness, meekness, and purity of morals to their credit, and whose liberal and tolerant spirit has never permitted a drop of human blood to be spilled for the propagation of doctrines that have been imposed on the world only by the power of attraction and persuasion.' ED.]

What is striking about this esoteric doctrine, we read further on, is that it is opposed to the idea of keeping men

> in subjection to any priestly system or dogma by terrifying their fancy with the doctrine of a personal judge waiting to try them for more than their lives at their death.[9]

The idea of a personal God, so hatefully caricaturized in this last passage,[10] is one of those that has been most often and most energetically spurned by the Theosophists, at least during their first period. 'We do not believe at all,' said Mme Blavatsky

> in such a God [as that of the Christians, of the Bible and of Moses].... We reject the idea of a personal, or an extra-cosmic and anthropomorphic God, who is but the gigantic shadow of *man*, and not of man at his best, either. The God of theology, we

9. Ibid., p260.

10. The French text Guénon quotes here is as follows: 'What must especially strike one is how this [esoteric] doctrine is opposed to the idea of keeping men under the yoke of any sort of clerical system whose dogmas and teachings are designed to abase the character, terrify the imagination. What could be more brutalizing than the thought of a personal God, on whose omnipotence and good will men wholly depend, a God who waits for their hour of death, who lies in wait so that, after a few years of an often unhappy life, he can throw them into an abyss of eternal sufferings or of endless joys!' ED.

say—and prove it—is a bundle of contradictions and a logical impossibility.[11]

This is sufficient to settle the value of the assertion so often made by the leaders of the Theosophical Society, that adherents of all religions will not find in the Society's teachings anything that might offend their beliefs. 'It does not seek to remove men from their proper religion,' says Mrs Besant,

> but it rather urges them to seek the spiritual food which in the depths of their faith they need. . . . Wherever it reaches, the Society not only attacks the two great enemies of man, superstition and materialism, it propagates peace and good will, establishing a pacifying force in the conflicts of modern civilization.[12]

We will see later what the 'esoteric Christianity' of contemporary Theosophists amounts to; but immediately after the citations we just made, it is well to read this extract from a work of Mr Leadbeater:

> In order to facilitate the oversight and direction of the world, the Adepts have divided it into districts, very much as the Church has divided its territory into parishes, with this difference that the districts sometimes include a continent. An Adept presides over each district, as a priest directs his parish. From time to time the Church makes a special effort which is not directed toward the good of a single parish, but to the general well-being; it sends what is called a 'mission to the interior' with the aim of rekindling the faith and reawakening enthusiasm in an entire country. The results obtained do not bring any benefit to the missionaries, but contribute to an augmentation of the work of each parish. From certain points of view, the Theosophical Society resembles such a mission, and the natural divisions of the world made by the diverse religions correspond to different parishes. Our Society appears in the middle of each of them, making no effort to

11. *The Key to Theosophy*, p61.
12. *Theosophy*, pp10–11.

> turn people away from the religion which they practice, but on the contrary trying to make them understand better and especially to make them live better, often even leading them back to a religion they have abandoned by offering them a more elevated conception of it. In other cases, there are men who though of a religious temperament yet belong to no religion because they have had to content themselves with vague explanations of orthodox doctrine, and who have found in Theosophical teachings an exposition of the truth which has satisfied their reasoning and to which they have been able to subscribe, thanks to its great tolerance.[13] We have among our members Jains, Parsees, Jews, Mohammedans, and Christians, and none of them has ever heard a word of condemnation of their religion from the mouths of our instructors. On the contrary, in many cases the work of our Society where it has been established has produced a real revival of religion. The reason for this attitude will be easily grasped through the understanding that all religions have their origin in the Confraternity of the White Lodge. In its bosom there exists, unknown to the masses, the real government of the world; and in this government is found the Department of Religious Instruction. The Chief of this Department [that is to say, the 'Bodhisattva'] has founded all the religions, whether personally or through the intermediary of a disciple, adapting his teaching both to the times and to the people for which it is destined.[14]

What is new here in relation to the theories of Mme Blavatsky on the origin of the religions is only the intervention of the 'Bodhisattva'; but one can see that the claims of the Theosophical Society have only been increasing. In this connection we will also mention as a curiosity the multiple initiatives which, according to the same author, the Theosophists indiscriminately attribute to their 'Adepts':

13. The end of this phrase is not very clear because of the errors it contains, at least in the translation. [Since we were not able to find the English original, this is a translation back into English of the French translation used by Guénon. ED.]
14. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp378–379.

It has been said that several centuries ago the Chiefs of the White Lodge decided that once every hundred years, during the last quarter of the each century, a special effort would be made to help the world in some way. Some of these efforts are easily recognizable. For example, such is the movement imparted by Christian Rosenkreutz[15] in the fourteenth century, at the same time that Tsong-khapa reformed northern Buddhism.[16] In Europe, such also was the Renaissance in the arts and letters, and, in the fifteenth century, the invention of printing. In the sixteenth century we have the reforms of Akbar in India; in England, the publication of the works of Lord Bacon, with the splendid flowering of the reign of Elizabeth; in the seventeenth century, the foundation of the Royal Society of Sciences in England and the scientific works of Robert Boyle[17] and others after the Restoration. In the eighteenth century there was an effort to implement a very important movement (whose occult history on higher planes is known only to a small number), which unfortunately escaped the control of its leaders and ended

15. The legendary founder of the Rosicrucians. All that is said of him, even his very name, is purely symbolic. The date of the founding of Rosicrucianism is, moreover, extremely uncertain. — Theosophists consider Christian Rosenkreutz an historic personage and make him an 'incarnation' of one of their 'Masters', who was then successively, they say, the Transylvanian general Hunyadi Janos, then Robert le Moine, sixteenth-century physician and alchemist, and the philosopher Francis Bacon (Annie Besant, *The Masters*). It is added that a certain portrait of Johannes-Valentin Andreae, the German Rosicrucian of the seventeenth century, 'seems to be a portrait of Lord Bacon at age eighty' (E.F. Udny, *Le Christianisme primitif dans l'Evangile des Douze Saints*, pp135–36) leading one to suppose that it is still a question of the same personage, who then became Count Rakoczi (see p48, n40). 'One of the main tasks accomplished by this august Personality, a task pursued through the entire cycle of his activity, except perhaps the life as Hunyadi, was to lay down the foundations of modern science. It was accomplished largely through the intermediary of secret and Masonic Societies. . . . Master R is the true Head of Masonry.' (J.I. Wedgwood, 'Le Comte Ferdinand de Hompesch', in *Le Lotus Bleu*, November 1926).

16. The Theosophists reproduce here a confusion of the 'uninitiated' orientalists: Lamaism has never been part of Buddhism.

17. There is no doubt an allusion here to the relations of this celebrated alchemist with the Rosicrucian Eireneaus Philalethes.

in the French Revolution. Finally, we arrive in the nineteenth century at the founding of the Theosophical Society.[18]

Here, certainly, is a prime specimen of history shaped to the special conceptions of the Theosophists. How many men without in the least suspecting it have been agents of the 'Great White Lodge'! If there were nothing but fantasies such as these, one could merely smile, for they are all too obviously intended to impress the naive and they do not actually have too great an importance. What is much more important, as what follows will show, is how the Theosophists mean to carry out their role as 'missionaries', particularly in the 'district' which corresponds to the domain of Christianity.

18. Ibid., p380. — At present, several personages, even outside of Theosophy in the strict sense of the word, give themselves out as envoys of the 'Great White Lodge'. We shall mention here only the person who is known in Germany under the bizarre name of Bô-Yin-Râ, and who in recent years founded an organization bearing the title 'Grand-Orient de Pathmos', an apocalyptic allusion which makes one think of the 'Initiate Brothers of Asia' (see p32). It seems that this organization spread not only in Germany but also in Austria and Poland; some have even claimed that its central headquarters are found in France, probably in Savoy, but this information seems to us rather doubtful. To this 'Grand-Orient de Pathmos' is attached a 'Confrérie des Rites Anciens du Saint-Graal', whose Grand-Master (who calling himself Majôtef) is Dr E. Dreyfus, a dental surgeon in Sarreguemines.

14

THE OATH IN THEOSOPHY

ONE OF THE THINGS for which secret societies, especially Freemasonry, are most often reproached, is that they compel their members to take an oath the nature of which varies, as also the extent of the obligations it imposes; it is in most cases an oath of silence, to which is sometimes joined an oath of obedience to the orders of leaders both known and unknown. The oath of silence may itself concern the means of recognition and the special ceremonial used in the association, or even its very existence, its mode of organization, or the names of its members; more often it applies to what is said and done, to the activities it is engaged in and to the teachings received there in one form or another. Sometimes there are also pledges of another kind, such as the promise to conform to a certain rule of conduct, which can, with good reason, appear abusive when it assumes the form of a solemn oath. We do not intend here to enter into even the least discussion of what can be said for or against the use of oaths, especially the oath of silence; the only thing that interests us at present is that if this is a subject of reproach valid against Masonry and other more or less secret societies—if not against all those which have this character—it is also valid against the Theosophical Society. This, it is true, is not a secret society in the full sense of the word, for it has never made a mystery of its existence and most of its members do not conceal their affiliation; but this is only one side of the question, and it would be necessary above all to agree on the different meanings to which the expression 'secret society' is susceptible, which is not especially easy judging by all the controversies revolving around this simple matter of definition.

Most often people make the mistake of taking too summary a view of things; they think exclusively of the characteristics of certain organizations, they use these to form a definition, and they then want to apply this definition to other organizations that have very different characters. However that may be, we shall accept here as more or less sufficient for the case that occupies us, the opinion that a secret society is not necessarily a society that conceals its existence or that of its members, but is above all a society that has secrets, whatever their nature. If this is the case, the Theosophical Society may be regarded as a secret society, since its division into an 'exoteric section' and an 'esoteric section' already offers sufficient proof. Of course, in speaking here of 'secrets' we do not mean signs of recognition—abolished today, as we said—but teachings reserved strictly for members, or even for some of them to the exclusion of others, and for which the oath of silence is required; in Theosophy, these teachings seem to be above all those relating to 'psychic development', since that is the essential aim of its 'esoteric section'.

There is no doubt that in the Theosophical Society there are the oaths of the different kinds that we have noted, for on this point we have the formal testimony of Mme Blavatsky herself; here in fact is what she says:

> We have, strictly speaking, no right to refuse admission to anyone—especially in the *Esoteric Section* of the Society, wherein 'he who enters there is as one newly born.' But if any member, his sacred pledges on his word of honour and his immortal *Self* notwithstanding, chooses to continue, after that 'new birth', with the new man, the vices or defects of his old life and to indulge in them still in the Society, then, of course, he is more than likely to be asked to resign and withdraw; or, in the case of his refusal, he will be expelled.[1]

Here it is a question of the pledge to adopt a certain rule of life, and it is not exclusively in the 'esoteric section' that such a pledge is required: 'Even in some exoteric public branches the members pledge themselves on their "Higher Self" to live *the* life prescribed

1. *The Key to Theosophy*, p 49.

by Theosophy.'[2] In such conditions, it will always be possible, when one wants to be rid of a troublesome member, to declare that his conduct is not 'theosophical'; moreover, among faults of this kind are expressly listed any criticism that a member dares to make of the Society and its leaders, and it seems moreover that its effects must be particularly terrible in future existences. Leadbeater writes:

> I have noted that some people, having shown at a given moment the greatest dedication to our President [Mrs Besant], have now changed their attitude completely and begin to criticize and slander her. This is a wicked deed of which the karma will be much worse than it would be if it were a matter of a person to whom they owed nothing. I do not wish to say that one does not have the right to change one's opinion.... But if, after having separated from our President, one starts to attack her and to spread scandalous calumny about her, as many people have done, then one commits a very serious error and one's karma will be extremely heavy. It is always serious to be vindictive and untruthful, but when applied to the one who has offered you the cup of life [*sic*], these faults become a crime whose effects are fearful.[3]

In order to form an idea of these effects, one need only refer to the two preceding pages, where one reads:

> We discovered that the ignorant populace that tortured Hypatia in Alexandria reincarnated for the most part in Armenia, where the Turks submitted them to all kinds of cruelty.[4]

And since Mrs Besant claims precisely to be Hypatia reincarnated, the comparison is inevitable; and, given the mentality of the Theosophists, it is easy to understand that threats such as this must have some efficacy. But really, was it worth the trouble, in order to maintain this, to vehemently denounce the religions which,

2. Ibid., pp52.
3. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, pp367–368.
4. Ibid., pp365–366.

> from the point of view of religious speculation ... find nothing more important or more highly practical than conjectures as to the attributes and probable intentions of the personal, terrible Jehovah, pictured as an omnipotent tribunal into whose presence the soul at its death is to be introduced for judgment?[5]

If it is not a 'personal God', it is 'karma' which is charged with safeguarding the interests of the Theosophical Society, and avenging the wrongs done to its leaders!

Let us return to Mme Blavatsky's statements, and see now what is meant by the oath of silence:

> As regards the inner section, now called the *Esoteric*, the following rule has been laid down and adopted, so far back as 1880: 'No Fellow shall put to his selfish use any knowledge communicated to him by any member of the first section (now a higher "degree"); violation of the rule being punished by expulsion.' Now, however, before any such knowledge can be imparted, the applicant has to bind himself by a solemn oath not to use it for selfish purposes, nor to reveal anything said except by permission.[6]

Elsewhere it speaks of these teachings that must be kept secret:

> But though we do give out to the world as much as is lawful, even in our doctrine [there is] more than one important detail which those who study the esoteric philosophy and are pledged to silence *are alone entitled to know* [it is Mme Blavatsky herself who emphasizes the last words].[7]

And in another passage allusion is made to a mystery

> directly connected with the power of projecting one's double [or astral body] consciously and at will ... which is never given to anyone, with the exception of irrevocably pledged *chelas*, or those, at any rate, who can be safely trusted.[8]

5. *Esoteric Buddhism*, p256.
6. *The Key to Theosophy*, p50.
7. Ibid., p96.
8. Ibid., p120.

Mme Blavatsky especially insists on the obligation to always observe this oath of silence, an obligation that remains even for people who, voluntarily or not, have ceased to belong to the Society; she poses the question in these terms: 'Is a man expelled or forced to retire from this section free to reveal things which have been taught him or to break one or the other clause of the oath that he has taken?' And she replies:

> His expulsion or resignation only relieves him from the obligation of obedience to the teacher, and from that of taking an active part in the work of the Society, but surely not from the sacred pledge of secrecy.... To any man or woman having the slightest honourable feeling a pledge of secrecy taken even on one's *word of honour*, much more to one's Higher Self'—the God within—is binding till death. And though he may leave the Section and the Society, no man or woman of honour will think of attacking or injuring a body to which he or she has been so pledged.[9]

She concludes with this citation from a Theosophist journal, where the threat of 'karmic' vengeance is again expressed:

> An oath once taken is irrevocable, both in the moral and the occult world. Having violated it once and having been punished, we are not however justified in violating it again; for as long as we do so, the powerful lever of the law [of karma] will again fall upon us.[10]

We also see through these texts that the oath of silence taken in the 'esoteric section' doubles as an oath of obedience to Theosophist 'teachers'; this obedience must go very far, for there are examples of members who when ordered to surrender a good part of their fortune in favor of the Society did so without hesitation. The pledges just spoken about exist still, as does the 'esoteric section' itself,[11]

9. Ibid., pp50–51.

10. *The Path*, New York, July 1889.

11. On page 151 of F.-K. Gaboriau's last article, written after his resignation (see p74), we read the following on the subject of the 'esoteric section':

which as we said adopted the name 'Eastern Theosophical School', and which would not be able to survive in other conditions. It even appears that members who want to pass to the higher grades are obliged to make a sort of general confession in which they express in writing the state of their 'karma', that is, an assessment of what is good and bad in their own existence. The Society thinks thereby to control them, just as Mme Blavatsky thought to control them by the signatures she made them append to records of her 'phenomena'. Furthermore, the habit of accepting orders from the directorship without ever discussing them sometimes produces truly extraordinary results; here is a typical case: in 1911 a congress was to have taken place in Geneva, and a large number of Theosophists traveled there, some coming from very far away; now, on the day before the meeting everything was cancelled without it being thought fitting to give any reason, and everyone returned as he had come, without protest and without asking for explanations, so much is it true that in such a milieu any independence is entirely abolished.

> Before leaving the Theosophical Society, which I feel should be completely reorganized or else disappear, I am obliged to warn those who thirst after 'Universal Brotherhood' that they will find there only hate, personal ambition, slander, feminine tittle-tattle (oh! those gossips! for the feminine element dominates), national jealousies (the English especially believing themselves superior to the rest of the Theosophists), etc., etc. All these pleasantries stem from the 'esoteric sections' into which the naïve are introduced, who believe they can learn there something other than can be read in current books of science and in that other book that is found everywhere—Nature. These 'esoteric sections', whose members swear passive allegiance to the sovereign, stir up misunderstanding and trouble, being allowed to play at the occult sciences with some success; but what is most regrettable is the tarnishing of the reputation of a person who, being followed by an invisible enemy, can no longer defend herself, especially if she loves full daylight. I have said enough about this and hope that the serious-minded members of the Theosophical Society will put it in order (*Le Lotus*, March 1889, p711).

15

MRS BESANT'S ANTECEDENTS

ANNIE WOOD was born in 1847 into an Irish Protestant family. In her youth she fed on mystical literature. Around the age of fifteen years she lived in Paris, and unlikely as it seems, it has been contended that at this time she converted to Catholicism. She returned to England at seventeen and four years later married Rev. Frank Besant, an Anglican minister, by whom she had a son and a daughter; but it was not long before her unruly temperament rendered the marriage untenable. Her husband, who seems to have been very decent, showed much patience, and it was she who finally left, taking the two children with her. This happened in 1872, and it is likely that she then went to live with the free-thinker Charles Bradlaugh, who was leading a violent anti-religious campaign in the *National Reformer* and converted her from the mystic she had previously been to his own ideas. Nevertheless, if we are to believe her own account, she would not have made the acquaintance of this person until somewhat later while earning her livelihood making copies in libraries; in any event, her husband was never able to convict her of adultery. At the same time she also worked with Dr Aveling, son-in-law of Karl Marx; she studied anatomy and chemistry, and after three failures earned the diploma of Bachelor of Science. Finally, she became editor of the *National Reformer*, signing her articles with the pseudonym *Ajax*. It was then, around 1874, that she began lecturing widely, preaching atheism and Malthusianism, and linking to her altruistic theories the names of the three great benefactors of humanity, who for her were Jesus, Buddha, and Malthus.

In 1876 a Malthusian pamphlet entitled *The Fruits of Philosophy*, by Knowlton,[1] was banned as an immoral publication, a bookseller in Bristol being sentenced to two years in prison for having put it on sale while the publisher got off with a heavy fine. Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant immediately hired a marketing agency where they publicized and sold the incriminated work,[2] even having the audacity to send copies to the authorities, and in June 1877 they were prosecuted in their turn. The jury declared that 'the book in question had as its aim to deprave public morals,' and since the accused indicated their intention to continue its sale in spite of everything, they were condemned to a heavy prison sentence accompanied by a fine; however, this sentence having been overturned on a technicality, they were freed shortly afterward.[3] They then founded a society called the 'Malthusian League', which set as its goal 'to mount active and passive resistance to any attempt made to stifle discussion of the question of population'. On June 6, 1878, after a bookseller was again sentenced for the same activity, this League held a protest meeting at St James's Hall, where vehement speeches were delivered by Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant.[4] It was doubtless to her sentencing that Papus was to allude when on August 23, 1890 he wrote to Olcott that he 'had just acquired proof that certain important duties in the Theosophical Society were entrusted to members who had only just left prison after having been sentenced to several years for moral outrage';

1. See *Fruits of Philosophy: A Treatise on the Population Question* (Chicago: G.E. Wilson, 1870). ED.

2. In *Vers l'Initiation* (pp22–23 of the French translation), Mrs Besant presents Charles Bradlaugh as a man who, although a militant atheist, 'took the first steps on the Path.' In the same work (pp29–20) she says further: 'The Knowlton Pamphlet affair led me, in my present existence, to the threshold of Initiation' because 'my motive was to relieve the sufferings of the lower class.

3. For more on this see *'A Dirty Filthy Book': The Writings of Charles Knowlton and Annie Besant on Reproductive Physiology and Birth Control and an Account of the Bradlaugh-Besant Trial...*, by Sripati Chandrasekhar (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). ED.

4. We take these details from an article published by the *Journal des Economists*, August 1880. The role of Mrs Besant in neo-Malthusian propaganda is also indicated, but without details, in *La Question de la Population*, by Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, p299.

unfortunately, the accusation in this form contained inaccuracies which allowed it to be declared 'false and defamatory'.

On the subject of Mrs Besant's children, it seems that at first an arrangement was made between her and her husband; but after the facts that we have just noted, Mr Besant sued to remove custody from his wife. The case was heard and then taken to the Court of Appeal; on April 9, 1879 this court confirmed the decision of the first court and Mrs Besant saw her daughter taken away. The judgment was based on the subversive opinions she had displayed and on the fact that she had propagated 'a work considered immoral by a jury.' In September 1894, curing a lecture tour in Australia, Mrs Besant was again to meet up in Melbourne with her daughter Mabel, now Mrs Scott,[5] whom she had already succeeded in bringing to Theosophy, but who in 1910 or 1911 separated from her and converted to Catholicism.

In September 1880 a Congress of Free-Thinkers took place in Brussels, where Mrs Besant revealed that her party in England had as its aim 'the propagation of atheism, republicanism, civil burial, and the abolition of the House of Lords and the system of land ownership still in force';[6] it was she who gave the closing address, in which she made the violent anti-religious declaration we cited at the outset. During the same period she published quite a number of works, among others a *Freethinker's Textbook* [*Christianity: Its Evidences, Its Origin, Its Morality, Its History*] in two volumes, and sundry 'essays' with titles clearly characteristic of the tendencies and opinions which were then hers.[7] In November 1884 she commended Bradlaugh's affiliation with the *Grand-Orient de France*,[8] but things were soon to change. Bradlaugh, who had entered Parliament, could only think of ridding himself of Mrs Besant; discord arose between them and he removed her from the

5. *Lotus Bleu*, December 27, 1894.

6. *Le Français*, September 14, 1880.

7. *A World Without God; The Gospel of Atheism; Why I am a Socialist; Atheism and its Moral Bearing*, etc.

8. Bradlaugh had already requested on May 15, 1882 to be affiliated with the *Lodge of Persevering Friendship*, but it was refused; he was affiliated with the Lodge *League of Perseverence* on November 14, 1884.

management of his journal. So much ingratitude toward her who had been 'the friend of bad times,' as she herself said, surprised and shocked her; her convictions were shaken by this, which proves that at root they had always been more sentimental than truly thought out. She later gave a strange explanation of these past bad habits, claiming to have received orders from the 'Mahātmās' even from the time (before the foundation of the Theosophical Society) when she was the wife of the Rev. Besant, and to have been constrained by them to abandon him in order to 'live her life'—an altogether too easy excuse, and one by which the worst aberrations could be justified.

It was then, at a loss and not knowing which way to turn that in 1886 Mrs Besant read *The Occult World* by Sinnett. Thereupon she began to study spiritism and with Herbert Burrows to cultivate psychic phenomena. Next, on the advice of W.T. Stead, then head of the *Pall Mall Gazette* to which she contributed, she began reading *The Secret Doctrine*, at the same time giving up for good her association with free-thought. Her early tendencies to an exaggerated mysticism once again gained the upper hand, and she began to have visions under the influence of auto-suggestion. It was thus prepared that she went to see Mme Blavatsky, whose magnetic power did the rest, as we have already reported; and we have also said that she was not long in becoming one of the governing members of the British section (it was at the end of this same year, 1889, that she actually joined Theosophy), then of the autonomous European section which was constituted in 1890 under the direct authority of Mme Blavatsky, with G.R.S. Mead [1863–1933] as Secretary-General.

16

THE BEGINNING OF MRS BESANT'S PRESIDENCY

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING Mme Blavatsky's death a violent debate arose between Olcott, Judge, and Mrs Besant, each of the three claiming the succession and alleging direct communication with the 'Mahātmās' while accusing the others of imposture. Moreover, each of the three intended to exploit to his or her advantage the rivalry of the three sections, Asian, American and European, which they respectively headed. Naturally, every effort was made at first to hide these dissensions. Blavatsky died on May 8, 1891, and on May 19 a statement was published in London in which, after a protest against the 'calumnies' to which the memory of the founder had been subjected, one reads the following:

> Respecting those who entertain the bizarre notion that Mme Blavatsky's death could give rise to disputes 'over her place, which has become vacant,' allow us say that the organization of the Theosophical Society has not and will not undergo any change in consequence of her death. Mme H.P. Blavatsky was the founder of the Theosophical Society conjointly with Col. Olcott, President of the Society, and William Q. Judge, an eminent barrister from New York, Vice-President and head of the Theosophical movement in America, a situation which was not conferred—by 'coup d'état' or otherwise. Mme Blavatsky was, moreover, Secretary-Correspondent of the Society, an entirely honorific post, and one which according to our statutes is not obligatory. For six months, owing to the growth of our Society, she took on the authority, delegated by Col. Olcott, of President for Europe with the aim of facilitating the good administration of our affairs, and through her death this office becomes vacant. Mme Blavatsky's important place was due to her knowledge, her power, and her firm loyalty, and not to the influence of the official position she filled. And so our outer organization will remain entirely unchanged. H.P. Blavatsky's primary function was to teach; whoever would succeed her must possess her knowledge.

This declaration bore the signatures of the leaders of the European section, including Annie Besant, C. Carter Blake, Herbert Burrows, Laura M. Cooper, Archibald Keightley, G.R.S. Mead, and also those of Walter R. Old, secretary of the English section, Countess Wachmeister, and Dr W. Wynn Westcott, who the following year would succeed Dr Robert Woodman as 'Supreme Magus' of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*.

The denial of the rumors that were starting to circulate did not correspond to the truth; this became noticeable when, on Jan 1, 1892, Olcott yielded the Presidency, offering his resignation in a letter addressed to Judge in which he put forward reasons of health and humbly requested his colleagues 'to consider him, not as a person worthy of honor, but as a sinner who was often wrong, but who had always tried to rise and help his fellow man.' Making this letter public on February 1 following, Olcott added a note showing a concern that each of the two opposing candidates, who stood in confrontation, be treated with consideration:

> My visits to Europe and America have proved to me that the present state of the movement is very satisfying. I also noticed on my return to India that the newly formed Indian section is in good hands and on a solid basis. In Europe, Mrs Annie Besant, almost in a single bound, has entered the first rank. Through the well-known integrity of her character and conduct, her self-denial, enthusiasm, and exceptional ability, she has surpassed all her colleagues and has deeply moved the spirit of those who speak the English language. I know her personally, and I know

that in India she will be as amiable and fraternal toward the Asians as H.P. Blavatsky and I have been.... In America, under the firm and capable direction of Judge, the Society has expanded through the length and breadth of the land, and the organization has grown each day in power and stability. The three sections of the Society are thus in very good hands, and my personal direction is no longer indispensable.

He then announced his intention to

> retire to my little house in Ootacamund, where I will live from my pen and a part of my income from the *Theosophist*. I intend to complete an unfinished but essential part of my task, the compilation of the Society's history, and some books on religion and the occult and psychological sciences.... I will always stand ready to give to my successor any needed help, and to put at the disposal of the committee my best advice, based on the experience of forty years of public life, and seventeen years of the Presidency of our Society.

Olcott not having named his successor, this had to be done by voting for a new President. Meanwhile the outgoing President, still in office, decided that May 8, the anniversary of Mme Blavatsky's death, would be called 'White Lotus Day' and that it should be celebrated in all branches throughout the world

> in a simple and dignified manner, avoiding all sectarianism, all fawning adulation and empty compliments, and expressing the general sentiment of loving recognition for the one who has brought us the map of the arduous path leading to the summit of the science.

We have already related an incident that illustrates just how well Theosophists observe this recommendation to avoid 'all fawning adulation'!

On April 24 and 25, 1892, the annual Convention of the American section met in Chicago. It was disposed to refuse Col. Olcott's resignation, and to ask him to retain his functions (no doubt they feared that Mrs Besant might be elected), and expressed the wish

that Judge should be chosen in advance as President for life on the day the Presidency should become vacant. Soon after, it was learned that 'giving in to the wishes of his friends and the American Convention, as well as to the necessity of terminating several legal matters, Col. Olcott has deferred his resignation indefinitely [*sic*]';[1] on the following August 21st he finally withdrew his resignation, naming Judge as his eventual successor.

Nevertheless, a bit later, after several regrettable incidents, especially the suicide of the Administrator of Adyar, S.E. Gopalacharlu (whose pilfering of large sums from the Society had gone undetected for years), there was a reconciliation between Olcott and Mrs Besant. In January 1894 the latter went with the Countess Wachtmeister on a tour of India, and Olcott accompanied them everywhere they went; in March, when Mrs Besant left for Europe, Olcott assigned to her the direction of the 'esoteric section', excepting its American part, which was kept by Judge. In November of the same year Judge tried to remove Mrs Besant from office, but was supported by only one segment of the members of the American section; in return he was accused more than ever of deception by Mrs Besant's partisans. Just then, the journal of the French section published, under the initials of Captain D.A. Courmes,[2] an article which reads as follows:

> Rightly or wrongly, one of the main personalities of the present Theosophical movement, William Q. Judge, is accused of passing off as deriving directly from a 'Master' certain communications perhaps of mental provenance but written down by W.Q. Judge alone.... The neutrality of the Theosophical Society and the occult character of the communications allegedly 'precipitated' would have prevented W.Q. Judge from explaining himself completely regarding the events for which he was reproached. Moreover foolishness, daughter to human imperfection, would

1. *Lotus Bleu*, June 27, 1892.

2. Commander D.A. Coumes, who for a long time edited *Lotus Bleu*, was also a former spiritist; in early 1878 he published an article in *Revue Spirite* which was probably the first in France to take up the question of Theosophy.

have again aggravated the incident . . . and it can be said that the English-speaking Theosophists are presently divided into two camps, for and against Judge.[3]

Some time later the *Path* warned the members of the Theosophical Society that 'hoaxers and ill-intentioned people were sending so-called occult messages to those they believed to be naive';[4] never had so many supposed communications from the 'Masters' been seen, even during Mme Blavatsky's lifetime. Finally, on April 27, 1895, Judge's partisans separated completely from the Adyar Society to form an independent organization with the name of 'Theosophical Society of America'; this organization, which still exists, was presided over by Ernest T. Hargrove, then by Catherine Tingley, who moved its headquarters from New York to Point Loma (California).[5] It has branches in Sweden and Holland.

Concerning the accusations made against Judge, the following instructive clarifications were offered a short time after the split in an article that Dr Pascal published in *Lotus Bleu*:

> Almost immediately after Mme Blavatsky's death, many messages were sent through W.Q. Judge as coming from a Hindu Master, messages allegedly 'precipitated' by occult means and bearing the imprint of the cryptograph of the said Master. It was soon recognized that this impression came from a facsimile of the Master's seal, which Col. Olcott had had engraved at Delhi, in the Punjab.[6] Due to an error in the drawing made by Col. Olcott, this facsimile was easily recognizable because it gave an imprint resembling a 'W' where there should have been an 'M'.[7] This pseudo-seal had been given to H.P. Blavatsky by

3. *Lotus Bleu*, December 27, 1894.

4. Cited in the *Lotus Bleu*, March 27, 1895.

5. The denomination 'Universal Brotherhood', originally another name of the Theosophical Society (article from the *Path*, cited in *Le Lotus*, March 1888), has been retained by Mrs Tingley's organization, whose complete title is Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society of America. This organization's headquarters were transferred to Point-Loma in 1900.

6. With what intention? It would have been interesting to know.

> Col. Olcott, and a number of Theosophists had seen it during her lifetime, although it had disappeared after her death. . . . When Col. Olcott for the first time saw the imprint accompanying the messages from W.Q. Judge, he noticed that it was the seal he had had engraved in the Punjab, and which had disappeared. He remarked that he hoped that whoever had stolen it would not use it to deceive his brothers, but that in any case he would be able to recognize its imprint among a thousand. From this time forward new messages no longer carried the imprint of the cryptograph, and the old messages, still accessible to W.Q. Judge, had the imprint erased.[8]

It should be added that a Belgian Theosophist, Opperman, who was a partisan of Judge, sent a response to this article; but after announcing its publication, the management of the *Lotus Bleu* suddenly withdrew it, refusing to print it under the pretext that 'the question had been settled' in July at the London Convention.[9] At this Convention Olcott had simply recorded the 'secession' and cancelled the charters of the dissident American branches and then reorganized from the groups that had not followed Judge a new American section with Alexander Fullerton as Secretary-General (an Australian section had also been founded recently with Dr. A. Carol as Secretary-General); then Sinnett was named Vice-President of the Society as a replacement for Judge. After vainly protesting in favor of Judge, certain members of the European section officially left in order to form in their turn a distinct body under the title 'Theosophical Society of Europe', and under the honorary Presidency of Judge; among them was Dr Archibald Keightley, whose brother Bertram, however, remained Secretary-General of the Indian section; Dr Franz Hartmann also joined the dissidents.

As one might think, all the events that we have just described did not fail to penetrate to the outside as soon as they happened; at first it was pretended in Theosophist circles that gossip in the London

7. The initial of Morya; but why did the seal of a 'Hindu Master' bear a European character?

8. *Lotus Bleu*, June 27, 1895.

9. Ibid., September 27, 1895.

press would be excellent publicity for the Society.

> The newspapers, it was said in September 1891, made much fuss about the letters Annie Besant claimed to have received from the 'Mahātmās' since the death of H.P. Blavatsky. The *Daily Chronicle* opened its columns to the discussion and our brothers took advantage of this good publicity to put forward our doctrines: more than six columns per day were filled with Theosophical and anti-Theosophical correspondence, not forgetting the 'clergymen' and members of the Society for Psychic Research.[10]

But things looked different in the following month when this harsh judgment was seen in precisely the paper just mentioned:

> The Theosophists are deceived and many will discover their deception; we are afraid that they have opened the doors to a veritable carnival of deception and imposture.[11]

This time, those referred to kept a prudent silence as to this 'wonderful publicity', the more so as the *Westminster Gazette* soon began publishing under the signature of F. Edmund Garrett a whole series of well-documented articles said to have even been prompted by members of the 'esoteric section' and that were printed together in 1895 under the significant title *Isis Very Much Unveiled*. Moreover, a famous 'thought reader', Stuart Cumberland, offered a prize of £1,000 to anyone who could produce in his presence even one of the phenomena attributed to the 'Mahātmās'; this challenge, of course, was never taken up. In 1893, Nagarkar, a member of the *Brahma Samāj* and as such little suspected of biased hostility, said in London that Theosophy was regarded in India as 'nothing but vulgar nonsense,' and replied to his contradictors:

> You do not have the pretension, I suppose—you who hardly know about your own country—to teach me things concerning my country and my competence; your Mahātmās have never existed and are simply a joke by Mme Blavatsky, who wanted to know how many fools would believe it; to take this joke for a truth, is to make oneself an accomplice in forgery.[12]

10. *Lotus Bleu*, September 27, 1891.
11. *Daily Chronicle*, October 1, 1891.

Finally, on October 2, 1895, Herbert Burrows, the very man who had introduced Mrs Besant into the Theosophical Society, wrote to W.T. Stead, then editor of *Borderland*:

> The recent disclosures of fraud which have divided the Society have led me to new investigations proving conclusively that for years deception has reigned in the Society.... Col. Olcott, President of the Society, and Sinnett, the Vice-President, believe that Mme Blavatsky was in part dishonest. To the accusations of fraud made by Mrs Besant against Judge, the former Vice-President, can be added accusations against Col. Olcott, which have been brought at the same time by Mrs Besant and Judge.... After this I can no longer give my recognition and support to an organization where such suspect things and still others have taken place; and although I do not give up the main ideas of Theosophy, I quit the Society because in its present form I believe it to be a permanent danger to honesty and truth, and a perpetual open door to superstition, deception, and imposture.

And in December 1895 it was said in the *English Theosophist*, the dissidents' journal:

> Sinnett himself has said that Judge learned all these frauds from Mme Blavatsky.... Mrs Besant *knows* that Olcott and Sinnett believe Mme Blavatsky was dishonest; but still she has had neither the moral courage nor *honesty* to say it.

It can be seen, then, in what conditions Mrs Besant took over the leadership of the Theosophical Society; in fact, she exercised it unopposed from 1895, although it was only a rather long time afterward that Olcott officially relinquished it in her favor (we have been unable to ascertain the exact date of his final resignation). It seems, moreover, that he submitted only with rather bad grace to relinquishing his title of President, even after it had become purely

12. *The Echo*, London, July 4, 1893.

honorific. He died on February 17, 1907,[13] after having carried out his project of writing—in his own fashion—the history of the Society, which appeared under the title *Old Diary Leaves*; but his bad temper at having been ousted was so obvious, and certain passages seemed so compromising, that the Theosophical Publishing Company hesitated for some time to publish this work.

13. On the proposal of Mme de Manziarly, a special commemoration known as 'Adyar Day' was created in 1922, to be celebrated on the 17th of February. This date is the anniversary of the deaths of both Olcott (February 17, 1907) and Giordano Bruno (February 17, 1600), of whom Mrs Besant considered herself the reincarnation (see p183), as well as the birth date of Leadbeater (February 17, 1847).

17

AT THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

In September 1893, during the Chicago Exposition, there took place in that city, among all sorts of other congresses, the famous 'Parliament of Religions'. All the religious or semi-religious organizations of the world had been asked to send their most authoritative representatives to explain their beliefs and opinions. This truly American idea had been launched several years earlier; in France, its most ardent propagandist was Fr Victor Charbonnel, who at the time frequented the salon of the Duchess of Pomar, and who was later to leave the Church for Masonry, where he had several misadventures. If the Catholics of Europe prudently abstained from appearing at this Congress, such was not the case with those in America; but the great majority was formed, as was natural, by the representatives of the innumerable Protestant denominations, joined by other fairly heterogeneous elements. Thus this 'Parliament' was the appearance of Swāmi Vivekānanda, who completely distorted the Hindu doctrine of 'Vedānta' under the pretext of adapting it to the Western mentality. If we mention him here, it is because Theosophists have always regarded him as one of their allies, even calling him 'one of our brothers of the Elder race' (a designation which they also applied to their 'Mahātmās') and 'a prince among men'.[1] The pseudo-religion invented by Vivekānanda had a certain success in America, where it has still a certain number of

1. *Lotus Bleu*, January 27 1895.

'missions' and 'temples', just as it does in Australia. Of course it had nothing to do with 'Vedānta' except the name, for there could not be the least connection between a purely metaphysical doctrine and a sentimental and consoling 'moralism' differing from Protestant preaching only in the use of a somewhat specialized terminology.

Mrs Besant also appeared at the 'Parliament of Religions' to represent the Theosophical Society, which of the seventeen days the Congress was to last had obtained two whole days to be devoted to the exposition of its theories; it would seem that to have granted it such a large share, the organizers must have been particularly favorable to it. The Theosophists naturally profited by putting forward a large number of speakers. Judge and Mrs Besant appeared side by side, for as long as the split between them was not an accomplished fact, the effort was made to hide from the public as much as possible the inner dissensions of the Society, although as we have seen above, this did not always succeed. Mrs Besant was accompanied by two rather odd persons, Chakravarti and Dharmapāla, with whom she had journeyed from England to America, and about whom it is fitting to say a few words here.

Gyanendra Nath Chakravarti (the 'Babu Chuckerbuthy' of Rudyard Kipling),[2] founder and secretary of the *Yoga Samāj* and mathematics teacher at Allahabad College, delivered an address at the official opening session of the 'Parliament'. In spite of his name and position, and although he claimed to be a Brahmin, he was not a Hindu by origin but a more or less 'hinduized' Mongol. In December 1892 he tried to contact English spiritists by claiming that there were close connections between Hindu 'Yoga' and 'spiritist' phenomena; we do not wish to decide whether this was ignorance or insincerity on his part, and perhaps it was both at the same time; in any case, it goes without saying that the connections in question are purely imaginary. What is interesting to note is the similarity of this attempt with that to which Mrs Besant was to devote herself, in 1898, at the 'Spiritualist Alliance' of London; and what is most interesting about this rapprochement is that Chakravarti, who though

2. Masonic poem entitled 'The Mother Lodge'.

anything but a true 'Yogi' was at least a remarkable hypnotist, had found an excellent 'subject' in Mrs Besant, and it seems well-established that he held her under his influence for a fairly long time.[3] It is to this fact that Judge was referring when in the circular he addressed on November 3, 1894 to the 'esoteric sections' of the Theosophical Society ('by order of the Master,' as he said) to dismiss Mrs Besant, he accused her of having 'unwittingly entered into the conspiracy of black magicians, who always fight against white magicians,' at the same time denouncing Chakravarti as 'a minor agent of the black magicians.' No doubt, too great an importance should not be attached to these stories of 'black magic', and what we said previously must be remembered. Nonetheless, it remains true that it was Chakravarti, a very suspect person in many respects, who for some time directly inspired the deeds and conduct of Mrs Besant.

The 'Anagarika' H. Dharmapāla (or Dhammapāla),[4] a Buddhist from Ceylon, was delegated to the 'Parliament of Religions' with the title 'lay missionary' by the 'Great-Priest' Sumangala to represent the *Mahā-Bodhi Samāj* (Society of Great Wisdom) of Colombo.[5] It is said that during his stay in America he 'officiated' in a Catholic church; but we think this must be only a legend, all the more in that

3. Letter of Thomas Green, member of the 'esoteric section' of London, published in the journal *Light*, October 12, 1895, p 499; *The Path* of New York, June 1895, p 99.

4. The first form is Sanskrit, the second Pāli.

5. The *Mahā-Bodhi Samāj* is engaged in singular dealings, as can be seen in an article by Alexandra David entitled 'La Libre Pensée dans l'Inde et le mouvement bouddhiste contemporain', published in *Les Documents du Progrès* (January and February 1914). Indeed, one reads therein:

> The *Mahā-Bodhi* Society has two principal headquarters, in Colombo [on the island of Ceylon] and Calcutta, a central quarter near Benares, at the site where according to tradition the Buddha gave his first discourse, as well as numerous branches in various parts of India. In August 1910 this Society delegated me to represent them at the Congress of Free Thought being held in Brussels. In this connection Secretary-General Dharmapāla sent me a report to be read at the meeting.
>
> Here is a characteristic extract from this statement:
>
> We have the deep conviction that the wonderful progress realized by science in the West will permit the emancipation of the great masses of all countries from ritualism and superstition, which are the creation of a despotic clergy. . . . The Buddha was the first to

he had declared himself 'lay person'; perhaps he did give a talk there, which ought not to overly astonish those who know American ways. Be that as it may, he spent several years traveling in America and Europe giving talks on Buddhism in many places. In 1897 he was in Paris, where he spoke at the Guimet Museum and took part in a Congress of orientalists. The last appearance of this person that we know of is a letter he wrote from Calcutta on October 13, 1910 to the head (designated only be the initials T.K.) of an American secret society called the 'Order of Light', which also calls itself the 'Great School', and which recruits its adherents especially from the high grades of Masonry. One of the most active members of this organization is a known Theosophist, Dr J.D. Buck, who is at the same time a dignitary of Scottish Masonry and who was also one of the speakers at the 'Parliament of Religions'. Mme Blavatsky showed a special regard for this Dr Buck, whom she called 'a great Philalethean',[6] and on whom, citing a passage from a speech he had made in April 1889 before the Theosophical Society Convention of Chicago, she bestowed this eulogy: 'No living theosophist has better expressed and understood the real essence of Theosophy than our honoured friend Dr Buck.'[7] It must also be said that the 'Order of Light' is marked by a very strong anti-Catholic tendency; now, in his letter Dharmapāla warmly complimented the American Masons for their efforts to 'protect the people from servitude to papal diabolism' [*sic*] and wished them complete success in this struggle, adding

proclaim the science of human liberation, and in this 2,499th anniversary of his sermon we who follow the doctrine are delighted to see the promoters of scientific thought in the West work in accordance with the same principle for the emancipation and the education of the whole human race, without distinction of nationality or color.

Alexandra David, who is a well-known Theosophist, says in the same article that 'the Buddha must be considered the father of free thought'! This is the same Alexandra David-Neel, author of the book *Le Modernisme Bouddhiste*, who in 1927 published an account of an exploration in Tibet under the title *Voyage d'une Parisienne à Lhassa* [*My Journey to Llasa: The Personal Story of the Only White Woman Who Succeeded in Entering the Forbidden City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983)].

6. *The Key to Theosophy*, p6.
7. Ibid., p16.

that 'seemingly the only desire of the clergy in all countries and all ages is to reduce people to slavery and hold them in ignorance.' We wonder if such language had the approval of the 'Great-Priest of the Buddhist Church of the South,' who really claimed to be the head of a 'clergy' although nothing of the kind existed in the original conception and organization of Buddhism.

The Theosophists seemed very satisfied with the excellent occasion for propaganda afforded them in Chicago, and they even went so far as to proclaim that 'the true Parliament of Religions had been, in fact, the Theosophical Congress.'[8] Thus, 'neo-spiritualist' groups were talking of preparing a second congress of the same kind, which would be held in Paris in 1900; a more ambitious idea was even put forward by an engineer from Lyons, P. Vitte, who signed himself with the pseudonym *Amo* and wanted to transform the 'Congress of Religions' into a 'Congress of Humanity'

> gathering together all the religions, spiritists, humanitarians, seekers, and thinkers of all kinds, and having as a common aim the progress of Humanity toward a better ideal and faith in its realization.[9]

All the religions of the world, and even all the doctrines, whatever their character, would be 'called to a sympathetic union of the great common principles ably ensuring the safety of Humanity and preparing Unity and future peace on earth.'[10] Theosophists, as well as spiritists and occultists of various schools joined in this project, whose promoter was believed to have brought about the reconciliation of these fraternal enemies, as a prelude to the 'sympathetic union' he dreamed of. He wrote:

> the issues for May 1896 of *Lotus Bleu* and *Initiation*, respective organs of the French Theosophists and Martinists, repeat in warm and resolute terms their support for the Congress of Humanity. The collaboration of these two great spiritualist

8. *Lotus Bleu*, October 27, 1893, and March 27, 1894.
9. *La Paix Universelle*, September 15, 1894.
10. Ibid., November 30, 1894.

movements which shine on the whole earth would already suffice to communicate an intense vitality to the Congress.[11]

But this would not suffice, and would turn out to be a great illusion; the 'neo-spiritualists', among whom moreover quarrels would continue as in the past, could still not claim to form by themselves the 'official Conference of Humanity'; and as hardly anyone else but they were interested, the congress did not take place in 1900. Regarding Vitte, we shall note another strange trait: after Saint Yves d'Alveydre told him that 'the Celtic spirit is today in India,' he wished to go there, and embarked in September 1895. Hardly had he arrived, however, when he was seized by a kind of irrational fear and hastened back to France, where he arrived less that three months after his departure. At least he was a sincere soul, but this simple fact shows he was rather unstable. The occultists, however, were not discouraged by the failure of their 'Congress of Humanity'; waiting for a more favorable moment, he set up a kind of permanent office, holding occasional meetings in more or less empty rooms and indulging in vague pacifist and humanitarian declarations. The feminists too had a certain place in this organization whose last heads were Albert Jounet and Julien Hersent; the latter, whom his friends had nominated for the presidency of the future 'United States of the World' when it should be formed, began in 1913 by putting forward his candidacy for the Presidency of the French Republic; these people truly have no sense of the ridiculous!

There was nonetheless to be a sequel in Paris to the 'Parliament of Religions' in Chicago, but it was only in 1913 that it took place, under the name of the 'Congress of Religious Progress', and under the presidency of Boutroux, whose philosophical ideas also have some relationship with 'neo-spiritualist' tendencies, although in a much less marked way than those of Bergson. This congress was almost entirely Protestant, particularly 'liberal Protestant'; but the Germanic influence was preponderant over the Anglo-Saxon, and thus the Theosophists loyal to Mrs Besant's leadership were not

11. *La Paix Universelle*, June 30, 1896.

invited, whereas Edouard Schuré was heard there representing Rudolf Steiner's dissident organization, of which we shall have to speak in what follows.[12]

12. We should mention the presence at the 'Congress of Religious Progress' in Paris of D.B. Jayatilaka, president of the 'Buddhist Association of Young People' of Colombo, who had already taken part in the 'Congress of Free Christians' held in Berlin in August 1910, where he read a statement in which he said in particular that 'among all the founders of religions it was the Buddha who promulgated the first charter of freedom of conscience.' It would seem these 'Buddhist modernists' are intent on being considered 'free thinkers'.

18

ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY

IT IS TIME NOW to turn to the most characteristic trait of the new orientation (new at least in appearance) given to the Theosophical Society under the instigation of Mrs Annie Besant, and which her antecedents could hardly have predicted; we refer to 'esoteric Christianity'.[1] It must be said however that before this, the Christian current, or what is supposed to be such, was despite its apparent incompatibility with the ideas of Mme Blavatsky already represented in this milieu by certain more or less secondary elements, which of course did not express what might be called the official doctrine of Theosophy. There was first the 'Rosicrucianism' of Dr Franz Hartmann, which we spoke of above; any Rosicrucianism, no matter how deviant it might be in relation to the original Rosicrucianism, at least employs a Christian symbolism. But it must not be forgotten that in one of his books, Hartmann presents Jesus as an 'Initiate', a opinion shared by Edouard Schuré [1841–1929],[2] the inventor of an alleged 'Hellenic-Christian esoterism' whose character is most suspect, since, if one is to judge it by the very titles of the works that expound it, it must lead 'from Sphinx to Christ', then 'from Christ to Lucifer'![3] Secondly, we will mention the more or less

1. The title of one of the Mrs Besant's works is in fact *Esoteric Christianity* [Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1966].

2. See his book, *The Great Initiates* [West Nyack, NY: St. George Books, 1961].

3. It seems that in the literary domain it is the works of Edouard Schuré, along with those of Maeterlinck, that contributed to leading the most adherents to Theosophy.

similar works of G.R.S. Mead, Secretary-General of the European section, on gnosticism and the 'Christian mysteries'; we will see below that the restoration of these 'Christian mysteries' is one of the declared aims of contemporary Theosophists. Other than these works, largely inspired by the studies of 'non-initiated' specialists, Mead has also done very rough translations (to say no more than this) of several Sanskrit texts from the *Upanishads;* there one can find typical examples of the manner in which the Theosophists 'arrange' these texts according to the needs of their particular interpretation.[4] Finally, there was already an 'esoteric Christianity' properly so-called, connected with Theosophy; more precisely there were two that were not always unrelated: one is that of Dr Anna Kingsford [1846–1888] and Edward Maitland, and the other that of the Duchess of Pomar.

The first of these two theories was set forth in a book entitled *The Perfect Way* which appeared in 1882;[5] the authors' names were at first kept secret 'in order that their work might be judged only on its own merits and not on those of theirs,'[6] although the authors' names appeared in subsequent editions.[7] We will add that a French translation followed published at the expense of the Duchess of Pomar for which Schuré wrote a preface.[8] Count MacGregor Mathers, dedicating his *Kabbalah Unveiled* to the authors of *The Perfect Way,* declared this book 'one of the most profoundly occult works written in recent centuries.' At the time *The Perfect Way*

4. Mead's principal works include *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*; *Pistis Sophia: a Gnostic Miscellany*; *Simon Magus, an Essay*; *Apollonius of Tyana, the Philosopher-Reformer of the First Century A.D.*; *The Gospel and the Gospels*; *The World Mystery: Four Essays*; *The Theosophy of the Greeks: Plotinus and Orpheus*; and *The Theosophy of the Vedas: the Upanishads.*

5. All citations in this book are taken from the 1924 edition: *The Perfect Way, or The Finding of Christ* (New York: Macoy Publishing & Masonry Supply). ED.

6. Preface to the first edition, p vii.

7. 1886 and 1890. Our citations are from the third edition.

8. The same authors have published several other less important works, separately or in collaboration,: *The 'Virgin of the World' of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistos*; *'Astrology Theologized': The Spiritual Hermeneutics of Holy Writ* [of Valentin Wiegel, 1533–1588]; and *'Clothed with the Sun'* [an allusion to the Apocalypse], *being a book of the illuminations of Anna (Bonus) Kingsford.*

appeared, Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland were both members of the Theosophical Society; it is true that they withdrew soon afterward, around the time when the Kiddle affair provoked numerous resignations in the English branch, of which we have spoken elsewhere. Nevertheless, on May 9, 1884 they founded in London a 'Hermetic Society' of which Anna Kingsford was president until her death in 1888, and whose statutes were in three articles copied from the declaration of principles of the Theosophical Society that we reproduced earlier.[9] Strangely, Olcott was present at this society's inauguration and gave a speech there which seems to support those who consider it a mere 'esoteric section' of the Theosophical Society. Thus there is reason to ask if the resignation of the founders was sincere, and we find something analogous in the case of the Duchess of Pomar.

How far did the opposition between the theories of Anna Kingsford and those of Mme Blavatsky extend? The first had a Christian label, but without even speaking of their very pronounced anti-clerical spirit (and here again it is allegedly through St Paul that 'the sacerdotal found entrance into the Church'),[10] the way in which Christian dogmas are interpreted there is quite peculiar; they especially wish to render Christianity independent of all historical considerations,[11] so that when Christ is spoken of it is in a 'mystical sense', by which it must always be understood an interior principle which each one must strive to discover and develop in himself. Now sometimes Mme Blavatsky also gives the name of *Christos* either to one of the higher principles of man, about whose position she moreover varies, or 'to the reunion of the three higher principles in a Trinity which 'represents the Holy Ghost, the Father, and the Son, since it is the expression of the abstract spirit, the differentiated spirit, and the embodied spirit.'[12] We are here in total confusion, but what must be remembered is that for Mme Blavatsky as for

9. Before founding the 'Hermetic Society', Anna Kingsford had not only been a member of the Theosophical Society, but President of the *London Lodge*.

10. *The Perfect Way*, p270.

11. Ibid., pp25–26 and 223.

12. *The Key to Theosophy*, pp67–68.

Anna Kingsford, the 'Christs' are beings who have developed in themselves certain higher principles which exist in a latent state in every man; and Anna Kingsford adds that the 'Christs' are not distinguished from other 'Adepts' except that, to their knowledge and the powers, they join a profound love of humanity.[13] Blavatsky said nearly the same thing when she taught that 'Christos [is the] Buddha state.'[14] Here too there is not perfect accord among the Theosophists, and those of today think that this is rather the immediately inferior state, that of the 'Bodhisattva'. Mme Blavatsky's anti-Christian bias, which is especially directed against orthodox and so-called judaized Christianity, thus need not be too adverse to the idea of an 'esoteric Christianity' like this, where one finds a 'syncretism' rather similar to her own and almost as incoherent, although the confusion there is perhaps less inextricable. The principal difference is that a Christian terminology replaces the Eastern terminology, and that Buddhism is relegated to a secondary level even while being regarded as the complement of, or rather as the indispensable preparation for, Christianity. There is a passage on this subject too peculiar for us not to give it here:

> Buddha and Jesus are, therefore, necessary the one to the other; and in the whole of the system thus completed, Buddha is the Mind and Christ is the Heart; Buddha is the general, Jesus is the particular; Buddha is the brother of the universe, Jesus is the brother of men; Buddha is Philosophy, Jesus is Religion; Buddha is the Circumference, Jesus is Within; Buddha is the System, Jesus is the Point of Radiation; Buddha is the Manifestation, Jesus is the Spirit; in a word, Buddha is the 'Man' [intelligence], Jesus is the 'Woman' [intuition]. . . . Wherefore no man can be, properly, Christian, who is not also, and first, Buddhist. Thus the two religions constitute, respectively, the exterior and interior of the same Gospel, the foundation being in Buddhism—this term including Pythagoreanism[15]—and illumination in Christianity.

13. *The Perfect Way*, p216.

14. *The Key to Theosophy*, p155.

15. It may be doubted whether this assimilation is really justified.

> And just as without Christianity Buddhism is incomplete, so without Buddhism Christianity is unintelligible. . . .[16]

Anna Kingsford even assures us that the Gospel confirms this relationship in the account of the Transfiguration, where Moses and Elias represent Buddha and Pythagoras as their 'Hebraic counterparts';[17] a singular interpretation, but no more astonishing than what is found a few pages further on, where the author claims on the basis of fantastic etymologies, that Abraham represents the 'Indian mysteries', Isaac the 'Egyptian mysteries', and Jacob the 'Greek mysteries'![18] Despite this, for Anna Kingsford Christianity is superior to Buddhism as intuition is superior to intelligence, or as woman is superior to man; for she is a convinced feminist and regards woman as 'the crowning manifestation of humanity.'[19] Let us add to this, in order to complete her physiognomy, that she was an apostle of vegetarianism[20] and a relentless adversary of the theories of Pasteur.

On various questions Anna Kingsford maintained positions quite peculiar to herself: thus, for example, she regarded human nature as fourfold, and she attributed a special importance to the number thirteen, in which she saw the 'number of woman' and the 'symbol of perfection'.[21] But on most important points, whatever the appearances, she is fundamentally in agreement with Theosophical teachings. In particular, she admits 'spiritual evolution', 'karma', and reincarnation. Regarding the last she goes so far as to claim that 'the doctrine of the Progression and Migration of Souls . . . constituted the foundation of all [the] ancient religions,' and that 'one of the special objects of the [ancient mysteries] was to enable the candidate to recover the memory of his previous incarnations.'[22] These teachings and many more of the same value are due, so it seems, to

16. *The Perfect Way*, pp248–249.
17. Ibid., p247.
18. Ibid., pp251–252.
19. Ibid., p23.
20. She devoted a special work to this subject, entitled The *Perfect Way in Diet*.
21. Ibid., p244.
22. Ibid., p21.

the same 'source of information' as the doctrine as a whole, that is to say to the exercise of intuition 'whereby it [the Mind] returns towards its centre' and 'gains access to the interior and permanent region of our nature,' 'after exercising itself in an outward direction as Intellect in order to obtain cognition of phenomena.'[23] Truly, one might almost believe that Bergson himself were speaking; we do not know if he knew Anna Kingsford, but in several respects she can certainly be ranked among the precursors of contemporary intuitionism. It is also interesting to note in her case the relationship between intuitionism and feminism, and we do not believe that hers is an isolated case; between the feminist movement and various other currents of the contemporary mentality there are relationships which would be most interesting to study. We will have to speak of feminism again in connection with the Masonic role of Mrs Besant.

Notwithstanding Anna Kingsford's affirmation, we do not believe that intuition—rather, we should say, imagination—was her only 'source of information', even though the fantastic assertions, of which we have given some examples, are certainly due to the exercise of this faculty. At the beginning at least there were borrowings from different doctrines, especially the Kabbalah and Hermeticism, and the comparisons indicated here and there bear witness to a knowledge that, although superficial, nevertheless existed. Moreover, Anna Kingsford had certainly studied the theosophists properly so called, notably Boehme and Swedenborg; it is especially this which she had in common with the Duchess of Pomar, and there was more theosophy, though rather mixed up, with these two than with Mme Blavatsky and her successors. As for the Duchess of Pomar, because it was especially in France that she developed her 'esoteric Christianity', and also because her personality makes it worthwhile, we believe it will be well to devote a special chapter to her.

23. Ibid., p3.

19

THE DUCHESS OF POMAR

LADY CAITHNESS, Duchess of Pomar, was a peculiar figure who described herself as Catholic and seems to have been a sincere one; but with her Catholicism was allied a 'Christian Theosophy' inspired, as we have noted, principally by Boehme and Swedenborg as well as by certain private conceptions that were even stranger. She expounded her ideas in numerous works,[1] and she also directed a review in Paris called *L'Aurore du Jour Nouveau,* an 'organ of Christian esoterism'.[2] This journal was dedicated to 'Logosophy', which was defined thus:

1. Here are the titles of some of them: *Une visite nocturne à Holyrood; Fragments de Théosophie occulte d'Orient; La Théosophie chrétienne; La Théosophie bouddhiste; La Théosophie sémitique; Le Spiritualism dans la Bible; Interpretation Ésotérique des Livres sacrés; Révélations d'en haut sur la science de la vie; Vieilles vérités sous un nouveau jour; Le Mystère des Siècles; L'Overture des Sceaux; Le Secret du Nouveau Testament.*

2. On the sympathies of the Duchess of Pomar's 'theosophic-catholic' review, one reads the following in *Lotus* (June 1887):

> The Catholicism of *Aurore* is perfectly eclectic and tolerant, mixed with a good deal of spiritism. This last point is the result of communications the Duchess of Pomar is said to have had with the 'spirits'. . . . Moreover, we could say that this Catholicism is socialist, for *Aurore* was managed by Limousin, editor of the *Revue du Mouvement social,* and in the May issue contains correspondence from Fr Roca, whose progressive socialist opinions are known to everyone and of whom a very characteristic eulogy was given in the *Intransigeant* of Rochefort.

It is worth adding that Limousin, director of *Aurore*, was none other than F.·. Ch.-M. Limousin, who later founded and edited the Masonic review *L'Acacia.*

> Logosophy is the science of the Logos or Christ as this has been handed down to us in the esoteric doctrines of Indian savants and the Greek and Alexandrian philosophers. . . . Christ, or the Logos, who forms the basis of our teachings, is not precisely Jesus as an historical personage (the Son of Man), but rather Jesus in his divine aspect as Son of God, or Christ. This divinity, in which we believe, must be the goal of our aspirations. We have the right to make this claim, for we are all sons of the same God and consequently of a divine essence, and have we not been commanded to become perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect? Logosophy is therefore the science of the divinity in man. It teaches us how to kindle the divine spark that every man brings with him when coming into this world. It is by its development that we can, even on this earth, exercise psychic powers that seem to be superhuman; and that, after our physical death, our spirit will be reunited with that of its divine Creator and will possess immortality in Heaven.

Here again it is the notion of an 'internal' Christianity that predominates, even though it is affirmed in a less exclusive manner than with Anna Kingsford. As to the development of 'psychic powers', this is nothing but the third of the Theosophical Society's goals, whose realization is reserved for the 'esoteric section'.

From 1882, Lady Pomar called herself 'President of the Theosophical Society of the East and of the West'; contrary to what might be believed, her society was never in competition with that of Mme Blavatsky, of which it really constituted on the contrary an 'esoteric section', which explains the reconciliation which we have noted. In May, 1884, Mme Blavatsky wrote to Solovioff:

> For the past two years . . . a few persons [have met] in the home of a certain Duchess *plus* lady, who likes to call herself 'Président de la Société Théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident'. God bless her, let her call herself what she likes, she is rich, and has a superb hotel of her own here in Paris; that is no objection; she may be useful.[3]

3. *A Modern Priestess of Isis,* p25.

Thus Mme Blavatsky was anxious to humor the Duchess of Pomar because of her wealth; and when she wished to establish a branch at Paris, the Duchess for her part thought that it might serve as a recruiting center for her own organization for which she intended to preserve a much more restricted character. What proves that there was no rivalry between the two women is that the Duchess, responding to Mme Blavatsky's hopes, in fact provided funds that enabled her to spread her doctrine in France; in particular, it has been ascertained that in 1884 the Duchess provided a sum of twenty-five thousand francs for that purpose.[4]

Nevertheless, Lady Pomar resigned from the Theosophical Society in September 1884, complaining that Olcott 'lacked tact' in her regard.[5] This resignation must have been withdrawn because she resigned again in 1886, this time in the company of Mme de Morsier and several other members of the Parisian branch, following the revelations of Solovioff. Despite this, at the time of the 'Spiritist and Spiritualist Congress' of September 1889,[6] for which she was offered the honorary presidency,[7] and where Papus declared in his general report that she had 'well served the spiritist cause', Lady Pomar did not cease to be the 'president of the Theosophical Society of the East and of the West'; she was thus in a situation analogous to that of Anna Kingsford with her 'Hermetic Society'. But a little later, in March 1890 to be precise, Mme Blavatsky established an independent 'esoteric section' in Paris, for whose statutes and rules no information was made public, and whose members were required by oath to passively obey the orders of the directors. It is no less true that toward the end of her life the Duchess maintained rather amicable relations with the Theosophical Society; thus in July, 1893 she wrote a letter to the secretary of the Paris branch which was published by the *Lotus Bleu* and in which can be read:

4. *Daily News*, November 5, 1885.
5. Letter from Solovioff to Mme Blavatsky, September 26, 1884.
6. Here, 'spiritualist' means 'occultist'.
7. This Congress was chaired by Jules Lermina; the other honorary presidents were Charles Fauvety and Eugène Nus.

> Whatever the differences of point of view that exist between me and the Theosophical Society, I very much wish to see it develop in France, knowing that it can only contribute to the progress of the ideas to which I am myself devoted. But the mission that has been confided to me by Him whom I call my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, absorbs all the resources at my disposal.

Nevertheless, she registered an annual subscription of two hundred francs, and she continued her letter in these terms:

> I want the MTS [Members of the Theosophical Society] to be aware of the fraternal sentiments which I bear them. If we sometimes follow different ways, the goal which we seek is the same, and I extend my very best wishes for your efforts.

Let us also note that on June 13, 1894 Lady Pomar entertained Mrs Besant, who gave a lecture in her home on the 'pilgrimage of the soul', and that this meeting was chaired by Colonel Olcott. On June 11, Mrs Besant had given another lecture at the Rudy Institute; it had not yet been deemed proper to place the Sorbonne at her disposal, as happened in 1911 and as happened again even this year [1921].

The Duchess of Pomar died on November 3, 1895; we excerpt the following lines from the obituary by Commandant Courmes which appeared in the *Lotus Bleu*, and we scrupulously respect his style:

> It is a great and truly noble existence which has just been extinguished, for if the Duchess did not refuse to enjoy the wealth that karma had placed at her disposal, she certainly used it all the more in every kind of charity, whose number and particulars are innumerable, and also by acting eminently on the terrain of high intellectual charity by spreading, especially in France, her country of adoption, the waves of 'Knowledge'.... Spiritualist from the first hour, the Duchess of Pomar entered the Theosophical Society at its beginning in 1876, and she was intimately linked with Mme Blavatsky. She was president of the French branch 'Orient et Occident', whose Theosophical spirit, though independent, retained a more particularly Christian and even somewhat spiritist character. We would assuredly have preferred that she might have remained among oriental teachings, which appear to

us closer to the primary sources; but of course it is the right of Theosophists to follow, in their quest for the truth, the ways that best agree with their natural dispositions.[8]

These are truly strange facts: the alliance of Lady Pomar with Mme Blavatsky and her school, and the affirmation of a common goal between the movements directed by the two. What is perhaps no less curious is the extremely secret character the Duchess gave her organization. Here is what she wrote to Arthur Arnould in a letter which he published in 1890 on the occasion of the quarrel with Papus, or that, more exactly, he inserted in a document which he characterized as 'strictly private', but which nevertheless was sent to people outside the Theosophical Society:

> The Theosophical Society of the East and West, over which I have the honor of presiding, being most esoteric and consequently most secret, I do not understand why Colonel Olcott had the imprudence to speak of it, for I had asked him to keep *our* secret. Our meetings are wholly secret, and we are forbidden to speak of them to anyone whomsoever outside our now rather numerous circle which counts among its members some of the greatest minds of France, but to which one is admitted only after the highest of initiations and very serious tests. When I say that we receive our instructions *directly* from the highest spheres, you will understand that we desire to keep the strictest secrecy. . . .

What then were these instructions and these mysterious communications, whose means were probably not very different from those in use by ordinary spiritists, and what was the mission that Mme de Pomar claimed to have received? In a letter dated February 2, 1892, the original of which is in our hands, she said in this regard:

> the devotion which I profess for Mary Stuart applies less to the the memories of her earthly personality than to her always living celestial individuality[9] which for more than thirty years has given

8. *Lotus Bleu,* December 27, 1885.

9. The words 'personality' and 'individuality' are taken here in their Theosophical sense, where their relationship is exactly the reverse of what they ought normally to have.

> me numerous proofs of her spiritual [*sic*] presence at my side. This being, already so great, so noble on earth, has continued to develop according to the eternal law of the life of the Spirit, and today having come to possess the truth which makes one free, she has passed far beyond her former religious convictions.[10] Her mission is to give to the world today and especially to France, the Truths of the New Day which must lead the evolution of the race in the direction of a higher spirituality, and I have had the privilege of being chosen by her as earthly intermediary to labor at her work.

Further on she adds that 'this Queen is today an angel of the highest celestial spheres', spheres which she calls elsewhere the 'Circle of Christ' and the 'Circle of the Star'.

This 'New Day' which the Duchess of Pomar was thus charged with announcing and preparing for was a new revelation, an era which would succeed Christianity as Christianity succeeded the old Law; in a word, it was the 'arrival of the Holy Spirit' conceived of, gnostically, as the 'divine feminine'.[11] This is again

> the manifestation of the sons and daughters of God, not as a unique being, but as many; this more perfect race will humanize the earth which we know to have already passed through periods of mineral, vegetable, and animal development; and we see that this last period of development is nearly complete.

And the Duchess goes so far as to specify that

> We can say truly that the old world ended in 1881 and that the Lord has again created a new heaven and a new earth and that we are going to enter the *new year of Our Lady,* 1882.[12]

These citations are taken from a curious brochure, full of Kabbalistic calculations, which has as title only the two dates *1881–1882*, and at the end of which one reads this:

10. What becomes of Catholicism here?

11. See *Le Secret du Nouveau Testament,* pp496–505: 'Communication from above, received in the sanctuary of the Queen at Holyrood', and signed 'an envoy of Queen Mary'.

12. *1881–1882*, pp49–50.

> While I write these lines, the hours of 1881, *the last year of the Old Revelation,* rapidly approach the end, and the first hour of the celestial Spouse approaches.[13]

One may be excused for finding that the idea of a collective Messiah, as expressed here, is rather bizarre; but it is not entirely new, and we will point out in this connection that one encounters in Judaism ideas that tend to identify the Messiah with the people of Israel themselves. Whatever the case, it is precisely Messianism under one form or another that seems to provide the key for this 'end [times] community' which Lady Pomar affirms for the Theosophical Society, just as it is a more or less openly avowed messianism that is at the root of many other 'neo-spiritualist' movements.

If it was hardly a dozen years that the idea of a 'future Messiah', was expressed among the Theosophists, it is no less true that it had already been announced in these terms my Mme Blavatsky herself:

> the next impulse will find a numerous and *united* body of people ready to welcome the new torch-bearer of Truth. He will find the minds of men prepared for his message, a language ready for him in which to clothe the new truths he brings, an organization awaiting his arrival, which will remove the merely mechanical, material obstacles and difficulties from his path. Think how much one, to whom such an opportunity is given, could accomplish.[14]

This therefore is the common aim of Lady Pomar's and of Mme Blavatsky's undertaking; but the latter, who carefully refrained from advancing precise dates, probably prophesied with foreknowledge; for it must be assumed that she had given to her Society, as secret mission, not only to prepare the way for 'Him who must come', but also to provoke his very appearance at the moment that seemed propitious. This mission Mrs Besant, Mme Blavatsky's former secretary and her last confidante, would accomplish with the aid of the former Anglican minister, Charles W. Leadbeater, who seems to

13. Ibid., p85.
14. *The Key to Theosophy,* p307.

have played in her regard a role analogous to that of Olcott in regard to the founder of the Society. Only the 'Christian' complexion which had been given to the messianic movement on its way to realization did not perhaps correspond entirely to the views of Mme Blavatsky; and further, if one refers to what we said in the previous chapter, it can be seen that the disagreement is more apparent than real. Besides, the unstable and fleeting character of the Theosophical pseudo-doctrine has the advantage of permitting the most unforeseen transformations. To those who see its contradictions, the response is that they have not understood, just as the defenders of Bergsonian intuitionism do in their own case.

20

THE FUTURE MESSIAH

IN order TO UNDERSTAND the strange messianic escapade which caused some stir in recent years, it is necessary to know the very peculiar idea that the Theosophists have of Christ or, more generally, of what they call a 'Great Teacher' or 'World Teacher'. These two expressions are the translation of the Sanskrit terms *Mahāguru* and *Jagadguru*, which in reality simply designate the heads of certain Brahmanic schools: thus, the authentic *Jagadguru* is the chief of the Vedāntine school of Shankarāchārya. Let us say in passing, in order to warn against possible confusions, that the person to whom this title legitimately belongs at present is not the one who passes himself off as such in publications where the exposition of 'Vedānta' is particularly distorted for the use of Westerners (even though one must concede that the distortion is still not as complete as it is with Vivekānanda and his disciples). This episode has a rather curious political side, but that would lead us too far from our present subject. When Theosophists speak in their works of the *Mahāguru*, the person in question is not one of those in whom this quality is recognized in India, but is identical to the *Bodhisattva* of whom, as we have already seen, they have made the 'chief of the department of Religious Instruction' in the 'occult government of the world'. According to the Buddhist conception, a Bodhisattva is so to speak a Buddha 'in the making', a being on the point of attaining the state of Buddhahood or the possession of the supreme wisdom who is presently at the degree immediately below it. Theoso-phists accept this idea, but they add a good many fantasies of their own; thus for them there are two functions that are as it were complementary, that of the Manu and that of the Bodhisattva; moreover, there is a Manu and a Bodhisattva especially in charge of each one of the

seven 'mother-races'. When a Bodhisattva has fulfilled his role, he becomes Buddha and is replaced by another 'Adept'; when the Manu completes the period during which he must exercise his function, he passes on to a superior rank, although this is not specified. Finally, the era of the Manu and that of the Bodhisattva do not coincide: 'A Manu always starts with the first sub-race of the mother-race, whereas the Bodhisattva always has his work overlapping two great races.'[1]

This said, we can return to the conception of the 'historical Christ' whom Theosophists carefully distinguish from the 'mystical Christ', that is to say the higher principle of man mentioned earlier, and the 'mythological Christ' or 'sun god', for they accept the conclusions of the so-called 'science of religions' regarding 'myths' and their astronomical interpretation. Mme Blavatsky made a distinction, which sounds like a pun, between *Christos* and *Chrestos*; she reserved the first of these terms for the 'mystical Christ' and regarded the second as indicating a certain degree of initiation into the ancient mysteries; every man who had attained this degree was therefore not *Christos* but *Chrestos*, and such may have been the case with Jesus of Nazareth, if indeed one admits his historical existence—which she strongly doubted. Here is a passage in which she more clearly expresses herself in this regard:

> For me, Jesus Christ, that is the Man-God of the Christians—a representation of the Avatars of all countries, of the Hindu Chrishna,[2] and the Egyptian Horus—was never a *historical* figure. This is a glorified personification of the deified type of the great Hierophants of the Temples, and his story told in the New Testament is an allegory, certainly containing profound esoteric truths, but nonetheless an allegory.' Of course, this 'allegory' is nothing but the famous 'solar myth'.

But let us continue:

1. *De l'an 25000 avant Jésus-Christ à nos jours*, pp60–61.
2. Clearly Mme Blavatsky writes *Chrishna* and not Krishna deliberately; however, she does not dare go as far as writing *Christna* as Jacolliot did.

> The legend I speak of is founded, as explained on various occasions in my writings, on the existence of a figure called Jehoshua (who was turned into Jesus), born in Lud or Lydda around the year 120 before the modern era. If this fact is contested, something I am not opposed to, one must make up one's mind and consider the hero of the Calvary drama as a sheer myth.[3]

However, a little earlier Mme Blavatsky expressed herself differently and much more categorically on the 'fact' in question:

> Jesus was a *Chrestos*... whether he actually lived during the Christian era or a century earlier, under the reign of Alexander Jannes and his wife Salome, in Lud, as indicated by the *Sepher Toldoth Jehoshua.*

The source she quotes here is a rabbinical book, written with an obvious bias toward anti-Christian polemics, and generally considered as having absolutely no historical value; but this does not prevent him from adding a note in response to certain scholars, including Renan himself, for whom this assertion is erroneous:

> I say that the scholars are lying or talking nonsense. Our *Masters* say so. If the story of Jehoshua or Jesus Ben Pandira is false, then the entire Talmud, the whole Jewish canon, is false. It was the disciple of Jehoshua Ben Parachia, the fifth president of the Sanhedrin after Ezra who *rewrote* the Bible. Compromised in the Pharisees' revolt against Jannaeus in 105 BC, he fled to Egypt, taking along the young Jesus. This account is much truer than the one in the New Testament on which history remains silent.[4]

Here, then, are the facts that her 'Masters' themselves—if they are to be believed—have guaranteed as real, and which a few months later she is no longer opposed to having treated as mere legend; how explain such contradictions if not by this 'pathological case' later to be denounced by the editor of the very review that had published all these lucubrations?

3. *Le Lotus*, April 1888 (controversy with Fr Roca).
4. Ibid., December 1887.

Wholly different is the attitude of Mrs Besant, for on the contrary she affirms the historical existence of Jesus, although she too takes it back to about a century before the Christian era; we shall summarize the singular account on this subject that she gives in her *Esoteric Christianity.*[5] The Jewish child whose name was translated as Jesus was born in Palestine in the year 105 BC. His parents taught him Hebrew literature; at the age of twelve, he visited Jerusalem and was later placed in the care of an Essene community in southern Judea. Let us say at once that the story about Jesus' relations with the Essenes was not wholly invented by the Theosophists, and that many other occult organizations before them have wanted to turn it to their advantage; in fact, it is common custom in these circles to claim a link with the Essenes,[6] whom some claim are linked to the Buddhists—it is not known why—and in whom they want to see an origin of Freemasonry. Some thirty years ago there was a spiritualist sect in France which called itself 'Essenian' and believed in two messiahs, Jesus and Joan of Arc. They attached great importance to a manuscript relating to the death of Jesus allegedly found in Alexandria and published in Leipzig in 1849 by a certain Daniel Ramée; an English translation of this document, whose obvious aim is to deny the Resurrection, was recently published in America under the auspices of the 'Great School' or 'Order of Light' of which we spoke earlier. But let us return to Mrs Besant's tale. At the age of nineteen, Jesus entered the monastery of Mount Serbal, which had a large occultist library containing many books 'from trans-Himalayan India.' He then traveled through Egypt where he became 'an initiate of the Esoteric Lodge from which all major religions receive their founder,' that is to say the 'Great White Lodge', which at the time was not yet centralized in Tibet, although another writer—who is definitely not a Theosophist and toward whom the Theosophists in fact show some distrust—claimed to

5. See also the work of Mead entitled *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?* [New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1968].
6. On the so-called modern 'Essenes', see *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pt. 2, chap. 7. The pseudo-historic fantasies of Jacolliot were much respected in this sect, and by a coincidence that is no doubt not accidental the author's *La Bible dans l'Inde* also figures among the officially recommended works of the *Order of Light.*

have discovered traces of Jesus' stay in this country, where he was known by the name of Issa.[7]

What follows requires a bit more explanation, for here we come to the way in which, according to the Theosophists, the manifestation of a 'Great Teacher', or sometimes even of a 'Master' of lesser importance, is produced. In order to spare such an 'evolved' being the trouble of preparing a vehicle himself by going through all the phases of ordinary physical development, an 'initiate' or a 'disciple' must lend him his body after he has been made worthy of the honor by having been specially prepared for this by certain trials. From this moment, then, it will be the 'Master' who, using this body as if it were his very own, will speak from its mouth to teach the 'religion of wisdom'. There is something here analogous to the phenomenon that the spiritists call 'incarnation' with the difference that in this case the 'incarnation' is permanent. It must be added that living 'Masters' can similarly make occasional use of a disciple's body, as they are supposed to have often done with Mme Blavatsky; it is also said that the 'Masters' do not keep the privilege of reincarnation by substitution to themselves and that they sometimes let their most advanced disciples benefit from it. On this point we have already mentioned Sinnett's and Leadbeater's statements that Mme Blavatsky entered another body in this way immediately after her death. But the case that most particularly interests us here is the manifestation of the 'Masters'; it seems to be admitted, though without always being stated in an absolute fashion, that Buddha used the method we just described; here is what Leadbeater says on the subject:

> The body of the child born of King Suddhodana and Queen Māyā might not have been inhabited in the first years by Lord Buddha himself, who like Christ, would have asked one of his disciples to take care of this vehicle into which he entered only when this body was weakened by long austerities that he inflicted upon himself for six years in order to find the truth. If such is the case, it is not surprising that Prince Siddhartha did not preserve the memory of all the previously acquired knowledge of Lord Buddha, since he was not the same person.[8]

7. *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*, by Nicholas Notovitch [Joshua Tree, CA: Tree of Life Publications, 1996]; see *Lotus Bleu*, July 27, 1894.

Siddhartha, like Jesus, would thus have been the disciple chosen by the 'Master' to prepare an adult body to later yield to him, 'a sacrifice that his disciples will always be happy to offer him';[9] and what is presented here as mere hypothesis in the passage we just cited is elsewhere presented by the same author as a certain fact and as something quite common:

> The idea of borrowing a suitable body is always adopted by great beings when they think that it is important to descend among men in the present conditions. Lord Gautama proceeded in this way when he came to earth in order to attain the dignity of the Buddha. Lord Maitreya did the same when he came to Palestine two thousand years ago.[10]

In any case, as regards Christ's manifestation, which is what the last phrase refers to, present-day Theosophists are always very affirmative. Mrs Besant says that at the age of twenty-nine the 'disciple' Jesus had become 'qualified to serve as a tabernacle and an instrument for a mighty Son of God, Lord of compassion and wisdom.' This 'Master' thus descended into Jesus, and during the three years of his public life 'it was He who lived and moved in the form of the man Jesus ., . . teaching, healing diseases, and gathering round Him as disciples a few of the more advanced souls.'[11] At the end of three years, 'the human body of Jesus paid the penalty for enshrining the glorious Presence of a Teacher more than man';[12] but the disciples he had trained remained under his influence, and for more than fifty years he continued to visit them by means of his 'spiritual body' and to initiate them into the esoteric mysteries. Subsequently, around the accounts of Jesus' historical life crystallized the 'myths' distinguishing a 'solar god', which, once their symbolical meaning ceased to be understood, gave birth to the dogmas of Christianity.

8. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p322.
9. Ibid., p319.
10. *Adyar Bulletin*, October 1913.
11. *Esoteric Christianity*, p92.
12. Ibid., p93.

This last point is almost the only one in this whole account where one can find the ideas of Mme Blavatsky.

The 'Lord of Compassion' just mentioned is the Bodhisattva Maitreya; this name and title, referring to the concept of the 'future Buddha', do exist in authentic Buddhism; but this attempt at mixing Buddhism and Christianity, which is a special characteristic of the Theosophists' messianism, is rather awkward. This is yet another example of the eminently fantastic manner in which they claim to reconcile the different traditions from which they borrow; we have already found another in the association of Manu with the Bodhisattva. In the same connection let us also point out that according to contemporary Theosophists, Maitreya had appeared in India in the form of Krishna long before he manifested himself as Christ. However, it doubtless has to be granted that he was not yet a Bodhisattva at the time, but a slightly lower-ranking 'Adept' (as is Koot Hoomi today, who is his designated successor), since Krishna was much earlier than the time when Gautama, the former Bodhisattva, became Buddha. Nevertheless, we are not at all sure that certain Theosophists do not commit an anachronism here and believe that Krishna came after Buddha. Indeed, after having given as a general rule that 'Great Beings' borrow a disciple's body, Leadbeater adds:

> The sole exception we know of is this: when a new Bodhisattva assumes the function of World Teacher, his predecessor having become Buddha, he takes birth as an ordinary child when he first appears in the world. Our Lord, the present Bodhisattva, did so when he took birth as Shri Krishna in the golden plains of India, in order to be loved and honored with a passionate devotion which has perhaps never been equalled elsewhere.[13]

In any event, it is the same Bodhisattva Maitreya who is supposed to manifest himself again in our times, in conditions similar to those we mentioned earlier as regards Christ. Says Leadbeater:

> The Great Head of the Department of Religious Education, the Lord Maitreya, who already taught the Hindus under the name of Krishna and the Christians under the name of Christ, announced that he would soon return to the world in order to bring healing and help to the nations, and to revive spirituality, which is almost lost on earth. One of the great tasks of the Theosophical Society is to do all it can to prepare mankind for his coming, so that a greater number of people may be able to benefit from the unique opportunity provided by his very presence among them. The religion he founded when he came to Judea two thousand years ago has now spread all over the world, but when he left his physical body, it is said that the disciples who assembled to consider the new situation numbered only a hundred and twenty. His coming was announced by only one precursor last time; this task now has been given to a Society of twenty thousand members spread worldwide! Let us hope the results will be better this time than the last and that we shall be able to keep the Lord among us for more than three years, before human wickedness forces him to leave; may we also gather a greater number of disciples around him than formerly.[14]

Such is the goal assigned today to the Theosophical Society, which Mrs Besant declared some twenty years ago 'was chosen to be the cornerstone of the future religions of humanity... the pure and blessed link between those above and those below.'[15] Now, should the total success one wishes for the new manifestation of the Bodhisattva be interpreted in the sense that this time he will achieve perfect Buddhahood? According to Sinnett, 'the fifth, or Maitreya Buddha, will come only after the final disappearance of the fifth race, and when the sixth race will have already been established on earth for some hundreds of thousands of years';[16] but Sinnett knew nothing about the former manifestations of Maitreya as Bodhisattva, which are an innovation in Theosophy. Besides, when one recalls by how much the interval between us and the beginning of the fifth race was reduced, it is little wonder that its end should be much closer than was first announced. In any case, we are told about the imminent birth of the kernel of the sixth

13. *Adyar Bulletin*, October 1913.

14. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p382.
15. *Theosophy*, p12.
16. *Esoteric Buddhism*, pp214–215.

race,[17] 'under the direction of a Manu who is well-known to Theosophists,' namely the 'Master' Morya.[18]

The role appropriated by the Theosophical Society is not limited to announcing of the coming of the 'Great Teacher'; it is also to find and prepare, as the Essenes are supposed to have done earlier, the chosen 'disciple' in whom 'He who is to come' will incarnate when the time arrives. But in reality the fulfillment of this mission has been somewhat tentative; at least there was a first attempt that failed miserably and which dates back to a time when they were not yet clear about the personality of the future 'Bearer of the Torch', as Mme Blavatsky said. This was in London, a sort of Theosophist community then existed in the Saint John's Woods quarter; a young boy was being raised there, of a sickly and unintelligent aspect, but whose least words were listened to with respect and admiration, for he was no less, it seems, than 'Pythagoras reincarnate'. It is probable that this was not a real reincarnation but rather a manifestation like those just mentioned, since Theosophists grant that Pythagoras has already been reincarnated in Koot Hoomi and that he is still alive. Nonetheless, there are other cases where such an interpretation does not even seem possible but where the Theosophists are hardly troubled by the greatest obstacles; thus, when some of them called Mme Blavatsky 'the nineteenth-century Saint-Germain',[19] others took this literally and believed that she was the actual reincarnation of the Count of Saint-Germain, while the Count, on the other hand, after having been considered as a mere messenger of the 'Great White Lodge', was raised to the rank of a still living 'Master'. In this connection we will note that a Theosophist biography of this man,[20] a truly enigmatic character, moreover, has been written by

17. It seems the sixth race is to take birth in California; this is why a crowd of pseudo-initiatic societies, more or less similar to Theosophy, have established their headquarters in this region (see p222, n10).

18. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p261. — See Mrs Besant's book entitled *Man: Whence, How and Wither* [*A Record of Clairvoyant Observation* (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1960)].

19. *Lotus Bleu*, May 27 and September 27, 1895.

20. On Christian Rosenkreutz and the Count of Saint Germain considered as the same person and identified with the 'Master R', see the additional notes of p48, n40 and p130, n15. [See also *The Comte de St. Germain*, by Isabel Cooper-Oakley (NY: Samuel Weiser, 1970). ED.]

Miss Isabel Cooper-Oakley, who was one of Mme Blavatsky's first disciples.[21] There are mysteries here that one doubtless does better not to go into too deeply, for one would probably see that the Theosophists' ideas, here as elsewhere, are extremely undecided and unsettled, and one would even find the most irreconcilable assertions. In any case, according to Sinnett, Mme Blavatsky herself claimed to have been previously incarnated in a member of her own family, in an aunt who died young, and before that to have been a Hindu woman with considerable knowledge of occultism; there is no mention in all of this of the Count of Saint-Germain.

But let us return to Pythagoras, or rather to the young boy who was meant to furnish him a new 'vehicle'. After a certain time the father of this child, a captain retired from the British army, abruptly withdrew his son from the hands of Leadbeater, who had been specially charged with his education.[22] There must even have been some threat of scandal, for in 1906 Leadbeater was expelled from the Theosophical Society for reasons on which a prudent silence was maintained. It was only later that a letter written at the time by Mrs Besant came to light in which she spoke of methods 'worthy of the severest reprobation.'[23] Reinstated nonetheless in 1908 after having 'promised not to repeat the dangerous advice formerly given to young people,'[24] and reconciled with Mrs Besant even to the point of becoming her constant collaborator in Adyar, Leadbeater was again to play the principal role in the second affair, one much better known, and one that would end in a similar result.

21. On the other hand, there are also those who believe that the Count of Saint-Germain himself was a reincarnation of Christian Rosenkreutz, the symbolic founder of the Brotherhood of the Rose-Cross (see *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, by Max Heindel, p433), and that the latter had already been an initiate of a high grade, having lived at the time of Christ.

22. These facts were reported in an article signed by J. Stonet, which appeared in the *Le Soleil* of August 1, 1913.

23. *Theosophical Voice*, Chicago, May 1908.

24. *Theosophist*, February 1908. This reinstatement provoked a certain number of resignations in England, particularly those of Sinnett and Mead (*The Hindu*, Madras, January 28, 1911); the first was replaced as Vice-President of the Theosophical Society by Sir S. Subramanya Iyer, former First Judge of the High Court of Madras.

21

THE TRIALS OF ALCYONE

IN THE AFFAIR WE ARE GOING TO DISCUSS NOW, it is neither Pythagoras nor Koot Hoomi who was to manifest himself, doubtless as a 'precursor', but the Bodhisattva Maitreya himself; and the young man who was being raised to this end was not this time an Englishman, but a Hindu named Krishnamurti, of whom Mrs Besant appointed herself the guardian, as she did also of his brother Nityānanda, who was also to fulfill some secondary mission;[1] they were generally referred to by the astronomical pseudonyms *Alcyone* and *Mizar*. Both of them accompanied Mrs Besant on her trip to Paris in 1911 and appeared at her side at the lecture she gave at the Sorbonne on June 15th under the presidency of Mr Liard, the then Vice-Chancellor (it is important to note that he was a Protestant), the subject being 'Giordano Bruno's message to the world today'.[2] In order to understand this title, it has to be known that Mrs Besant claims to be the reincarnation of Giordano Bruno, just as she claims that previously she was the philosopher Hypatia, daughter of the mathematician Theon of Alexandria. Formerly, she gave an entirely different version of this subject, for she expressly affirmed—as did

1. A few years ago Nityānanda died while still very young, without having been able to play an active role in the 'messianic' enterprises of Theosophy.

2. Very recently, on July 26, 1921, Mrs Besant, who was in Paris to preside over the Theosophical Congress, gave another lecture in the great amphitheater of the Sorbonne. The present Vice-Chancellor, Mr Appell, who had to give the necessary authorization for this and who appeared in the first row of the audience, is not he likewise a Protestant? — On this subject, see the article by Eugène Tavernier in the *Libre Parole* dated July 25, 1921.

Mme Blavatsky—'that she had been a Hindu in her former life';[3] such variations hardly contribute to inspire confidence and this is yet another contradiction to add to all those we have had the occasion to note so far.

When he came to Paris for the first time (he would be seen there again in May 1914),[4] Alycone was sixteen years old. He had already written—or at least somebody had published under his name—a little book entitled *At the Feet of the Master*, for which the Theosophists displayed the keenest admiration, even though it was hardly more than a collection of moral precepts devoid of any great originality.[5] Gaston Revel ended an article on this book with these significant words: 'Tomorrow, the Announcer will be the Dispenser of new benefits; may they be in great numbers, may they be multiple—the hearts which will follow his Star!'[6] Earlier there had appeared a most bizarre book, having the title *Tears in the Veil of Time* 'by the main Theosophical teachers: Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, in collaboration with several others.' It was a kind of novel, worthy of the history of the ancient human races, and deriving from the same source, relating the thirty successive incarnations of Alcyone—at least the last thirty, for it was said that there had been many others before these.[7] As a general rule it must naturally be admitted that man retains no recollection of his former lives, but it seems that the 'main Theosophical teachers' are an exception thanks to their 'clairvoyance' which permits them to make investigations into the past; but we have just seen to what extent we can trust this. A kind of French adaptation of this work, or rather a summary accompanied by commentaries, was published in 1913 by Gaston Revel under the title *De l'an 25000 avant Jésus-Christ à nos jours*. What is noteworthy

3. *The Two Worlds*, April 20, 1894.

4. After having already gone to Paris in 1911 and 1914, Krishnamurti returned first in 1921, and numerous times thereafter.

5. In 1913 there appeared another pamphlet attributed to Alcyone, entitled *Service in Education*.

6. *Le Théosophe*, June 16, 1911.

7. In *Man: Whence, How and Wither?*, published in 1913, one can find information about the older incarnations, and even about the 'pre-human' lives of Alcyone and the leaders of the Theosophical Society during the 'lunar chain'!

about this is the care with which the episodes described have been chosen to provide the opportunity to recall various Theosophical teachings; also the predictions that have been cleverly insinuated regarding different dates in the role of the future Alcyone; and lastly, the way the same people are met again in one existence after another, among whom are the leaders of the Theosophical Society. Leadbeater (who appears there under the name *Sirius*) says:

> Approximately five hundred of the current members of the Society figure among the principal characters of this drama that unfolds itself in the course of these lives (*Hercules* is Mrs Besant, *Vajra* Mme Blavatsky, *Ulysses* Olcott and so on). It is profoundly interesting to note how those who in the past were often united by blood relations—in spite of being born in faraway countries this time—are brought together once more by the common interest they feel for Theosophical studies and united in the same love for the Masters more closely than an earthly relationship.[8]

They have built up a whole theory about the 'meeting of Egos' on this in correlation with certain periods regarded as particularly important in the history of the human races; and they avail themselves of this to declare that 'the true foundation of the Theosophical Society goes back to the year 22662 BC,'[9] an assertion that can be compared to those fantastic genealogies of the secret societies we alluded to earlier.[10]

As for the hero of this story, here are the details of the 'initiation' he is supposed to have recently attained after having been prepared gradually for it throughout his former lives:

> From now on, Alcyone is ready to fulfill new duties, as a direct disciple of those [the 'Masters'] he served so well in the past. Thus in his present incarnation he has found the friends and parents of the past in the persons of our revered President and C.W. Leadbeater. Soon after, he was admitted to the Path of Probation and hardly five months had gone by before he became an accepted disciple. A few days later, he became the 'Master's Son' and passed the first Portal of the first major Initiation, which allowed him to join the members of the Great White Lodge which governs mankind. All those who in the past knew, loved and served him are near him today as members of the Theosophical Society.[11]
>
> Alcyone and those surrounding him belong to the heart of the world; moreover, they are the promises of the future; they form a special group of their own called the *group of Servants*. They are the ones who assist the great Teachers of humanity in their work.[12]

The expression 'to belong to the heart of the world' means that they are direct disciples of the Bodhisattva, whereas because of the ties that were supposed to bind them personally to the 'Mahātmā' Morya, the founders of the Theosophical Society are to belong to the group of the Manu or to the 'brain of the world'; perhaps this distinction is meant to suggest a means for explaining and excusing certain differences.

However, a few protests were already being raised from various sides, and, especially in India, certain troublesome rumors were starting to spread. In this connection we think it necessary to deny most categorically the stupid legend that in India whole crowds prostrated themselves before Krishnamurti. It is certainly easy to understand why this legend should have been spread by the Theosophists to enhance the prestige of their future Messiah; but what is much more difficult to understand is that some of their adversaries should have deemed it appropriate to repeat such an outrage; it is hard to use any other term when one knows how Theosophism is valued by Hindus.[13] At the beginning of 1911, Dr M.C. Nanjunda

8. *L' Occultisme dans la Nature*, p158.

9. *De l'an 25000 avant Jésus-Christ à nos jours*, p296.

10. The 'H B of L' fixed its origin only '4,320 years before 1881 of the present era.' This is relatively modest, and it should again be said that these dates refer to the symbolism of 'cyclic numbers'.

11. Ibid., pp288–289.

12. Ibid., pp295–296.

13. Another legend: people unfamiliar with Hindu dress imagined that the way Alcyone was dressed was meant to recall the traditional image of Christ. This story is certainly much less unlikely than the other one, but in fact it is not true either.

Rao, professor at the Medical School in Madras, whom Theosophists later accused of having inspired the whole campaign against them, wrote in the *Arya-Bala Samaj Magazine* of Mysore:

> The current goings-on of the Theosophists call for a severe condemnation of the methods adopted to glorify this young Krishnamurti [Alcyone] as a second Christ come to save afflicted mankind.

For the sake of those who might be misled by a certain similarity of names, let us point out that the *Arya-Bala Samaj*, whose journal published these lines, should not be mistaken for the *Arya Samaj* mentioned above, nor for another organization called *Arya-Bala Bodhini*, which was only one of the Theosophical Society's many creations.[14] This *Arya-Bala Bodhini* is or was (for we do not know whether it still exists, and in any case it could not have been very successful) an 'Association of Hindu youth', a little too similar in certain respects to the 'YMCA' or 'Young Men's Christian Association' that Anglo-American Protestantism strives to spread in all countries and where its proselyte mentality hides behind the mask of an apparent neutrality.

On the other hand, also in 1911, Dr J.M. Nair had already published an extremely scathing article against Theosophy in the medical journal *Antiseptic*, and he did not hesitate to bluntly accuse Leadbeater of immorality. This article, entitled 'Psychopathia Sexualis chez un Mahātmā', was reprinted in the form of a pamphlet and reproduced by the large-circulation daily, *The Hindu*. Following these attacks and after a certain period of reflection three lawsuits were filed in December 1912 against Dr Nair, Dr Rama Rao, and the editor of *The Hindu*; all three were lost by the Society and its President, who contended that it was wrong to hold them responsible for Leadbeater's theories since they had always been of a purely private and personal nature. Preparing yet again to disavow Leadbeater, who had become too much of a liability, Mrs Besant forgot what she had written earlier: 'One night as I was going to the Master's residence, Mme Blavatsky informed me that Leadbeater's defense must

14. *Lotus Bleu*, April 27, 1895.

be organized against all the exaggerations he was accused of;'[15] and that some time later she had even said: 'I must stand or fall with him.' This is what her enemies very conveniently reminded her of; and if Mrs Besant lost these lawsuits, Leadbeater doubtless gained by not being expelled from the Society a second time. But the scandal was great despite the sometimes clumsy efforts of the President's loyal friends; this is when Arundale, principal of the 'Central Hindu College' of Benares,[16] wrote the confidential letter full of an idolatrous servility toward Mrs Besant, of which we spoke elsewhere. When this letter was revealed by the *Leader* of Allahabad, a certain number of professors of this college, who were too ardently spreading Theosophist propaganda among their students, were forced—as was the Principal himself—to submit their resignations. A Hindu newspaper, *The Behari*, summed up very well the general impression in these terms:

> If a movement must be judged by its coryphaeus and if Leadbeater is a coryphaeus of Theosophy, then for the layman, Theosophy is merely a mystery somewhere between scabrous indecencies and daring pretensions, between a repulsive teaching and an incredible presumption.

All this finally disturbed the father of Krishnamurti and Nityānanda, G. Narayaniah (or Narayan Iyer), who was nonetheless a staunch Theosophist who had belonged to the Society since 1882 and who had worked since 1908 without salary under the Theosophical name *Antares* as Assisting Correspondent-Secretary of the 'Esoteric Section' in Adyar. He determined to revoke the delegation of its rights of tutelage, which he had consented to on March 6, 1910, and asked the Madras High Court his sons be returned to him.[17] After a trial whose details were all printed in the April 18, 1913 *Times*, Judge Bakewell ordered that the youths be restored to their parents

15. *The Link*, a Theosophist journal.

16. Arundale later became director of teaching in Indore State. The Maharajah of Indore was one of the anglophile Hindu princes mentioned in chap. 29.

17. The disappearance of Alcyone could in reality only be momentary, as will be seen later in these notes. Before speaking of him once again, it was only necessary

before the 26th May, declaring that the father was still the natural guardian of his children. In the preamble to this judgment we read *verbatim*:

> Mr Leadbeater admitted in his deposition that he held and continues to hold opinions that I cannot qualify otherwise than as being without contradiction immoral and of a nature that disqualifies him as a tutor of young boys, and which, added to his alleged power of perceiving oncoming impure thoughts, make him a highly dangerous companion for children. It is true that both he and the defendant have declared that he promised not to express and not to put his ideas into practice, but a father must not be expected to trust a promise of this kind.[18]

Mrs Besant immediately appealed this verdict, but as this was rejected in Madras on October 29, 1913, she decided to apply to the English Courts. Her two pupils were then at Oxford finishing their education (a peculiar preparation for a messianic mission!),[19] and, duly prepared by their entourage (Arundale had become their special tutor), they declared that they refused to return to India.[20] This time Mrs Besant's appeal was accepted on May 5, 1914 in London by the judicial committee of the Privy Council,[21] and things remained as they were. Naturally, this decision was celebrated as a victory by

that people have had sufficient time to forget the unfortunate incidents of which he was the unwitting cause. — In 1922, Krishnamurti was nominated a member of the General Council and of the Executive Committee of the Theosophical Society.

18. The Theosophists cannot question the accuracy of this text, for we took it from a booklet entitled *The Madras Trial* (p64), a 'publication restricted to members of the Theosophical Society,' concerning which, in his preface dated September 15, 1913 (p3), Charles Blech formally recommends members 'not to spread these documents outside, and not to even mention this booklet beyond the restricted circle of our members.'

19. The most amusing thing is that Mrs Besant had expressly declared before the Madras High Court that she had sent Krishnamurti 'to study at an English University in order to prepare him to become a spiritual teacher' (*The Madras Trial*, p28).

20. *The Times*, January 28, 1914.

21. *Daily Mail*, May 6, 1914.

Theosophists, and it may be believed that certain political influences were no strangers to this (we shall see elsewhere that they had already tried to use them in Madras), and one of their French journals wrote:

> Mrs Besant has just won the action filed against her. This is good news and no surprise to us as we were expecting it. From now on, our movement will impose itself with still more irresistible force.[22]

However, from that time on much less was heard of Alcyone, and it seems that today nobody even speaks of him anymore; all these incidents were without a doubt far too unfavorable for achieving the mission intended for him, and moreover, he had been prudently presented only as a 'herald', but all the while quite clearly hinting at the more important role that was later to devolve upon him. In this way another exit was rather shrewdly kept open in case events should turn out badly.[23]

However, less caution was shown during the legal proceedings in Madras, and

22. *The Theosophist*, May 16, 1914.

23. Since the first edition of this book, matters have entered a new phase. In December 1925 Mrs Besant suddenly decided to proclaim his imminent coming with great solemnity and the most theatrical production. However, what is so strange is that she did it in such terms as to leave one wondering if Krishnamurti himself was destined to be the 'vehicle' of the messiah, or if he was to be a simple 'precursor'. This prudence is explained as soon as it is known that despite the special education that he received, Krishnamurti, who at that time was around thirteen years old, made great efforts to escape the role that was being imposed on him; he even refused to appear at the proclamation ceremony. After that, Mrs Besant was again able to bring him back entirely under her influence, and she presented this resistance as a 'test' that he had to undergo, and she even compared it with Christ's temptation in the wilderness! It thus appears decidedly admitted that the Bodhisattva should manifest himself using Krishnamurti, and we are assured that already the Bodhisattva has frequently spoken through him. There is yet another difficulty. This new messiah needs twelve apostles. Now at the time of the proclamation, only seven had yet been found, and it seems that the number is not yet complete. These seven 'Apostles' are Mrs Besant, Leadbeater, Jinarājadāsa, Mr and Mrs Arundale, the Rev. Kollstrom, and finally, Madame de Manziarly, who is said to be one of the possible candidates for Mrs Besant's succession.

certain declarations made under oath during the courtroom discussions are undoubtedly the most extraordinary ones ever made in court: Thus, for example, Mrs Besant declared under oath that she had been in the presence of the Supreme Head of the Earth's Evolution (the planetary *Logos*), that she was consciously present during Krishnamurti's 'Initiation' at a certain place in Tibet; that she had very good reasons for believing that Christ, or Lord Maitreya as He is called in the East, will make use of the disciple Krishnamurti's body—in a few years' time and for the sake of His work among men—in the same way as He made use of the disciple Jesus' body two thousand years ago. She also claimed that at a certain meeting in Benares, Christ had appeared, and, for a few minutes had 'overshadowed' His 'Elect One'. Leadbeater made similar statements under oath and even more, saying that he had conducted researches on Mars and Mercury, that he could read people's thoughts and many years ago certain Superhuman Beings had instructed him to look for young people suitable for spiritual work in the future. Several statements from these two depositions also indicated that Mrs Besant and Leadbeater were in constant contact with the 'Inner Heads' of the Theosophical Society, generally known as the Masters.[24]

One wonders whether one is dreaming on reading these lines, and it is understandable that a Hindu newspaper, the *Poona Mail*, should have written that Mrs Besant—who had gone as far as to tell Narayaniah that Leadbeater was 'an Arhat bordering on divinity'—was 'guilty of blasphemy' through the outrageous assertions she had dared to make under oath.

All these more or less scandalous incidents could not but create trouble within the very heart of the Theosophical Society; the most celebrated split was that of the 'Rosicrucian' Rudolf Steiner, who led away most of the groups from Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, as well as a certain number of others spread far and wide, and who formed with these elements a new, independent organization

24. *The Madras Standard*, April 24, 1913 (article signed C.L. Peacock, written in Leadbeater's defence).

which he named the 'Anthroposophical Society'. Following this split, which officially took place on January 14, 1913, Mrs Besant re-formed a new and much reduced German section, comprising the few branches that still remained loyal to Adyar, and on March 7 to replace Steiner she named as Secretary-General of this section Dr Hübbe-Schleiden, director of the review *Sphinx*. Hübbe-Schleiden had been involved with the Theosophical movement for a long time, and from 1884 had been favored with 'precipitated' communications from the 'Mahātmās', the first of which came to him on a train in the company of Olcott.[25] Apart from Steiner's schism, which we are going to speak of at more length—there were several others of less importance; thus, on October 30, 1913 the Spanish group 'Marcus Aurelius' of Pontevedra made itself an autonomous center, claiming 'to be no longer in sympathy with the ideas and doctrines of the current president, holding to Mme Blavatsky's teachings,[26] and expressly disapproving of the new tendency

25. *The Occult World*, 'Conclusion'.

26. 'Return to Mme Blavatsky's teaching' is the slogan for various dissident Theosophist organizations, among which the American United Lodge of Theosophists deserves special mention. This organization was directed by W.P. Wadia, who was one of the most visible members of the Theosophical Society, and seemingly one of those most expected to follow in the line of presidential succession after Mrs Besant. It was distinguished by not being a society properly so called, for it had 'neither a constitution, nor statutes, nor officials.' It declared itself 'faithful to the great founders of the Theosophical movement,' and accused the successors of having altered the teachings. The accusation of 'disloyalty toward Theosophy' was expressly formulated by Wadia in his July 18, 1922 letter of resignation, from which we offer the following extracts.

> What is this sand bed of thought on which the Theosophical Society has been erected? It is a program of spiritual progress which has become a creed, with its savior-initiates, its eternal hell for those who will have missed the opportunity, its devils under the guise of Jesuit black magicians, and the Garden of Eden which in 750 years will flourish in Southern California for the faithful who, like soldiers of a fanatic army, obey and follow zealously if not wisely. . . . In the Theosophical Society we find on the one hand unverifiable assertions, and on the other a fantastic credulity; a sort of 'apostolic succession' has even become an article of faith in the society, thanks especially to the private and secret organization of the E.S., that is, the 'esoteric section' or 'Eastern School' (the initials can stand for both). Regarding the future 'Garden of Eden' in Southern California, it will be the cradle of the sixth race, and the 'apostolic succession' concerns the episcopacy of the 'Liberal Catholic church', to which we will allude in greater detail further on. What is the cause of this ruination if not the psychic assertions (that is, the assertions of

imparted to the Society.'[27] Finally, certain American Theosophists raised indignant protests and created a 'Theosophical Reformation

the 'clairvoyants'), the materialization of spiritual facts, the creation of demi-gods who drive away the Gods?... Now, there exists an 'apostolic Church' with all its 'pernicious ecclesiasticism' (Mme Blavatsky's expression), including the 'apostolic succession' conferred by the Masters! Today, the places of worship with their priests and those officiating, their ritual and their ceremony, are encouraged as being Theosophical. The sacred names of the Masters are used on every occasion and at every instant. One cannot belong to '*Their* School' if one participates politically in the non-violence and non-cooperation movements of the great Indian leader M.K. Gandhi. 'No one can attack the L.C.C. (Liberal Catholic church) and remain in the E.S.'; members must choose between the E.S. and the League of Loyalty (founded in Australia to promote a return to the spirit of the founders), for they cannot remain in both.' To be part of the E.S., all must believe in the next coming of an 'World Teacher', and must actively participate in certain movements because they have been declared blessed by the Bodhisattva or the Christ. Messages, orders, and instructions coming from the 'Masters and Devas' are broadcast, and these indicate not only the subsidiary activities that a 'loyal' member should join, but also concern the rules of the game, the manner in which quarrelsome young people should comport themselves, how they should dress, and what should be sung during the Co-Masonic rites, and a dozen other subjects of the kind. These orders show an absence of all lack of proportion, of all enlightened intelligence, and of all good sense. Obey and follow, follow and obey, such is the slogan given to those who are infected with the virus of psychic folly which is dignified with the name of Theosophy' — However there were those who eventually wearied of 'obeying and following'; in addition to Wadia's, there were also quite a number of other less sensational resignations at about the same time. In October of 1922, Georges Chevrier, Corresponding Secretary for the E.S. in Australia, left along with six hundred other members of the Sydney Lodge of which he had been president, and he soon set it up as an independent organization. Other entire branches also left or threatened to leave, like the Nottingham Lodge in England, the Midland Federation of British Lodges, and in France, the Angi branch of Nice, followed by the Vajra branch of Roanne, and part of the branch of Havre (whose president, Louis Revel, published an open letter to the members of the Theosophical Society on February 18, 1923, confirming Wadia's statements completely). From various sides the then current directors were accused of falsifying Mme Blavatsky's works in the new editions prepared under their auspices, and according to certain dissident American reviews, *The Secret Doctrine* contained no fewer than two thousand two hundred suppressions, additions, and various alterations. Stokes expressly designated as principal author of these alterations the all too famous G.N. Chakravarti, who, as we saw above (pp152–53), was for a long time Mrs Besant's principal 'inspirer'. — At present, the 'return to Blavatsky', as partisans familiarly term it, seems to be expanding anew: independent Theosophical groups who propose 'to recapture the true directives published by the first foundress and to rehabilitate the name of Theosophy,' have just been founded—in Paris at 14, rue de l'Abbé-de l'Epée, under the direction of Louis Revel, in Brussels under A. Pletinckx, and in Amsterdam, under Kleefstra and Van der Velde.

27. *El Liberal* of Madrid, November 18, 1913.

League' which counted among its principal members the aforesaid Dr Buck. In the manifesto of this League, whose mouthpiece was the Chicago review *Divine Life* and which published a series of very edifying brochures on the Madras trial, we find the following lines:

> We propose to organize in the United States a body of Theosophists meant to bring about a reform of the present conditions of the Theosophical Society, whose President Annie Besant, in association with Charles W. Leadbeater, has, during the entire duration of her mandate, caused the most deplorable demoralization of the aim and the ideal of this Society.... Contrary to the most fundamental principles of Theosophy,[28] a new personal cult is being exploited by the President of the Society, and a particular religion is developing under her patronage. Here again Mrs Besant's behavior constitutes a characteristic malfeasance, and her continuous collaboration with Leadbeater is of a nature to throw discredit on the Society.

28. Allusion to a clause of the regulations reproduced elsewhere, and which prohibits agents of the Society from preaching any particular religious belief.

22

THE ANTHROPOSOPHY OF RUDOLF STEINER

THE THEOSOPHISTS really have no reason to congratulate themselves on their relations with the so-called German Rosicrucians; we have spoken previously of Mme Blavatsky's disputes with Franz Hartmann; we just saw how, from the beginning of 1913, as regards the Alcyone affair, Rudolf Steiner, general secretary of the German section of the Theosophical Society, separated himself entirely from Mrs Besant.[1] In revenge, she seized the pretext that Steiner (who was born in 1861 in Kraljevic, Hungary), belonged to a Catholic family (and not Jewish as some have claimed), and accused him of being a Jesuit.[2] If that were true, it must be admitted that she took quite a while to perceive it, for Steiner had belonged to the Society for some fifteen years, and that her 'clairvoyance' did not serve her very well in this instance. This entirely gratuitous accusation of 'Jesuitism' is nearly as common as that of 'black magic' in neo-spiritualist circles, and certainly it is not worth lingering over.[3] There

1. On this conflict see *Mme Annie Besant et la Crise de la Société Théosophique*, by Eugène Lévy.

2. *Theosophist*, January 1913.

3. Mrs Besant has claimed that Jesuits are identical to 'black magicians', called 'Brothers of the Shadows' by Madame Blavatsky (see p67) and 'Lords of the Dark Face', and she even goes so far as to accuse them of inspiring every attack directed against the Theosophical Society and its leaders, and in particular for having wholly concocted the Leadbeater affair. But since this might be somewhat hard to believe, we should reproduce her own words, despite the length of the quote:

> You will remember HPB's sharp attacks against the Jesuits, whom she recognized as Theosophy's most dangerous enemy. Although the Catholic clergy accomplish much fine work, to the extent that its head acquired supreme authority in the Western world, it gave itself up to the spirit of persecution, for it considered knowledge to be too dangerous for ordinary people and shut its doors even to the most worthy.... The persecutors of Antiquity and the Middle Ages were ever engaged in besmirching their victims by calumniously accusing them of sexual perversion; just witness the accusations directed against the Templars and Albigensians, against Paracelsus, Bruno and other servants of the White Lodge. Since the founding of the Jesuit Order, these soldiers of the Church, with the occult knowledge of its leaders and the intellectual discipline and obedience of its lower ranks, have produced both saints and persecutors. Spread throughout the world, obedient to a single will, this order has become a formidable power for good and evil. It has a wondrous list of martyrs but has been banished many a time from Christian realms for its crimes. Being itself the depository of occult powers, it seeks to break all those who have attained such powers outside its own training, and, no longer able to punish by death, it employs the ancient deadly weapon of ruining reputations. Hence HPB's vehement attempts to unmask it, seeing it as an incarnation of the dark forces battling ceaselessly against the light, and their deadliest weapon. In its lowest form it is at the height of its strength now in North America and Australia, for in these countries the Roman Catholic Church seeks to cleave to democracy, and in the Jesuits it has soldiers without scruple. They have again availed themselves of this ancient weapon against HPB, accusing her of the worst debauchery. This was more deadly than the overt attacks against the Coulombs [*sic*].... The same politics were arrayed against the one who ranks after her among the Theosophical Society's Instructors, my brother Leadbeater, who has traversed a hell of the most sordid kind of accusations. Other less eminent people have shared his cross, and at this moment the Jesuit conspiracy with its ancient weapon launches its most venomous attack against the leaders of the Liberal Catholic Church, which it recognizes as its mortal enemy because as in the days of the early Church its bishops are in contact with the Masters of Wisdom. These persecuted people are apostles. [*The Theosophist*, March 1922; the French translation appeared in the *Bulletin Théosophique*, April 1922]

are occultists for whom the fear of Jesuits or their more or less disguised emissaries has become a real obsession. On the other hand, certain authors, among them Mme Blavatsky (who may have borrowed this idea from the Masonic writer J.-M. Ragon), have not hesitated to attribute to the Jesuits the founding of the Rose-Cross in Scottish Masonry. Others claim that the Jesuits insinuated themselves into various Rosicrucian organizations in the eighteenth century and deflected them from their primary aim. Still others, going further, want to identify the Rose-Cross Brotherhood of the seventeenth century with the Jesuits. But all these pseudo-historical fantasies cannot bear the least scrutiny and we mention them only to show that here Mrs Besant has not invented anything; seeing an adversary of Catholic origin arise before her with references from a Rosicrucian school (which moreover was imprecise and perhaps

Later on we will see what business is referred to in the last lines of this quotation.

non-existent), she could not fail to denounce him as Jesuit.[4] Some have believed that this quarrel between Steiner and Mrs Besant was a mere comedy;[5] even though one always needs to be wary of appearances, we do not believe this was so, and in our view there was a real scission which, beyond the affair which was the avowed occasion for the breach, and apart from the question of personal rivalry, may also have had certain political motives. No doubt one is always enjoined from all sides not to engage in politics, but we will see further on that the Theosophical Society nevertheless faithfully served the interests of British imperialism; the Society's German adherents were hardly disposed to play this game, being Germans before they were Theosophists.

We have said that Steiner gave to his new organization the name 'Anthroposophical Society' with the manifest intention of competing with the Theosophical Society, and also to distinguish his own conception which in fact made of man the center of what he called 'spiritual science'. It must also be added that the word 'anthroposophy' is not, as might be believed, a neologism coined by Steiner, for a work by the Rosicrucian Eugenius Philalethes, or Thomas Vaughan that dates from 1650 bears the title *Anthroposophia Magica*. The Anthroposophical Society took as its motto 'Wisdom is only in the Truth', in imitation of the Theosophical Society's 'There is no higher religion than the Truth'; this latter is a very defective translation of the motto of the Maharajas of Benares.[6] Here are the principles which the new organization declared as its basis, according to a propaganda brochure published at the time of its creation:

4. In this connection we note that Steiner was never a priest, as Fr Giovanni Busnelli erroneously wrote (*Gregorianum*, January 1920).

5. *Le Dr Rudolf Steiner et la Théosophie actuelle*, by Robert Kuentz (articles published in *Le Feu*, October, November, December 1913, and subsequently gathered and published in a brochure).

6. *Satyāt nāsti paro dharma.* — The Sanskrit word *dharma* has several meanings, but never properly that of 'religion'. Even though it can often be rendered approximately by 'law', it is one of those words which are almost impossible to translate precisely into a European language because the notion which it expresses really has no equivalent in western thought; moreover this is far from being an exceptional case, however astonishing this may seem.

> In order to form a satisfactory and healthy life, human nature needs to know and to cultivate its own supersensible essence and the supersensible essence of the world exterior to man. The natural investigations of modern science cannot lead to such a goal, even though they are called upon to render inestimable services within the limitations of their task and their domain. The Anthroposophical Society intends to pursue this goal by encouraging serious and true research directed toward the supersensible, and by observing the influence these researches exercise on the conduct of human life. A true investigation of the mind, and the state of soul that results from it, must form the character of the Anthroposophical Society, whose expression may be summed up in the following guiding principles: (1) A fraternal collaboration can be established in the bosom of the Society among all men who accept as the basis of this collaboration a fund of spirituality common to all souls, whatever the diversity of their faith, their nationality, their rank, their sex, etc. (2) The investigation of supersensible realities hidden behind all the perceptions of our senses will unite with the concern to spread a true spiritual science. (3) The third object of these studies will be the penetration of the kernel of truth enclosed within the multiple conceptions of life and of the universe held by different peoples throughout the ages.[7]

In fact these tendencies are analogous to those of the Theosophical Society: on the one hand, the idea of 'universal brotherhood' and the 'moralism' which is more or less closely associated with it, for

> the Anthroposophical Society will aim at an ideal of human cooperation . . . and will attain its spiritual goal only if its members consecrate themselves to an ideal of life which may serve as universal ideal for the conduct of human life.[8]

On the other hand, there is the statement of 'a method of spiritual investigation able to penetrate into the supra-sensible worlds,'[9]

7. *Esquisse des principes d'une Société Anthroposophique*, pp1–2.

8. Ibid., p3. The clearly Kantian inspiration of this last formula will be noted.

9. Ibid., p4.

which obviously consists in the development of 'clairvoyance' or of some other similar faculty, whatever the name by which it may be designated.[10]

Naturally the Anthroposophical Society disclaims any intent to form a religion or even to attach itself to any particular belief whatsoever:

> Nothing must be more alien to the efforts of the Society than activity favorable or hostile to any religious orientation whatsoever, for its aim is spiritual investigation and not the propagation of any faith; thus any religious propaganda is foreign to its duties.[11]

Certainly this is only logical on the part of people who have reproached Mrs Besant precisely for having forfeited Theosophical principles by giving herself up to 'religious propaganda'. But what must be particularly noted in this regard is that it would be very wrong indeed to believe that the doctrines of Steiner have a specifically Christian character:

> The spiritual investigator who contemplates the noblest creations of human genius over the course of its development, or who plumbs the philosophical conceptions or the dogmas of all peoples throughout all time, will not be attached to the value of these dogmas or these ideas; he will consider them as an expression of human effort, straining toward the solution of the great spiritual problems that interest humanity. Consequently a designation borrowed from a particular confession cannot express the fundamental character of the Society.

The religions are thus placed in the same rank as mere philosophical conceptions and treated as purely human facts, which is indeed an 'anthroposophical', or even 'anthropological' point of view. But let us continue:

10. Let us carefully note nevertheless that neither spiritism nor mediumship is in question here; some, like Keuntz, have confused things that are really quite distinct.

11. Ibid., p3.

> If, for example, the impulse impressed on human evolution by the personality of Christ is studied in the course of the investigations of spiritual science, this study will not proceed from the dogmas of a religious confession. The result obtained can be welcomed by the believer of any religious confession, just as an adherent of the Hindu religion or of Buddhism would familiarize himself with the astronomy of Copernicus which is no more than this a part of his religious documents. This impulse attributed to Christ is the exclusive result of investigations [*sic*]; it is presented in such a way as to be admitted by the believers of any religion and not only by the Christian faithful to the exclusion of others.[12]

The comparison with Copernican astronomy is truly an admirable idea. Doubtless this can only be a wholly outward description, where there is no mention of Rosicrucianism and where by an excess of discretion Steiner's name does not even figure; it is only said that the Anthroposophical Society has at its head a 'Founding Committee' composed of Karl Unger, Marie von Sivers,[13] and Michael Bauer, with its provisional seat at Berlin. To know something of Steiner's thought, one must go to his works, and it will then be seen that if his doctrine can from a certain point of view be regarded as a kind of 'Christian esoterism', it is still in a sense not greatly different from what is found under this name with other Theosophists. Here is an example:

> In this way, students of the spirit are initiated into that same exalted mystery that is linked with the name of Christ. The Christ discloses Himself [to the initiate] as the great example for human beings on Earth.
> To those who have recognized the Christ in the spiritual world as a result of their initiation, historical events on earth in the fourth post-Atlantean period (the Greco-Latin period) also become comprehensible. For students of the spirit, the intervention of the exalted Sun being, the Christ-being, in Earth's evolution at

12. Ibid., pp4–5.

13. Marie von Sivers subsequently became Rudolf Steiner's wife.

> that time and His ongoing work within this evolution become a matter of direct experience and personal knowledge.[14]

It is not a question here of a 'Bodhisattva', for the pseudo-oriental façade of Theosophy has disappeared; but the 'Great Solar Being' in question is probably identical to the *Logos* of our system, as conceived by Mme Blavatsky after what she thought she understood of Neoplatonism, and also as conceived by her successors,[15] who made him the supreme chief of the seven planetary *Logoi,* and through them of 'the hierarchy of powerful Adepts who are raised up to the Divinity itself'[16] in virtue of this attachment. Steiner therefore differs from Mrs Besant in that he sees in Christ the manifestation of a higher principle, if not merely a more direct manifestation of the same principle, by the suppression of a number (two to be precise) of intermediary entities, for there are always ways to reconcile such divergences when one wants to bring a little good will to both sides; and, moreover, they were never advanced to start the split.

Regarding the work of Steiner from which we took the preceding citation, it is worthwhile pointing out something rather curious. This book, called *La Science Occulte,*[17] was published in Leipzig in 1910; now, the previous year there appeared in Seattle (Washington) another work entitled *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception,* by Max Heindel, which put forward theories that on the whole were entirely the same. At first glance it might be thought that Steiner, who gives no explanation of the identity of his affirmations with

14. *An Outline of Esoteric Science* [Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1997], p374. [The text Guénon cites is from *La Science Occulte,* p338 of the French translation, which—rendered back into English—reads as follows: 'By the strength of his initiation the disciple finds himself initiated into the august mystery which is united in the name of Christ. Christ reveals himself to him as the great terrestrial ideal. Once *intuition* has thus recognized Christ in the spiritual world, the disciple understands the historical fact that has occurred on the earth during the course of the Greco-Latin period, and how the *Great Solar Being that we call Christ* has thus intervened in its evolution. The knowledge of this fact is now for the disciple a *personal experience.*] ED.

15. See especially *Le Credo Chrétien,* by C.W. Leadbeater.

16. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature,* p202.

17. The German original was entitled *Die Geheimwissenschaft im Umriss.* ED.

those of Heindel,[18] borrowed from the him; but on the other hand, as Heindel dedicated his book to Steiner, one may suppose that he drew his teachings from Steiner before these teachings were made public, unless both did not simply draw from a common source. In any case, the most appreciable difference between the two (aside from questions of form) is that Heindel does not hesitate to clearly attribute his teachings to the Rosicrucian tradition, while Steiner is most often content to speak of 'occult science' in an extremely vague and general manner, which is perhaps more prudent. In fact, it is not too difficult to see that the greater part of Heindel's teachings as well as Steiner's, are drawn directly from *The Secret Doctrine* with a few modifications that touch only details, but carefully avoiding terms of an oriental appearance. Thus these conceptions have little connection with authentic Rosicrucianism, and even what is presented as 'Rosicrucian terminology' is almost always expressions invented by Mme Blavatsky. From another point of view also there is in Steiner's reserve the proof of a certain cleverness, for it has always been said that true Rosicrucians never proclaim themselves but on the contrary keep this hidden. This is doubtless one of the reasons why Steiner avoids saying expressly in his publications that he belongs to Rosicrucianism, which does not prevent him from letting this be guessed, and he would doubtless be greatly distressed if no one believed in such an attachment. We will add that a schism must have quickly occurred between Steiner and Heindel, for the dedication of The *Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* has disappeared from more recent editions, and Heindel, who formed a 'Rosicrucian Fellowship' with its seat at Oceanside, California,[19] wrote in another work published in 1916 that the first messenger chosen and instructed by the Rosicrucian Brothers to spread

18. In later works Steiner did identify Heindel as an auditor at his lectures who then plagiarized his words in the book Guénon mentions, and in others. ED.

19. Following the death of Max Heindel in 1919, his widow has directed the Rosicrucian Fellowship and edited a review entitled *Rays from the Rose-Cross,* which deals chiefly with astrology. To these same astrological preoccupations the following curious news item is attached: 'Last year the *Rosicrucian Fellowship* commissioned twelve paintings from the artist Camille Lambert, who has a studio in Juvisy, each to represent a sign of the zodiac. These paintings will be placed in the *Ecclesia,*

their doctrines failed certain tests, so that it was necessary to seek a second who was no other than Heindel himself;[20] and although the first was not named, it was certainly Steiner who was meant.

As to the organization of the Anthroposophical Society, here is some information found in the brochure from which we have already cited several extracts:

> The work of the Society will be organized in groups free to form themselves independently in every country or in every place. These groups may remain separate or unite to form societies among themselves or freer associations, as inspired solely by the conditions which their local circumstances might dictate. In its real objectives, the Anthroposophical Society is not a society in any usual sense of this word; the link uniting the members does not consist in an organization based on regulations or on any other outward framework.

There is in this last phrase an idea which might be of interest, and all the more so since in fact the true Rosicrucians have never established societies; but if the word 'society' is improper, why use it in the very title of the organization?

> Only the culture of spiritual science in the ideal sense established in the preceding statement confers on the title of member its integral and true character. This title, however, involves certain rights as, for example, the access to certain writings of spiritual science reserved to members alone,[21] as well as other prerogatives of this kind. Outwardly, then, the bond of the Anthroposophical Society in no way differs from what would be found, for example, within an anthropological society or some similar body.[22]

a temple built for humanitarian ends [*sic*] at Oceanside [California]' (*Voile d'Isis*, November 1922). There is a French branch of this organization, whose head, L. Krauss, seems to be actively propagandizing at this time; a Spanish branch was also formed in 1927.

20. *The Rosicrucian Mysteries* [*An Elementary Exposition of Their Secret Knowledge* (Ocean Park, CA: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1911), pp12–14.

21. Steiner's lectures form an enormous volume of material; in 1913 there were already twenty-one series. [The complete edition of Steiner's works in German exceeds 350 volumes. ED.]

This obviously implies 'an interior point of view', a bond of another kind, but one that is not explained; we must thus recognize here the equivalent of a division of the Theosophical Society into an 'exoteric section' and an 'esoteric section'. Indeed, the teachings said to be reserved for members are not given to all indiscriminately, or at least are so given only in part; in the Anthroposophical Society there is another organization, previously created by Steiner, which now constitutes the 'inner circle'; this organization, about which no information is given out publicly, calls itself Rosicrucian, and for the reception of members uses forms of initiation altogether similar to those used in Masonry,[23] indeed, too similar, for this is yet one more reason among many others to doubt the authenticity of this Rosicrucianism. We can only recall what we have said before in this connection: most of the current groups which style themselves in this way can only claim a wholly imaginary filiation, or at the very most a mere theoretical attachment. This is, if you like, to be Rosicrucian in intention, but we do not believe anything more can be seen here unless it is claimed that the use of certain symbols independently of all other considerations and even of their meaning is enough to constitute an effective link.[24] Of course, we can say as much, and with much greater reason, about a supposed link to the mysteries of antiquity which is frequently mentioned in Steiner's works;[25] we will see that the idea of 'restoring the mysteries' also

22. *Esquisse des principes d'une Société Anthroposophique*, pp 4–5.

23. There is a rather detailed description of the initiation into the first degree in the brochure of Fr L. de Grandmaison, *La Nouvelle Théosophie*, pp36–37. But here we must say that in this brochure there are conclusions on certain points which we cannot accept, especially regarding the origins of Rosicrucianism (pp22–24), as well as regarding the role of Theosophy in India.

24. It is possible that at first Steiner may have belonged to the 'Renovated Illuminism' of Léopold Engel, but we cannot affirm this absolutely.

25. *Christianity as Mystical Fact and the Mysteries of Antiquity* [London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co., 1948]. — It is curious to note that in 1919 the ex-Abbé Loisy published a volume entitled *Les Mystères païens et le Mystère chrétien*, a title nearly identical to that of a published translation of one of Steiner's works.

exists with Mrs Besant and her followers; but these are all only attempts at reconstitution based on 'intuition' or 'clairvoyance', and therefore always call for extreme caution.

Whatever the case, one can now see how in the Anthroposophical Society the very great autonomy promised to the various outer groups does not compromise the unity of direction; it suffices that there be in each of these groups, and not necessarily at their head, 'initiates' of the inner organization who will be responsible for transmitting, not precisely orders, but suggestions; this is generally how things work in associations of this kind. Moreover, the Theosophical Society also includes national sections or societies which have administrative autonomy, and this does not hinder the central leadership from exercising what is in fact an almost absolute power. There too it is the existence of an 'esoteric section', with an oath of obedience required of its members, which provides the possibility. This apparent independence is well devised to seduce those who are unaware that is only illusory, and it is doubtless this which permitted the Anthroposophical Society to attract from the beginning numerous adherents in nearly all countries. It even had some in England, and it also had some in France, where we will only name as the most widely known, Edouard Schuré, of whom we have already had occasion to speak (and who after quitting the Theosophical Society in 1886, joined again in 1907), Eugène Lévy, Mme Alice Bellecroix, and Jules Sauerwein, editor of *Le Matin* and translator of the works of Steiner.

On the other hand Steiner wanted to carry out an idea very similar to Franz Hartmann's Theosophical monastery; at Dornach, near Basle,[26] he built a temple 'where those dedicated to spiritual science might assemble, be instructed and improve themselves in a place

26. Apparently Switzerland provides an especially favorable terrain for the founding of Theosophical or suchlike communities. A 'Cooperative Theosophical Community' called *Domaine de l'Étoile* was created in June, at Céligny near Geneva, under the direction of René Borel. Its aim was to 'found a small colony living by its own work and intended to gather together in a harmonious setting all those members who desire to live in a spiritualist atmosphere' (*Bulletin Théosophique*, April 1922).

prepared for them.'[27] The description is so strange that we must give some extracts:

> The edifice carefully reflects Steiner's doctrine as expounded in a great number of works and conferences. Two vast domes rise above the hill that dominates a wooded amphitheater crowned with old ruins. . . . One of the domes, larger than the other, symbolizes the Universe with its harmonies and the successive stages of its evolution. Since in occultism the number seven represents the unfolding of things in time, so this dome is supported by seven immense columns on each side. These columns are in the form of pentagrams formed by triangles fitted perfectly into one another. Above each column an ornate capital represents one of the planetary forms of our world. . . . The small dome is so to speak fit into the larger from which it issues. Under this dome reigns the number twelve, the number of space. The twelve columns signify the twelve zodiacal influences that descend into the 'microcosm' or human world, while all around the edifice the stained glass windows designed by Steiner himself paint in lively colors the steps of the soul's progress. . . . Rudolf Steiner thinks that an edifice in which one studies the forces of nature must, in

27. The temple at Dornach, called the 'Goetheanum', burned down on the night of December 31, 1922. Since it was built almost entirely of wood, everything was destroyed; however they began rebuilding it almost immediately, but this time in concrete. This fire has been quite generally attributed to arson, some even accusing the Theosophists of responsibility, and others, of course, the Jesuits. One effect of this event was to draw public attention to the Anthroposophical Society and its founder, and news items such as the following could be read in the press:

> If the legend is to be believed, Dr Steiner, whose theories are confused, has however rendered an eminent service to humanity by befuddling the mind of Count von Moltke, the General Chief of Staff, at the decisive moment of the battle of the Marne. Nevertheless, the German strategist has remained his disciple. . . . Last year, the prophet collected 35 million marks in subscriptions and founded a share-holding company called 'The Coming Day', which undertook the manufacture of cigarettes with the goal of financing propaganda later on. This concession to human weakness was poorly received by Steiner's adversaries and the cigarette factory had to be sold (*Echo de Paris*, January 10, 1923).

all its parts, express the ceaseless effort, the constant metamorphoses that mark the progress of the Universe.[28]

To realize construction costs, which must have been as high as three million, he organized a real estate association called the 'Society of St John' (*Johannesbau-Verein*), in allusion to the old brotherhoods of operative Masons. The temple was to be completed toward the end of 1914, but the war interrupted the work or at least slowed it, and we believe it was only in 1920 that the building was finally dedicated. It contained, among other things, a theater where the 'esoteric dramas' of Steiner and Schuré[29] were to be performed. Let us add that Steiner exercised an increasing influence on his disciples,[30]

28. *Le Matin*, March 1, 1914.

29. The latter's plays were translated into German by Marie von Sievers. Nevertheless, it appears that Schuré separated from Steiner during the war because of a pan-Germanist brochure written by him, and that from this point he was reconciled with the Theosophical Society, where he has recently given several lectures on the 'Celtic spirit'.

30. Rudolf Steiner died April 26, 1925. Since then the Anthroposophical Society has been lead by a board of directors, and it does not seem that they have ever dreamed of having a successor to the founder. Various accessory organizations are connected with the Anthroposophical Society: the Eurythmy School at the Goetheanum, created and directed by Marie Steiner, with an associated drama school; the Waldorf School in Stuttgart, and other similar schools in Holland and England; the International Laboratories of Arlesheim, around which are grouped four nursing homes for children and adults. In connection with the medical applications of Steiner's theories, here is a rather curious report:

> Dr Kolisko of Vienna, has sought to establish a new medicine, or at least a pharmacology, on the anthroposophical doctrine of his master Steiner. Adoration [*sic*] of the number three, following Babylonian methods (?), plays a certain role in this therapeutic, which is also akin to the research and results of early homeopathy. To suffering humanity Dr Kolisko brings a universal remedy: sulphur. With it he wants to make a 'sulphured' humanity. The Vienna Physicians Society has taken a dim view of these proceedings, whose chief originality consists of justifying the use of known medications by the strangest mystical reasons. Thus, in extolling the use of any infusion whatever against cancer, the Theosophists [*sic*] invoke the myth of Holder the god of winter, who kills Balder the god of summer (*Echo de Paris*, August 23, 1922).

The 'Anthroposophical Society of France', centered at 3, avenue de l'Observatoire, has as its mouthpiece the review *La Science Spirituelle*, which seems to be published at quite irregular intervals. In addition, a 'World Congress to show the existence of a Spiritual Science and its practical applications' was held in London in July 1928. Here are some excerpts from the manifesto issued for this occasion:

and they, who in 1914 already numbered some four thousand and among whom there were many women had for him an admiration and veneration equal to what the 'orthodox' Theosophists—if one may use this word here—professed for Mrs Besant.

> Analytical science, inflexible logic, and crystallized dogma have completed their tasks.... The time has come when man should develop within himself a superior form of knowledge. This will necessarily be by means of a Spiritual Science, which will cast a new light on the Divine Incarnation and the mission of Christ. But a vast and profound understanding of Christ's mission is only possible if one draws out the evolutionary direction of the Earth as a whole.... In the light of this knowledge, a clearer understanding of the role entrusted to each earthly nation will arise, and Individualization, Freedom, and Good Will shall constitute a Spiritual Reality penetrating all branches of human activity... Every age has had its guides. At present there has devolved on man the mission of discovering where Wisdom dwells, and, having found it, erecting the edifice of the new age on a solid foundation.

23

THE ORDER OF THE STAR OF THE EAST AND ITS ANNEXES

MUST IT BE BELIEVED that the chiefs of the Theosophical Society, discouraged by the failures we have recounted, have come to renounce their messianic enterprises? We have reasons for thinking that this is not at all the case; under one form or another, with or without Alcyone (and most likely without him, for we have heard that another future Messiah is already being prepared in secret, destined to replace Alcyone),[1] the movement will continue, for the 'group of Servants' continues to function as in the past. Of course, we intend to speak here of the real group and not of the more or less fantastic personages to whom the Theosophical Society also gives this name and whom they regard as composing the entourage of the Bodhisattva; besides, what is really in question is not a unique and well-defined group but rather multiple and diverse groups, forming so many organizations distinct in appearance from the Theosophical Society but created and directed by it. The collection of all these associations is what is called the 'Service Order of the Theosophical Society'. We shall return to this later; for the moment we only want

1. As seen earlier (p190, n23), the Theosophists have not actually renounced their Messianic enterprise, but contrary to what might have been believed at the time we first wrote this book (since they themselves at that time took the precaution of preparing another 'possible' Messiah in case of need), Alcyone was finally assigned the role, whether he wanted it or not, of 'vehicle' of the 'Great Teacher', and so to be as Mme Blavatsky says (for she interpreted the name *Lucifer* in this way), the 'torch-bearer of Truth' (see p170).

to note some of these auxiliary groups, and first 'the Order of the Rising Sun', organized at Benares by Mr Arundale, then transformed on January 11, 1911 into the 'Independent Order of the Star of the East',[2] with Alcyone as the nominal chief and Mrs Besant as 'protectress', 'in order to bring together all those who, whether in the Theosophical Society or outside it, believe in the coming of the Supreme Instructor of the World.' It is hoped

> that its members will be able to do something on the physical level to prepare public opinion for the idea of this coming by creating an atmosphere of sympathy and veneration, and that by uniting they will form on higher levels an instrument which the Master can use.

This Order 'excludes no one and receives all those who, whatever form their faith may take, share the common hope.' The acceptance of the following principles is the only requirement for admission:

> (1) We believe that a Great Instructor will soon appear in the world, and we want to order our life so as to be worthy of recognizing Him when He appears. (2) We will therefore try always to think of Him and to act in His name, and therefore to the best of our ability to do all the work entailed in our daily occupations in His name. (3) Insofar as our regular duties permit, we will endeavor to consecrate some of our time every day to some definite work that may prepare his coming. (4) We will endeavor to make devotion, perseverance, and gentleness the dominant characteristics of our daily life. (5) We will endeavor to begin and to end each day with a short sentence intended to ask His benediction on all that we try to do for Him and in His name.[3] (6) Considering this as our principal duty, we will endeavor to recognize and venerate greatness without distinction of person, and to

2. This 'Order of the Star of the East' must not be confused with another Order with a similar name, the *Eastern Star,* whose founding dates back to 1855 and which is only a kind of feminine annex to American Freemasonry.

3. Members of the Order are furnished special formulas for this use, which are changed from time to time.

cooperate as much as possible with those whom we feel to be our spiritual superiors.

As to the relationships of the Order with the Theosophical Society, here is what Leadbeater, in the presence of Alcyone, said at a meeting of the Italian section at Genoa:

> While the Theosophical Society *asks* for the recognition of human fraternity, the Order of the Star of the East *commands* belief in the advent of a great Master and *submission* to his six principles. On the other hand, one can admit the principles and the precepts of the Order without accepting all the teachings of the Theosophical Society. The birth of the Order has revealed to us that everywhere in the world there are people who await the arrival of the Master, and thanks to him it has been possible to gather these people together .... The work of the Order and that of the Theosophical Society are identical: to enlarge the ideas of Christians and of those who believe that outside their little Church there is no salvation; to teach that all men can be saved.... For a great number of us, the arrival of a Great Instructor in only a belief; but for some it is a certainty. For many the Lord Maitreya is only a name, while he is a great being for some among us who have seen him and have often heard him.[4]

A little while later these declarations were to be partly contradicted by Arundale, affirming in the name of Alcyone that 'the Order does not identify this Supreme Instructor for whose advent it has been founded', and that 'no member has the right to say, for example, that the Order awaits the coming of Christ or of the Lord Maitreya,' and that 'it would be prejudicial to the interests of the Order and to those of the Theosophical Society to regard as identical the objects of these two organizations.'[5] Elsewhere we read that

> if some members believe that the Instructor of the World will make use of this or that body [an obvious allusion to the mission

4. *Le Théosophe*, October 16, 1912.
5. *The Daybreak*, August 1913.

> of Alcyone], these are only personal opinions and not beliefs to which other members must adhere.

It probably would have been different if things had turned out better. In any event, this is a very clear example of how the Theosophist leaders know how to adapt themselves to circumstances and to modify according to their opportunities the appearances that will permit them to penetrate different groups to recruit assistants for the realization of their plans.

Organizations have been created that are adapted to each of the groups which they desire to reach; thus there are those addressed especially to the young and even to children. Thus was established, besides the 'Star of the East', the 'Servants of the Star', with Krishnamurti as its 'Protector' and Nityānanda as its head:

> all the members of this Order, with the exception of honorary members, must be less than twenty-one years old, and the youngest child who wishes to serve can be a part of it.[6]

Previously there were two other organizations of the same kind, the 'Golden Chain' and the 'Round Table'.[7] The 'Golden Chain' is a 'spiritual training group' to which children are admitted from the age of seven, whose aim (at least the avowed aim) is expressed in the formula the members must repeat every morning:

> I am a link in the chain of love which encompasses the world. I must remain strong and bright. I want to try to be gentle and kind toward every living creature, to protect and aid all who are weaker than I. And I will try to have only pure and beautiful thoughts, to speak only pure and beautiful words, and to do only

6. *The Daybreak*, October 1913, p151.
7. Along with to the 'Golden Chain' and the 'Round Table' is another Theosophist organization, the 'Rose Star', which, like the first, is aimed at young children. 'All these orders or leagues,' wrote Mlle Aimée Blech, 'do not contradict one another, and do not compete. Kindness can never be too accentuated, and the beautiful, the true, and the good can never be placed in too sharp relief in the troubled times in which we live. It is said that this is a time of transition, which is a further reason for preparing the future.' (Bulletin Théosophique, February 1922).

pure and good actions. May all the links become bright and strong.[8]

This aim seems almost identical to that of the 'Bands of Mercy', originally American but introduced into Europe by Jerome Périnet of Geneva.[9] These leagues are obviously of Protestant inspiration, and their young adherents must sign this formula: 'I want to try to be good not only for all living creatures, but to *prevent* anyone whatsoever from molesting or *injuring* them.'[10] It is said hopefully that this commitment of honor, this initiation into the value of an oath, will quickly raise the child to the dignity of manhood, which is what is also promoted by 'Scouting' (another institution no less penetrated by the Protestant spirit) which, born in England, is not without links with the Theosophist movement. Even in France the Theosophists actively patronize the 'League for National Education', established in 1911 for the propagation of 'Scouting'.

If in the 'Golden Chain' the advent of the 'Great Teacher' is not an open issue, the same cannot be said for the 'Round Table', where one can become an 'associate' from age thirteen, 'companion' from fifteen, and 'knight' from the age of twenty-one (it is hardly necessary

8. We take this text from an article of Mme I. de Manziarly, which appeared in *Le Théosophe*, March 11, 1914.

9. In France the honorary president of the 'League of Kindness' is Mme Eugène Simon, a member of the Theosophical Society who also plays an important role in the feminist movement. The child who wishes to join the League signs a card on which the following rules are printed: (1) perform an act of kindness every day; (2) be kind to animals; (3) tell no lies; (4) protect the weak, help the unhappy; (5) show gratitude toward your parents and all those who have done you good; (6) always show gratitude to the defenders of the Fatherland; (7) respect the old and the infirm. These rules are very similar to those of 'Scouting'; and in this connection it is also worth noting that a special group for the defense of animals has been formed in the 'Order of the Eastern Star'. In the Boy Scouts there are even specifically Theosophical groups; thus the *Bulletin Théosophique* of April 1923 contains a letter originating from the 'Directing Committee of the Blue Scouts of the Round Table' at Grenoble. On the other hand, as to the spirit animating the 'Scouting' movement in general, it is interesting to note that several years ago Mrs Besant was proclaimed 'Protectress of the Scouts of all the world,' just as the English general Baden-Powell is recognized as their supreme head. This is not unrelated to the political role of the Theosophical Society as an instrument of British imperialism.

10. *Le Théosophe*, September 16, and October 1, 1913.

to point out the analogy, certainly intentional, of these three grades with those of Masonry), and where members must take a formal oath of secrecy. Members must

> follow the Great King which the West has named Christ and the East Bodhisattva; now that we have the hope of his early return, the time has come to form knights who will prepare His advent by serving Him from this present moment. Those who enter the League are asked to think of this King each day, and to do an act each day to serve Him.

This League counted among its first adherents a number of directors of the Scouting movement, which also presents itself as a 'new chivalry'; after a short time it had centers not only in England and Scotland, but also in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, America, Australia, and New Zealand.[11] In sum, it is above all a recruiting center for the 'Star of the East' which claims to be the kernel of the 'new religion', a rallying point for all those who await the 'advent of the Lord'.[12]

On the other hand, a certain 'Confraternity of the Mysteries of God' was founded in France and Belgium in 1913, whose title seems to be inspired by the 'Confraternity of the Friends of God' of Tauler, and which was presented in these terms:

> All readers of *Esoteric Christianity* and of some of the works of Mead are familiar with the idea of *Christian Mysteries*. A lively hope widely spread among some students is that these *Mysteries* may be restored in a way that we cannot foresee,[13] and that in this way a profound need felt in the Christian church will be fulfilled. In this hope and with the conviction that the time has

11. *Le Théosophe*, August 1, 1913.

12. Formerly there existed in Theosophy another 'Society of the Round Table' with a quite different character; this was a group founded by inmates of Folsom State Prison in California, 'having as aim their moral improvement and the study of Theosophy' (*Lotus Bleu*, April 27, 1895).

13. At the Theosophical Congress of Stockholm, June 1, 1913, Mrs Besant held a conference on the 'restoration of the Mysteries'; as we said above, this is one of the aims proposed by Steiner.

arrived, the Confraternity of the Mysteries of God has been founded with these two aims: (1) to gather together in a single body, grouped together by solemn promises of service and fraternity, those Christians who in a humble attitude of readiness to be employed as He will judge good, want to consecrate their life to the service of Christ, and want to live, study, pray, and work in the hope that the Mysteries will be restored; (2) the common study of Christian Mysticism, of the legends and mystical traditions, as well as of the scattered allusions relating to the Christian Mysteries.... It must be specified that the primary aim of the Confraternity is based on the imminent coming of the Lord and implies belief in this coming. It is to be hoped that the numerous Christians of the Order of the Star of the East who are interested in ceremony and symbolism will join the Confraternity and will find in its line of work a definite occasion to aid and prepare His path and make level His ways.[14]

Finally, and no doubt to compete with the Rosicrucian organization of Steiner which was taking a completely different direction, a new 'Temple of the Rose-Cross' was created, having as its object the 'study of the Mysteries of Rosicrucianism, the Kabbalah, Astrology, Freemasonry, symbolism, Christian ceremony, and the occult traditions found in the West.'[15] There are some rather disparate things in all this; for example, it is not apparent what astrology is doing here,

14. *Le Théosophe,* April 16, 1913; *Revue Théosophique belge,* July 1913. — For all that concerns this organization as regards France, see Raimond van Marle; and, for Belgium, see F. Wittemans. — Wittemans, currently a Belgian senator, has recently published an *Histoire des Rose-Croix,* which naturally accommodates Theosophical conceptions and is consequently filled with the most fantastic assertions.

15. *L'Acacia,* a Masonic review, April 1913, p 237. The same article also dealt with the founding of a 'Musical Group of the Theosophical Society'. — In January 1928 we saw the appearance of a new journal, *Cahiers de l'Etoile,* which is related to a series of journals appearing in twenty different countries. The international office of these journals is at Eerde-Ommen, Holland; the editorial direction is anonymous, although we know that the French journal is edited by Mme de Manziarly. *Cahiers de l'Etoile* publishes poems in English by Krishnamurti. The first number contains a portrait of him by the sculptor Bourdelle who, it seems, is a convinced Theosophist (and those who have noted how he signs his works can hardly doubt this).

especially as the Theosophists already have at their disposal a special organization for its study, directed in England by Alan Leo and in France by L. Midville, with its review *Modern Astrology.*[16] Besides, this is not the essential aim of the 'Temple of the Rose-Cross' which, although 'having no official relation with the Order of the Star of the East', must nevertheless 'labor at the common work', that is to say, 'prepare the way of the Lord' and by its ritualistic forms 'furnish the basis for a part of the great *ceremonial* aspect of the new religion'.[17] And yet, all this was still insufficient; in order to give a body to this 'new religion', the leaders of the Theosophical Society wanted to have a real Church, clad officially as a Christian, even Catholic denomination; and it is this, as we shall now see, which was accomplished in the most recent years.

16. The commercial side has not been neglected in this organization; we have before us a fee schedule for horoscopes, whose prices 'vary according to the work involved and according to the needs of the client'; 'all horoscopes under fifty francs are assessed according to rigorously scientific data; in all horoscopes of fifty francs and above, scientific judgement is combined with intuitive judgement [*sic*], each horoscope being synthesized by Mr Alan Leo.'

17. *The Daybreak,* August 1913.

24

THE OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH

AT THE BEGINNING OF 1914 people began to hear of the existence in Paris of a 'French Catholic Church', also called the 'Gallican Church'; there was already another 'Gallican Church', directed by an Abbé Volet, which had a journal entitled *The French Catholic*. It is characteristic of these schismatic organizations to multiply almost indefinitely, like Protestant sects, and sometimes to compete with another rather dishonestly. The new Church was provisionally placed under the control of 'Msgr Arnold Henri Mathieu, Count of Landave of Thomastown, Old Catholic Archbishop of London, Metropolitan of Great Britain and Ireland' while awaiting the consecration as 'Metropolitan of France and the Colonies' of his Vicar General, 'Msgr Pierre Rend, vidame of Lignidres.' It seemed that in reality this last person was simply called Laurain, but the dignitaries of this Church have a mania for titles of nobility as others have for fantastic decorations; thus Bishop Villatte, whose cultural efforts had earlier caused a certain uproar, invented the 'Order of the Crown of Thorns'. However that may be, it is quite singular that a Church proudly proclaiming itself 'French and not Roman' was even provisionally under the authority of an Englishman; it first became known, just like that of Villatte (who had by then moved on to a Syrian Church under the name Mar Timotheus), by offers of schismatic priests to parishes which found themselves deprived of their curés because the municipalities had had difficulties with their bishops.[1]

1. We can cite the commune of Chevrières in the department of l'Isère, as having received such an offer.

There soon appeared a bulletin entitled *The Catholic Awakening* which ran for exactly four numbers, from March to August 1914, whose publication was halted by the war and by the mobilization of 'Archbishop Metropolitan'.[2] This bulletin, in order to establish the 'apostolic succession' of Msgr Mathieu, consecrated by Msgr Gérard Gul, Jansenist Archbishop of Utrecht, listed the entire line of Jansenist archbishops and bishops of Holland; and through them, by several intermediaries, the line was traced back to Bossuet, then to Cardinal Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII. One could then read there of the 'religious division' of France into an archbishopric and eight 'regional' bishoprics; several of these had already had designated bishops, among whom were two bishops of a so-called 'Latin Orthodox Church', Msgrs Giraud, former Trappist lay brother, and Joanny Bricaud. The latter, who is quite well known in occultist circles, previously had himself called 'His Beatitude John II, Patriarch of the Universal Gnostic Church', and today he claims succession to Papus as head of the Martinist Order and of several other organizations; but it should be mentioned that these titles are contested by other occultists. It would be difficult, moreover, to enumerate all the Churches and all the Orders to which Bricaud claims to be attached either successively or even simultaneously. If we especially note the presence of this occultist among the personnel of the Church here in question, it is because this is an example of the relations that exist between a throng of groups that at first glance one might believe to be complete strangers to one another. However, there was no question of Theosophy and its representatives in the 'French Catholic Church', which, like most similar schisms, seems to have had only an ephemeral existence. It was in the Old Catholic Church of England, from which the 'French Catholic Church' was born, that the Theosophists began to insinuate themselves.

The head of this Old Catholic Church, Archbishop Mathieu, who was really Arnold Henry Matthews, born in Montpellier of Irish parents, was at first prepared to receive orders in the Episcopal

2. The administration was at 5, rue du Pré-aux-Clercs; the place of worship was at the 'Church Joan of Arc', 18 passage Elysée des Beaux-Arts.

Church of Scotland. Then he became Catholic in 1875, and was ordained priest in Glasgow in June, 1877. He left the priesthood in 1889, and in October 1890 took the Italian name of Arnoldo Girolamo Povoleri, even publishing a notice in the *Times* to announce this change of names. He married in 1892 and had himself called the Reverend Count Povoleri di Vicenza, and it was about the same time that he also took the title of Count of Landaff. Let us add that recently he has appeared under the name of the Marquis of Povoleri, accompanied by his son and daughter, at some of Empress Eugènie's receptions at Bayswater, where there was rather mixed company.[3] At one time he seemed to be reconciled with the Catholic Church, but this lasted only briefly; in 1908, Msgr Mathew (this is the way he now spelled his name) had himself consecrated bishop by Dr Gérard Gul, who was head of the Old Catholic Church of Holland, which was formed from the debris of Jansenism together with some dissidents who in 1870 had refused to accept the dogma of papal infallibility; the various Old Catholic Churches (including that presently directed by the Theosophists) recognize the Pope only as 'Patriarch and Primate of the West'. The new bishop in turn consecrated two other strayed English priests, Ignace Beale and Arthur Howorth; and after scarcely three years he founded the 'Catholic Orthodox Church of the West', repudiating any subordination to Utrecht as well as to Rome. This Church successively took different names that would be of little use or interest to enumerate, while its head sought to enter into negotiations, first with the Holy See through the Cardinal Merry del Vall, then with the Anglican Church through the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, and even with the Eastern Orthodox Church through the Archbishop of Beruit;[4] finally, he was formally excommunicated by the Holy See in 1911.[5]

3. *L'Indépendence Belge,* May 10, 1910.

4. Let us note incidentally here that there are presently efforts underway to form an alliance between the Anglican Church and certain factions of the Orthodox Church, probably more for political than for religious reasons.

5. These bibliographic notes as well as a part of the details which follow are taken from a heavily documented brochure which appeared in England under the title, *Some Fruits of a Theosophy: The Origins & Purpose of the So-Called Old Catholic Church, Disclosed,* by Stanley Morison [London: Harding & More, Ltd., 1919].

In 1913 the clergy of the 'Old Catholic Church of Great Britain and Ireland' (such was the name that finally prevailed) was augmented with several members, all former Anglican ministers and more or less openly Theosophist: James Ingall Wedgwood, secretary general of the English section of the Theosophical Society (designated in the 'lives of Alcyone' by the name *Lomia*); Rupert Gauntlett, secretary of an 'Order of Healers' attached to the Theosophical Society; Robert King, specialist in 'psychic consultations' based on the examination of horoscopes; and Reginald Farrer. In 1915, Archbishop Mathew, who was completely ignorant of Theosophy, became frightened on perceiving that Wedgwood and his associates awaited the arrival of a new Messiah. He closed his Old Catholic Church and offered his submission to Rome, then recovered himself almost immediately and established a 'Catholic Uniate Church of the West'. Unable to obtain from Mathew the episcopal consecration he aspired to, Wedgwood approached—though in vain—Bishop Vernon Herford, who directed a kind of Nestorian chapel at Oxford. His approach to Frederick Samuel Willoughby, who was consecrated by Mathew in 1914 and expelled from the Old Catholic Church the following year, had a happier outcome. Willoughby first consecrated King and Gauntlett (the first-established branch of the Old Catholic Church in Scotland), and then with their assistance consecrated Wedgwood on February 13, 1916. During the course of this same year, 1916, he would submit to the Holy See. Wedgwood promptly left for Australia, where in Sydney he consecrated as 'Bishop of Australia' Charles Webster Leadbeater, also a former Anglican clergyman as we have noted; and he, assisted by Wedgwood, in turn consecrated 'Jongheer' Julian Adrian Mazel, of Dutch origin, as 'Auxiliary for Australia'.[6] On April 20, 1916, an assembly of clergy and bishops of the Old Catholic Church of Great Britain adopted a new constitution which was published under the signature of Wedgwood, and in which there was no allusion to Theosophy nor to the future Messiah. In November 1918 there was still another declaration of principles in which the title of the Old Catholic Church was replaced by that of the 'Liberal Catholic Church'.

6. See Addendum A. Ed.

This last designation brings to mind that there was also in France a dozen years ago an attempted 'Liberal Catholic Church'[7] under the patronage of certain occultists, notably Albert Jounet, one of those who is encountered in many diverse and, in appearance at least, incompatible organizations. He was even the founder of a 'Spiritualist Alliance' which boasted of effecting the reconciliation of all doctrines and which, naturally, had hardly any more success than the 'Congress of Humanity'.[8]

In the *Theosophist* of October 1916, Mrs Besant, speaking of certain movements which according to her are destined to acquire world-wide importance, mentioned

> the little-known movement called old-Catholic; it is a living Christian Church[9] which will grow and multiply with the years and which has a great future before it; it is probably called upon to become the future Church of Christianity *when He appears.*

Two other movements are mentioned in the same article, the 'Theosophical Educational Trust', that is to say, the collection of educational works directed by the Theosophical Society; and 'Co-Masonry', of which we will speak below. This was the first time that the Old Catholic Church was officially mentioned in a Theosophical publication, and the hopes placed on this organization are clearly defined there. Moreover, Wedgwood himself, who was so reserved in his episcopal declarations, was on the contrary quite explicit before his colleagues in the Theosophical Society. In fact, he expressed himself thus in a report to the Theosophical Convention of 1918:

> The Old-Catholic Church works to spread Theosophical teachings through Christian pulpits; and the most important part of its task consists in preparing the hearts and minds of men for the arrival of the Great Teacher.[10]

7. This church had its seat in the old Swedenborgian chapel in the rue Thouin.

8. In recent years Jounet joined the Theosophical Society, but left it after a very short time.

9. It is curious to note that in Russia the expression 'living Church', applied by Mrs Besant to her 'Liberal Catholic Church', was meant to denote a 'modernist' organization set up with the aid of the Bolshevik government in order to compete with the Orthodox Church, the intended implication being that the Orthodox Church, by contrast, must be considered a 'dead Church'. Doubtless, Mrs Besant had precisely the same intention regarding the Roman Catholic Church.

The aim of the Theosophists in taking possession of this Church is therefore exactly as we have indicated: it is the same as that for which they previously founded the 'Order of the Star of the East', with the sole difference that this addresses itself to all without distinction, while the Old-Catholic Church is particularly meant to attract those who, perhaps without well-defined religious principles, nevertheless wish to call themselves Christians and to keep up all the outward appearances. Here then is the latest transformation of Mr Leadbeater, at least up to now, and the new occupations to which this 'clairvoyant' now devotes himself:

> Bishop Leadbeater is researching the occult side of the Mass, and he is preparing a complete book on the science of the sacraments....[11] The book on the Mass will be illustrated with diagrams of the various steps of the Eucharistic edifice [*sic*] as it takes place during the course of the Mass. The end and role of each part are explained, and thus the work contains not only the theory and meaning of the sacraments, but also the complete form or the architectural side of the thing.... The main event of the week for some at Sydney is the High Mass of Sunday morning, at which Bishop Leadbeater is always present and generally officiates or delivers the sermon.[12]

What sincerity can there be in all this? The excessive skill of the Theosophical leaders in dissimulating their intentions and in simultaneously managing enterprises which are the most contrary

10. *The Vahan*, official organ of the Theosophical Society, June 1, 1918; *The Messenger*, of Krotona (California), September 1918. — Those American Theosophists who remained faithful to Mrs Besant chose Krotona for their headquarters because this locality bears the name of the place where Pythagoras established his school, and also because California, where occultist sects are particularly numerous and flourishing, is designated to become the cradle of the 'sixth mother-race'. In August 1917 Wedgwood founded an Old Catholic Church at Krotona, with the Reverend Charles Hampton as pastor.

11. See Addendum B. ED.

12. *The Messenger*, Krotona, November 1918.

in appearance, provided only that they think that they will serve toward the realization of these schemes, none of this allows many illusions about it.

ADDENDUM A

Bishop Matthew has now been dead for several years, and early in 1928 we also learned of the death of 'Jongheer' Mazel. Consequently, other bishops of the 'Liberal Catholic Church', notably Mr Irving S. Cooper, were likewise consecrated at Sydney, the reason being that Leadbeater took refuge there when he was obliged to leave India after the scandalous trial at Madras. It might be believed that the immorality with which Mr Leadbeater has been reproached is an isolated case in Theosophical circles, but unfortunately, it will be seen that this is not at all the case. The facts that we are about to report are those to which Mrs Besant alluded at the end of the passage we included in n3, p196. These incidents have been the principal cause of the scission of the Agni branch from Nice (see p192, n26). In November 1922 this branch, under the direction of Countess Prozor, had sent to all the other branches in France a circular letter announcing its intention of undertaking 'an effort of purification' in the Theosophical Society, and notably to shed light on 'the abuses of power, the duplicity, and the eminently immoral conduct charged in the first place against our President, and secondly against Mr C.W. Leadbeater.' This initiative was poorly received, and the *Bulletin Théosophique* of January 1923 published a note according to which the 'Administrative Council [of the French section] deemed that there was reason to disapprove' the initiative, given that it was of such a nature as 'to sow trouble and dissension in the bosom of the Theosophical Society of France.' The Agni branch nevertheless continued to publish a series of brochures 'for the exclusive use of members of the Theosophical Society,' a series that was concluded with a collective letter of resignation dated February 11, 1923. These brochures contained very instructive documents, and although it is true that pains were taken to contest them even before they were all

published, no better response was found than declamations of which we take the following sample from the *Bulletin Théosophique* of February 1923:

> Do we Theosophists place ourselves among the calumniators or among the calumniated? Moreover, who among us believes himself pure enough, sufficiently free from sin, to throw a stone at one of our brothers when the latter is gravely deceived? In this crisis let us seek a lesson. If this lesson, this trial, enlarges our views, if it leads us to greater tolerance, to greater comprehension, and to a higher ideal of brotherhood, it will be nobly useful, it will be blessed....

Unless one is blinded by prejudice, it is certainly difficult to consider this sermon as constituting a satisfactory and valid response. — The first of the brochures published by the *Agni* branch contained a letter, dated May 20, 1921 (thus before the resignation of its author), from T.H. Martyn of Sydney to Mrs Besant, from which we extract the following:

> In 1906 I was in London and fought for your cause and for that of Mr Leadbeater. The latter was threatened by judicial prosecution. One of the youths of his entourage came to me in desperation and besought my aid in thwarting the threatened prosecution because he would be forced to testify to the immoral practices of Leadbeater. The prosecution did not take place.... In 1914 Leadbeater came to live with us in Sydney. I accepted his own opinion, which was the same as yours; and considering him an Arhat, I willingly came under his influence and took joy in carrying out all his projects. Subsequently many things about him astonished me.... For example, one day in July 1917 it was said to five among us that we had received various initiations. No one remembered any of them.... At that time, Mrs Martyn was suffering much from Leadbeater's sojourn in our home.... Later (1918–1919), scarlet fever broke out in our home and caused the precipitous departure of Leadbeater and his young boys; all my efforts at persuasion could not convince Mrs Martyn to reopen our home to him.... In 1919, I went to America. The

young Van Hook was in New York. He spoke freely of Leadbeater's immorality of and of the deceit of the 'lives' [the famous 'lives of Alcyone']. We have therefore the witness of two adolescent boys concerning Leadbeater, the boy who sought me out in 1906 and the young Van Hook. I add to this the compromising things that occurred in my home (I can only touch this subject lightly in this letter), all of which lead to the conclusion that Leadbeater is a sexual pervert. His habit. which takes a particular form that I discovered only recently, is very well known and altogether common in the annals of sexual criminology.

We do not know if the youth of 1906 is the one who was later presented as 'Pythagoras reincarnate' (see pp180–181), nor whether he should be identified with the youth whose deposition was produced in the Madras trial, a deposition signed only with the initials D.D.P., and which ended with these lines:

I make this declaration with the intention of warning parents, so that they may protect their children from the pernicious teachings of persons who pose before the world as moral guides but whose practices debase and destroy children and men.

As to the young Van Hook, he is probably a close relative of Dr Weller Van Hook, Secretary-General of the American section of the Theosophical Society, one of Leadbeater's most ardent defenders, who in a letter alledgedly dictated by a 'Master' and approved by Mrs Besant, had declared that 'it was in no way criminal or wrong to teach boys the practices in question, but only the counsel of a wise tutor'—counsel inspired moreover by 'superior instructors'—and that the 'introduction of this question into the thought of the Theosophical world is only the prelude to its introduction into the thought of the outside world,' these practices being destined to 'constitute the future regimen of humanity'! We add that Dr Van Hook succeeded Alexander Fullerton as Secretary-General of the American Section, Fullerton himself having replaced Judge, who had become a dissident (see chap. 16). After his arrest on February 18, 1910 for having undertaken an immoral correspondence with an adolescent, Fullerton was confined to an insane asylum in the state

of New York (there is a pamphlet on this affair by Mr J.H. Fussell). Leadbeater wrote to Fullerton on February 27, indicating as explicitly as possible the advice he gave his students for the purpose of helping them 'free themselves from undesirable thoughts,' and to 'avoid until later the frequentation of women.' And he added that 'a doctor might object to this practice on the grounds that it might degenerate into unrestrained abuse of oneself (*self-abuse*), but this danger can easily be turned aside by a frank explanation.' But let us again take up the letter of Mr Martyn:

This brings me to 1919 and my visit to London.... In October of 1919 I went to see Mrs Saint-John. I found her greatly distressed because, as she told me, the police were looking for four priests of the Liberal Catholic Church: Wedgwood, King, Farrer, and Clark. She had wanted to warn Wedgwood in Australia but did not know how to do so without being herself incriminated for complicity. Farrer, she said, had left the country, and she was sure that the police would not find him. King had decided to remain in London until the end, since Farrer was safe.... Naturally, while I was in London I learned of the accusations of homosexuality brought against Wedgwood by Major Adams and others. Reports on the same subject concerning him had also reached me at Sydney, but what Mrs Saint-John told me was surprising. A week later ... you told me that you wished to communicate with Wedgwood in Sydney, but that by such direct action you could be accused of complicity. You gave me a message for Raja (the abbreviation of the name of Jinarājadāsa, vice president of the Theosophical Society). Wedgwood must leave the T.S. and the E.S., etc. You explained that he was seriously compromised and that you believed it your duty to protect the Society's good name. I thought then of a talk you had given at the E.S. the previous Sunday on black magic and sexual excesses, and asked whether you had been alluding to Wedgwood. You answered yes.... Then the question of Wedgwood's initiation came up. You told me he was not an initiate.... In America, after I left you, certain persons came to see me; they had learned that the truth concerning Wedgwood had finally been revealed, and they explained to me

that in London he had confessed his evil to one of them.... When I reached Sydney, Raja received the message with obvious repugnance.... The most important point for him was your denial of Wedgwood's initiation, and I understood that the latter's fall indicated nothing less than the collapse of Leadbeater as an Arhat, of the divine authority of the Liberal Catholic Church, of all belief in the reality of the supposed initiations, of the recognition of certain persons as disciples, etc. From Raja's point of view, none of these things that concern so many people could be admitted at any price, for there was the peace of members and of the cause in general.... I discovered subsequently that Raja merely echoes Leadbeater, the latter communicating his occultism directly, and Raja accepting it blindly.... Truly, I would not wish to think of Leadbeater and Wedgwood as monsters who hid their unlawful practices under the veil of humanitarian interests and who acted with the skillful cleverness and cunning often encountered in such cases. That, however, is the opinion of many people. I would like to avoid having to recognize the accuracy of such criticisms, and I would with pleasure cling to any other reasonable explanation of these facts.

During the two years following the incidents just recounted, the dignitaries of the Liberal Catholic Church compromised in this unsavory affair do not seem to have been seriously worried; if the English police sought them, no doubt certain influences acted to keep them from being found. On February 28, 1922, one of them, Reginald Farrer, sent Mrs Besant his resignation as a member of 'Co-Masonry', accompanied by these admissions:

The imputation brought against me, as well as against Wedgwood, King, and Clark, contained in Mr Martyn's letter, are only too well founded. But I beg you to take into consideration that I was incited to the vice by those whom I considered very much my superiors morally and spiritually.... My reason for writing this letter is the hope of easing my conscience.... Wedgwood refuses absolutely to cease this evil practice.... Once again Acuna, who is tainted with this vice, has been the sponsor of one of his 'friends' in the *Emulation* Lodge.

This letter was confided to Mr W. Hamilton Jones, who reports that Farrer left England the very same day, while he [Jones] met Wedgwood, who had been warned by an anonymous letter that he would be arrested if he did not leave Europe before March 1st. Wedgwood protested his innocence, but disappeared the same evening. And Mr Hamilton Jones adds: 'I had faith in Wedgwood until, quite recently, I learned of facts of such a nature as to remove all my illusions in his regard.' Leaving England, Wedgwood came to Paris where he established a branch of the Liberal Catholic Church which on March 5th was installed provisionally at the Anglican Church, 7 rue Auguste-Vacquerie, and which, under the name 'Free Catholic Church of France' organized itself into an association that professed to be in accordance with the law, this declaration appearing in the *Journal Officiel* of April 13, 1922. Some say that Wedgwood subsequently went to America, while others claim that he simply went into hiding in France. Whatever the case, there was a considerable time during which it was not known what had become of him. But since he surfaced again not only in Paris but also in London, one must believe that his affairs were finally settled thanks to certain political influences. As to his Paris church, it was moved somewhat later to 72 rue de Sèvres, from where it then published a manifesto from which this passage is taken:

The Free Catholic Church does not wish to oppose any Church or any religious or lay group, but on the contrary to work in peace and charity, offering its ministry to all souls of good will. It aspires to study together with all Christian confessions, the bases of union necessary for the universal Church to work effectively at the task of the Kingdom of God. Also, it adheres fully to the program of the *Faith and Discipline* conference, which groups together the greater number of Christian churches. Far from isolating itself in a sterile egoism, it intends to realize a truly traditional *catholicity* based on the *apostolic* Faith; *united*, not by an exterior and imposed uniformity, but in mutual respect and fraternal affection, working to raise the world to *sanctity*, union with God of which the Kingdom of justice and love is the end of creation.

The task of the 'Kingdom of God' is the advent of the new Theosophical Messiah. As to the 'sanctity' of the Church of Wedgwood and Leadbeater, it can be fully appreciated by what has just been recounted! To this we add the following information taken from an article that appeared in an American journal (*The O.E. Library Critic*, February 5, 1919), which further enlightens us as to the value of this church's 'apostolicity':

> The facts prove that in reality Wedgwood's apostolic succession is fraudulent, having been received from an interdicted priest, a certain Willoughby who had been expelled from the Old Catholic Church (of Bishop Matthew), just as he had been expelled previously from the Anglican Church owing to the gross immorality of his life, an immorality which, in sum, consisted in vicious relations with boys placed under his care. It is from this defrocked priest, from this pervert, that Mr Wedgwood received the right to be considered as following in the direct line of the apostles of Christ himself and of passing this right on to others, including Leadbeater and various priests in America. Each priest of the Liberal Catholic Church must trace his spiritual forefathers to this moral sewer. And in a notice on 'the validity of orders in the Liberal Catholic Church' which was written in 1921, a member of the Sydney Lodge concluded ironically: 'Mr Leadbeater has often proclaimed that, thanks to his clairvoyance, he could distinguish between a true priest of the apostolic succession and a dissident. Only the first named could render the host luminous during the celebration of the Mass. And here at his first public test, he let himself be 'consecrated' by a false priest without even being aware of it!'

As regards the 'Free Catholic Church of France', it must be added that the Theosophists have encountered some difficulties. Bishop Winnaert, who had been placed at its head after his consecration by Wedgwood, is a former Roman Catholic priest (he was vicar at Viroflay) who moved over to the Utrecht schism and for some time served the 'Old Catholic' chapel on Boulevard Blanqui. When the letters from the 'Mahatmas' to Sinnett appeared (see p51, n1), he protested against the spirit that inspired these letters, which he

adjudged atheistic and materialistic. Mrs Besant came to Paris expressly to reach an understanding with him, but the reconciliation that followed was short-lived. Finally, following the publication of Mr Jinarājadāsa's book entitled *The First Teachings of the Masters*, Msgr Winnaert quit the Theosophical obedience in 1924 for the same reasons. Winnaert gave a lengthy explanation of his position both in his bulletin (*L'Unité Spirituelle*, July–August 1924) and in his letter of resignation of July 30, addressed to Wedgwood, which concluded with these lines:

> I am forced to renounce all ties, however slight, with the 'Liberal Catholic Church', which henceforth is for me only a counterfeit Church and, intended or not, a disloyal enterprise to attract souls and, according to your own words, to insinuate the doctrine of the Theosophists into Christian pulpits. I would never have accepted episcopal consecration from such a source had I suspected all the secret mystique behind the 'Liberal Church'. *I must emphasize the fact that I was left in complete ignorance as to the occult influences under which it had been founded and by which it claims to be directed.* I believed I had encountered a traditional Church, but one liberated from outdated theology. It was in fact a matter of slipping in, under the label of Christianity, ideas totally foreign to it—when they were not in actual opposition. Despite my sentiments of sympathy for the persons involved, I cannot be complicit, however remotely, in such an enterprise.

The Theosophists therefore had to reorganize their 'Liberal Catholic Church' when Wedgwood again passed through Paris, and it is now situated in the rue Campagne-Première.

In the collective letter they sent Mrs Besant on February 11, 1923, the members of the Agni branch did not hesitate to stigmatize the Liberal Catholic Church, which more and more identified itself with Theosophy itself, as

> a sect endowed with a special morality which no religion had ever taught, and the propagation of which would be one of the works of darkness which Christianity attributes to instruments

of Satan, and which Theosophical occultism attributes to adepts of black magic.

Now it is undeniable that the propagation of this special morality had zealous partisans. In his apology for Leadbeater, which Mrs Besant declared to have been written under a 'high influence', Dr Van Hook presented the so-called 'prophylactic' methods of this strange educator as a revelation by which 'Theosophy gives to the world a service of which the consequences will extend as far as the distant future progress of humanity.' Moreover, we are told that 'the members of the E.S. already find themselves faced with the alternative of defending these abominations and of identifying themselves with them, or of resigning.' These are very probably the 'things contrary to his conscience' spoken of by Chevrier, who for his part preferred to resign, which is all to his honor. In such conditions, the resignants of Nice had good reason to foresee 'a dark future for the Theosophical Society.' In other similar circles, among spiritists and occultists for example, we find equally repugnant undersides. We called attention to these in *The Spiritist Fallacy* (pt. 2, chap. 10), limiting ourselves, as here, to statements of fact and witnesses. But what is new in the affair which presently occupies us, and what lends it particular gravity, is the attempt to spread the theories and practices of Leadbeater and his associates to the 'outside world'. What truly diabolical intentions must be concealed behind this? Several questions put by the Agni members to Mrs Besant will perhaps help us fathom them.

> It is no longer a question of Leadbeater and the system according to which he tries 'to cure adolescents of their vicious habits'. This system he practices and which Dr Van Hook recommends with your approval, is adopted by the entire community. In this way the speculative conception you expounded in your *Theosophist* article takes shape. Fallacious logic then derives a moral rule from this: did not the Beings that preside over evolution liberate Mme Blavatsky from her bad karma elements, causing her to resolve them through action? Why then cannot their disciples, the Sydney initiates, use analogous means to liberate children from future vices which they [the 'Beings'] perceive in their [the young people in question] *aura*? An objection must occur even to those swayed by such arguments: will not the practices in question, along with the fear of women simultaneously inspired in the 'subjects', tend to destroy in them an attraction which, when transformed into love, gives to the procreative act a sublime and divine character? By what right would one impose a restraint on this motive which acts on every level and enters into the *Dharma* [law] of our humanity? In various countries, notably England, has not the legislature acted on this intuition in punishing as a crime the depravity affecting the generative instinct to which the race owes its preservation? You seem to have foreseen this objection, for, as though to parry it in advance, you begin by making those who might raise objections feel incompetent in the matter. But today it occupies both the religious and the learned worlds, and one of the principal points therein bears on the neo-Malthusianism which you formerly preached but later combated. Today you can see the progress in public opinion, only recently raised up against it. Either this allusion has no sense at all, or its meaning is this: the same reversal of opinion will be effected very soon concerning the Leadbeater-Van Hook doctrine and the practices it formulates. This reversal will be accentuated in the measure that 'the process of mental development determines the weakening of the sexual instinct and the physical creative power.' Do you consider the end of the sub-race desirable? Does this in your opinion prepare the advent of a new sub-race, the sixth? Or, with a humanity in the travail of Buddhist evolution, does the return of the initial and final androgyny commence? And henceforth do you consider anything that hastens this goal and this future to be moral, that is, conformable to evolution? One may believe so, according to certain comments that filter through the walls of the E.S. to spread subtly through the body of the Theosophical Society.

Here we neither can nor wish to develop all that is implied in the last lines of this citation. In Theosophist phraseology, one would find an echo of far distant ideas which as always seem to have been grossly materialized. We will only add that a writer who seems very

well informed has noted that the 'reversal of opinion' in the sense just indicated is presented as forming part of a well-defined plan, and that 'everything now happens as if certain protagonists of bad morals obey a slogan' (Jean Maxe, *Cahiers de l'Anti-France,* sixth fascicle). Surely it is not the directors of Theosophy who have given this slogan; but they too obey it, and consciously or not, work toward the realization of this plan just as others do in their respective domains. What formidable enterprise of corruption and ruination lies hidden behind all that presently happens in the Western world. Perhaps it will one day be known, although it is to be feared that it will be too late to effectively combat an evil that ceaselessly gains ground and whose seriousness escapes only the blind. Remember the decadence of Rome!

ADDENDUM B

Leadbeater's work *The Science of the Sacraments* has appeared not only in English, but also in French translation. In addition to information allegedly obtained by 'clairvoyance', this tome contains a comparison of the liturgy of the Liberal Catholic Church with that of the Roman Catholic Church, a comparison that is quite instructive, for it shows how the first has been rather adroitly modified to dispose minds to accept Theosophical theories without the necessity of teaching them overtly; for it is of course not necessary to be a member of the Theosophical Society in order to be part of the Liberal Catholic Church. Many allusions which would be difficult for the public to understand but which are quite obvious to those familiar with the theories in question, have been slipped into this liturgy. We must also note that the cult of the Sacred Heart is used in the same way as being closely related with the coming of the new Messiah (we have already seen that Krishnamurti and his entourage, considered as direct disciples of the Bodhisattva, are said to 'belong to the heart of the world'). According to information reaching us from Spain, it is claimed that 'the Reign of the Sacred Heart will be that of the Spirit of the Lord Maitreya; and by announcing

it, it is in effect a veiled form of saying that his advent among men is imminent.'

But there is still more: not only is the liturgy altered, now the Gospel itself is altered under the pretext of a return to 'primitive Christianity'. To effect this, an alleged *Gospel of the Twelve Saints* is being circulated with the claim that it is the 'original and complete Gospel'. This is presented in a slender volume entitled *Le Christianisme primatif dans l'Evangile des Douze Saints,* by E. Francis Udny, 'priest of the Liberal Catholic Church'. It is well to note that at the time this book was written there was still some ambiguity as to the person of the future Messiah, for it was said that Christ might 'choose an individual in each country whom he would guide and inspire in a special way,' so as to be able 'without the obligation of travelling through the world bodily, to speak when he wished in this or that country of his choice as and when this might be most consonant with his activity' (p59 of the French translation). At first the title of the book made us think that it was a question of an apocryphal Gospel, of which there are a great number; but we were not long in realizing that this was no more than a simple hoax. This so-called Gospel, written in Aramaic, was supposed to have been preserved in a Buddhist monastery in Tibet, and its English translation transmitted 'mentally' to the Anglican priest Ouseley, who then published it. We are told moreover that the poor man was at that time 'aged, deaf, and physically weak; his eyesight at its worst, and his mind greatly slowed, he being more or less broken down by age' (p 26). Is this not an avowal that his state disposed him to play the role of dupe in this affair? But let us move on from this fantastic story to the explanation of the origin of this translation, the work of 'Master R' who, as we have previously seen (see p234, n15), was at another time Francis Bacon. It is even claimed that Bacon's style can be recognized by comparing this translation to the 'Authorized Version' of the Anglican Church, or King James Bible, of which he was the principal author. In this connection we note in passing that the Liberal Catholic Church is placed under the special protection of St Alban, who would again be a former incarnation of the 'Master' (p39), because Bacon bore, among other titles, that of Viscount of St Alban. We could mention many more truly extraordinary

assertions, notably concerning certain 'feigned deaths' of the 'Masters' or their 'advanced' disciples, but we will limit ourselves to citing one of them as a curiosity:

> During the last century [i.e., the nineteenth, TR] another feigned death to be noted was that of Marshall Ney, a Brother [*sic*], brave among the brave, who after his supposed execution in France lived for many years as a respected citizen of Rowan County, North Carolina' (p136).

But what is more interesting is to know the special teachings contained in the Gospel in question, said to be 'an essential part of original Christianity, the absence of which has impoverished and still impoverishes this religion' (p4). Now, these teachings come down to two: the Theosophical doctrine of reincarnation, and the prescription of a vegetarian and anti-alcoholic regimen dear to a certain Anglo-Saxon 'moralism'. This is what one would like to introduce into Christianity, all the while claiming that formerly these same teachings were also found in the canonical Gospels but were suppressed around the fourth century, and that only the *Gospel of the Twelve Saints* 'escaped the general corruption.' Really, this hoax is rather crude, but unfortunately there are still many people who let themselves be taken in. One must know the mentality of our time very poorly to be persuaded that something of this kind will have no success. Moreover, we are treated to a preview of an enterprise of the broadest scope: 'In the same book it is stated, in effect, that the author has reason to believe that a new and better Bible will shortly be placed at our disposal, and that the Liberal Catholic Church will probably adopt it; but he alone is responsible for this opinion, not having been authorized by the Church to assert it. For the question to be posed, it is naturally necessary that the better Bible should have appeared' (p41). This is still only a suggestion, but it is easy to see what is intended: the falsification is going to extend to the ensemble of the Holy Books. We are therefore warned, and each time an announcement is made of the discovery of some manuscript containing biblical or Gospel texts hitherto unknown, it is appropriate to be more wary than ever.

25

THEOSOPHY AND FREEMASONRY

PARALLEL TO HER RELIGIOUS, or rather pseudo-religious, work which we have just discussed, Mrs Besant completed another of a quite different character, a Masonic enterprise. We have already seen that from the beginning there were many Masons in and around the Theosophical Society; moreover, the ideal of 'universal brotherhood', whose realization this Society presents as the first of its goals, is something it holds in common with Masonry. Nevertheless, this was only a matter of individual relationships, involving no Masonic organization, and there never were any between the Theosophical Society and so-called 'regular' Masonry, perhaps because the latter found Theosophy too compromising or perhaps for other reasons; we will not try to resolve this question here. It is probable that certain Masons who are at the same time and doubtless before all else Theosophists, go too far and too easily take their own wishes for reality when they write things like:

> Freemasonry and Theosophy, whatever one may say of the latter, are of one mind, complement one another, and are united on their initiatic sides which are absolutely identical. From this point of view they are one and the same thing, as old as the world.[1]

1. *Le Temple de la Vérité ou la Franc-Maçonnerie restituée dans sa veritable doctrine*, by A. Micha, p59. Georges Pécoul, citing this phrase in the article which we have already mentioned in connection with Bergson, was wrong in uncritically accepting the affirmation that it contains (*Les Lettres*, December 1920, pp676–678.

If the point of view is exclusively doctrinal, this can only be an expression of the Theosophist claim that they possess the doctrine which is the source of all the others, a claim which they apply here to Masonry as they do elsewhere with regard to the religions, but which has no foundation because Theosophy—it can never be too often repeated—is essentially a modern invention.[2] On the other hand, from the historical point of view it is too easy and much too simple to speak of Masonry in general as a sort of indivisible entity; these things are rather more complicated in reality, and there, as with Rosicrucianism (we have already said this in regard to the latter), one has to know how to make necessary distinctions and to say which Masonry one means, whatever one's opinions on the presence or absence of relations between the different Masonries. This is why we were careful to specify that what we just said concerned only 'regular' Masonry; for matters are quite otherwise if one considers 'irregular' Masonry, which the public is much less familiar with and which includes very different organizations, some of which are closely linked to occultism; generally these groups are not very numerous, but they claim to be quite superior to ordinary Masonry, while this, for its part, treats them with the deepest contempt and even regards them as vulgar counterfeits.

One of the most curious figures of this 'irregular' Masonry was the Englishman John Yarker, who died in 1913. Author of numerous works on Masonic history and symbolism, he held opinions quite peculiar to himself on these subjects, and maintained, among other bizarre opinions, that 'the initiated Mason is priest of all religions.' Creator or renovator of several rites, he was at the same time linked to a multitude of occultist associations with more or less justified initiatic claims. He was, in particular, an honorary member of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia,* whose leaders were also members of his own organizations even while they were linked to that 'regular'

2. The Theosophists' claim that Masonry is a kind of emanation, or if you will, a more or less veiled manifestation of their own doctrine, is in their mind closely linked to the assertion that 'the Master R is the real Head of Masonry' (see p130, n15), an assertion of which we were aware long before writing this book but which we had not wanted to put forward as we had not met with it from the pen of one of the leaders of Theosophy.

Masonry which he had himself long since abandoned. Yarker had been the friend of Mazzini and Garibaldi and, in their entourage, had known Mme Blavatsky; thus, she made him an honorary member of the Theosophical Society as soon as she founded it. In exchange, after the publication of *Isis Unveiled,* Yarker conferred on Blavatsky the grade of 'Crown Princess', the highest of the grades of 'adoption' (that is to say, feminine grades) of the Rite of Memphis and Misraïm, of which he called himself 'Great Hierophant'.[3] These reciprocal courtesies are the custom among the leaders of such groups. One might find that the title of 'Crown Princess' agreed rather poorly with the legendary poor appearance of Mme Blavatsky, to such a point as to seem almost an irony; but we have known of other persons on whom the same title was conferred and who did not have even the most elementary education. Yarker claimed to hold his office of 'Great Hierophant' from Garibaldi; but the legitimacy of this succession was always challenged in Italy where there existed another organization of the Rite of Memphis and Misraïm which asserted its independence from his. In later years Yarker's principal auxiliary was a certain Theodore Reuss, of whom we spoke in connection with the 'Order of the Eastern Templars' of which he was made head.[4] This Reuss, who now calls himself Reuss-Willsson, is a German living in London, where, if he does not still have them, he had official responsibilities at the 'Theosophical Publishing Company', and who cannot return to his own country, we are told, without risk of arrest by the authorities for certain indelicacies previously committed. But this has not prevented him from founding—without leaving England—the 'Grand Orient of the German Empire' which counts among its dignitaries Franz Hartmann. To return to Yarker, we must further note that this same personage formed a Swedenborgian Rite which, though claiming to be 'primitive and original' (just as, for

3. An allusion to this fact can be found in the *Lotus Bleu* of July 7, 1890, at the beginning of an article on 'Le Maillet de Maître' which was to open a series devoted to Masonic symbolism, although the following articles never appeared.

4. On Theodore Reuss and his 'Order of the Eastern Templars' see also *The Spiritist Fallacy,* pt. 2, latter part of chap. 10.

its part, the Rite of Memphis called itself 'ancient and primitive') was entirely his own invention and had no link with the Masonic rites which, in the eighteenth century, were more or less wholly inspired by the ideas of Swedenborg, and among which were the rite of the 'Theosophical Illuminati', established at London in 1767 by Benedict Chastanier, and that of the 'Illuminati of Avignon', founded by the Benedictine Dom A.-J. Pernéty. It is quite certain, moreover, that Swedenborg himself never established any Masonic rite, any more than he did a church, although there now exists a Swedenborgian Church, called 'of the New Jerusalem', which is quite clearly a Protestant sect. As for Yarker's Swedenborgian Rite, we have a list of its dignitaries dated 1897; or according to the chronology peculiar to this rite, 7770 A.O.S. (*Ab Origine Symbolismi*). The name of Colonel Olcott is there as representative of the Supreme Council to the Grand Lodge and Temple of Bombay. Let us add that in 1900 Papus tried to establish a Grand Swedenborgian Lodge in France connected to the same rite, an effort that had little success. Papus had named Yarker a member of the Supreme Council of the Martinist Order,[5] and in reciprocation, Yarker had made a place for him in the Supreme Council of the Swedenborgian Rite, with the title 'Grand Marshall'.

From the Masonic point of view, the preceding is all we need note regarding Mme Blavatsky and Col. Olcott, although it is worth recalling that prior to the creation of the Theosophical Society, Olcott belonged to 'regular' American Masonry. But what satisfied the founders of the Theosophical Society did not suffice Mrs Besant, and this for two reasons: first, her excessively propagandist temperament led her to prefer to address a more widespread organization, and she very much intended to play an active and not a merely honorific role; and then, her ardent feminism agreed badly with the grades of 'adoption' which were a kind of annex in which the women were kept apart from serious work, and she needed a Masonry that admitted women as well as men on a footing of complete equality. This is something contrary to generally recognized

5. This Supreme Council could have no more than twenty-one members, but the charters were distributed so widely that we have known of more than sixty.

Masonic principles, but nevertheless such an organization existed; this was the mixed Masonry founded in France in 1891 by Maria Deraismes and Dr Georges Martin, and known as 'Human Right'.[6] Maria Deraismes, who was in her time one of the directors of the feminist movement, had been initiated in 1882, contrary to the constitutions, by *The Free-Thinkers* Lodge of Pecq, which came under the Grand Symbolic Lodge of Scotland. This initiation was declared null and the Lodge where it took place was 'put to sleep' for the deed. But several years later, Martin, formerly a municipal councillor of Paris and senator from the Seine, who as a politician, had made himself known especially for his insistence in calling for voting rights for women and had seen all his efforts to have them admitted into 'regular' Masonry fail, joined with Maria Deraismes to establish a new Masonry, which naturally was not recognized by any of the obediences already existing in France or abroad. Maria Deraismes died in 1894; after her it was Mrs Georges Martin who was placed at the head of mixed Masonry which then was only 'symbolic', that is to say it practiced only three degrees. Subsequently the higher grades were introduced, following the Scottish system of thirty-three degrees; and in 1899 the 'Supreme Universal Mixed Council' was founded, which from that time has been the directing power. This Supreme Council had a reputation for autocratic ways which, in France, provoked a schism in 1913; some of the lodges formed a new and independent obedience called the 'Grand Mixed Lodge of France', recognizing only three symbolic grades as was the case at the beginning. Nevertheless, mixed Masonry spread little by little to different countries, particularly to England, Holland, Switzerland, and the United States. Its first English lodge was consecrated in London on September 26, 1902 under the title *Human Duty*, while the French lodges all bear the uniform name of 'Human Right', followed simply by a number.

It was into this mixed Masonry that Mrs Besant entered, and as in the Theosophical Society she rapidly reached the highest grades

6. In 1926 the Belgian Senator Wittemans (see p215, n14) had established a Lodge of the 'Human Right' at Antwerp; there was already one in Brussels, though it seems never to have had much vitality.

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and the highest functions: honorary Grand Master of the London lodge, she established another lodge at Adyar with the name *Rising Sun*; then she became vice-president of the Supreme Mixed Universal Council and 'national delegate' of this same Supreme Council for Great Britain and its dependencies. In this latter capacity she organized the English branch under the name of 'Co-Masonry' and succeeded in greatly expanding it and giving it a certain autonomy. The concessions she won from the Supreme Council to form this organization in the way she intended is perhaps the most obvious proof of the considerable influence she was able to acquire in this milieu. She gave to her branch statutes which, under the pretext of adaptation to the Anglo-Saxon mentality, were apparently different from those which were and still are in use in the French branch; thus she reestablished all of the old ritual forms which English and American Masonry had always possessed, particularly the use of the Bible in the lodges, and also the formula, 'To the glory of the Great Architect of the Universe', which the Grand Orient of France had suppressed on 1877 and which mixed French Masonry had replaced by 'To the glory of Humanity'. In 1913, British Co-Masonry had at its head a Grand Council whose Grand Mistress naturally was S.·. Annie Besant assisted by S.·. Ursula M Bright, with whom she normally resided while visiting England, and whose Grand Secretary was F.·. James I. Wedgwood, today a bishop of the Old Catholic Church; her representative for India was S.·. Francesca Arundale, aunt of the former principal of the 'Central Hindu College', who is himself an eminent member of Co-Masonry. The influence of Theosophy is also very evident in the American branch of mixed Masonry; it was S.·. Annie Besant who inaugurated the Chicago Lodge[7] on September 21, 1909; an avowed Theosophist, S.·. Alida Leeuw, is vice-president of the American Federation (whose president is F.·. Louis Goaziou, of French origin). In the French branch, on the contrary, Theosophists and occultists have until recently been only a small minority, even though among the founders of the first 'Human Right' Lodge there was at least one Theosophist, Maria

7. Extract from the *Bulletin mensuel de la Franc-Maçonnerie mixte*, reproduced in *l'Acacia*, January 1910, pp70–78.

Martin, sister of Francesca Arundale; later she became Grand Secretary General of the Supreme Mixed Universal Council, and when she died, she was replaced in this office by another Theosophist, Mme Amélie Gédage. The latter has today succeeded to the Presidency of the Supreme Council, where she replaces Mrs Georges Martin who died in 1914. One must believe, therefore, that even in France the Theosophists have henceforth assured themselves of a preponderance. The leaders of Theosophy, moreover, seem to anticipate that the English branch will be called upon to supplant the French branch from which it arose and one day to become the central organization of 'Universal Co-Masonry'; but even if this center should officially remain in France, it is nonetheless henceforth subject to their direct influence—another example of the monopolizing that we saw at work in the Old Catholic Church.

In its beginnings, mixed Masonry had nothing occultist or even spiritualist about it; here are the ideas of Dr Georges Martin as to its spirit and goal (we scrupulously respect style):

> The International Order of Mixed Masonry is the first Masonic mixed philosophical power, progressive, and philanthropic, organized and constituted in the world, which places itself above all the preoccupations of philosophical or religious ideas which those who ask to become members may profess.... The Order intends to occupy itself principally with the vital interests of the human being on the earth; it intends especially to study in its Temples the means of realizing Peace among all peoples and social Justice, which will permit all humans to enjoy, during their life, the greatest possible sum of moral felicity as well as material well-being.[8]

And we read elsewhere: 'Not claiming any divine revelation and loudly affirming that it is only an emanation of human reason, this fraternal institution is not dogmatic; it is rationalist.'[9] In spite of everything, and even independently of any Theosophical inter-vention, mixed Masonry has in the nature of things been led gradually

8. *La Lumière Maçonnique*, November–December 1912, p522.
9. Ibid., pp472–473.

to undertake ongoing relations with most of the other 'irregular' Masonic organizations, even with those with the most pronounced occultist character. Thus, for example, in a list of *Past Grand Masters* of the Spanish National Rite, established by F.·. Villarino del Villar and closely connected with the organizations of F.·. John Yarker (who in his last years became one of the con-tributors to the English review *The Co-Mason),* we see the heads of mixed Masonry, including Mrs Besant, figure side by side with the heads of the principal occultist schools, whose quarrels as we have noted do not exclude certain alliances of this kind.[10] What is curious is to see the insistence, even the avidity, with which all these groups claim to possess the most pure Masonic doctrine; and Co-Masonry, which is 'irregular' in the highest degree, boasts of restoring the primordial tradition, as is seen in this phrase which ends its declaration of principles:

> Universal Co-Masonry reestablishes the immemorial custom of admitting on an equal footing men and women to the *Mysteries* from which Freemasonry is derived, founded on Brotherhood, the Truth and the practice of all the moral and social virtues.[11]

Moreover, it is a common habit of all schisms and all heresies of whatever kind to present themselves as a return to original purity. Does not even Protestantism wish to pass itself off as a manifestation of the pure evangelical spirit, such as this was in the time of primitive Christianity?

The restoration of the Mysteries, to which the phrase we cited alluded, is as we have seen one of the reasons for 'esoteric Christianity', so that it and Co-Masonry appears, at least in this respect, as the two complementary faces of a single enterprise. Let it also be remembered that Masonry generally claims to constitute a link

10. By a rather comic error, it was plainly printed in this list: *Mr* Annie Besant and *Mr* Marie Georges Martin.

11. The first phrase of this same declaration is worth citing as a remarkable example of the pompous jargon frequently found in documents of this kind: 'The Order of Universal Co-Masonry, founded on Freedom of Thought, Unity, Morality, Charity, Justice, Tolerance, and Brotherhood, is open to men and women without distinction of race and religion.'

between all peoples and all forms of worship (this is what Scottish Masonry in particular understands by the 'Holy Empire'), and one will then understand the full meaning of these words uttered a long time ago by Mrs Besant:

> What we have to do now is to embark on a period of construction during which the Theosophical Society will endeavor to make itself the center of the Religion of the world, the Religion of which Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and all the other sects are integral parts.... In fact, we consider, and not without a solid basis for our belief, that we alone represent the eclectic and really catholic Universal Church, recognizing as brothers and as faithful all those who, under each form of worship, seek truth and justice.[12]

These claims might then have seemed very extravagant, and indeed they are, but one is less tempted to smile when today one thinks of the furious perseverance with which for a quarter of a century she who uttered them has worked to make them a reality.

12. Declaration of Mrs Besant to W.T. Stead in *Borderland,* October 1897, p401.

26

AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

WE HAVE ALREADY POINTED OUT the existence of many auxiliary groups of the Theosophical Society, which allowed it to penetrate and work in the most diverse circles, usually without any reference being made to its special doctrines, and without setting forth any other goal than 'universal brotherhood' and certain moralizing tendencies which could hardly seem compromising. After all, one must be careful not to frighten with overly extravagant claims those whom one would like to attract imperceptibly as unwitting accomplices. The history of the Old-Catholic Church provides us an example of this pretense. Theosophists are motivated by a keen desire for propaganda, which despite their contrary claims reveals just how Western they are, since the Eastern mentality, and the Hindu mentality in particular, has a deep repugnance for proselytism. And their methods of infiltration strangely recall those of many Protestant sects.

Moreover, one should not think that this kind of behavior is limited exclusively to the most recent period of the Theosophical Society, for this external action has developed along with the Society itself. Thus we read in a work by Mme Blavatsky:

> Have you not heard of the Nationalist clubs and parties which have sprung up in America since the publication of Bellamy's book?[1] They are now coming prominently to the front, and will do so more and more as time goes on. Well, these clubs and this party were started in the first instance by Theosophists; thus one of the first, the Nationalist Club of Boston, (Mass.), has Theosophists for President and Secretary, and the majority of its executive belong to the T.S. In the constitution of all their clubs, and of the party they are forming, the influence of Theosophy and of the Society is plain, for they all take as their basis, their first and fundamental principle, the Brotherhood of Humanity as taught by Theosophy. In their Declaration of Principles they state:—'The principle of the Brotherhood of Humanity is one of the eternal truths that govern the world's progress on lines distinguishing human nature from brute nature.' What can be more Theosophical than this?'[2]

At about the same time an 'Altruist Society' was formed in Nantes, which had a program offering such a wide range of subjects as hygiene, morality, philosophy, sociology, and included a section on Theosophical studies that soon became the 'Altruist Branch of the Theosophical Society', the second branch of the Theosophical Society in France.[3]

Here we have examples of each of the two types of organization whose nature we must make clear. There are those that, without having any official ties to the Theosophical Society, are nonetheless led or inspired by Theosophists, such as the American 'Nationalist Clubs' mentioned by Mme Blavatsky. To limit ourselves to associations of this kind found in France—at least until recently—we shall mention the following culled at random from Theosophist publications: 'Vegetarian Society of France'; 'League for the Organization of Progress'; 'Independent Moral Assistance' (Assistance to the Elderly); 'Women's Holiday Association'; 'Society of Criminalogy [*sic*] and Social Defense'; 'Idealist Society', International Union for the Realization of a Higher Ideal in Literature, Arts, and Thought'; and

1. *Looking Backward* [Edward Bellamy (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995), first ed., 1888].
2. *The Key to Theosophy*, pp44–45.
3. *Lotus Bleu*, April 7, 1890.

there are surely many others. In the same order of ideas, we have already noted the role played by Theosophists in propagating the 'Scout movement', we may add that Theosophists are present in great numbers among various groups of more or less Protestant tendencies, such as for example the society 'Faith and Life'.[4]

As for associations such as the 'Altruist Society' of Nantes, which, although not always bearing its label, are clearly auxiliary organizations of the Theosophical Society and are entirely subordinate to it, we have already said that today most are to be found under what is called the 'Order of Service of the Theosophical Society', which describes itself as 'an attempt to apply Theosophy with a view to providing for the needs of all classes of mankind.' Here is a list of the main branches of this 'Order of Service', with the head office of each indicated.[5]

Education: 'Uplifting the Depressed Classes'—Alleppey; 'League of Education'—Rangoon (Burma); 'Theosophical Education'—Amsterdam; 'Moral Education'—Paris; 'Harmonious Education'—The Hague; 'National Education'—Muzaffurpur (India); 'League for the Education of Young Girls'—Benares; 'League for Education'—Brussels; 'Golden Chain' and 'Round Tables' for youth.

Reform of Social Evils: 'Abolition of Vivisection, Vaccination, and Inoculation'—London, Manchester, and Bournemouth; 'Anti-vivisection'—New York; 'Medical'—London; 'Sociology and Social Problems'—Manchester; 'Development of Social Purity'—Chicago; 'Development of Temperance and Morality'—Surat (India); 'High Ideals'—Spokane (United States); 'Hospital and Prison Works'—Seattle (United States); 'The Abolition of Child Marriage'—India; 'Animal Protection'—Adyar; 'The Seven *M's*'[6]—Buitenzorg (Dutch

4. Some of the leaders of 'Faith and Life' have very courteously made known to us that they personally did not feel any sympathy for Theosophy and moreover that the 'conservative' elements of French Protestantism were in general resolutely opposed to the present tendencies of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and to the other 'movements' which have come from it; we are pleased to note this statement here.

5. The major part of this list is taken from a report published in the *Théosophe* dated August 1, 1913. We have added a few organizations created since then.

6. These seven *M*'s are the initials of the Malay names of seven things that the members must vow to abstain from.

Indies); 'International Mental League for Peace'—Rio de Janeiro; 'League of Mental Union for Peace'—Cuba; 'Wereldvrede' (Universal Peace)—The Hague; 'Belgian Theosophical League for Universal Peace'—Brussels.

Propagation of Theosophy: 'Translation of Works on the Wisdom of Islam' (i.e., Sufism)[7]—Muzaffurpur; 'Braille League' (publication of Theosophical works for the blind)—London and Boston; 'Theosophical University'—Chicago; 'Oasis, for the Propagation of Theosophy among Shipyard Workers'—Toulon; 'Fraternal Union, for the propagation of Theosophy among the working classes'—Paris; 'Science, Religion, and Art'—Brooklyn; 'Bodhalaya', Bombay; 'Theosophical Mission', New York; 'League of Modern Thought', Adyar; 'Esperanto Theosophical League'[8]—London; 'League of Daily Meditation'—London.

Different goals: 'Aesculapius'—Benares and Manchester; 'Fraternity of Healers'—Leyden; 'Order of Helpers'[9]—Melbourne; 'League of Unity'—Paris; 'Reduction of Suffering'—Paris; 'League of Swiss Servants for the Development of Brotherhood and Union'—Neuchâtel; 'Belgian Idealistic League'—Antwerp; 'Association of Thought, to prepare the world for the advent of the *Master*'—Capetown; 'Independent Order of the Star of the East' and 'Servants

7. There is also a so-called 'Sufi Order' closely linked to the Theosophical Society. This organization, founded in America in 1910 by Inayat Khan, today has branches in England and France. It is as well to say that the real Sufis never formed an Order or any association whatsoever. — Inayat Khan died in 1927; it seems that toward the end he had quarrelled with the Theosophists, although we do not know for exactly what reasons. Since his death his organization, in which feminine and Anglo-Saxon elements predominate, seems threatened with dissolution owing to dissensions among various pretenders to the 'Master's' succession, as almost always happens in such groups. The Order's journal, *Sufism*, is edited by Baron Eichthal. — Regarding Sufism adapted to Theosophist conceptions, see *L'Islamisme Esotérique*, by Edmond Bailly.

8. The interest shown by Theosophists and Masonry in the propagation of *Esperanto* is worthy of special mention. This movement also has connections with 'Scouting', and, on another side, the association 'Peace by Law' has created a 'Pacifist Esperanto Library'.

9. This no doubt refers to the 'invisible aides' established by Leadbeater in view of the 'astral work'. We see that he is currently settled in Australia where the Order in question has its headquarters.

of the Star'; 'Saint Christopher's League to help those with a heavy physical karma'—London; 'Redemption League for the Protection of Women and Young Girls'; 'Order of the Lyre, to realize—by an increasingly intimate contact with Nature—the progressive development of the inner sense which gives the perception of Life'—Geneva; 'European League for the Organization of Theosophical Congresses'.[10]

Later on we shall speak of the most general characteristic of these associations, which may be summarized in the word 'morality', but

10. To the list of organizations forming the 'Order of Service' of the Theosophical Society, we can add the 'League of International Correspondence' founded in 1920, 'proposing to collaborate in the realization of the first aim of the Theosophical Society, which is to constitute a nucleus of universal brotherhood by creating and strengthening the bonds of friendship and affection between all the Theosophists of the whole world.' The secretary for France is J.-C. Demarquette, who is also president of another organization called 'The Stroke of Union'. The latter does not bear the Theosophist label openly, and appeals especially to the 'Idealist Youth', calls itself the 'Naturist Society of Human Culture', and is affiliated with the 'National League Against Alcoholism'. Furthermore, in 1928 the same J.-C. Demarquette organized a 'Popular Naturist University' which apparently shares the same goal but no doubt addresses itself to other circles. — On the question of an international language, the Theosophists seem somewhat divided, some being partisans of *Esperanto*, while others prefer *Ido*; and in addition to the 'Theosophical League of Esperanto' there now exists a more recently formed 'International Union of Idoistic Theosophists'. — Concerning the Theosophists' interest in educational works, we should point out that they have especially become the propagators of the 'Montessori method', named after the Italian physician, herself a Theosophist, who invented it. In October 1911 a nursery school called the 'Theosophical Center for Education', in which this method is applied, was opened at Champ-de-5, Mars, avenue du Général-Tripier (*Le Théosophe*, December 16, 1911). In a presidential address by Mrs Besant, we even read the following:

> The Great Teacher has ordered us to infuse Theosophist ideas into systems of education. This has been done in a very effective manner in Europe, and the Montessori system is one of the results.... We do not mean to impose Theosophist labels on the new educational ideas or to patent them in any way; ideas are the free property of everyone, and it is enough that they be spread in the mental atmosphere for them to be caught in passing by all receptive brains' (Adyar Bulletin, January 1918, reproduced in the *Bulletin Théosophique*, January–February–March 1918).

It is quite transparent that this last phrase means suggesting ideas to people without them suspecting their provenance; thus Theosophist propaganda will be all the more efficacious in that it will not bear any label and will be easily disguised.

let us first note, in what can be called the external activity of the Theosophical Society, the importance given to educational works, without even speaking of the colleges and schools which, in India and elsewhere, are also Theosophist foundations. We have already mentioned efforts made to recruit children indirectly at a very young age, and the organizations especially formed for this purpose, but let us note further that in Paris before the war there was a monthly journal entitled *Le Petit Théosophe* 'addressed to youth between seven and fifteen years.' However, it should be added that among the said works of education, not all are meant exclusively for children or young people, some also being directed at adults. Thus the Theosophists show a lively interest in the work of 'Summer Schools', which are 'assemblies of men sharing a common ideal making the best of their holidays by spending time together, teaching one another and drawing from contact with sympathetic souls new forces for the struggles of daily life.' Here are some excerpts from an article in a Theosophist journal dedicated to this 'admirable means of propaganda profiting more and more from movements aimed at furthering the progress of mankind':

> There are two kinds of Summer Schools. Some are the work of a particular society and are intended above all for members of that society, such as the very successful Schools held each year in England by the Vegetarian Society of Manchester or the Fabian Society, a great number of these being active in Great Britain and the United States. The others, on the contrary, appeal to those linked, albeit loosely, by shared opinions on a given subject. One such example was a spiritist Summer School that gathered together representatives of almost all the Protestant sects of England united by a common desire of fraternity. Likewise, the humanitarian Summer School held in Brighton the last two years brought together free-thinkers, spiritists, Theosophists, occultists, antivivisection activists, vegetarians, city-gardeners [*sic*], and even materialists.... Considering the ease with which expression and exchange are facilitated there, it can be said that Summer Schools constitute a real 'Cooperation of Ideas'. We think that the time has come to endow France with a similar

instrument of progress. This year we intend to open a Summer School in the vicinity of Paris, probably in the Fontainbleau forest. As for the number of participants, success is already guaranteed. Many of the Theosophists, Vegetarians, Rhythmicians, Esperantists, Harmonists, and Naturists approached have assured us of their participation.[11]

The war prevented this project from being realized, but it would not be surprising to see it taken up again some day in one or another form. It is easy to imagine what strange unions are formed by people recruited from all these groups, which are most certainly ill-assorted but in spite of everything are connected by mysterious affinities.

Another point worthy of note is that propaganda (not only for the rather vague ideas of 'fraternity' and 'morality', but for clearly-defined Theosophist propaganda as well) is frequently practiced in working class circles. In the list given above, we have seen that there is a society in Paris which formally adopts this goal and another one whose action, quite tellingly, is directed solely at the workers of the Toulon shipyard, who seem moreover to form a favorite milieu for all kinds of more or less suspect propaganda, for it is a known fact that this shipyard has frequently revealed itself as a hotbed of revolutionary intrigues. It would be interesting to know just how such workers appreciate certain points of Theosophist teaching—if indeed these points are explained to them. Would they really be flattered, we wonder, to learn for example that they are 'lunar animals' who have attained humanity only in the present 'planetary chain', some of them only during the present 'round', whereas the 'bourgeois' had already become men in the preceding 'chain'? We invent none of this. Leadbeater says it all quite seriously (even using the French word 'bourgeois' in his text).[12] But these things are probably

11. The publication of propaganda articles in favor of 'Christian Science' in the review *La Science et la Vie* is explained by a fact we learned later. This review is simply an offshoot of the *Petit Parisien*, whose editor Paul Depuy was an enthusiastic adherent of 'Christian Science'.

12. Emile Coué, who made himself the subject of so much talk in recent years by propagating a method of healing by autosuggestion, came from the 'Mentalists' or 'Mental Scientists'. In fundamentals his method differs little from these American conceptions, but has its own particular characteristic of claiming to be based on the use, not of will, but of imagination exclusively.

best passed over in silence when addressing an audience of workers. Be that as it may, on this eminently 'democratic' terrain, Theosophy, better suited to seduce the half-educated, finds itself competing at something of a disadvantage with spiritism, which is more easily grasped by uneducated minds. Indeed, the no less relentless propaganda of spiritism, especially in certain regions, victimizes many in the working-class world. Thus there is a spiritist sect called 'Fraternism' centered in Douai, which had enrolled thousands of members among the miners of the North of France—at least this was true before the war, which must have caused some disruption. There was a similar spiritist sect in Belgium called 'Sincerism' headed by a high-ranking Freemason, the Chevalier Le Clément de Saint-Marcq. In the same region we find yet another striking example in 'Antoinism', a pseudo-religion that had such extraordinary growth in Belgium, and which has even had a temple in Paris since 1913.[13] Its founder, known as 'Father Antoine' who died in 1912 was himself a nearly illiterate former mine worker. He was one of those 'healers' frequently encountered among spiritists and magnetizers, and his

13. The 'democratic' and 'pacifist' tendencies of the Theosophists explain their sympathy for movements such as that of Marc Sangnier, regarding which we find this significant statement:

> An International Democratic Congress has just taken place in Paris, from the 4th to the 11th of December [1921], organized by the journal *La Jeune République* and presided over by Marc Sangnier. Eighteen European countries were represented. The aim of the Congress was to strengthen the common bonds uniting all men who are equally desirous of justice and international brotherhood. This program is truly one to which members of the Theosophical Society can adhere, and we know that several of our own people were present at these discussions. All that was lacking for this Congress to be of an entirely Theosophist spirit was that it be interdenominational (*Bulletin Théosophique*, January 1922).

On 'Sincerism' and its leader, the chevalier Le Clement de Saint-Marcq, see in *The Spiritist Fallacy* (pt. 2, chap. 10), the account of an affair that exposes the shocking underside of Theosophy, all the more so as the person involved thought it a good idea to support his thesis by invoking theories for which Leadbeater was reproached. In addition, in the same volume (pt. 2, chap. 12) we have devoted an entire chapter to 'Antoinism'.

'teachings', considered as a new Gospel by his disciples, amount to no more than a kind of Protestant morality mixed with spiritism, and is of the most lamentable banality. These 'teachings', written down in an almost incomprehensible jargon at times, and in which 'intelligence' is unceasingly denounced as the greatest of evils, are wholly comparable to certain spiritist 'communications'. Moreover, Antoine was formerly head of a spiritist group known as the 'Vine-growers of the Lord', and his disciples believe in reincarnation, as do ordinary spiritists and Theosophists. When the war broke out, the 'Antoinist religion' was on the verge of receiving official recognition. A bill to this effect had been submitted by the senators Charles Magnette and Goblet d'Alviella, two leaders of Belgian Freemasonry. Since then remarkable stories have been told of the particular respect which the Germans accorded Antoinist temples, a circumstance the sect members attributed to the posthumous protection of their 'Father'. This sect of 'healers' is not entirely unique in kind, for there is another of American origin, known as 'Christian Science', currently trying to establish itself in France and seemingly enjoying success in various circles.[14] Its founder, Mrs [Mary] Baker Eddy, announced that she would come back to life six months after her death, but the fact that this prediction did not come true did not prevent the organization from continuing to prosper, so great is the gullibility of certain people.[15] But to return to Antoinism, the remarkable thing from our point of view is that Theosophists should show a keen sympathy for it, as this excerpt from one of their journals goes to show:

> Since Theosophy has an import simultaneously moral, metaphysical, scientific, and esoteric, it is not possible to say that Theosophical and Antoinist teachings are identical; but it can be affirmed that Antoinist morality and Theosophical morality present many points of agreement. Besides, the *Father* only claims to renew the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, become too materialized in our times by the religions that invoke this great Being.[16]

14. Since the beginning of 1919 the review *La Science et la Vie*, an instrument of scientific and industrial popularization in which we would not expect to find such things, has been publishing a series of articles devoted to propaganda for 'Christian Science'.

15. Let us also note the existence of another similar sect in America, the 'Mental Scientists', who claim to heal illnesses simply by denying them. For this reason they are also known as *Deniers*.

Fundamentally, such a parallel is hardly flattering to Theosophy, but we should be surprised at nothing, for despite the ignorance and intellectual mediocrity he always displayed 'Father Antoine' was considered by certain naïve occultists as 'one of the twelve Unknown Grand Masters of the Rose-Cross.' These same occultists also attributed this quality to several other 'healers' of the same kind, especially Francis Schlatter, an Alsacian emigré in America who rather mysteriously disappeared around 1897.[17] Why not just as well turn these people into 'Mahatmas' of some kind?

A very different kind of Theosophist propaganda operates in artistic and literary circles,[18] and of this we have a recent example. In early 1918 a journal called *L'Affranchi* made its appearance. By its numbering it made itself out to be a continuation of the former

16. The article entitled 'Une religion spirituelle', published in *Théosophe*, December 1, 1913.

17. *Histoire des Rose-Croix*, by Sédir, pp55 and 126. Moreover, the author declares that this statement is erroneous. — The occultist writer Auguste Strindberg recounts a fantastic story about this Schlatter in his *Inferno* (pp110–113).

18. It would be interesting to look for traces of Theosophical influence in the various forms of current literature, including novels (an example being *Saint Magloire* by Roland Dorgelès); moreover, this influence is very often exercised without the knowledge of the writers themselves. Naturally, the Theosophists record the results with satisfaction in statements such as this:

> Psychic phenomena, occultism, and Theosophy are increasingly referred to in literature, and from America we have heard of the appearance of a number of psychic films that made quite an impression, in the genre of *Nos Morts nous frôlent*, which was recently shown us (*Bulletin Théosophique*, January 1922).

And here is something curious. The lines immediately preceding the passage above announce the appearance of the first edition of the present book, which we reproduce as a matter of information:

> A work has appeared which constitutes a very closely-reasoned criticism against Theosophy and its teachers: *Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion*, by René Guénon. We cannot pass this over in silence, for it is very cleverly done and will certainly trouble

Théosophe, but the word 'Theosophy' itself never appeared in it. The journal took 'Hierarchy, Fraternity, Freedom' as its slogan, and contained only pseudonymous articles, most dealing with social questions. Discrete references were made to the 'Future Messiah', and certain well-known people, such as Wilson and Kerensky,[19] were presented in veiled terms as precursors. Besides these, there were other articles treating art and its role in 'evolution', as well as bizarre, decadent poems. At the same time the group 'Affranchis' [the 'Emancipated'], for whom the newspaper served as mouthpiece, also made itself known in the most extreme modernist performances and exhibitions (there was even an 'Emancipated Punch and Judy'). Two special publications also appeared: *L'Art* and *Le Travail*, and a legal consulting service was even organized at registered offices. The *Revue Baltique*, 'devoted to the special defence of issues concerning the Baltic countries, which will hold the key to world peace,' belonged to the same group, thereby showing that political and diplomatic concerns were mixed in with literature.[20]

those who know little of the history of our Society and do not yet have a sufficient knowledge of Theosophy itself. Let us not be troubled by whatever someone says or writes, for truth is on the march, none will stop it, and we hold a little of this truth. The great vogue of experimental psychic sciences and spiritism clearly proves that humanity wants to emancipate itself from the dogmatic chains of the Churches and that it is ripe to understand reincarnation and karma.

Here one recognizes the usual procedure which consists of responding to concise statements with declamations and the commonplace. 'Truth is on the march'; has not this been sufficiently used and abused since the Dreyfus affair? But what is interesting is to see Theosophy display solidarity with spiritism, of which the 'great vogue' quite simply proves the mental disorder of our time and the breakdown of a good number of our contemporaries. Furthermore, if the anonymous author of this note has not been 'troubled', he has nonetheless shown a certain thoughtlessness: if humanity 'emancipates itself from the dogmatic chains of the Churches', and this without exception, what will become of the 'Liberal Catholic Church'?

19. Guénon is almost certainly referring here to Woodrow Wilson and Aleksandr Fyodorovich Kerensky (1881–1970), author of *The Prelude to Bolshevism*, etc. ED.

20. Furthermore, among the principal members of the group there was de Lubicz-Milosz, official representative of the Lithuanian government in Paris. [For more on Oscar Vladislas de Lubicz Milosz (1877–1939) see *The Noble Traveller: The Life and Writings of O.V. de Milosz* (West Stockbridge, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1985). ED.]

In August 1918 the group leased Balzac's house, at the time under threat of demolition. Its director, Carlos Larronde, became curator and announced that it was to become the seat of an 'Artists' Corporation' and a 'center for intellectual and artistic revival.' It should be borne in mind that the Theosophists dispose of considerable funds, lending an undeniable weight to their propaganda. Another proof thereof is the sizeable building they erected recently in Paris at Square Rapp as their 'headquarters'. This building belongs to the 'Société Immobilière Adyar', whose president is Charles Blech, Secretary-General of the French section of the Theosophical Society (or 'Société Théosophique Française', according to the name which has been officially adopted). Within the 'Affranchis' organization, and above it, were two more closed ones, the 'Mystic Group *Tala*' (The Bond) and the 'Apostolic Center', both clearly Theosophist. Lastly, in May 1919, they announced

> the intention of establishing at Saint-Rémi-lès-Chevreuse a *Synthetic school of education* where all the faculties of a child will have a parallel growth and where the particular talents will be cultivated to their full development; everyone will be placed according to his aptitudes and work.

Today, the 'Affranchis' has changed its name to the 'Watchers'[21] (probably with reference to the *Egregori* of the Book of Enoch, which has always been of great interest to occultists) and engages in attempts at community living reminiscent of the socialist utopias of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is doubtful whether they will be any more successful than the latter, for we have already heard that there are some splits (especially between the groups led by Gaston Revel and René Schwaller) which do not augur well for the future.[22]

21. The association was registered under this name on July 19 1920. A physical education organization called the 'Eurythmotherapeutic Institute' has been operating under the direction of Mrs Madeleine Leprince and Dr Thiers from its offices at 17, boulevard de Boulogne (Parc des Princes).

22. By a singular coincidence the name 'Watchers' was given to a 'Third Protestant Order' founded in 1922 by Pastor Wilfred Monod (*Etudes*, August 5, 1924; La Croix, September 4, 1924). The two Theosophist groups bearing this title have ceased to exist; it seems that since that time René Schwaller has founded a new

In passing, we mentioned a mark of the admiration Theosophists professed for President Wilson; indeed, the idea of the 'League of Nations' was certainly one that could not fail to seduce and fill these 'humanitarians' with enthusiasm. Thus, in 1918 a 'Union for Peoples' Emancipation' was formed with a 'permanent committee' based in the offices of the *Affranchi*, and which in its manifesto 'rendered the homage of a grateful world to President Wilson, spokesman of the human conscience,' adding:

> A new era dawns for mankind. The terrible period of wars has ended.[23] The League of Nations shall irresistibly oppose the threats of violence and the conquering spirit. The peace program formulated by President Wilson on the basis of the peoples' right to self-determination is the only guarantee to the world for the permanent establishment of justice and harmony. . . . Anticipating universal opinion, the Union for Peoples' Emancipation will be the sincere interpreter and impartial spokesman of nationalities during the liberating period that begins. It will assist the efforts of all human communities in their evolution toward the good.

organization in Switzerland. The 'Eurythmotherapeutic Institute' has returned to its former address of *l'Affranchi*, 5, rue Schœlcher, under the name 'School of Eurythmy', which latter has joined Steiner's 'anthroposophy' and thus become a branch of the school of the same name in Dornach. Madeleine Lefèvre (and not Leprince as has been printed in error) succeeded Simone Rihouet as director, who we believe was formerly a student of philosophy at the Institut Catholique de Paris. [René Schwaller later took the name R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz, under which he published many works, including *Sacred Science, Nature-Word, Esoterism and Symbol, The Temple of Man: Apet of the South at Luxor* (2 vols.), and *The Temple in Man: Ancient Egyptian Sacred Architecture and the Perfect Man.* ED.

23. During the war the Theosophists did not neglect to spread their propaganda among soldiers. In France they published to this end a 'journal of the trenches' called *Kourokshetra*, an allusion to the great battle of the *Mahabharata* (*Adyar Bulletin*, January 1918). — In addition to the different kinds of propaganda mentioned in this chapter, another that seems altogether peculiar to Theosophy and some similar American sects, is what is called 'mental propaganda'. Mrs Besant explains it thus:

> A group of men with common convictions, a group of Theosophists for example, can contribute in large measure to spreading Theosophist ideas in their immediate circle if at the same time they agree to devote ten minutes per day to meditation on some Theosophist teaching. It is not necessary that they all be gathered at the same place, provided that their spirits are united. Suppose a small group has decided to meditate on reincarnation at an agreed upon time for ten minutes a day, for three to six months. Plenty of powerful thought-forms would thereby assail the region chosen, and the idea of reincarnation would penetrate a considerable number of minds. One should make enquiries, one should look for books on the subject, and a meeting on the subject, following this kind of preparation, would attract a public very eager for information and already very interested ahead of time. Progress out of proportion with the physical means employed is realized wherever men and women agree in earnest on the subject of this mental propaganda' (*Le Pouvoir de la Pensée, sa maîtrise et sa culture*, pp178–179).

In September of the same year this Theosophist group came out with another publication entitled *Le Drapeau Bleu* [The Blue Flag], 'Journal of the New World' and 'Mouthpiece for the Society of Nations and Classes', with the slogan: 'Evolve toward Unity, in Hierarchy, through Love'; as can be seen, the Theosophists are truly obsessed with the idea of evolution.[24] It seems that the blue flag is a 'symbol of synergy, sympathy, and synthesis in the national and international order';[25] we have here an example of the pompous and empty expressions currently in use among all groups of this kind, which are enough, however, to impress the naïve. A little later an Italian group of the 'Drapeau Bleu' was also formed under the name 'Società per l'Evoluzione Nazionale', which had as its organ the review *Vessillo*, and as its motto: 'For the Nation as Individual, for Humanity as Nation.' All this reminds us of the famous 'Congress of

It is important to note that the famous custom of 'a moment of silence' that the Americans introduced into Europe, and which has become one of the main elements of almost all official commemorations since the war, is linked to practices of this sort. There would be much to say in a more general way on the pseudo-religious deviations inherent in the kind of 'civic worship' to which this custom belongs.

24. Two French Theosophists, Drs A. Auvard and M. Schultz, have even invented a special doctrine to which they have given the rather barbarous name 'evoluism'.

25. On their side, the Esperantists have adopted the green flag as their emblem, this color corresponding to the name given the 'international auxiliary language' which they seek to propagate. They also have as their insignia a five-pointed star very similar to the 'flamboyant star' of Masonry and the silver star worn by members of the 'Order of the Eastern Star'. Should one see here also a correspondence of the same kind for the blue star serving as a distinctive mark for certain anti-alcoholic societies?

Humanity' mentioned earlier; it is very much of the same inspiration and the results will probably not be much more brilliant. Could it really be otherwise when even the officially formed 'League of Nations' cannot survive and when we are already witnessing its collapse? In any case, there is one sure fact: the groups we are dealing with here, and those with which they have certain affinities, are all more or less pacifist and internationalist. However, if the internationalism of the majority of Theosophists is indeed true and sincere, one may well wonder whether it is the same for their leaders who have already given us so many reasons to doubt their sincerity in all things. We shall try to answer this question later on.

27

THEOSOPHICAL MORALISM

WE HAVE ALREADY NOTED that after the death of Mme Blavatsky the doctrinal side of Theosophy lost some of its importance to the moral and sentimental side; this is not to say, however, that this was absent at the beginning, for 'universal brotherhood' has always been the first of the three goals proclaimed by the Theosophical Society. In this connection, if not as regards Theosophist propaganda properly speaking, it was notably Mme Blavatsky herself who took the initiative in certain working class circles. Here is what she wrote in 1890:

> At London, which is the real center of the most luxurious materialism, we have founded in the East End the first club of Women Workers, completely free of theological conditions and beliefs. Until now such efforts have been sectarian and have imposed certain specific religious beliefs; our efforts are based solely on *human brotherhood* and do not recognize any confessional differences as barriers.[1]

Thus, in the mind of the founder it was a matter of direct competition with charitable institutions having a confessional character, and this competition was to be carried into other fields as well, particularly education; it is in this sense that declaration like the following must be understood:

1. *Lotus Bleu*, October 7, 1890, p 237.

> With this object in view [universal brotherhood], it is the duty of all Theosophists to promote in every practical way, and in all countries, the spread of *non-sectarian* education.[2]

But on the very admission of numerous Theosophists who today are dissidents, educational work as well as other works of the Theosophical Society have on the contrary taken on a pronounced 'sectarian' character under Mrs Besant; we believe, moreover, that this unfortunate 'evolution' was inevitable, for whether one likes it or not, the Theosophical Society is a sect like any other and has always been so, even if its 'pseudo-religious' allure has certainly become more accentuated. It is precisely in order to give their movement the character of a religion, even while giving assurances that this is not their intention at all, that the present leaders insist so much on 'moralism'; for they believe in accordance with Protestant conceptions that this is the essential in all religion. As Leadbeater said:

> All enjoin the same virtues and condemn the same vices . . . and the adherents of all religions agree in declaring that in order to merit the name of a good man, one must be just, kind, generous, and truthful.[3]

It is with the same intention that especially today the Theosophists develop theories like those of 'karma' and reincarnation, and comfortably dwell on their 'consoling' aspect;[4] at least, they find them 'consoling', but others may value them very differently. At root this is a mere difference in each one's sentimental disposition; but the important thing in taking account of the Theosophist mentality is to see how much this 'consoling' character contributes to an acceptance of theories like these independently of any logical justification, which could not be attempted without a certain imprudence. There is in the very fact of having adopted such an attitude an incontestable sign of intellectual weakness among the leaders of Theosophy. But there is something else, namely the religious competition that

2. *The Key to Theosophy*, p44.

3. *L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p379.

4. For example, see the brochure entitled *A ceu qui souffrent*, by Mlle Aimée Blech.

goes on under a form different from that it assumed originally; in order to compete with the religions it is necessary to offer benefits comparable to those which their ordinary believers find in them. Theosophy must therefore sooner or later present itself as a religious sect; whether they admit it or deny it changes nothing; and if one takes into account the origins of its leaders, it must inevitably have tendencies similar to those of Protestant sects. This in fact is what has come to pass, and these tendencies have one of their most significant manifestations in the preponderance of 'moralism'.

If one refers to the list of auxiliary organizations of the Theosophical Society given in the last chapter, it is easy to see that the declared aims of nearly all these organizations, putting aside those of a special and overtly Theosophical character, are related almost exclusively to a few guiding ideas that are at root sentimental: humanitarianism, pacifism, anti-alcoholism, and vegetarianism, all of which are especially dear to the essentially 'moralistic' mentality of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. Certain current movements, some anti-alcoholism campaigns for example, have backgrounds which it would be very interesting to examine;[5] it would be very instructive to follow, on the one hand, the influence of Protestantism, and on the other that of Masonry and the secret societies; and we will add that the study of the feminist movement, even apart from the Co-Masonry of which we have spoken, would be no less interesting from the same point of view. We will limit ourselves to citing a few examples concerning anti-alcoholism and vegetarianism;[6] of course, the organizations we are going to mention have no direct link to Theosophy, but it is no less incontestable that they proceed from the same mentality.

In America there are two secret societies, one masculine and one feminine, called 'Sons of Jonadab' and 'United Daughters of Rechab', based on this verse from the Bible:

5. There is no doubt that the American secret societies we mentioned have in large part inspired the campaigns which resulted in the adoption of 'prohibitionist' laws almost everywhere in the United States.

6. The Lodge 'Terre et Liberté' [Earth and Liberty] of the 'Independent Order of the Good Templars' meets in the 'Vegetarian Hearth', 40 rue Mathis; this 'Vegetarian Hearth' is described as 'Work Preventive of Human Misery'.

> We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, 'You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons for ever.'[7]

No member who has broken this pledge can again become a member in good standing. Another similar association is the 'Order of the Sons of Temperance', which is for men only but which is joined by the 'Daughters of Temperance' for women and the 'Temperance Cadets'. To the question, 'Why does this Order have secrets?' this answer is given:

> An old allegory teaches that *Envy* and *Idleness* were married one day, and they had a child whose name was *Curiosity*. This child still lives on this earth, where he is a kind of omnipresent being assuring his subsistence by stealing a little from this one and from that one, and something from everyone. It is in order to avoid the too frequent incursions of this importunate and indiscreet creature that secrets were introduced into our Order.

We offer this citation because it is rather characteristic of the special mentality prevailing in all such groups; we do not believe that before the present period anyone would have dreamed of forming secret societies for such puerile ends. On the other hand, in English Masonry there are special lodges called 'Temperance Lodges' whose members pledge to abstain from all alcoholic beverages. Finally, we will call attention to the 'Independent Order of Good Templars', another association of American origin which also requires a formal oath of secrecy under the pretext of habituating its members to mastering themselves; this association has numerous links with Masonry. Side by side with the adult lodges where members of both sexes are admitted from the age of sixteen, this Order has children's lodges or 'Temples of Youth'. There are branches of this organization in several European countries including England, the Scandinavian nations, Germany, Hungary, Belgium, and France; in 1906 the 'Great International Chief Templar' was a Mr Wawrinski, a deputy in the Swedish Parliament; the head of the French branch is currently Dr Legrain, chief physician at the Asylum of Ville-Evrard.[8]

7. Jer. 35:6.

Anti-alcoholism is also part of the teaching of Theosophy. As Mme Blavatsky wrote:

> [Wine and spirits] are worse for his spiritual and moral advancement than meat, for in all its forms alcohol has a direct, marked, and very deleterious influence on man's psychic condition.[9]

As for vegetarianism, Theosophists recommend it for reasons of different sorts; here too they first advance the reason of 'spiritual evolution':

> When the flesh of animals is assimilated by man as food, it imparts to him, psychologically, some of the characteristics of the animal it came from. Moreover, occult science teaches and proves this to its students by an ocular demonstration [*sic*], showing also that this 'coarsening' or 'animalizing' effect on man is greatest from the flesh of the larger animals, less for birds, still less for fish and other cold-blooded animals, and least of all when he eats only vegetables. . . . and so we advise really earnest students to eat such food as will least clog and weight their brains and bodies, and will have the smallest effect in hampering and retarding the development of their intuition, their interior faculties and powers.[10]

As these last words show, it is especially in view of certain 'psychic attractions' that vegetarianism is particularly recommended, if not imposed, on the members of the 'esoteric section'. But if Mme Blavatsky had really believed that this was as necessary as she claimed, it is probable that she would have begun by adopting it as her personal practice, which she never did; but it is true that one cannot level the same reproach against Mrs Besant. The reasons given are certainly debatable, but in any case they are far less ridiculous than

8. Dr Legrain at the same time was a member of Masonry; in 1901 he was Venerable of the Lodge La Jérusalem Ecossaise.

9. *The Key to Theosophy*, p262.

10. Ibid., pp260–261.

the sentimental considerations which are added to justify vegetarianism more generally and which indeed are those on which Theosophists today most insist: we are brothers to the animals, they say, and one must not devour one's brothers even if they are less 'evolved' than ourselves. The response could be that, understanding evolution as they do, we are also the brothers of plants and even of the minerals, so their reasoning rigorously followed and applied would condemn us quite simply to die of starvation. Nonetheless, it is for this motive that most Theosophists adhere to a vegetarian regimen, to which they sometimes add milk and eggs, which are no less animal substances; it is true that in vegetarianism there are varieties and degrees. In our view it is not a question of condemning vegetarianism absolutely, but what can be reasonably said is that one's dietary regimen must be uniquely a function of climate, race, and temperament. Papus was able to write quite correctly that 'one must be as ignorant as a Theosophist to impose on an Englishman the same dietary regimen as that of Hindus,'[11] and in connection with this he recounts the following story:

> In London, in the community of a mystical society [the Theosophical Society], we saw two members, the Countess W... and Mme M...,[12] literally dying of hunger in order to avoid eating 'living beings', while the founders, under pretext of illness, devoured great platters of fish, followed by colossal plates of rice and various vegetables. The ladies wished to have 'visions', and while awaiting them they procured for themselves a pretty case of cerebral anemia.[13]

Among Theosophist creations we have mentioned the 'Vegetarian Society of France', whose official publication, conjointly with the 'Belgian Society for the Study of Alimentary Reform', is the review *Hygie*; previously there had been a similar publication entitled *La Reforme Alimentaire* which also proposed to 'fight vaccination and

11. *Traité élémentaire de la Magie practique*, p128.

12. The first must be the Countess Wachtmeister; we do not know the identity of the other.

13. Ibid., pp130–131.

the methods of Pasteur.' On this last point we have already noted Dr Anna Kingsford's animosity toward Pasteur, and also the existence in the 'Service Order of the Theosophical Society' of an English association whose aim is the 'abolition of vaccination and inoculation.' These are opinions which can be quite tenable in themselves, but it is astounding to see them so intimately mingled with all sorts of sentimental and 'humanitarian' (or better, as the English say, 'humane', a word which expresses a nuance that is almost untranslatable) foolishness, which can only make them lose all seriousness in the eyes of many sensible people.

With vegetarianism we find that there are similarities with what we found for anti-alcoholism; to begin with, we shall say that the Antoinist doctrine mentioned in the previous chapter also recommends a vegetarian regime; on the other hand, we know of an English secret society called the 'Order of the Atonement', with its seat at Brighton and 'Grand Temples' in Paris, Jerusalem, and Madras. This organization defines itself as 'a strictly Templar and vegetarian Order,' two things between which it is surely difficult to find the least logical relationship; on the other hand, the denomination 'Good Templars' applied to an anti-alcoholic association is scarcely any easier to explain. This 'Order of Atonement' claims to have its origin in 'the Temple of *Ioua* [*sic*] in the Holy City', that is to say in the Temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem, just as does Masonry; its members swear to dedicate all their efforts to hasten the coming of the 'Golden Age'. This expression, which here evidently designates the period when men abstained from all animal food, calls to mind another association founded in England in 1895 which bears precisely the name 'Order of the Golden Age'; the members of this organization, who modestly call themselves 'Knights of the Redemption', go much further than the Theosophists toward a strict vegetarianism; not only do they proscribe any animal substance, but they are also 'fruitarians' and abstain from all cooked foods; it would be difficult to be more rigorous than this. This Order, which states its 'ideal' in particularly pompous and declamatory formulas, has adherents in North America, which is not surprising, and even in India; in the second country they recruit almost exclusively among the Jains. The same Order counts among its most eminent

members Dr Wu-Ting-Fang who in China was a minister in the provisional government of Sun-Yat-Sen (who after some period of refuge in Japan has recently been elected President of a Chinese Republic of the South and who, let us note, is a Protestant and belongs to American Masonry).[14] Finally, this Order also claims as a 'fruitarian' the President of Mexico, Francisco Madero (assassinated in 1913), who was at the same time an occultist and an upper-grade Mason; there are quite unexpected relationships among all these things. But this is enough on this subject, which some perhaps will consider lacking in seriousness and unworthy of attention; if we have nonetheless dwelt on these things, it is because, as extravagant as they are, they are far from being as inoffensive and negligible as a superficial observer might think; it is also because they clearly show the currents of the modern mentality to which Theosophy is akin; and we think it is not useless to emphasize this last point.

14. Since the death of Sun Yat-Sen, his former associates have become divided, some having gone over to communism. What is curious is that the latter are for the most part also Protestants, especially Methodists, and affiliated moreover with the Y.M.C.A. (see p268), whose role in the events now unfolding in the Far-East is certainly very strange. — Of the secret organizations mentioned in this chapter, we should no doubt also include the one referred to by the initials V.P.A. ('Vie Plus Abondante' [More Abundant Life]), the 'Cosmopolitan, Vegetarian, and Occult Association', whose 'Guardian' is J. Canguilhem, in Bordeaux.

28

THEOSOPHY AND PROTESTANTISM

IT SEEMS TO US BEYOND QUESTION that certain tendencies of Theosophy, especially those we have characterized as 'moralist', exhibit a Protestant attitude, particularly that of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. We certainly do not wish to say that these tendencies are the exclusive monopoly of Protestantism, but they are preponderant in it, and it is largely from Protestantism that they have been spread abroad in the modern world. We find yet another analogy between Theosophy and current tendencies in Protestantism (especially 'liberal' Protestantism, which is the extreme form of this movement as well as its logical outcome) in the substitution of a vague 'religiosity' for religion properly so called, in the predominance of sentimental elements over intellectuality to the point of suppressing the latter almost entirely. Have not the modernists, whose mentality, as we have said, is fundamentally Protestant, even sought to achieve this in the heart of Catholicism itself? All these tendencies are closely related, and it is surprising that Theosophists calling themselves Catholics (there are such) proclaim their modernist or 'modernizing' sympathies on every occasion.[1] We have also said that 'neo-spiritualism' is generally linked to Protestantism, for it is especially in Protestant countries that sects with such leanings come to birth, develop, and multiply in an astonishing manner,

1. See for example an anonymous brochure entitled 'La Compagnie de Jésu et la Théosophie: Réponse d'une Catholique' in *Etudes* (articles of the Rev. Fr de Grandmaison).

indicating a grave disequilibrium of the religious mentality. But of all these sects, it is Theosophy, along with certain spiritist groups, that can be characterized as 'pietistic', that most exhibits the Protestant spirit.

If we examine the methods Theosophy employs for its diffusion, it is easy to see that they are identical to those used by Protestant sects. With the one as with the other there is the same proselytizing fury, the same insinuating suppleness employed to reach the various targeted groups, which creates all sorts of associations that are more or less independent in appearance but are all intended to cooperate in the same task. Need we recall here, for example, the Protestant initiatives pursued in every country by means of the Y.M.C.A. and its subsidiaries,[2] where all are admitted without distinction of religious confession in order to enlarge the field as much as possible for a proselytism that is no less ardent for being disguised? And this is not all: associations such as the latter, even while denying that they are 'confessional', nevertheless admit the Protestant inspiration that directs them. But alongside these are others that make a show of absolute neutrality but are no less closely linked thereto, and sometimes have some of the same personnel at their head, or in any case count a Protestant majority among their directors. Such are the 'neutral' associations of 'boy scouts', existing side-by-side with overtly Protestant associations.[3] The same holds true for anti-alcoholic leagues and the various secret or half-secret societies which we discussed in the last chapter, and which, although for the most part 'neutral', nevertheless have an essentially Protestant origin. Now these are the same characteristics one finds in the many auxiliary organizations instituted by the Theosophists: whether these organizations have an avowed aim of Theosophist propaganda, whether

2. Among these latter in France, the work of 'Foyers du Soldat' must be mentioned. — The letters Y.M.C.A. signify 'Young Men's Christian Association'; there would be curious things to say about the current mania for designations by initials, which is most certainly of Anglo-Saxon, and principally American origin. Some see in it, not without some apparent justification, an indication of the influence of the many secret or semi-secret societies more or less similar to Masonry, or at least formed in imitation of it.

3. See *La Question des Boy-Scouts ou Eclairsurs en France*, by Copin-Albanelli.

they proclaim themselves independent and open to all even while acknowledging their origin, or even whether they dissimulate their origin more or less carefully—all are in fact subject to a single direction; all are directly or indirectly consecrated to the 'service' of Theosophy, sometimes against the wishes of a great part of their membership, who are perfectly unconscious of the role they are made to play.

This identity of tendencies and methods can be explained quite naturally by the Protestant origins of the heads of Theosophy and the majority of their adherents. Among them are even a good number of former 'clergymen' who, if they have abandoned their ministry, have not for all that altered their mentality and who keep it intact under the 'Old Catholic' mask they have lately adopted. But must one stop there and must one believe that the spirit of religious competition opposes Theosophy to Protestantism properly so called, as it opposes it—whatever one may say—to Catholicism? The case is in no way the same, for one must take into account the indefinite multiplicity of sects intrinsic to Protestantism in consequence of its 'free examination', that is to say in consequence of its absence of principles and of any traditional authority. The Protestant sects are also very much in competition with one another, although this does not hinder their being united by very real ties, for these are only different expressions of the same general mentality. And here, rivalry does not necessarily imply a fundamental hostility, because there is nothing comparable to the unity of Catholicism. It is for the same reasons that the schismatic Churches describing themselves as Catholic (we do not, of course, speak of the Eastern Orthodox Churches) inexorably tend to draw near to Protestantism, and present the same phenomena of dispersion. It would even be difficult to trace a neat line of demarcation between the schismatics and Protestant communions. Do not the Anglicans, for example, love to call themselves Catholic? Fundamentally, the attitude of Theosophy toward Protestant sects does not differ greatly from the relations of these sects among themselves. And this is why Hindus can regard the Theosophists, at least in their present orientation, as a new Protestant sect that has arisen to add itself to all those that already exist. One more or one less in such a multitude can have only

minimal importance. For the rest, we have known men who have passed successively through various Protestant sects and who have then come to Theosophy, or vice versa; these are people of whom a former Belgian Theosophist has justly said that they 'lend to certain groups a Salvation Army air.'[4] One has exactly the same impression in reading certain passages from Theosophical publications, the tone of which is quite similar to that of Protestant sermons. Such connections cannot be accidental. We do not wish to say, of course, that Theosophy proceeds from a particular branch of Protestantism, but when we speak of Protestantism in general, as we do here, what must be understood above all is a certain state of mind, a certain mentality. It is precisely this spirit and this mentality that reveal all the analogies we have noted: they pertain to Theosophists, as in various degrees they also pertain to many other 'neo-spiritualists'; they pertain also (we repeat) to the self-styled Catholic 'modernists' and 'immanentists'; and likewise, in the philosophical domain, they pertain to contemporary pragmatists and intuitionists. This does not prevent the existence in these currents of thought or in their point of departure individual or collective influences that are exercised in a more or less hidden way, and that are favored in their action by the labyrinthine muddle of all these groups and schools. The divergences, if not entirely superficial, are in any case much less fundamental than the shared tendencies, and it could be said that everything happens as if one were in the presence of a multitude of efforts tending, each in its own domain, toward the realization of a single plan.

Concerning the relationships between Theosophy and Protestantism there is a further question: if it is reckoned that Theosophy is anti-Christian in principle and that it always remains so despite its present 'neo-Christian' allure, must we then conclude that Protestantism itself must logically become anti-Christian when its tendencies are pushed to the extreme? However paradoxical such a conclusion might appear at first sight, there are facts that lend this at least some probability, especially when one recalls that many Protestant sects like to call themselves 'Christian' without any modifier, or

4. *Lettre ouverte à Mme Besant,* by Émile Sigogne in *Mysteria,* February 1914.

again 'Evangelical'.[5] Such is the case particularly with 'liberal Protestantism', which does not even admit the divinity of Christ, or admits it only as a 'manner of speaking', and which is hardly more than a simple 'moralism' disguised as a pseudo-religion. In our view this degeneration is more logical than the middle term at which self-styled 'orthodox' Protestantism rests—as if there could be an orthodoxy where no rule can effectively intervene to limit the arbitrariness of individual interpretations!

Moreover, it must also be noted that messianic and millenarist ideas are singularly popular in certain Protestant sects[6] such as the 'Adventists', who announce the end of the world and the glorious return of Christ for a date not so far away. In addition, today more than ever those claiming to be prophets and messiahs strangely abound in all those groups occupied with occultism. We have known a certain number of these apart from Alcyone and Theosophy, and still others are spreading in spiritist circles. Must this be seen as a sign of the times? Whatever the case and without venturing the least prediction, it is quite difficult in the presence of all these things not to recall the words of the Gospel: 'For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.'[7] Assuredly, we are not yet there; the false Messiahs we have seen until now have offered wonders of a very inferior quality, and those who have followed them were probably not very difficult to seduce, but who knows what the future holds in store? If one reflects that these false Messiahs have

5. This conclusion is precisely that of an article devoted to Leadbeater and signed 'Timothy' (Charles Godard), published in the *Echo du Merveilleux* of July 15, 1912. This article, which is not entirely in agreement with our own perspective, ends with these words: 'After having brooded over the pages which Mrs Annie Besant has written on the subject of the near advent of the *Instructor of the World,* of the great revealer of a world religion, they [the Theosophists] will be disposed to recognize him in the Antichrist. Protestantism will have anti-Christianity as its final consequence.'

6. Mrs Besant herself was careful to point out that 'the "Irvingite" sect supported in a very specific way the idea of a second coming of Christ' (*Vers l'Initiation* p150). This is a very clear confirmation of the links between the messianism of these Protestant sects and that of the Theosophists.

7. Matt. 24:24.

never been anything but more or less unconscious instruments in the hands of those who have raised them up, and if one looks at the series of attempts made by the Theosophists, one is led to think that these are no more than trials, experiments which will be renewed in various forms until success is achieved.[8] In the meantime, these efforts always have the result of troubling some minds. We do not believe moreover that the Theosophists, any more than the occultists and the spiritists, have the strength to succeed in such an enterprise by themselves. But behind all these movements is there not something more fearsome, of which their leaders perhaps do not themselves know, and of which they are in their own turn merely the instruments? We merely raise this last question without seeking to resolve it here, for to do so, we would have to raise extremely complex considerations that would lead us far beyond the limits we have set ourselves for the present study.

8. Krishnamurti's vain efforts to escape his role as Messiah (see p190, n23) clearly show that he is only an instrument—and we would readily say a victim—of undertakings in which his personal will counts for nothing. The present development of Theosophist messianism, which moreover does not seem to make as much noise in the 'outer world' as it would like, therefore does not modify what we wrote before the latest events. It must be added that even if the leaders of Theosophy now consider that there is more than a simple attempt, it might very well be that for others their movement is itself only one of multiple elements which must converge to prepare for the realization of a plan which is much more vast and complex.

29

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

IT REMAINS FOR US TO SPEAK of the political role played by the Theosophical Society, particularly in India. This role has been variously described,[1] and no doubt it is difficult to form a very clear idea of it because it is one of those things which the Theosophists really keep secret, much more so than their pseudo-esoterism. They have always affirmed that, as Theosophists at least, they do not mingle in politics, alleging that their organization is 'international in the highest sense.'[2] Their political role exists, nevertheless, and if the Society taken as a whole is in fact international, its leadership has become purely English. Consequently, whatever the appearances, we are convinced—even certain—that viewed from this angle, Theosophy is above all an instrument in the service of British imperialism. It must have been so from the beginning or near the beginning, for trustworthy witnesses have given assurance that during her stay in India Mme Blavatsky received a significant annual subvention (the figure of twelve thousand rupees has been suggested) from the English authorities. It seems that this was the price of certain services rendered against her country of origin; besides, she repudiated

1. Thus, Dr Ferraud believed that the Theosophical Society is really internationalist and even suggests that they have hostile tendencies toward all established governments; the Rev. Grandmaison, even while recognizing that it has frequently served English power in India, nevertheless thinks that the Society's attitude in this regard may sometimes vary.

2. *The Key to Theosophy,* p231.

her Russianness and liked to call herself American (we have seen that she was in fact naturalized in 1878). Hodgson, much less competent in these matters than in the study of psychic phenomena, was quite wrong to suspect her of being a Russian spy; and if, as there is reason to believe, this suspicion was inspired by certain functionaries, it is because these latter did not know much more than he did. The political police in India are entirely outside the official administrative services, although some of its agents simultaneously belong to the latter. In any case, the government, which must have known the situation, took no account of Hodgson's accusation; already at this period the Theosophical Society worked for England. And here is a very significant note that Sinnett[3] (himself a government functionary) inserted in his first work:

> Many older Indians, plus numerous books on the Indian Mutiny speak of the incomprehensible manner in which news of distant events penetrated into the native bazaars before reaching the Europeans in the same area, in spite of the use of the most rapid means of communication at the latters' disposal. The explanation given to me is that the Brothers (that is to say the 'Mahātmās'), who at that time wanted to preserve British power because they regarded it as better for India than any native government, rapidly distributed the news according to their particular methods, when the news was of such a nature as to calm popular excitement and to discourage new uprisings.[4] The sentiment that animated them at the time is the same that still animates them today, and the government would act wisely by favoring the development of the influence of the Theosophical Society in India. The suspicions that were in principle directed against the founders of the Society, although poorly addressed, were nevertheless excusable enough; but today, when the character of the movement is better understood, the functionaries of the British government in India would do well, when the occasion is offered,

3. 'Sinnett is the former editor of the journal *The Pioneer*, an official organ published in English India' (Jules Lermina, *Magie pratique*, p249).

4. The fact in question is very real and has often been affirmed, not only in India but also in Islamic countries; as for the explanation given, it is naturally as fanciful as the personality of the 'Mahātmās' themselves.

> to show sympathy for the promoters of the Society who necessarily have a thankless task to accomplish if they are deprived of every token of sympathy.[5]

In fact, the Theosophical Society never lacked the moral and financial support of the government, even if this was not true for all officials; nor did it lack support from some native princes whose Anglophile sentiments are well known. Thus the Mahārāja of Cooch-Behar, a high dignitary in British Masonry who died in England in 1911, was a member of the Theosophical Society. He organized a branch in his capital in 1890, and in 1893 was elected president of the branch in Darjeeling.[6] He was the son-in-law of Keshab Chandra Sen, founder of one of the sects of the *Brahma Samāj,* called 'Church of the New Dispensation' and which is perhaps the one which had the most pronounced tendencies toward Protestant Christianity. His son and successor, the present Mahārāja, is also in English Masonry, and is one of the dignitaries of the Order of the *Secret Monitor,* a dependency of the former. The Theosophical Society likewise counts among its protectors and benefactors, if not among its members, the Mahārāja of Kapurthala, another high dignitary of British Masonry who in 1892 made a gift of the sum of two thousand rupees to the 'Commemorative Budget of HPB,[7] intended for the publication of Oriental translations.'[8] And, as we have alluded to Masonry in India, here is a simple fact that allows one to account for what may be its role there: in 1910 the head of the native secret police was Deputy Grand-Master of the Great Lodge of the Bengal District, a position which previously had been held by the Mahārāja of Cooch-Behar.

Naturally, the pretext for government support was the Theosophical Society's educational work; but in reality it was justified by the struggle led by the Society, precisely by means of this educational work and various other organizations, against traditional Hindu

5. *Le Monde Occulte*, p157

6. *Lotus Bleu,* December 7, 1890 and March 27, 1883.

7. Theosophists frequently designate Mme Blavatsky by her initials only.

8. *Lotus Bleu,* September 27, 1892. We will also mention the Mahārāja of Burbungha, a member of the Theosophical Society, who endowed it with the sum of twenty-five thousand rupees (*Le Lotus,* March and July 1888).

institutions, particularly against caste. Europeans generally display so much hostility to caste because they are incapable of understanding the profound principles on which it rests; besides, Hindu civilization in its entirety is based on a tradition which is linked to principles of the purely metaphysical order. Of course, genuine Hindus, who are essentially traditionalists and who for the stated reason cannot be other than traditionalists, shun contact with such a milieu, and so much the more in that they cannot forgive Theosophy for denaturing Eastern doctrines. They also show a deep contempt for those among their compatriots (quite rare, moreover) who are affiliated with this Society, and for those who enter Masonry. By contrast, the British government views such persons favorably, and frequently grants them advantageous positions. Several years ago, for example, the Theosophist J.C. Chatterji became the director of the archeological service in Kashmir. He was the author of several works[9] which, despite their titles and claims, are most often inspired more by the evolutionist (and very 'exoteric') philosophy of Herbert Spencer than by ancient Eastern doctrine.

As for Mrs Besant, her protestations of friendship for Hindus have never been taken seriously by Hindus at large; and in 1894, at the time when she still declared that 'to be converted to Christianity is worse than to be a sceptic or a materialist,' while claiming that she herself was a convert to Hinduism,[10] S.C. Mukhopadyaya wrote in the journal *Light of the East,* that her Hinduism was 'pure hype', and that there were only a few hundred Theosophist followers of this 'fantasy Buddhism' as against two hundred and fifty million Hindus. Considering Mrs Besant simply as an English political agent, he concluded by placing his compatriots on guard against her, counselling them to resist all foreign intrusion more than ever. Much later the work of Mrs Besant was judged by Hindu patriots in terms of the most vigorous severity:

> Mrs Besant has proved noteworthy in many things in her adventurous life, but her latest role is that of subtle and dangerous enemy of the Hindu people, among whom she flutters about like

9. *Philosophie Ésotérique de l'Inde; Vision des Sept Sages de l'Inde; Le Réalisme Hindou.*

10. *The Two Worlds,* April 20, 1894.

> a bat in the darkness of night.... Just as by their singing the sirens lured men to their ruin, this eloquent and gifted woman draws Hindu youth to their destruction by her honeyed and lying words. The poison of her silvered words, drunk in by her charmed listeners, is deadlier than the venom of serpents.... Since the establishment of the 'Central Hindu College' at Benares, Mrs Besant has sunk ever deeper in the muck of hypocrisy and lies. Perhaps the proud passion of her imagined racial superiority has vanquished her religious fervor. She has always been unstable and inconstant in her attachment to ideas and causes. This mental quality led W.T. Stead to characterize her as 'the woman without stable convictions.' Whatever the case, it is certain that at present she is in complete agreement with the designs of the foreign caste which governs India and must be counted among the enemies of India.... What is Mrs Besant's function among the ranks of official agents? What methods does she follow? She has been entrusted with the delicate mission of controlling the Hindu religious system from within. The government cannot touch our religion directly and openly. But the foreign bureaucracy cannot leave such a vast and influential organization at peace because it fears any institution that can unify the conquered race. Consequently, spies and impostors in disguise are sent to enter this citadel and deceive its guardians. Mrs Annie Besant and her colleagues at Benares, such as Dr Richardson and Mr Arundale, are English imperialists who work with the idea of controlling Hindu religious life. They are like wolves in sheep's clothing and are more to be feared and condemned than the brutal and crude enemies of India.... This is why she has translated the *Bhagavad Gītā* and founded the 'Central Hindu College'.[11] At present she devotes all her energy to the imperialist propaganda of Great Britain.[12]

11. We add that this establishment found itself in competition with the 'Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College', a foundation of the *Arya Samāj*; it is thus that Mrs Besant, even while accomplishing her own work, occasionally avenged the injuries previously done to Mme Blavatsky.

12. *La Sirène indienne,* extract from the Hindu journal *Bande Mataram,* March 1911.

And on the contrary, those whom these same Hindu patriots consider traitors to their cause have for their part only praise for Mrs Besant and her work. For proof we need only refer to their warm defense published in June 1913 on the occasion of the trial in Madras and published in the *Rajput Herald,* a review published in London and which proclaims itself 'devoted to Imperialism', and on the cover of which is displayed a map of 'the Empire on which the sun ever shines.' There, certainly, is a very compromising friendship. For the rest, did not Mrs Besant herself, at Adyar in January 1914, create a new periodical entitled *The Commonwealth,* intended for India particularly and carrying the motto 'For God, the Crown and the Country'? Long before that, she boasted of having obtained for her 'Central Hindu College' a signed portrait of King Edward VII, through the good offices of the Princess of Wales.[13] And was it not she who had inscribed on the statutes of British Co-Masonry (including the Lodges of India) that Masonry 'requires of its members loyalty to the Sovereign'?[14] The sense in which the English understand 'loyalty' in political matters is well known; all this is perfectly conclusive and leaves no doubt, even if we had no other direct and corroborating information to further reinforce our conviction. At the same time and in the same order of ideas we can cite a few texts which are very edifying: at a conference in Lahore a dozen years ago Mrs Besant declared 'that foreign invasion has often served development and that Hindus must stop hating the English.' This declaration must be compared with a more recent document, the oath which must be taken by the 'Brothers of Service', that is to say the adherents of a branch of the 'Order of Service of the Theosophical Society' which was organized in India around 1913 'among the most devoted members of the Society' and allegedly 'to insert Theosophy into daily life, and to combine Theosophy with the solution of social reforms.' Here is the text of the oath, the beginning of which leaves no place for any equivocation:

> Considering that the *primordial interest of India is to develop freely under the British flag,* to free itself from all customs injurious to the union of all its inhabitants, and to render to Hinduism a measure of social flexibility and real-life fraternity, I promise: (1) *to take no account of differences of caste;* (2) not to give my sons in marriage when they are minors, nor my daughters before they have reached their seventeenth birthday; (3) to provide my wife and my daughters as well as other women of my family with instruction insofar as this is suitable for them, to encourage the education of daughters, and to oppose the seclusion of women; (4) to encourage the instruction of the people insofar as this may be possible for me; (5) to take no account in social and political life of differences of color and race, and to do what I can to further the free entry of the colored races into all countries on the same footing with white emigrants; (6) to actively combat all social ostracism of widows who remarry; (7) and to encourage workers' unions in all fields of spiritual, educational, social, and political progress under the direction of the 'National Hindu Congress'.[15]

13. Letter to Leadbeater, July 14, 1906.
14. Article 7 of the statutes of Co-Masonry.

It is well to note that this so-called 'National Hindu Congress' was created by the English administration with the cooperation of the Theosophists; perhaps it was inspired by them,[16] and even during Mme Blavatsky's life, for she had written that this Congress was a 'political body with which our Society had nothing to do, although it was organized by our members, Indians and Anglo-Indians.' But a little further on in the same article she added:

15. We take this text from the *Bulletin Théosophique* of December 1913.
16. Here is another curious piece of information of the same order as the various facts we have indicated:

> After attending the meeting of Krishnamurti and Nityānanda in Bombay and accompanying them to Adyar, our President left there on December 9, 1921 for the north of India, and, going first to Benares, where the Hindu National Institute conferred on her the diploma of doctor of letters in recognition of her services to national education; on the following day this same distinction was conferred on the Prince of Wales' (*Bulletin Théosophique,* February 1922).

This link between Mrs Besant and the Prince of Wales is most significant, especially when it is known that throughout the course of his journey through India all genuine Hindus were very good at isolating him completely.

> When the political agitation began, the National Congress that was convened was modeled *according to our plan* and guided principally by our members, who had served as delegates to our convention.[17]

Even to the present this Congress has remained almost entirely under the influence of Mrs Besant; the real aim has been to contain aspirations for autonomy by offering a more or less completely illusory semblance of satisfaction. The Irish 'Home Rule' project (and everyone knows how that was received) proceeds from exactly the same politics, which have also been attempted in Egypt. To return to the 'Brothers of Service', it is not such an institution as this that might give Theosophy a little prestige in the eyes of real Hindus—even if such a thing were possible. These latter can hardly be led to believe the nonsense about 'progress' and 'brotherhood' any more than about the benefits of 'compulsory education'; they are very little concerned to make their wives and daughters into 'suffragettes' (the avowed aim of the 'Co-Masonic' lodges in India as well as in Europe and America), and they will never be persuaded to tread underfoot their most sacred customs, under the pretext of 'assimilation' to their foreign dominators. For a Hindu, the pledge 'to take no account of caste differences' amounts to a real abjuration.

But there is still more. At the Madras trial, seeking to impress the judges favorably, Mrs Besant did not hesitate to make a display of the services she had rendered the government, claiming that the real motive of the campaign directed against her was to be seen there. In the deposition she made in her defense we read the following:

> The defendant states that this suit has been undertaken from political motives and personal ill-will aimed at doing injury to the defendant, in virtue of a plot elaborated to destroy her life or her reputation because she had induced the educated population of India not to participate in the plots of the 'Extremists', trying to inspire in them loyalty to the Empire. From the time she intervened to put an end to the clandestine drilling of youths and to the gathering of arms in Maharastra, during the Vice-Royalty of

17. *Lotus Bleu*, October 7, 1890, pp235–36.

> Lord Curzon, she has been considered an obstacle to all propaganda aimed at inciting violence among students; and her life has been threatened both in India and in Europe. . . . The defendant asks that these young men [her two wards] be protected by the Court against the renewal of influences which make them hate the English, instead of loving and being devoted to them as they are today, influences which would make bad citizens of them.[18]

On the other hand, here is the beginning of an account of the causes of the case brought against Mrs Besant, drawn up by Mr Arundale:

> The case against Mrs Besant cannot be understood if it is considered as an isolated incident rather than as constituting part of a movement begun long ago with the aim of destroying the influence that she exercises upon the youth of India; for she has always exercised this influence to restrain young people from political violence and to keep young men from joining the numerous secret societies that constitute the real danger for India at this time. The campaign against Mrs Besant was begun by the famous Krishnavarma, who in his journal counselled assassination because he considered it [this influence] the greatest obstacle for the extremist party.[19] The attacks of Mr Tilak in India, without going so far as to counsel the assassination of Mrs Besant, had as their aim the destruction of her influence over young Hindus. The extremist movement had at its head men of strict orthodoxy such as its two principal leaders, Aurobindo Ghosh and Tilak. Mr Ghosh is presently in French India [Pondicherry] and Mr Tilak is in prison. Nevertheless, Mr Tilak's journals have continued their attacks against Mrs Besant; and in Madras, even *The Hindu* [the chief newspaper in South India] has collaborated in this as much as it has been able.[20]

18. *Le Procès de Madras*, pp46–47.

19. In a letter dated September 15, 1913, Mrs Besant had to acknowledge that the 'extremist' party had never encouraged any assassination, and that Mrs Tingley [who followed Judge], whom she had accused of supplying money to her adversaries, 'had never meddled in the politics of India.'

20. Ibid., pp7–8.

And here is the conclusion of this same account:

> Whatever the outcome of this trial, there is no doubt that if the plot against Mrs Besant succeeds in destroying her influence in India, one of the principal factors in the accord between England and India will have disappeared.[21]

Basically is it not precisely the British government that is to blame for making use of such auxiliaries, whom it is always possible to disavow should they become embarrassing or do something stupid? During the Madras trial, on May 7, 1913, the *Times* expressed the wish 'that the government refrain from giving its approval or even any semblance thereof to the Theosophical movement,' which statement was understood by anyone informed as meaning that the movement had in fact had the government's approval and favor up to that point. For the rest, in a response to this editorial carried on May 9, Mr Wedgwood took pains to recall that it has been

> acknowledged by high officials in India that the influence of the Theosophical Society and the personal work of Mrs Besant in India have been most efficacious in inspiring Hindu youth with sentiments of fidelity toward the English government.[22]

21. Ibid., p13.

22. Another proof of Mrs Besant's political role is her hostile attitude concerning Gandhi's anti-English movement; as we saw above, she declared support for this movement incompatible with membership in the E.S., or 'Esoteric Section' (see p192, n26); and this is what she herself wrote on this subject:

> When the first sign of the revolutionary spirit appeared in the minor attempt at civil disobedience [*sic*] which Gandhi led in 1919, I rose up against this spirit, seeing in it the destroyer of true liberty, the enemy of political progress, of the ideal for which I had struggled in India for twenty-six years (*The Theosophist*, March 1922; translation published in the *Bulletin Théosophique*, April 1922).

In other words, there can be 'political progress' and 'true liberty' for India only under British domination. Is this not to push cynicism a little too far? At the time of Ramsay MacDonald, Mrs Besant developed a draft constitution for India and delivered it to the government; this draft, which originated in the same spirit as the institution of the 'National Hindu Congress' (see p284), appears to have come to nothing, at least till now. However, this fact conceals a quite specific meaning when one knows that true Hindus clearly count Ramsay MacDonald among the 'brutal and crude enemies of India' (see p278).

These are political means which, however repugnant they may seem to some, are nevertheless used more or less routinely. Thus some years ago several occult organizations were introduced into Bohemia for the purpose of recruiting Czech patriots particularly suspect in the eyes of the Vienna government; one of the directors of these organizations was, quite plainly, the director of the Austrian secret police. The contemporary history of occultism in Russia would also furnish many more or less similar examples. The blameworthy ones in such cases are those who agree to assume this not always honorable role which, moreover, is not always exempt from danger. We heard Mrs Besant complain that her life was threatened; and if in fact there never was a real attempt on her life, it is no less true that in spite of all the precautions with which she surrounded herself, she was pelted with stones during her travels through India. In 1916 an effort was made to rehabilitate her in the eyes of Hindus, and to provide these latter with some element of confidence, by her sham internment in her own villa of Gulistan, which, however, did not hinder her holding meetings. But this rather crude ruse fooled no one, and it was only in Europe that some believed this measure to be motivated by a real change in her political attitude. It can now be understood why some Hindus readily associate her name with that of Rudyard Kipling,[23] who is certainly a great writer (and Mrs Besant is not entirely lacking in talent) but whose diverse adventures reflect little honor on his character and keep him from returning to his country of birth. And there is this aggravating circumstance: both are of Irish origin. And as we speak of Rudyard Kipling, let us note that he wrote a novel entitled *Kim* which, but for some few details, can be considered a real autobiography, particularly the rigorously historical account of the rivalry of the Russians and English in the northern regions of

23. Regarding Rudyard Kipling, it is to be noted that in 1923 he published a book entitled *Land and Sea Tales for Scouts and Guides* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923]. This fact shows again the bonds uniting 'Scouting' with British imperialism (see p213, n9). — *L'Avenir Imminent* is the collection of lectures given by Mrs Besant in London in June and July 1911 (*Vers l'Initiation* is the collection of lectures from 1912). The last chapter is dedicated particularly to the question of the relationship between England and India.

India. Among other things, curious details are given there on the organization of political espionage and on the use by the English of a secret society called *Sat Bhai* ('The Seven Brothers'). This society really exists and was introduced into England by officers of the Indian Army in 1875, the very year in which the Theosophical Society was founded.

It goes without saying that if for us the duplicity of the heads of the Theosophical movement is not in doubt, the good faith of most of those who follow them, especially those who are not English nationals, is not in question; in all circles of this kind one must distinguish between the charlatans and their dupes; and though one has only contempt for the former, one must pity the latter (who form the great mass) and try to enlighten them if there is still time and if their blindness is not irremediable. While still on this topic we will cite a further and quite remarkable passage, taken from a work treating the famous 'lives of Alcyone':

> When a family does not follow the natural law, grouping itself around the father and mother, disorder results. It is the same for the nations of the world; there must be a *father-nation* and a *mother-nation* living in perfect harmony, or war results. The nation of today that in this world will direct, that will fulfill a role similar to that of *Manu*, that is, of the father, will probably be England. On the maternal side, or that of the *Bodhisattva*, we have India. It is in this way that *Manu* and the *Bodhisattva* will very soon apply themselves to reinstating order in the world in matters pertaining to the affairs of nations.[24]

Translated into plain language, here is the meaning of the above passage: While India, under English domination, must be content with a 'spiritual' role consisting in furnishing, in the person of Krishnamurti, a 'support' for the manifestation of the 'Great Instructor', England is called upon to dictate its laws to the entire world (the essential role of *Manu* is in fact that of legislator). This will be the realization of the 'United States of the World', but under

24. *De l'an 25000 avant Jesus-Christ à nos jours*, by G. Ravel, p60. See *L'Ère d'un nouveau Cycle* and *l'Avenir Imminent*, by Mrs Besant.

the aegis of the 'directing nation' and for its exclusive benefit. Thus the internationalism of the Theosophical chiefs is really and primarily British imperialism in its most extreme degree, which, after all, is understandable up to a point. But what is to be thought of the inconceivable naiveté of Theosophists in France who with servile earnestness docilely accept and pass on such 'teachings'?

This conception of the relationship between England and India is not entirely new, and Mrs Besant does not even have the merit of inventing it. In fact, in *The Perfect Way* of Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, we read the following:

> Since of the spiritual union in the one faith of Buddha and Christ, will be born the world's coming redemption, the relations between the two peoples through whom, on the physical plane, this union must be effected, become a subject of special interest and importance. Viewed from this aspect, the connection subsisting between England and India rises from the sphere political to the sphere spiritual.[25]

We have already noted these authors' notion of Buddhism and Christianity as two complementary elements of a single religion; only they have forgotten that Buddhism has long since ceased to exist in India. But a little further on we read:

> In this forecast of the now imminent future[26] is to be found the clue to the world's spiritual politics. Transferred from the mystical to the mundane plane, the 'kings of the East' [an allusion to the Magi-Kings of the Gospel] are they who hold political sovereignty over the provinces of Hindustan. On the personal plane the title implies those who possess the 'magical' knowledge, or keys of the kingdom of the Spirit, to have which is to be Magian. In both these senses the title henceforth belongs to us. Of one of the chief depositaries of this magical knowledge—the Bible—our country has long been the foremost guardian and champion.[27] For three centuries and a half—a period suggestive of the mystic

25. *The Perfect Way*, p250.
26. Mrs Besant has even taken this as the title of one of her works.

'time, times, and half a time,'[28] and also of the 'year of years'[29] of the solar hero Enoch—has Britain lovingly and faithfully, albeit unintelligently, cherished the Letter which now, by the finding of the interpretation,[30] is—like its prototype [an allusion to the Ascension of Christ]—'translated' to the plane of the Spirit. Possessing thus the Gnosis, in substance as well as in form, our country will be fitted for the loftier, because spiritual, sovereignty to which she is destined, and one which will outlast her material empire.... All, therefore, that tends to bind England to the Orient is of Christ, and all that tends to sever them is of Antichrist.[31]

This story, especially the last citation, brings to mind a singular coincidence: Éliphas Lévi (died 1875) announced that in 1879 a new political and religious 'Universal Kingdom' would be established and that this Kingdom would belong to 'him who would have the keys of the East,' and that these keys would be possessed 'by the nation having the most intelligent activity'. This, then, occurred at the very time Mme Blavatsky established the seat of her Society in India. This prediction was contained in a manuscript in the possession of an occultist of Marseille, a student of Éliphas Lévi, Baron

27. There is an allusion here to the title *Defensor Fidei* used by the Kings of England since Henry VIII; this allusion is the more apt in that three and a half centuries have elapsed since the Anglican schism.

28. Dan. 7:25.

29. That is to say three hundred sixty-five years, or rather, according to Hebrew chronology, three hundred fifty-five lunar years (of three hundred fifty-five days), which make only about three hundred forty-five solar years. Now from 1534, the date of the schism of Henry VIII, to 1879, the date indicated in the prediction of Éliphas Lévi of which we have spoken, there are in fact exactly three hundred forty-five years. The concordance is too remarkable not to lead one to think that the date 1879 was calculated on the basis of what we have just indicated. — It is said in *Genesis* that Enoch lived 365 years, and this is why he is described as a 'solar hero'; but in Hebrew the word *shanah*, 'year', and the number 355, are written in the same way, which allows a double interpretation for the expression 'year of years'. It is the substitution of the Hebraic 'lunar' chronology for the 'solar' chronology that makes possible the calculation we have given.

30. Thanks to the 'intuitive' revelations of Anna Kingsford.

31. *The Perfect Way*, p253.

Spedalieri; the Baron gave it to Edward Maitland, so that it cannot be doubted that the source of inspiration for the lines we have just quoted must be sought in this manuscript.[32] Further, a very eulogistic letter from Spedalieri, speaking of nothing less than 'miracles of interpretation', was inserted in the preface of the second edition of *The Perfect Way*; without naming the author of the letter, he was designated as 'the friend, disciple, and literary heir of the celebrated magus, the late Abbé Constant [Éliphas Lévi], which for all initiates will be sufficient indication of his personality.' Later, Maitland gave the Éliphas Lévi manuscript to Dr Wynn Westcott, *Supreme Magus* of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia,* and the latter finally published it in 1896 under the title *The Magical Ritual of the Sanctum Regnum*. Naturally, the English, who as readily as the Germans claim to be the 'superior race', were tempted to apply the prediction to their nation since they were masters of India (if Éliphas Lévi, although French, had not himself already thought of it), and we have seen that they have not been remiss in doing so. But the material keys of the East were insufficient; the intellectual and spiritual keys were also necessary; and if they have counted on the Theosophical Society to gain possession of them, it must be acknowledged that they have been singularly deceived—just as if, in order to understand the true spirit of the Bible and the Gospel they had counted on the new 'esoteric Christianity', whether that of Anna Kingsford or of Mrs Besant.

Of course, in mentioning the prediction of Éliphas Lévi, we do

32. Baron Spedalieri published extracts of letters sent him by Eliphas Lévi in the *Theosophist*, from 1881 to 1884. In 1884 he sent Eliphas Lévi's manuscripts, in the presence of Captain Courmes, to Edward Maitland, who had come to Marseilles with Anna Kingsford to receive Mme Blavatsky on her return from Adyar (P. Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, p290). The first edition of the *The Perfect Way* appeared in 1882, but since Maitland was then already in correspondence with Spedalieri it is likely that the latter announced the prediction of his master, who had charged him with publishing the manuscripts he had donated to him twenty years after his death. The manuscript published by Dr Wynn Westcott under the title *The Magical Ritual of the Sanctum Regnum* was inserted in a copy of Trithemius' treatise *De Septem Secundeis*. Its original title was: *La Clavicule prophétique des Sept Esprits par J. Trithème, maître de Cornélius Agrippa, avec le Rituel Magique des Clavicules de Salomon.*

not wish to say that any extraordinary importance should be attributed to it, but only that some Englishmen who knew of it have in fact taken it seriously and have even tried to further its realization. For the rest, to judge this prediction at its just value it is necessary to know its real inspiration, and what is certain is that its author had ties to circles in Britain wherein occultism and diplomacy were linked.[33] On the other hand, as we have seen above, the Theosophists claim that the last quarter of each century is particularly favorable to certain occult manifestations—which they naturally attribute to the action of their 'Great White Lodge'. Whatever the case regarding this assertion, which is unacceptable for us in the form in which presented, it is no less true that 1875 and the following years in fact marked the point of departure for numerous quite enigmatic activities. In addition to those we have already mentioned, beginning with the Theosophical Society itself,[34] we may call attention to an Order called 'Brothers of Light' (*Fratres Lucis*),[35] founded by an English Israelite named Maurice Vidal Portman, an orientalist and politician who in 1876 was in the entourage of Lord

33. What makes us also think that Éliphas Lévi indeed had England in mind is the calculation we indicated in a previous note.

34. Let us also recall in this connection that according to the Duchess of Pomar the year 1882, the same year in which *The Perfect Way* appeared, was to be the beginning of a new era; and, singular coincidence, an identical affirmation is found in the teachings of the 'H B of L'.

35. This Order, whose center is presently at Bradford, Yorkshire, must not be confused—despite the similarity of names—with the F.T.L. *(Fraternitas Thesauri Lucis)* or 'Fraternity of the Treasure of Light', a Rosicrucian organization, or allegedly such, apparently of American origin. There are two further 'Brotherhoods of Light', both American; one, the *Brotherhood of Light* (without modifier), has its center in Los Angeles, California; the other, the *Hermetic Brotherhood of Light*, has already been mentioned in connection with the *Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*, and it seems that the former name is intended to provoke confusion with the latter. An 'Order of Light', also American, should also be added, the existence of which we noted in the chapter 'The Parliament of Religions'.

36. Here we should rectify a confusion of personages, which however changes nothing in our remarks on the links between occultism and politics. Lord Lytton, who was Viceroy of India, is the same man who was also ambassador to Paris. It was not he who wrote *Zanoni* but his son, the occultist writer Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (whose brother was ambassador to Turkey). Bulwer-Lytton was born in London on May 25, 1803 and died in Torquay on January 18, 1875. He published *Zanoni* in 1842, and in 1854 made the acquaintance of Eliphas Lévi in London. The latter went to see him again with Count Alexandre Branicki in 1861, the same year that Bulwer-Lytton was named 'Great Patron' of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, and according to A.E. Waite (*The Mystery of Magic*, p8), together they made an invocation at the top of the Pantheon in London. The following December, Kenneth McKenzie, 'scientific deputy' of the *Societas Rosicruciana*, was sent to Paris to meet with Eliphas Lévi (*The Rosicrucian and the Red Cross*, May 1873); *The Occult Review*, December 1921). Since *L'Estrange Histoire* [see *Strange Story and the Haunted and Haunters* (London: Routledge & Sons, n.d.)] appeared in 1862 in the *Revue Britannique*, it is supposed that the relations established between Bulwer-Lytton and Eliphas Lévi perhaps counted for something in the inspiration of this work (*Le Voile d'Isis*, February 1923; P. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp149, 194–198 and 201–203.

Lytton, then Viceroy of India.[36] It was declared at the time, as is usual in nearly all such cases, that this was only the reconstitution of an old Order of the same name founded in Florence in 1498. And in certain Theosophist circles (which is further proof that all these things stand together and follow one another), it is stated that

> Swedenborg and Pasqualis,[37] Saint-Martin, Cazotte, and later Éliphas Lévi, had been affiliated with the Order of *Fratres Lucis*, while Saint-Germain, Mesmer, Cagliostro, and perhaps Ragon[38] belonged to an *Egyptian* branch of the same brotherhood.

And it was added with some acrimony that the last-named branch 'had nothing in common, of course, with a certain H B of Luxor, a quite recent Anglo-American invention.'[39] As it was assured that the Count of Saint-Germain and Mme Blavatsky were envoys of the same center[40] and as Mme Blavatsky had in fact sojourned in Egypt,

37. It is Martinès de Pasqually, founder of the rite of the 'Elect Coëns' who is in question. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin was his disciple before becoming acquainted with the works of Boehme and Gichtel.

38. The reason for this last supposition is doubtless that Ragon translated into French and published (in 1821) a manuscript of a German Mason named Köppen, dated 1770 and entitled *Crata Repoa*, which contained an alleged ritual of 'Initiation into the ancient Mysteries of the Priests of Egypt.'

39. 'Les Cycles', by E.-J. Coulomb, in *Lotus Bleu*, November 27, 1893, p258. If what we have been told of the personality of Metamon is exact, the denial relative to the 'H B of L' is really amusing.

40. *Lotus Bleu*, September 27, 1895.

undoubtedly it was desired to convey the impression that she, too, had been attached to the *Fratres Lucis,* and that these *fratres* (who naturally must have as their antithesis those whom they call 'Brothers of the Shadow') were a direct emanation of the 'Great White Lodge'. This is certainly a fanciful way of composing history; but to return to more serious things, we will point out that Lord Lytton, whose name we encounter in connection with the *Fratres Lucis,* is the celebrated author of *Zanoni, The Strange History,* and *The Future Race* (whence the Theosophists have drawn some inspirations, notably the idea of a mysterious force called *vril*). Lord Lytton was 'Great Patron', (that is, honorary president) of the *Societas Rosicruciana,* and his son was English ambassador to Paris. Doubtless it is not merely by chance that the name Lytton is found mixed up at every turn with the history of occultism. It was precisely for someone belonging to the same family that, in London, Éliphas Lévi performed an evocation of Apollonius of Tyana, which exercise he described in his *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie,* the aim of which seems to have been to attain knowledge of an important social secret. All these allusions can offer great interest to those who might wish to study the underside of politics, of religious politics, of contemporary occultism, and of organizations directly or indirectly attached thereto. This underside is certainly of more interest than all the weird paraphernalia with which these things are surrounded, the better to dissimulate them in the eyes of the 'profane'.

30

CONCLUSION

IN THIS STUDY we have wished above all to provide a source of information and to gather for this purpose documentation whose elements up to now have been scattered everywhere; some of it has even been quite difficult of access for all who have not been favored in their research by rather exceptional circumstances. As to the doctrines themselves, if we have not thought it useful to dwell on them longer than we have in fact done because of their only too evident inconsistency, and if here too we have above all given citations, this is because we think, in agreement with another adversary of theirs, that 'the surest method of refuting [these doctrines] is to state them briefly by letting the masters themselves speak';[1] and we will add that the best way to fight Theosophy is, in our opinion, to display its history for what it is. We can then therefore leave to the reader the task of drawing all the conclusions that it is only too easy to draw, for we have certainly said enough about this for anyone who has the patience to follow us to the end should be in a position to bring to Theosophy definitive judgment. To all who are unprejudiced, Theosophy will probably appear more like a bad joke than something serious; but unfortunately this bad joke, far from being inoffensive, has taken many victims and continues to take more and more (according to Mrs Besant, the Theosophical Society properly so called, not to speak of its numerous auxiliary organizations, included twenty thousand active members in 1913),[2] and this is the

1. *La Nouvelle Théosophie,* by the Rev. de Grandmaison, p54.

2. *The Madras Trial,* p41. At this time there existed 'National Theosophical Societies' in the following countries: England, Scotland, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, Russia, Finland, the United States, Central America, India, Australia,

principal reason we decided to undertake this work. It must also be said that the history of the Theosophical Society is not without interest in itself, for it is quite instructive in various respects; it even raises many little known questions that we have only been able to note in passing because to treat them a bit more deeply it would have been necessary to enter into considerations far exceeding the extent and import of the particular subject being treated.

Our account does not claim to be absolutely complete on every point; but such as it is, it is largely sufficient for men of good will to be fully informed, and for the Theosophists themselves to see that we are very well informed about most of the particulars of their history; and we can also assure them that we know as well as they do, and much better than many of them, the bases of their own theories. They can therefore dispense with digging up again the reproach of 'ignorance' which they habitually direct toward their adversaries, for it is generally to 'ignorance' that they attribute attacks against their Society, and in truth we have sometimes noted with regret that some have opened themselves to this reproach, either from the historical point of view or as regards their theories. In this connection we must say a few words regarding a recent brochure entitled *L'Eglise et la Théosophie* which reproduces a lecture given by a Theosophist in response to certain attacks,[3] and in which is mentioned without

New Zealand, and South Africa. Spain and South America had less important groups directed by 'Presidential Agents'. It seems moreover that the number of Theosophists has also grown considerably since the War [i.e., World War I ED.); it is even claimed that today it has reached fifty thousand and, at the recent Congress of Paris, thirty-three nations were represented.

The Theosophical Society now consists of thirty-six sections called 'National Theosophical Societies'. Here is the list as given in the *Bulletin Théosophique*: America, England, India, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, Holland, France, Italy, Germany, Cuba, Hungary, Finland, Russia, Czechoslovakia, South Africa, Scotland, Switzerland, Belgium, Dutch Indies, Burma, Austria, Norway, Egypt, Denmark, Ireland, Mexico, Canada, Chile, Argentine, Brazil, Bulgaria, Iceland, Spain, Portugal, and Wales.

3. Lecture given March 6, 1921 at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society by Georges Chevrier. At the time the author was head of the 'esoteric section' of Paris, which lends some importance to his declarations. In October 1922, Chevrier gave up the running of the Parisian 'esoteric section'. He was replaced by Aimée Blech, sister of the Secretary-General of the French Theosophical Society.

comment a study bearing the same title as the present volume but much less developed, that we published in the *Revue de Philosophie*,[4] and that was then only at the beginning of its preparation.[5]

The adversary whom the author of the brochure had particularly in mind was reproached bitterly among other things for having expounded the doctrines of reincarnation and 'karma' without once mentioning the word 'evolution'; we think this complaint is well justified, but it certainly cannot be levied against us, for far from committing such a lapse of memory we have on the contrary presented the idea of evolution as constituting the very core of the entire Theosophical doctrine. This idea ought to be attacked before

4. January–February, March–April, May–June, and July–August 1921. — *La Revue de Philosophie* must not be confused with *Revue Philosophique*, a university journal. If we call attention to this point, it is because this confusion was made recently by a Theosophist, who as a result even believed he could see a kind of incompatibility between the publication of our study by this review and our lack of respect for 'official science'. If he had been better informed he would have known that there is nothing contradictory here, *La Revue de Philosophie* not having any ties with the circles where the aforesaid 'official science' is in favor.

5. Since the insinuations we have disclosed regarding Chevrier's lecture on *L'Eglise et la Théosophie* have been reproduced on several occasions since then, and most recently have even been repeated more explicitly, we are once again anxious to assert our complete independence, and also to point out more fully our true reasons for writing this work. The first reason, whose merit should be the most immediate to everyone, is the one we expressly stated: seeing in Theosophy a most dangerous error for the contemporary mentality, we considered it fitting to denounce the error at the moment when, following the disequilibrium caused by the war, it began to spread as it had never done before — which is something we also said a little later regarding spiritism. But there was also a second reason of particular importance to us which rendered this task even more urgent: since in other works we were proposing to give an account of authentic Hindu doctrines, we thought it necessary first to show that these doctrines have nothing in common with Theosophy, whose claims in this respect are, as we have remarked, too often admitted by its adversaries themselves. To dispel the confusion we knew to be current in the Western world it was essential to repudiate as clearly as possible any connection with this fraudulent counterfeit that is Theosophy. We will even add that the idea of this book had been suggested to us long before by some Hindus, who even provided a part of our documentation. Thus, in spite of everything claimed by the Theosophists, who naturally have the greatest interest in allaying suspicion as to the true origin of an 'offensive' such as ours, neither the Church nor the 'Jesuits' nor any other Western organization have played a part.

anything else, for if its inanity is demonstrated all the rest will crumble of itself; this is a much more effective refutation than that which consists in developing sentimental arguments against 'karma' and reincarnation that are worth just as much as the arguments Theosophists themselves offer in favor of the same theories. Naturally we cannot undertake a detailed critique of evolution here; but we wanted to establish that this critique, which can be easily made, is particularly valid against Theosophy because at root it is only one of the many forms which evolution has put on, the starting-point for almost all specifically modern errors, whose prestige in our time is due to no more than a monstrous mass of prejudice.

Another reproach we encounter in the same brochure is that of 'a confusion as to the nature of the methods of knowledge to which Theosophical documentation is attributed.' Without going to the root of the question and without seeking to know whether this confusion is as grave as claimed, we offer this simple remark: the adversary in question was wrong first of all in attributing 'a theory of knowledge' to Theosophy, for in reality this does not correspond to their point of view, so that the resulting confusion he caused, it seems to us, is above all between the point of view proper to Theosophy and that of philosophy, or more precisely modern philosophy; and certainly the Theosophists have enough follies to their credit that they do not need in addition to be hit with those of others! Here we think that there is another observation to make: some will probably be astonished that in all of our narrative we have not mentioned the word 'pantheism', and yet it is intentionally that we have refrained from doing so. We are well aware that Theosophists, or at least some of them, readily declare themselves 'pantheists'; but this term is equivocal and has been applied to so many different doctrines that one sometimes ends by not knowing precisely what is meant when it is used, and it requires many precautions to give it back a precise meaning and to avoid all confusion. Further, there are people for whom the mere word 'pantheism' seems to take the place of any serious refutation; once they have rightly or wrongly given this name to some doctrine, they believe they are dispensed from any further examination; these are methods of argument that can never be ours.

There is, still in the same reply, a third point that we can only note with great satisfaction, for it is a true admission that in a rather unexpected way corroborates our own manner of seeing things; it is in fact a protest against 'an abusive identification of Theosophy with Brahmanism and Hinduism.' The Theosophists have not always spoken this way—far from it—and they hardly have a right to complain, for they were the first to be responsible for this 'abusive identification', much more abusive originally than they proclaim today. If they have come to this point it is because this identification, instead of being to their advantage as it may have been at the beginning, has now become very embarrassing for their 'esoteric Christianity', whence a new contradiction to add to all the others. Without presuming to counsel anyone, we think that all adversaries of the Theosophists ought to take careful note of this in order to avoid committing certain faults in future; instead of using their criticism of Theosophy as a pretext for insulting Hindus, as we have heard, by odiously caricaturizing their doctrines of which they know nothing, they ought on the contrary to regard them as their natural allies in this struggle, for they are so in fact and cannot not be so. Beyond the more particular reasons that Hindus have for profoundly detesting Theosophy, it is no more acceptable to them than it is to Christians (we ought rather to say Catholics, since Protestantism accommodates itself to everything), or, in a general way, than it is to all who adhere to a truly traditional doctrine.

Finally, there is a passage that we are obliged to cite, so much the more in that it in part concerns ourselves. After affirming that Theosophy 'does not fight against any religion' (we have shown what ought to be thought of that), the lecturer continues in these words:

> That is all very well, we will be told, but it is no less true that you most definitely attack religion by the very fact that you profess ideas contrary to the truths they proclaim. But why not address this reproach to official science, especially to biologists at the Faculty of Sciences who profess theories wherein materialism finds a total and definitive argument in favor of its thesis. . . ? Do you grant Science rights you refuse to Theosophy because in your mind Theosophy may above all be a religion, or rather a

pseudo-religion, as said by the author whose study is being serialized in the *Revue de Philosophie?* That is an opinion we cannot accept, and although we seek truth by methods other than those of modern Science, we have the right to claim the same privilege accorded to it, that of saying what we believe to be the truth.[6]

We do not know what others may wish to respond to this, but for ourselves, our response will be most simple: we do not profess the least respect for 'modern' and 'official' Science, its methods and its theories; we have demonstrated this already elsewhere, and what we just said regarding evolutionism is yet another proof. We therefore do not recognize for science or for philosophy any greater right than for Theosophy. And given the occasion, we are just as prepared to denounce, should there be occasion, the false opinions of 'official' scholars, in whom we must nevertheless generally recognize the merit of a certain frankness too often lacking among Theosophists. For those among the latter who are truly sincere we hope for nothing more than to enlighten the greatest number possible, for we know that many have entered the Theosophical Society from mere curiosity or idle fantasy, ignorant of its history and of nearly all its teachings, and these perhaps have not all undergone the mental deformation which, in the long run, inevitably results from frequenting such a milieu.

We will add only a few further words: if we are not among those who love to speak 'in the name of Science' and who place 'reason' above all else, neither do we claim to speak 'in the name of the Church', and moreover we have no qualification to do this. If some Theosophists have imagined something of this kind (and the lecture *L'Eglise et la Théosophie* would seem to indicate it), let them be undeceived. Besides, we do not believe that even their ecclesiastical contradictors have ever done this, nor that they have spoken or written other than in their own name. The Church, so far as we know, has intervened only once to condemn Theosophy and to formally declare that 'its doctrines cannot be reconciled with the Catholic

6. *L'Eglise et la Théosophie,* p8.

faith.'[7] In any case, for our part, the attitude we have taken in regard to what we *know* to be error, and a dangerous error for the contemporary mentality, has been adopted in full independence. We are not associated with any organized campaign and we do not even wish to know whether one exists, which we rather doubt. If Theosophists want to know the reasons for our attitude, we can assure them that there is no other reason than this: that, translating and applying better than they do the Hindu device which they have audaciously appropriated, we consider that 'there are no rights superior to those of the Truth'.

7. Decision of the Congregation of the Holy Office, July 19, 1919: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis,* August 1, 1919, p317. This decision has been commented upon by the Rev. Giovanni Busnelli in an article entitled 'Théosophie et Théologie', published in the *Gregorianum,* January 1920, of which a French translation appeared in *Documentation Catholique,* September 10–17, 1921.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

Eugen Lennhoff, *Histoire des Sociétés politiques secrètes au XIX^e^ et au XX^e^ siècle* (Paris: Payot, 1934). This work provides an excellent 'illustration' of what we have explained elsewhere regarding the different kinds of secret organizations, for under the heading 'political' it includes examples of the main categories we have described. The 'Decembrists' in Russia, the various Irish societies, and the 'Black-Hand' in Serbia and Bosnia were assuredly nothing more than simple associations of political conspirators, but on the other hand, as we explain in our article, one can see something else in the 'Carbonari', at least as regards their origin, although in this purely historical account it is hardly possible to realize this from a few quotations taken from the rituals. The 'Houng Society' of China is probably rather too conventional a name, under which are grouped some more or less outward and temporary organizations, which, as we have explained elsewhere, originate in the Taoist tradition, although they sometimes borrowed forms that were partially Buddhist, and even Christian, as in the case of the 'Tai-Ping'. Lastly, the 'Ku-Klux-Klan' is merely one of countless caricatures of initiatic organizations that have originated in America. However, whereas most such organizations are quite innocuous, the latter has become known in a rather sinister way through its long trail of murder and arson, notwithstanding that its founders' primary aim, as is almost always true in such cases, seems only to have been to accumulate profits. The author himself seems not to have been clearly aware of these distinctions, and one could reproach him for placing everything on the same level, but his book nonetheless represents an interesting contribution to what could be called the 'underground history' of our times.

Ludowic Réhault, *L'Instructeur du Monde, Krishnamurti* (Nice: Les Tables d'Harmonie, 1934) [*Krishnamurti: 'Man is His Own Liberator'*, tr. Ina Harper (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1939)]. This is no doubt the only book in which a Theosophist has dared in all honesty and with no attempt to conceal or 'reconcile' anything, to make known the disagreement that arose between Krishnamurti and the leaders of the Theosophical Society. It is truly a terrible indictment of the latter, whose role appears to have been one of unparalleled duplicity, and in this respect it constitutes a document worthy of the greatest interest. As for the author's admiration for Krishnamurti and his belief that he is truly the 'World Teacher' (without moreover indicating exactly what he means by this), this is naturally quite another matter, about which we must express the most formal reservations. Krishnamurti was certainly right to discard the yoke that was being imposed on him, and we readily acknowledge that his doing so demanded a certain courage and force of character to which one must pay tribute; but this is not enough to prove that he had an extraordinary 'mission', albeit different from that his instructors intended. That he detested 'societies' and 'ceremonies' is also good; but between this and setting himself up as an enemy of all religion and even renouncing all initiation, there is an abyss. He does have an excuse, however, in that of religion he knew only such sorry counterfeits as the Liberal Catholic Church, Co-Masonry, and the Theosophical Esoteric School; but then, if he was really what one says, he would know that what is rightly called religion and initiation is something entirely different. Indeed, he seems to have no notion of what constitutes the essence of all tradition... And what kind of 'instructor' is it who on his own admission, and on that of his followers, teaches nothing and has nothing to teach? He even expressly denies having a doctrine; but why, then, does he speak? In short, everything is confined to a few quite vague formulas, and this very vagueness is dangerous because one can see in it anything one likes; but those not fooled by words will find no satisfaction in it. Let us point out a curious fact in this regard: a search is made through the Buddhist *Sutras*, the Gospel, and St Paul's epistles, for everything that appears to be in harmony with Krishnamurti's declarations, but, should something be found which obviously contradicts them, one hastens to assert that these are 'interpolations'. Such a method, worthy of modernist exegetes, is really just a little too convenient! Finally, let us put it bluntly: if Krishnamurti

was really 'liberated', that is, if he were a *jivan-mukta* in the true sense of the word (even without having to play the role of *jagad-guru*) as well, he would not identify himself with 'Life' (even with a capital 'L'), but would be beyond it, just as he would be beyond any other condition that limits contingent existence. This kind of 'vital' immanentism which goes so well with the characteristic tendencies of the modern world (would it be possible to explain Krishnamurti's success otherwise?), is here truly the fruit by which one can judge the tree... And when Krishnamurti speaks of 'those who will become the Flame,' who would dare say what this strange expression might evoke?

L. De Païni, *Le Mysticisme intégral* (Paris: 'Les Argonautes' Editions). This short volume could be regarded as an 'illustration' of what we have said concerning the confusion of the psychic and the spiritual. The following definition alone is sufficient to demonstrate this clearly: 'Mysticism in itself is an experiential science of the unconscious, which is a complete penetration of the mystery of the obscure psychic forces of the organism.' The author shows much respect for current psychology because 'the unconscious again takes up its great primordial role; in the human economy, our fragile consciousness rests upon its fathomless, living, eternally moving darkness...' All this is naturally accompanied by a certain 'evolutionism' particularly explicit in 'cosmogonical' views that are somewhat far-fetched. On the other hand, there is a strange exaggeration of the role of the body. No doubt the latter really does represent a state of our being and thereby stands in a more or less close relation to the other modalities of our being, but this does not mean it is 'a structure made out of pure psyche,' and still less 'a spiritual construction.' Here again, in the absence of any notion of the hierarchy of states, we are in the midst of confusion. And there is another confusion regarding mysticism itself: the author does not find what she calls 'integral mysticism' in Western mysticism (which latter is nevertheless the only one that can strictly be called by this name), but rather finds it in what she believes to be 'Asian mysticism', which in reality is something entirely different. In addition, according to her conception of it, this 'integral mysticism' only exists fully in Tibet. Why in Tibet rather than in the other countries of the East, if not because, rightly or wrongly, Tibet has a reputation for being particularly fertile in unusual 'phenomena'? The Tibetan tradition, which is initiatic and not mystical, is seen here only

in its psychic, or even psycho-physiological, aspect, which is to say that the means are taken for the end. All of this would be merely 'a living dislocation of the being' ending in an 'immersion in the great psychic ocean with its unfathomable and fearsome depths...' Fearsome in truth, for it is indeed a matter of the possibilities of the being, but of the inferior possibilities that initiation must on the contrary enable it finally to overcome. A book such as this leaves a truly painful impression. What it proposes for man is in fact a 'step backward', which, far from leading him 'toward the pure spirit', can only lead him to a 'cosmic communion' with 'infra-human powers', because it is the latter, and not 'spiritual' forces, that rule in the 'vast ocean of the deep racial psychism'—deep indeed, but in the 'abysmal' and 'infernal' sense of the word!

Henry de Geymuller, *Swedenborg et les phénomènes psychiques* (Paris: Ernest Leroux). The content of this thick book could easily have furnished material for several volumes, and the frequent digressions make the account rather difficult to follow; also, some underlying link is missing, or at least, if there is one, it does not appear clearly... As for Swedenborg's ideas themselves, especially on the relationship between mind and body and what he calls 'limbo', they have in any case a certain historical interest. But the arguments against spiritism which the author claims to draw from them are rather weak, and it could hardly be otherwise if the spiritists are granted their basic postulate, that is, the possibility of a real communication with the dead. That it would be far better to abstain from such practices is but a matter of minor importance next to this. The discussion of reincarnation also focuses merely upon 'side-issues'; besides, as we have often said before, the only decisive factor is the demonstration of its metaphysical impossibility. For the rest, this is not the place to discuss the way in which Swedenborg envisages the 'spiritual world'. Now it may be that his language sometimes fails his thoughts, but it is curious that he agrees with the spiritists in claiming to find in the spiritual world only beings of human origin, including the angels themselves—a strange limitation of universal Possibility!

Dr Alexander Cannon, *L'Influence invisible*, tr. from the English by Grace Gassette and Georges Barbarin (Bazainville, Seine-et-Oise: Editions du Prieuré) [*Invisible Influence: A Story of the Mystic Orient, with*

Great Truths Which Can Never Die (New York: E.P. Dutton, & Co., 1934)]. This book is presented as a 'revelation of Tibetan secrets.' The author appends to his name several lines of academic and medical titles, followed by 'Yogi Kushog of Southern Tibet and Fifth Master of the Great White Lodge of the Himalayas.' In addition, we learn further from this volume that he has received from the 'Great Lama Nunnery' [*sic*] the highest of titles, that of Knight Commander of Asia, which is equivalent to Count in the United Kingdom'! All this is certainly very impressive, even a little too much so to inspire confidence. In fact, when we examine the contents of the book by this 'Master', alas, we find only hypnotism, telepathy, and more or less ordinary psychic phenomena, the whole expounded in a very Western fashion; in all of this, not the least 'secret'—Tibetan or otherwise—and of course not one word of doctrine... We may add that this poorly composed book is hardly anything more than a mass of anecdotes with no other link than of a series of so-called conversations that took place during the course of a journey—and we are not even always sure which of the interlocutors is speaking. There are also blatant improbabilities: for example, what are we to make of a person who has 'read a work by Pythagoras,' or again, of a 'Wise Man' who lets himself be hypnotized by a snake? Some of the stories described as the author's personal recollections give us the unfortunate impression that we have already seen them elsewhere. Even the account of the journey that serves vaguely as a setting for all this contains many details, including that of the crippled messenger, which remind us of an English adventure novel we read in our childhood, and we regret very much that we cannot remember this reference, for it would have been intriguing to push this comparison further than our memory allows. Furthermore, the author sometimes contradicts himself. Thus, no doubt forgetting that he had set the scene in a cave, as his 'experiments' require, he then situates a mantelpiece thereon, adorned with a clock! Lastly, a reference to 'dear old England' found again 'after such long months spent in the wilderness of Tibet' seems to betray the real mentality of this so-called Eastern initiate... For some years now we have seen a whole series of hoaxes whose common feature is that they are all invariably placed under the auspices of the all too famous 'Great White Lodge' devised by Theosophists, and there is no doubt that we must now add yet another. Exactly what intentions are hidden behind all of this? Unfortunately, too many people are duped by such things, which is why we felt it appropriate to dwell on them more than they would otherwise deserve. They may be of little interest, but their danger in times such as ours is only too real.

Rudolf Steiner, *L'Evangile de saint Jean* (Paris: Association de la Science Spirituelle) [*The Gospel of Saint John* (New York: The Anthroposophic Press, 1962)]. This volume contains the French translation of a cycle of twelve lectures given in Hamburg in 1908. The author begins by rightly criticizing the methods of modern exegesis and the consequent results. However, in order to reconcile the Gospel of Saint John (of which the real author, according to Steiner, is the risen Lazarus) with his 'anthroposophical' conceptions, he himself treats it in a manner that is, to say the least, highly fanciful. In fact he even seems to use it above all as a pretext to develop ideas which to a great extent, especially regarding human 'evolution', recall Mme Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* much more than they do a Rosicrucian tradition. Moreover, what he calls 'spiritual science' can only be so described as a result of one of the confusions we have noted elsewhere, because for him, 'spiritual' is quite simply a near synonym to 'invisible'; and his conception of initiation is naturally strongly influenced by this. In this connection, let us note a rather peculiar point: on the one hand, he claims that since the coming of Christ, who has made accessible to everyone what the ancient mysteries reserved for an elite few, initiations have lost their raison d'être; but on the other hand he describes what he calls a Christian initiation and a Rosicrucian initiation, between which he seems to make a certain distinction. It is really not so easy to see how all this can be reconciled!

Alice A. Bailey, *Les trois prochaines années* [No publication data given]. We recall having come across the content of this brochure before, published as articles in various reviews with a more or less Theosophist slant under the signature of an anonymous 'Tibetan'. Would he thus not be one and the same person as Mrs Bailey herself, or—which no doubt comes to the same thing—would he not have a purely 'astral' existence? In truth, we are not quite sure, because in other respects he also shows some resemblance to a character whose various manifestations have been brought to our notice from different quarters... Be that as it may, he is supposed to have been established by a hypothetical 'Hierarchy' in which it is not hard to

recognize the too famous 'Great White Lodge'. The latter, described curiously as a 'Company of enlightened Intellects', is supposed to have founded a 'Group of Artisans of the new Era' in order to carry out this 'plan'. The members of this group are said to be connected with one another 'subjectively, intuitively, and sometimes telepathically,' and according to what is stated their activity would be exercised in the most profane fields. One would even find politicians and businessmen among them! All this is certainly not of much interest in itself, but if we nonetheless consider it, it is to point out once more how such fanciful stories circulate these days, and, as we have often said, there is a certain danger in this. Those who inspire them (we do not say those who spread them) surely have some suspect plan; and from the 'counter-initiation' to the 'pseudo-initiation' there are perhaps more 'infiltrations' than one would be inclined to believe...

Rudolf Steiner, *Mythes et Mystères égyptiens* (Association de la Science spirituelle, Paris) [*Egyptian Myths and Mysteries* (New York: The Anthroposophic Press, 1971)]. In this series of twelve lectures given in Leipzig in 1908, the author, with a peculiar insistence, refrains from the desire to explain symbols. He wishes to see in them only the expression of what he calls 'spiritual facts', by which he means events that are supposed to have taken place during such and such period of the history of mankind in the psychic, indeed even simply the 'etheric' domain—for as we have already explained in connection with another book, his conception of 'spiritual' is more than vague... Once again we find some incredible stories such as we know only too well regarding 'races' and 'subraces'. What we always find most astonishing is the fact that one could pass off as 'Rosicrucian teachings' assertions of which most, in spite of a few changes of detail, are obviously taken straight from Mme Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*!

Rudolf Steiner, *L'Apparition des Sciences naturelles* (Paris: Association de la Science Spirituelle, 1936). This volume, like the preceding ones, is a series of lectures given in Dornach in 1922–1923 in which the 'history of ideas' is treated by the author in his own quite special manner. It is certain that the development of modern sciences is closely linked to the formation of a certain mentality very different from that of earlier times, but the real nature of the change that has thus come about during the last centuries is perhaps not exactly what is described here,

and the views concerning the method of knowledge of the ancients are a little too reminiscent of the fantasies of the 'clairvoyants' to be taken seriously.

Peter Deunov, *Le Maître parle* (Sofia: editorial staff of the review *Jitno Zerno*, n.d.). The words of this Bulgarian 'Master' are on the whole distressingly banal. If we mention them, it is because they describe a 'Noble Universal Fraternity' whose constitution is overwhelmingly like that of the famous 'Great White Lodge'. Narrations of this kind are certainly multiplying rather too much for one not to see in them a truly disturbing symptom!

Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret Egypt* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1984 [first ed., 1934]). Having earlier published *A Search in Secret India*, which we reviewed when it appeared, the author has now written a similar book on Egypt, but we must say quite frankly that this new volume is appreciably inferior to the other, and the 'journalistic' tendency we had already noticed in certain parts of the previous book is now unfortunately much more pronounced. Like almost all foreigners, he is obviously more interested in ancient Egypt than in present-day Egypt, and his contacts with the latter have not all been favorable. One wonders why he attaches such importance to 'phenomena' produced by the 'fakir' Tahra Bey, well-known for his displays in the music-halls of Europe and America, for this hardly accords with the title of the book... There is also a chapter dedicated to an unnamed 'magician' (we had no difficulty identifying him), who despite his extraordinary claims (*As-saher min janbi' Llah...*) is basically nothing but a clever charlatan. In another chapter the author speaks of a hypnotist who works with the most common Western methods; but in spite of this, he is in fact an authentic Egyptian Jew, although the author has rather amusingly mistaken him for a Frenchman, even recognizing in him 'the lively manner of speaking characteristic of his race,' following the conventional idea held by the English about the French! The part dealing with snake charmers is somewhat more interesting, even if such facts are rather routine, and he truly goes beyond the pale in wanting to derive the possible survival of a so-called 'snake cult' from them.

Moving on to his treatment of ancient Egypt, we cannot refrain from remarking that here his visions and dreams are given rather too

much importance; these were unnecessary for the idea of an antediluvian and 'Atlantean' origin of the Sphinx and the Pyramids, for example, for it seems to us that such an idea has already been put forward in many books. The author chose to pass a night alone inside the Great Pyramid, and here again he had a vision related to initiation, but it took a form a little too reminiscent of the 'astral replication' so dear to occultists, no doubt as a result of his earlier studies. We will certainly not deny that the Great Pyramid could have been a place of initiation, seeing that this hypothesis is at least more credible than certain others which the author quite sensibly criticizes (including the 'prophetic' theory, which is quite meritorious coming from an Englishman, we shall return to this in connection with another book). However, even if this were proved, we would still not have any further knowledge of the particular methods of Egyptian initiation, and allusions to ancient authors are certainly quite insufficient for us to frame even an imprecise idea of it. — At the end of the book, the author recounts his meeting with an 'Adept'(?) whose discourses on the danger of certain excavations in the ancient tombs are less than 'transcendent'. We certainly do not mean to question his sincerity, but we wonder whether he was not purely and simply duped...

Georges Barbarin, *Le Secret de la Grande Pyramide ou la Fin du Monde adamique* (Paris: J'ai lu, 1969 [first ed., 1936]). That there is a 'secret' of the Great Pyramid, whether as a place of initiation (as stated earlier), whether by its orientation and proportions (which is like a summary of certain traditional sciences), or even whether both ideas are true at the same time (for in no way are they irreconcilable), is very likely since it seems to refer to certain more or less distorted traditions of ancient origin. But what seems much more unlikely is that moderns could have discovered this 'secret'. Much has been written on this subject, especially on measurements of the Pyramid. Certain geometrical, geodesic, and astronomical recordings seem well established and are not lacking in interest, but on the whole they are rather fragmentary, besides inspiring as much fantasy as fact. Beyond this, can one really know with precision what unit of measure the ancient Egyptians used? The author of this book first gives a brief outline of all the works on this subject, treating even the most bizarre hypotheses, such as that which claims to have discovered that the inner arrangement of the Pyramid is a map of the sources of the Nile, the 'Book of the Dead'

thus being nothing other than a description and an explanation of this same arrangement. Furthermore, we cannot share his opinion when he says that the geometric and other sciences of which one finds evidence 'are only an expression of human knowledge' and nothing more, for this proves only that he is not aware of the true nature of traditional sciences and that he confuses them with secular sciences... But let us move on, for the primary object of the volume is not this, but the even more fanciful 'prophecies' allegedly discovered by measuring—in a way which is not without arbitrariness moreover—the various parts of the corridors and chambers of the Pyramid, in order to establish a correspondence between the numbers thus obtained and historical periods and dates. For quite some time now, especially in England, this theory has been surrounded by the most extraordinary propaganda, of which the intentions seem rather suspect and not entirely disinterested. Various claims regarding the descendants of 'the lost tribes of Israel' and other things of this kind, which the author passes over rather quickly, are probably not completely irrelevant in this regard... Be that as it may, all of this is so obviously absurd that we are surprised no one seems to notice it. Indeed, supposing that those who constructed the Pyramid really embedded 'prophecies' into it, two things would seem plausible: either these 'prophecies' (which were surely based on knowledge of 'cyclic laws') are related to the general history of the world and of mankind, or else they were adapted in such a way as to concern Egypt in particular. But it is neither the one nor the other apparently, since every effort is made to relate the matter exclusively first to the point of view of Judaism and then to that of Christianity, in such a way that one must logically conclude that the Pyramid is not an Egyptian, but a 'Judeo-Christian' monument! It is worth adding also that everything is conceived according to a so-called biblical 'chronology' laid out by the narrowest and—let us say it—most Protestant 'literalism'. There are many more curiosities to register. Thus, it seems that since the beginning of the Christian era no interesting date was worthy of note before... that of the establishment of the first railways. These ancient builders seem, then, to have had a truly modern perspective in their evaluation of the importance of events—and this is the grotesque element which, as we have said before, is never lacking in such matters and which betrays their true origin... But what is perhaps most disturbing in this whole affair is that the date September 15–16, 1936 is

indicated with an astonishing precision as marking the entry of mankind into a new era and the 'advent of spiritual renewal'. Yet nothing particularly striking seems to have taken place on this date, so just what is it supposed to mean? In this connection, the author recalls several more or less concordant predictions, most of them also quite dubious either in themselves or especially through the use made of them by those who wish to spread them. Too many of these exist to be a simple 'coincidence', but for our part, we draw only one conclusion, that using such means some people are at present trying to create a 'state of mind' favorable to the imminent realization of 'something' that is part of their plans. Needless to say, we are definitely not among those who wish for the success of this 'pseudo-spiritual' enterprise!

Rudolf Steiner, *L'Evangile de saint Luc* (Paris: Association de la Science Spirituelle, n.d.) [*Lectures on the Gospel of St. Luke* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1975)]. These lectures were given in 1909 in Basle before the members of the Theosophical Society from which the author had not yet severed ties, but the interpretations presented at these lectures are perhaps more fanciful still, if that is possible, than those 'officially' current among ordinary Theosophists. It appears that when the Evangelist speaks of 'eye witnesses', this should be translated as 'clairvoyants'. From this we move on to the 'Akashic records', and the conclusions drawn from there are certainly far from commonplace! We discover, for example, that it was the 'transfigured Buddha' who appeared to the shepherds in the form of a 'celestial army', and then that there were two Jesus children, one at Nazareth and the other at Bethlehem, in whom, respectively, Adam and Zoroaster were first reincarnated, with other transformations following thereafter... It would serve no purpose to dwell further on this complicated story, for in truth even were one to set out deliberately to churn the origins of Christianity into some kind of incomprehensible mess, it would be hard to do any better than this. But even if there is no such conscious intent behind the elaboration of all these fables, the impression they give is no less tiresome, and the perfunctory way in which they are asserted as 'facts' only bolsters this impression. For the author's sake, we would rather believe that the role he played in all this was merely that of someone 'influenced by suggestion'!

René Lacroix-à-L'Henri, *Théories et procédés radiesthésiques* (Paris: Henri Dangles). This book marks an obvious effort to confine radiesthesia within 'reasonable' limits. The author, who moreover frankly states that he is a Catholic, seems to have noticed more clearly than most of his colleagues the danger of certain 'exaggerations'. 'Divinatory' applications, in particular, worry him—a point on which we agree. However, when he asserts that 'true radiesthesia need not lead to spiritism,' we fear he is deceiving himself, for the boundary is more difficult to draw than he thinks; and are not these suspicious affinities precisely the fundamental reason for the 'launching' of radiesthesia in our times? Besides, he himself cannot do otherwise than have recourse to methods he calls 'mental', which are not necessarily so but are in any case surely 'psychic'. His so-called 'Chinese' and 'Egyptian' methods, based merely on a rather fanciful application of certain symbols, or the construction of his 'rod of Pluto', do not seem to us any more exempt from reproach in this regard. His list of 'noxious waves', where physical and psychical influences mix strangely together, is also quite instructive in this regard. Even if his intention is to turn radiesthesia into a purely physical science, as this term is understood today, it could not be said that he is being any more successful. For our part, we think this is impossible, or if not... it is no longer a question of radiesthesia. And as an incidental matter, we would like to inform the author that, contrary to what he seems to believe, the article on radiesthesia that appeared in this journal last year was not written by us: *suum cuique* [to each his own]...

Paul Le Cour, *L'Ere du Verseau: L'Avènement de Ganimède* (Vincennes: Atlantis). We have already had occasion to point out the remarkable obsession of some of our contemporaries for so-called 'prophecies' in general and the announcement of the impending 'age of Aquarius' in particular. This book deals yet again with this kind of concern, although in point of fact it offers hardly anything new, most of its contents having already been expressed by the author in his articles in *Atlantis*. We will only point out that he passes himself off as heir and successor of the Hieron of Paray-le-Monial—something for which there is perhaps no good cause to congratulate him, since even if there were certain interesting ideas given in this rather special kind of 'center of Christian esoterism', there were even more daydreams—De Sarachaga's imagination was almost as fertile as Paul Le Cour's!

Moreover, this is where Le Cour drew his famous theory of *Aor-Agni*, in which he saw a prodigious revelation, and he now believes he finds traces of this revelation in the most varied names and words. But in the past we have already said enough concerning all these fantasies not to have the need to return to the subject at length here. In trying to reply to our objections against the association of these two terms *Aor-Agni*, Paul Le Cour first points out that there are 'many terms composed of words from different languages.' This is true for modern languages, although linguistics does not really accept this method of hybrid composition, rightly considering it most incorrect, but as regards sacred languages, such a thing is considered wholly impossible. The author then adds 'that he does not understand on what basis he is not permitted to see *Aor* (light) and *Agni* (heat) in fire.' Unfortunately, as we said then and as we still maintain, if *Aor* is indeed light in Hebrew, in Sanskrit *Agni* is not only heat but actually fire itself, simultaneously light and heat; so how valuable can such a response be? — And there is also another peculiarity in this book that it would be a pity not to mention: at one point (p67), the beginning of the Jewish era is fixed at 4000 BC (a simple confusion with the Masonic era), and in another (p139), at 4320 BC. The author should at least try to be consistent with himself; but what is most unfortunate is that neither of these dates is correct, for the said Jewish era starts in fact in 3721 BC!

Vladimir Pozner, *Le Mors aux dents* (Paris: Éditions Denoël) [*Bloody Baron: The Story of Ungern-Sternberg* (New York: Random House, 1938)]. This book presents a 'romanticized' and 'gloomy' picture, written in an obvious spirit of partisan hostility, of the eventful career of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg, who under a very different aspect had earlier been the subject in Ferdinand Ossendowski's work *Beasts, Men and Gods*. What is really quite odd is that at that time some people questioned the very existence of this character, and now the same thing has happened once again. Nonetheless, the Baron did belong to a very well-known Baltic family, related to that of Count Hermann Keyserling, whose letter is reproduced in the book in question. For the benefit of those who have read the book, it may not be without interest to recall and elucidate a story which seems to have been intentionally confused. In order to give what seems to us the most accurate account, we will quote the main passages from letters written in 1924 by Major Antoni Alexandrowicz, a Polish officer who had served as

commander of the Mongolian artillery under the direct orders of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg in 1918 and 1919:

> Baron Ungern was an extraordinary man, a very complicated character both from a psychological as well as a political point of view. Broadly described, his characteristic traits were as follows: (1) he was a fierce adversary of Bolshevism, which he saw as an enemy to the whole of mankind and to its spiritual values; (2) he despised the Russians, who in his opinion had betrayed the Entente during the war, having broken their oath of allegiance to the czar and then to two revolutionary governments, and having then accepted the Bolshevik government; (3) he scarcely offered his hand to a Russian, and kept company only with foreigners (but also with Poles, whom he held in esteem for their struggle against Russia), preferring, among Russians, simple people to intellectuals, as being less demoralized; (4) he was a Buddhist and a mystic who nourished the idea of founding an order of revenge against war; (5) he envisioned the foundation of a great Asian empire to combat the materialist culture of Europe and Soviet Russia; (6) he was in contact with the Dalai Lama, the 'living Buddha', and representatives of Islam in Asia, and bore the title of priest and Mongol Khan; (7) he was brutal and pitiless as only an ascetic and a sectarian can be, with an unimaginable lack of sensitivity such as could be found only in an incorporeal being with an ice-cold soul, knowing no pain, pity, joy, or sadness; (8) he had a superior intelligence and extensive knowledge such that there was no subject on which he could not give a discerning opinion, and he judged a person's value at a glance. . . . Early in June 1918, a Lama predicted to Baron Ungern that he would be wounded at the end of the month and that he would meet his death after his army's entry into Mongolia, where after his fame would spread all over the world. Indeed, at dawn on June 28, the Bolsheviks attacked the station of Dauria . . . and the Baron took a bullet to his left side above the heart. As regards his death, the prophecy proved true: when he died, the glory of his victory filled the whole world.

Judging from the discussions referred to at the outset, the last sentence is probably exaggerated, and it appears certain both that the Baron was not captured by the Bolsheviks, and that although still young, he died a natural death, contrary to the version given by

Vladimir Pozner. Given this authentic information, Pozner's readers should also be able to ascertain whether such a person could really have been nothing but a mere agent in the service of Japan, as is insinuated, or whether it is more likely that he was prompted by influences of an entirely different order. In this connection, we may add that he was not exactly what one could call a 'neo-Buddhist', for according to information we have from another source, his family's adherence to Buddhism went back three generations. On the other hand, it was recently pointed out that phenomena of 'haunting' took place at Ungern Castle. Might this not be a manifestation of 'psychic residues' with a more or less direct bearing on all this business?

I Protocoli dei Savi Anziani di Sion, Versione italiana con appendice e introduzione (Rome: *La Vita Italiana*, 1921). This Italian translation of the famous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, published in 1921 by Dr Giovanni Preziosi, director of *Vita Italiana*, has just been re-edited with an introduction by J. Evola who tries to put some order into the endless discussions generated by this 'text'. He distinguishes two different and not necessarily connected questions, one concerning 'authenticity' and the other 'veracity', the second being the more important in his opinion. Authenticity is not really tenable for a number of reasons which we will not examine here, but we should draw attention to one point, which, although perhaps the most decisive, seems not to have been sufficiently taken into consideration: an organization that is truly and seriously secret, whatever its nature, never leaves a trail of written documents. Moreover, 'sources' have been found from which many passages of the *Protocols* are borrowed almost word for word, for example, the *Dialogue aux Enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu*, by Maurice Joly, a pamphlet aimed against Napoleon III and published in Brussels in 1865, and the speech attributed to a Prague rabbi in the novel *Biarritz*, published in 1868 by the German writer Hermann Goedsche under the pseudonym Sir John Retcliffe. Another 'source' which to our knowledge has never been pointed out is a novel entitled *Le Baron Jéhova*, by Sidney Vigneaux, published in Paris in 1886 with the curious dedication: 'to the true gentleman A. de Gobineau, author of the *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, who entered Valhalla on October 13, 1882.' It should also be noted that according to information given in Miss Hersilie Rouy's *Mémoires d'une aliénée* [Memoirs of a Deranged Woman], published by E. Le

Normant des Varannes (Paris, 1886, pp 308–309), Sidney Vigneaux, like the latter, was a friend of Dr Henri Favre, whom we mentioned earlier. This strange story mentions the name of Jules Favre, who is also found to be involved in so many matters of the same kind that it is hard to see it as mere coincidence... In *Le Baron Jéhova* (pp59–87) we find a so-called 'Testament de Ybarzabal', which presents quite striking similarities with the *Protocols*, except for the remarkable fact that in it the Jews only appear to be instrumental in carrying out a plan that was neither conceived nor intended by them. We also note certain similarities with the introduction to Alexander Dumas' *Joseph Balsamo*, although here it is no longer a question of Jews, but of an imaginary Masonic assembly. We will add that this assembly is not unconnected with the pseudo-Rosicrucian 'Parliament' described at almost the exact same time by the American writer George Lippard in *Paul Ardenheim, the Monk of the Wissahickon*, and this description was reproduced by Dr Swinburne Clymer in *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America*. There is no doubt that in their more or less 'romanticized' form, all these writings draw their overall inspiration from one and the same 'current' of ideas, that their authors either approve or disapprove of these ideas, and in addition that, according to their sympathies or particular prejudices, they attribute without rhyme or reason the origins to Jews, Masons, or still others. Finally, what is essential in all this, and could be said to constitute the element of 'veracity', is the assertion that the entire orientation of the modern world conforms to a 'plan' established and imposed by some mysterious organization. Our own thoughts on this subject are well-known, for we have spoken so often of the role of the 'counter-initiation' and of its conscious or unconscious agents that we need not emphasize it further. In truth, it did not take a 'prophet' to notice these things at the time when the *Protocols* were compiled, probably in 1901, nor even at the time when most of the other above-mentioned works were first published, that is to say around the middle of the nineteenth century. At that time, although these matters were less obvious than they are today, even a little perspicacious observation was already sufficient. But here we must make a remark less than flattering to the intelligence of our contemporaries, that if anyone honestly expresses what he sees and what can be logically inferred therefrom, nobody believes him, or even pays attention. If, on the contrary, he presents the same thing as coming from an eccentric organization, it soon figures as a 'document', and as

such sets the world in a bustle. How strange is the effect of the superstitions instilled into modern people by the too famous 'historical method', superstitions which themselves are definitely among the suggestions necessary for the accomplishment of the 'plan' in question! It should be further noted that, according to the fabrications of the *Protocols* themselves, the organization responsible for inventing and spreading modern ideas in order to achieve world domination is perfectly aware of the falsity of these ideas. This must quite obviously be so, for it knows only too well where it stands in this regard, but then such an undertaking of lies could not in itself be its true and unique goal. This leads us to consider another point noted by Evola in his introduction and further developed in the November issue of the *Vita Italiana* in an article signed 'Arthos', entitled 'Transformazioni del "Regnum"'. Indeed, the *Protocols* contain not only an exposition of 'tactics' directed at the destruction of the traditional world, which is only a negative aspect corresponding to the current phase of events, it also contains the notion of the merely transitory nature of this phase itself, as well as the idea of a subsequent establishment of a supranational *Regnum*. This last can be considered a deformation of the idea of the 'Holy Empire' and other similar traditional conceptions which, as the author of the article recalls, we ourselves have expounded in *The King of the World*. In order to explain this, 'Arthos' has recourse to deviations, or even real 'subversions', undergone by certain elements that at their origin were genuinely traditional but that then survive on their own, as it were, once the 'spirit' has left them, and in support of this view he quotes what we recently wrote regarding 'psychic residues'. The reflection that can be found elsewhere concerning the successive phases of the modern deviation and the possible constitution of a real 'counter-tradition' as its final term—the distorted *Regnum* being precisely its expression in the social order—will perhaps contribute further to elucidate more completely this aspect of the question which, quite apart from the special case of the *Protocols*, is certainly not without a certain interest.

Upton Sinclair, *Comment je crois en Dieu*, tr. from the English by Henri Delgove and R.N. Raimbault (Paris: Éditions Adyar, 1937) [*What God Means to Me* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1936)]. The author's 'religious' conception—which by the way can be called so only on condition of specifying that it has more to do with mere

'religiosity' than with religion itself—is basically a rather typical mixture of American 'idealism' and 'pragmatism'. He feels the need to believe in an 'ideal', which is rather vague, and at the same time wants this 'ideal', which he calls 'God' (all the while admitting that he does not know what God really is) to 'serve' him practically in all sorts of circumstances. It would appear that God must be of use, notably to cure him when he is sick, given that stories of 'mental healing' and 'healing religions' have a particularly important place in his book. And in this connection let us note as an aside that Emile Coué's 'training' was perhaps not as different from Mrs Baker Eddy's as he believed, for what he probably does not know is that before founding his own school of 'autosuggestion', Emile Coué had been a disciple of Victor Segno and the American 'mentalists', who have much in common with *Christian Science*). This 'idealist' point of view is obviously connected to what we have called 'psychologism', for the value or efficacy of an 'ideal' as such can obviously only be psychological (moreover, he pushes this tendency to the point of wanting to explain psychologically facts that belong to the domain of magic or sorcery, assimilating them to simple suggestions. However, as happens only too often in such cases today, there are also many other elements arising from a rather suspect 'psychism', since basically it is primarily a matter of appealing to the 'subconscious', in which the author is only following William James, his master in 'pragmatism'. He is quite prepared to attribute a 'spiritual' value to psychic phenomena such as telepathy and clairvoyance, which is a regrettable illusion; and one can even wonder whether what he is 'deifying' is finally not quite simply his own subconscious... The translation contains some truly bizarre errors in language: thus, brain cells are not 'cervical' cells, which means cells of the neck, but 'cerebral' cells; and 'sectateur' is a nice little barbarism, apparently resulting from a confusion between 'sectator' [member of a sect] and 'sectarian'!

C. Kerneïz, *Le Yoga de l'Occident* (Paris: Éditions Adyar, 1938). This book, which is presented as a sequel to the same author's *Hatha-Yoga*—which we have already reviewed [see Book Reviews in *Studies in Hinduism*]—is meant as an attempt to adapt methods inspired by, or rather imitated from, those of *Yoga*, for the use of Westerners. We cannot say that he succeeds, for the attempt is both false and dangerous. What is false, first of all, is the idea that *Yoga* is something

independent of any tradition; in such conditions one can practice nothing but 'pseudo-rites' which, since no spiritual influence attaches to them, have no effective result of a higher order, and have only rather disturbing psychic effects. What is no less false is the author's 'idealistic' and 'subjective' point of view, which affects his entire interpretation, even in principle. This idealism and subjectivism are merely modern philosophical views which, whatever the author may say, have not the least connection with traditional doctrines. Does he not even go so far as to present as 'postulates' of *Yoga* propositions of which the substance is borrowed from Kant and Schopenhauer? The consequence of this point of view is that what is really in question is nothing but a popular method of 'auto-suggestion'; the author recognizes this, moreover, but nevertheless imagines that results thus obtained are spiritually valid. The truth is that they are perfectly ineffectual, even negative; indeed, what will surely befall those who practice the exercises he indicates is an irremediable psychic breakdown... All of this is accompanied by theories of which the least one can say is that they are very strange. Thus, in particular we find a biological interpretation of 'Adam' that for the Kabbalists would be quite unexpected. There is also the all too familiar 'pseudo-mystical' concept of the 'androgyne' realized by the fusion of two different beings, which can only lead to the most sinister consequences. We shall pass over the belief in reincarnation and other ideas pertaining to standard 'occultism', but we cannot refrain from pausing over a paragraph dealing with the 'provisional choice of a religion', for it contains truly incredible confusions. First, in no way is it a matter, as one might suppose, of choosing a traditional form to adhere to in a real way, but only of adopting it 'ideally', without worrying in the least over fulfilling the necessary conditions for admittance. Obviously, this is perfectly empty, and since we read further on that it 'is not a question of believing, but of acting as though one believed,' we can see that this is only a rather odious charade. Moreover, we are advised to 'leave aside the dead formulas [?] in order to adhere to esoterism alone.' Now, esoterism is something quite different from religion, and in any case no one has a right to follow his whims in choosing from among the elements that constitute a tradition: one must fully accept the tradition or abstain from it. For example, we would like to see how Judaism might accept a person who declared that he wished to join 'the Jewish religion restored to the Kabbalah'! And finally, the last sentence of this

paragraph is worthy of special mention: 'Freemasonry can very well replace a religion, but only by bringing it back to the mystical Martinism from which it issues.' Here, anyone who has even the slightest notion of the history of Masonry and who knows even vaguely what Martinism is will surely not be able to stifle their laughter! In his conclusion, the author boasts of 'bringing forth from the Temple secrets that have always been jealously guarded therein.' If he sincerely believes this, he is only to be pitied, for what he has 'revealed' are in reality alas nothing but his own illusions...

Eliphas Lévi. *Le Clef des Grands Mystères* (Paris: Éditions Niclaus, 1940) [*The Key of the Mysteries*, tr. Aleister Crowley (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972)]. Our readers are aware of our reservations concerning Eliphas Lévi's works; moreover we should consider the contents thereof only as the expression of 'personal views', since the author himself has never claimed any traditional filiation. Indeed, he has always declared that he owes everything to his own investigations, and assertions to the contrary amount to no more than stories that can be attributed to over-enthusiastic admirers. Actually, what is perhaps most interesting in the present book, although only from a contingent point of view, are the truly curious details he gives regarding certain 'hidden aspects' of the period during which it was written, and for this reason alone it certainly deserved to be republished. In another connection, it is also worth noting some of the documents included in the appendix, especially the Hermetic figures of Nicolas Flamel (although one may wonder to what extent they may have been 'arranged') and the translation of the *Asch Mezareph* of Abraham the Jew. Regarding this last document, it is regrettable that the fragments presented separately as a supplement to the eight chapters, are given no direct provenance, which would have served to guarantee their authenticity. Moreover, the reconstruction of the whole treatise is presented as no more than 'hypothetical', although it is difficult to know to what extent the copyists who are supposed to have 'split it up in order to render it unintelligible' are responsible, and exactly what role Eliphas Lévi himself played in it.

ARTICLE REVIEWS

La Revue Internationale des Sociétés Secrètes continues—and we would have been surprised to the contrary—in its efforts to revive the Taxil affair. In the July 7, 14, and 21 issues, it published a long biography of Diana Vaughan, who although she probably never existed is nonetheless presented as a kind of second Joan of Arc, which in any case is really a bit exaggerated. This publication was preceded (June 23 issue) by the reproduction of a letter from this same Diana Vaughan to the Abbot of Bessonies, which provided us with an opportunity to make an amusing observation: as it involves the 'worthy Fr Joseff', the following note was added: 'This is how the name is spelled in the text. It probably indicates Fr Tourmentin. These two *ff*'s, unique in this letter where the name Joseph is spelled perfectly when it refers to Saint Joseph, seem to be the result of an unintentional absent-mindedness on the part of someone originally from Russia.' In the commentary that follows the letter, it is claimed that this so-called American must in reality have been Russian, which moreover does not correspond in any way with the aforementioned biography. But when one gets involved in such stories one does not quibble over a mere contradiction... The only real misfortune in all this is that it really concerns Fr Tourmentin, but Tourmentin was merely a pseudonym, and his real name (we mean his *family* name and not his first name) was spelled exactly *Josepff*; thus there is surely a mistake, but it consists in the omission of the *p* and not in the two *ff*'s which should figure in the name. Are the editors of the R.I.S.S. then so ignorant that they do not even know the real name of their former anti-Masonic colleague? Be that as it may, as regards Diana Vaughan's letters we have something even better: it is a letter written on a paper with a letterhead of a lion's tail twisted around a crescent from which emerges a rose, with the initials D.V. and the motto *Me jubente cauda leonis loquitur!* — In the 'occultist part' of the same review (issue of 1 July), there is an article signed A. Tarannes and entitled 'Essai sur un symbole double: Quel est donc ce Dragon?' We expected to find therein some reflections on the double meaning of the symbols—a subject we have often dealt with ourselves, and which is particularly clear in the case of the serpent and the dragon, but we were completely disappointed. The article merely gives weight, so to speak, to the all too famous *Dragon Elect*, with the aid of rather strange documentation and even stranger commentary. In this respect we may venture a question that is probably very indiscreet: it is said that the figure on page 207 is 'borrowed from an unsuccessfully confirmed fragment of a rather rare work.' What is the title of this book, the name of its author, as well as the place and date of its publication? Absent this vital information, we could be tempted to think it an apocryphal document, which would really be a pity! Besides, it is very difficult to remain serious in the face of all the importance given to Aleister Crowley's foolery. Surely, it is obvious that this character's nonsensical ideas go precisely in the same direction in support of the theories upheld by the R.I.S.S. However, the R.I.S.S. will definitely not inform its readers that the O.T.O. and its leader are not recognized by any Masonic organization, and that if this so-called 'high initiate' appeared at the door of the least Lodge of apprentices he would be turned away promptly with all the respect due his rank! We have also noted something else in the same article (page 213) which enables us to assess clearly the value of the information given by the R.I.S.S; this is a reference to a recently deceased writer, who though not named is described clearly enough to be recognized without difficulty, and who is called a 'defrocked priest'. We challenge the author—and with just cause—to prove his assertion; and if he remains silent, we shall insist. — In the meanwhile, for its often untimely zeal the R.I.S.S. recently received a justified reprimand from the Archdiocese, or more precisely, from the Council of Vigilance of the Parisian diocese. The R.I.S.S. contented itself purely and simply with 'taking note' of this, (issue of 14 July) carefully avoiding publishing the rather harsh terms. For the edification our readers, here is the text of this document as published in the *Semaine Religieuse*:

> During its session of May 31, 1929, the Council of Vigilance of Paris was overwhelmed with complaints lodged by several groups of youth workers and Catholic writers against the *Revue Internationale des Sociétés Secrètes*. From the information provided, it appears that the opinions issued by this journal created confusion among certain provincial dioceses, into which they penetrated, and that the editorial committee of the *Revue*, summoned before the Paris ecclesiastical court by the founders and directors of the J.O.C. (one of the groups slandered), neglected to appear. On viewing the documents presented, The Council of Vigilance of Paris, which had

already been informed of these attacks, unanimously recognized that the incriminating judgments are devoid of any authority, that they ignore the services rendered to the Church by writers whose merit and orthodoxy are proven, that they rashly go against the most authorized pontifical approvals, and lastly, that they show a systematically disparaging attitude, which reaches even to the solemn decisions of the Sovereign Pontiff as regards, for example, the Roman question. The Council of Vigilance can thus only rebuke and condemn this attitude, which offends the Church itself as well as some of her best servants.

For a long time we anticipated, and without the need for the least recourse to 'clairvoyance', that all these stories would end badly...

La Revue Internationale des Sociétés Secrètes is currently publishing a series of articles entitled 'Did Diana Vaughan Exist?', which is an attempt to prove that the memoirs of this hypothetical person could only have been written by someone really belonging to the family of the Rosicrucian Thomas Vaughan. However, the alleged proofs given so far are only references to matters that are much better known than is publicly admitted, or which are entirely unverifiable. Let us await what results... — In the August 25 issue, we note a bit of news reproduced from *Le Figaro*, which, it is said, has 'discovered a small new sect' in America. In fact, it is simply a question of an organization called *Mazdaznan*, which has been well-known for a long time, and has several restaurants and shops selling special food products in Paris itself. If *Le Figaro* can really be unaware of these things, is such ignorance excusable on the part of 'specialists' of the R.I.S.S.? Is it really worth the trouble to speak once again of Clotilde Bersone and Diana Vaughan in regard to a 'sect' of such a trivial character, because a certain Mrs Arrens supposedly left her husband and her children in order to follow the 'Master'? — The September 8 issue contains the beginning of a study entitled *La Franc-Maçonnerie et son Oeuvre*, signed Koukol-Yasnopolsky; it seems to be the translation of a booklet, but there is no indication of either the place or date of its publication. The first chapter, dedicated to 'Masonic origins', contains nothing more than the rephrasing of some of the most commonplace stupidities concerning the Templars and the Brotherhood of the Rose-Cross. At the very most it is a third- or fourth-hand work. — In the

'occultist part', Henri de Guillebert continues his studies on *La Question juive*, always full of the most astonishing statements: thus, in the August 1 issue we read that 'in order to conquer the divine, the initiate claims to make use of his reason alone,' whereas such a claim is, on the contrary, rather the mark of the 'profane', and only those who make use of certain supra-rational faculties can be considered 'initiates' in the true sense of the word. The same article contains what is presented as a particularly 'revealing' 'initiatic document', a chart taken from a work by Pierre Piobb that merely expresses certain personal ideas of the author, which, however ingenious, do not have the least traditional character. The following article (September 1 issue) gives a 'sociological' interpretation of the Hermetic formula *Solve coagula* that is more fantastic than anything imaginable; and there are many more examples—but we must limit ourselves. Nonetheless, let us point out the factual error of declaring (always in support of a particular thesis) Protestants such as Schleiermacher and Harnack to be Jews, not to speak of the assertion that Renan was 'practically converted to Judaism,' whereas everyone knows that in fact he had become a stranger to all defined religion, preserving only a vague religiosity, which moreover had nothing Jewish about it, but was for him simply a last remnant of 'disaffected' Christianity. — In this same issue of September 1, A. Tarannes (author of the article on the Dragon mentioned in our previous column) deals with 'Quelques symboles de la Maçonnerie mixte', which he insists on interpreting in the most grossly 'naturalist' sense. What is extraordinary is that those who engage in this little game do not seem to realize that certain enemies of Catholicism are not embarrassed to apply the same system to its symbols and rites; this succeeds just as well and is exactly as false in the one case as the other. This article also contains some curious mistakes: the initials of the title of a grade are taken for the consonants of its 'sacred word' (which proves that this word is not known), and the 'age' of this same grade is taken for the number of another, which led to attributing to the latter the 'battery' of the first. The author states that he has put off deciphering a so-called 'Masonic square', that probably puts him on the spot. Let us then spare him this trouble: it contains simply *I.N.R.I.* and *Pax vobis*. — Lastly, still in the same issue, there is a rather amusing little note on the emblem of the Red-Cross organizations, which states that 'instead of Red-Cross, one could equally well write Rose-Cross of Geneva'; at this rate it is really

very easy to be Rose-Cross... or at least to pass for one in the eyes of the editors of the R.I.S.S!

We have in our hands the first issues of *Bulletin des Polaires*, which began publication last May. The contents are perfectly insignificant, and if what we read there is the result of communication with 'great initiates', from the Himalayas or elsewhere, it is rather pitiful. We would not even speak of it had we not learned that this organization has the deplorable tendency to invoke our name as recommendation for people they would like to attract. In fact, in a small way we did follow the demonstrations of the divinatory method called 'oracle of astral force' when there was no question of founding a group based on the 'teachings' obtained by this means, and since there were things about it that seemed rather enigmatic, we did try to clarify them by posing certain doctrinal questions; but we received only vague and evasive replies until, after a very long time and despite our insistence, a new question at last led to a blatant absurdity. At that time we were interested in the initiatic merit of the people supposedly providing the inspiration, this being for us the only interesting point in the whole affair. If we recall correctly, it was precisely in the interval between this question and the response to it that there was talk for the first time of constituting a society decked out in the baroque name 'Polar'. (Although we have spoken of a 'polar' or hyperborean tradition, we cannot without ridicule apply this name to people who appear to know of this tradition only what we have written in our various works). Despite many solicitations, we formally refused not only a part in this society, but to approve or support it in any way, all the more so since the rules dictated by the 'method' contained things that were unbelievably puerile. We learned later that the few serious people who had at first given their allegiance lost no time in withdrawing, and we would not be surprised if all of this finally sank into a vulgar spiritism. We regret that various traditional ideas we expounded in *The King of the World* were mixed up in this affair, but we can do nothing about it; and as to the 'method' itself, anyone who has read what we wrote concerning the 'science of letters'[1] will readily see that the whole thing was nothing but an example of what can happen to fragments of real and serious knowledge in the hands of people who have taken hold of it without understanding.

1. See *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 6. ED.

In the February 1 issue of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, under the title 'La mise en scène et la métaphysique', Antonin Artaud presents views that, while interesting, are at times rather confused, and could be considered to illustrate what we recently said here concerning the degeneration that has made Western theater purely 'profane', whereas Eastern theater has preserved its spiritual value. It is surprising that the word 'symbolism' was never employed in the course of the study, which it would have greatly illuminated, for it is really a matter of the application of symbolism to theatrical art: in reality the use of multiple means other than speech is nothing else. Moreover, we do not know why a sentence we never wrote was ascribed to us (by placing it within quotation marks). It is not that we could not approve the idea insofar as we understand it, but the terms in which it is expressed are entirely foreign to our vocabulary. Furthermore, we could never have said 'we' or 'us' when speaking of Westerners. — Another (although much less inoffensive) apocryphal sentence, and the same one as ever for that matter, has been attributed to us perhaps for the twentieth time by Paul le Cour in the January–February issue of *Atlantis*. It is true that nothing of this kind can surprise us about him after we have seen how two proper names written several times on a wall could, in his eyes, metamorphose into a sentence which is... approximately Latin. As for the rest, there is no need for such a fertile imagination to ascribe to someone something he never said, and on occasion something even completely contrary to what he really meant. For this it is enough to separate a mere fragment of a sentence from its context, and there are some famous examples of this (*Qala Allahu taala: Fa waylun lil-muṣallīn...*). Whatever may be the case, in this issue Paul le Cour devotes no less than two articles to an attack upon us, first regarding *The Symbolism of the Cross*, a subject he claims to treat in his own manner (or rather in the manner of the *Hiéron de Paray-le-Monial*: *Aor-Agni* and other already famous fantasies), and then regarding Hermeticism and some of our articles from *Voile d'Isis*. He even offers the testimony of many people who have no understanding whatsoever of what we write. If only he knew to what extent we feel unconcerned about this profane 'critique' that is by definition incompetent in matters of initiation! We write in order to instruct those capable of understanding, and not to look for the approval of the ignorant. Also, what we do has nothing in common with literature, despite Paul le Cour, who confuses Hermeticism with esthetics and enjoys counting the

words in our sentences (which probably kept him from noticing that in *The Symbolism of the Cross* we spoke of a three-dimensional geometrical representation and of an indefinite spheroid, since he reproaches us for not having done anything of the sort!). He also reproduces a letter directed against us by a certain Mr Alvart whom we believe to be the same person as a former 'worshipper' of Mme Blavatsky (see *Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion*, chap. 4). Since we have already responded implicitly in our article of last month, we shall not revisit the subject, but cannot help mentioning Paul le Cour's new linguistic find: he solemnly declares that 'the word *Christian* is a development of the word *cross*.' But then what can you say to someone who apparently thinks Latin is derived from Spanish, for he writes that '*hermoso* in Spanish has become *formosus* in Latin'? As for our article 'The Language of the Birds',[2] we wholly maintain what we said there concerning the origin and the meaning of the Latin word *carmen*, in spite of the strange and hardly 'normal' etymology 'pointed out' to le Cour, who perhaps 'can impress certain minds lacking critical sense.' Frankly, what weight could the assertions of the orientalists possibly have for us? Besides, if we spoke of these birds as symbolizing the angels, it is because the Islamic tradition is explicit on this point. We do not express individual opinions and our knowledge is of tradition alone. It is indeed a question of the 'language of the birds' (the Koran explicitly says *manṭiq aṭ-ṭayr*), and in no way did it involve the 'song of the birds', which could have another significance, but which in any case was not in question there. Truly, our opponent 'does not seem to us qualified to speak of these matters.' However, let us hope that the more or less brilliant variations on a theme in which he indulges on this subject are not for him of a... 'sign song'![3] Indeed, if we 'amuse' a few ignorant people who believe themselves very strong, then, as for Le Cour, he frankly makes us burst into laughter, and in this dismal end of the *Kali-Yuga*, such occasions are rare enough that we cannot help being somewhat grateful to him. *Rabbuna ikhallīk, yā bafuna!*

In the June issue [of *La Revue Spirite*] we posed a question concerning the mysterious death of 'Dr G. Mariani'. We have still not received a

2. See *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 7. ED.

3. There is a pun involved here whose literal translation, 'field of sign', makes no sense in English. In French, however, it is phonetically identical to the 'swan's song'.

response, and we think it time to point out some facts. His death, to which the R.I.S.S. only alluded equivocally, was announced publicly in a leaflet of the *Liberté*, a sort of fictionalized account according to the fashion of the day, on the 'underside of contemporary occultism', by two authors, at least one of whom was 'Mariani's' intimate friend, and was perfectly familiar with all our works (we shall see the import of this observation). In the March 25 issue, in the course of a supposed dialogue between two collaborators, the question of the 'King of the World' arose, which, it was said, 'singularly recalled the *Prince of the world* of the Gospels.' In passing, we must admire this feat of prestidigitation, for the evangelists never spoke of the 'Prince of the world', but rather of the 'Prince of *this* world', which is so different that certain languages require two entirely distinct words for them (thus in Arabic, 'the world' is *al-alam*, and 'this world' is *ad-dunya*). Then follows this sentence

> The recent death of a young man who dedicated himself to the task of discovering the truth on precisely this point—I speak of an old friend of mine, Gaetan Mariani—proves that the question is dangerous; he must have known too much about it!

The claim is thus very clear, despite the slip of saying that the dead man 'dedicates [in the present tense] himself...' In addition, for those who could not know who 'Mariani' was, a note adds that he is the author of our own study *The King of the World*, which is carefully specified as 'a very rare book,' and which indeed is entirely out of print! It is true that in the February 18 issue our *The Spiritist Fallacy* is no less curiously attributed to an imaginary person named 'Guerinon'! Since our books are signed 'René Guénon', the most elementary propriety demands that when spoken of, the name be reproduced as such, if only to avoid confusion; and, of course, if they were signed Abul-Havl ('F∴ Fomalhaut' would shudder with fear in his tomb), it would be exactly the same. — This is not all: we were informed that those who spread the word of 'Mariani's' death attributed it to a hydroplane accident that occurred at sea at the end of last December near the port where he lived. However... In this connection, we definitely had reason to recall the pseudo-suicide of Aleister Crowley, also engulfed by the waves of the sea... In fact, according to a very reliable source there were many points of resemblance between the victim (or, more precisely, one of the two victims) of the accident

in question and 'Mariani': same name but for one letter, difference in age of less than one year, same residence; but finally, it was definitely not 'Mariani' in person. We must thus believe that this astonishing set of coincidences was put to use for some purpose that remains obscure, and we should not forget to add that in order to confuse things as fully as possible, the body of the victim was never recovered! Thus, it was nothing but a sinister comedy. If it was so, was it organized by 'Mariani' himself, or by... others, and for what strange reasons? And was the R.I.S.S. a dupe or an accomplice in this phantasmagoric 'disappearance' of its contributor? Whether or not one chooses to believe us, we do not pose these questions for the pointless satisfaction of unraveling the thread of a kind of 'detective story'. In order to obtain an answer, will it finally be necessary for us to record in full the names of heroes of this incredible account?

PS: We request our readers to take note (1) that having never had any 'disciples' and having always refused to have any, we do not authorize anyone to claim this title or to attribute it to others, and that we most categorically deny any statement to the contrary, be it past or future; (2) that as a logical consequence of this attitude we also refuse to give individual advice to anyone whomsoever, as we consider that for a number of reasons such could never be our role, so that we earnestly ask our correspondents to abstain from all questions of this kind, if only to spare us the unpleasant task of being obliged to answer with a refusal; and (3) that it is equally useless to ask us for 'biographical' details about our person, considering that nothing that concerns us on a personal level belongs to the public, and that these matters cannot be of the least genuine interest for anybody; doctrine alone counts, and before it, individualities do not exist.

The December issue of the review *Action et Pensée* contains an article by Jean Herbert entitled 'Métaphysique et Psychagogie'. This latter term is borrowed from the very agenda of the review, which displays a truly incredible misinterpretation of the subject: the word *psyche* is here translated as 'spirit'. One wonders what exactly 'leading the spirit' can mean, when it is the spirit on the contrary that necessarily leads everything! In reality, of course, it is in no way a question of spirit, which is precisely why this 'psychagogy' has no connection, either as to its sphere or as to its goal, with the Hindu methods of Yoga or anything else. We have been sufficiently explicit elsewhere about this

deplorable confusion to which we here add metaphysics and philosophy. True metaphysics has in fact no connection with 'hypotheses' or any 'beliefs' whatsoever... Another point that we must touch on here is the necessity of a *guru*. Herbert is quite right to think that there are 'long preparatory stages during which to a very large extent one can rely on the written teachings of authentic masters' (subject to the possibility of even finding such undistorted teachings in the West, and especially with a reservation as to the quality of 'authentic master' attributed to Vivekānanda). This is properly speaking a phase of theoretical preparation, which can indeed be accomplished in an independent way; but as for what must follow, Herbert seems to hold that the role of the *guru* consist merely in an adaptation of the 'technique' to each particular case, whereas his truly essential role, that which renders his intervention strictly indispensable, is above all to ensure regular initiatic transmission, of which no mention is made here. Lastly, a note referring to *The Mystical Qabalah* of 'Dion Fortune' which we recently discussed, shows that unfortunately Jean Herbert is not properly informed about the real worth of 'Western disciplines' of this kind... — The rest of the part devoted to 'modern Hindu philosophy' particularly contains extracts from various writings of Sri Aurobindo, whose intentions certainly do not have anything in common with 'psychology' or with the therapeutics of nervous or mental illnesses, or for that matter with the 'conduct of life' as understood in the totally profane sense of Western psychologists.

The *Mercure de France* (November 15 issue) has published an article by Nyoiti Sakurazawa entitled 'Philosophie et Science d'Extrême-Orient'. Some years ago Sakurazawa published a volume treating the same subject, in which he presented as 'key' and 'unique principle' of this 'philosophy' and of this 'science' (which, moreover, as he himself acknowledged, are precisely neither 'philosophy' nor 'science' in the Western sense of these words) a 'universal law' which is nothing but the cosmological doctrine of the two complementary principles *yin* and *yang*, the oscillations and vicissitudes of which produce all manifested things, with the indefinite multiplicity of their modifications. As a matter of fact, this doctrine has its application in the field of all the traditional sciences, but in this article the author restricts himself to a more particular consideration of its medical application. His account contains some interesting information, but also a certain

confusion, due above all to a mixture of modern Western conceptions and traditional ideas; and this again confirms what we have so often had to say against these illusory parallels drawn between matters that proceed from radically different points of view. — We should also mention an article in the same issue by Paul Vulliaud on 'Léon Bloy prophète et martyr' containing curious details on the origins of the 'mission' that this peculiar character believed himself to be invested with. The most interesting aspect of this whole story pertains directly to the affair of La Salette, which is one of those events with suspicious 'undercurrents'. Our times offer such examples in plenty, and as the author notes, it presents truly remarkable links to the affair of Louis XVII's 'survival', links all the more noteworthy in that they remain the same in all cases of this kind occurring during the nineteenth century. The search for the reasons behind this could probably lead quite far into the sphere of what can be called the 'underground' history of our times... Besides, the famous 'Secret of La Salette', which so obviously inspired Léon Bloy's furious invectives against Catholics and particularly against the clergy, contains certain 'marks' that are very clear as to the true nature of the 'influences' that were active throughout all of this. Thus when it becomes obvious that under various guises these things still have a 'sequel' in present times, one may be allowed to think that this is not exactly reassuring, and one will thereby understand why, in particular, the current fashion of certain so-called 'prophecies' must inspire a certain anxiety in anyone not totally ignorant of these kinds of 'ramifications'.

From a certain quarter where it seems that for some time efforts have been made to gather together the scattered debris of the old occultist 'movement', there has also arisen a truly curious attack against the necessity of an effective and regular initiatic transmission, something evidently quite embarrassing for anyone unable to invoke anything better than an 'ideal' connection that is as vague as it is ineffective! In this context, in order to depreciate what one cannot boast of possessing, one speaks of 'exoteric initiation', which is a contradiction in terms. All initiatic rites are by their nature and very definition esoteric rites, but in order to understand this it is first of all necessary not to confuse initiatic transmission with an exoteric transmission such as that of the ecclesiastic ordinations. In no way do these things belong to the same order, even though in their respective domains they are

each equally indispensable. Further adding to this confusion, authentic initiatic organizations are placed in the same category as some of the worst examples of 'pseudo-initiation' that can be found... But the best part is that this negating fury goes so far as to contest the existence of the primordial tradition itself, and we can easily guess why, for it is the very filiation of the orthodox traditions that is fundamentally embarrassing, because in the initiatic order this filiation essentially implies the 'chain' that one wishes to dispense with. Without any exaggeration, we can apply to people of this kind what they themselves say of the study of traditional doctrines, no doubt preferring to remain in their ignorance, which is indeed more convenient and less tiring for them: all they can do in seeking a so-called initiation in the clouds of the 'invisible' or in... the world of the Moon, outside of all terrestrial 'lineage', 'is but a vain effort, an ineffectual task, a staggering in the darkness, and mental childishness.'

INDEX

René Guénon (1886-1951) was one of the great luminaries of the twentieth century, whose critique of the modern world has stood fast against the shifting sands of intellectual fashion. His extensive writings, now finally available in English, are a providential treasure-trove for the modern seeker: while pointing ceaselessly to the perennial wisdom found in past cultures ranging from the Shamanistic to the Indian and Chinese, the Hellenic and Judaic, the Christian and Islamic, and including also Alchemy, Hermeticism, and other esoteric currents, they direct the reader also to the deepest level of religious praxis, emphasizing the need for affiliation with a revealed tradition even while acknowledging the final identity of all spiritual paths as they approach the summit of spiritual realization.

Many readers of Guénon's later doctrinal works have longed to hear the tale of his earlier entanglement, and disentanglement, from the luxuriant undergrowth of so-called esoteric societies in late nineteenth-century Paris and elsewhere. The present work documents in excoriating detail Guénon's findings on what did, and did not, lie behind the Theosophical Society founded by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in 1875. Much further information has of course come to light since this book was written, but it has never been superseded as a fascinating record of the path of a master metaphysician through this maze. A particularly unusual feature is its extensive treatment of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, which has recently attracted the attention of scholars of the occult.

The Collected Works of René Guénon brings together the writings of one of the greatest prophets of our time, whose voice is even more important today than when he was alive.

Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*

If during the last century or so there has been even some slight revival of awareness in the Western world of what is meant by metaphysics and metaphysical tradition, the credit for it must go above all to Guénon. At a time when the confusion into which modern Western thought had fallen was such that it threatened to obliterate the few remaining traces of genuine spiritual knowledge from the minds and hearts of his contemporaries, Guénon, virtually single-handed, took it upon himself to reaffirm the values and principles which, he recognized, constitute the only sound basis for the living of a human life with dignity and purpose or for the formation of a civilization worthy of the name.

Philip Sherrard, *Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition*

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SOPHIA PERENNIS