

FOTA

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FOTA

The Friends of Theosophical Archives Newsletter n°8

In this Issue

- 05 • Editorial
- 06 • English FOTA News
- 07 • News
- 10 • *The Bohm-Krishnamurti Dialogues*
Orlando Fernandez
- 12 • *Christmas Humphreys 1901-1983*
Muriel Daw
- 16 • *Changes Afoot within the Scottish TS*
Susan Steven
- 20 • *Annie Besant Conference Report*
Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière
- 22 • *Annie Besant Struggles and Quest*
- 22 • *Annie Besant & Poland*
Karolina Maria Hess
- 32 • *Pelekan & Ilisos*
Maria Vassilopoulou
- 34 • *Anna Kingsford Conference Report*
Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière
- 36 • *Why the "Anna Kingsford Site" Was Created?*
Arnaldo Sisson
- 41 • *Anna Bonus Kingsford & Edward Maitland*
Elaine Bailey
- 42 • *Call for Papers The Occult Revival: Myth or Reality?*
- 44 • *"My dear Knight of Friendship"*
Bernhard Kuhn
- 48 • *CWL Speaks*
- 52 • *Interview with Jan Nicolaas Kind*
- 54 • *Cabinet of Curiosities*



Anna Kingsford, Source: Wiki Commons

FOUNDER: Leslie Price | EDITOR: Erica Georgiades

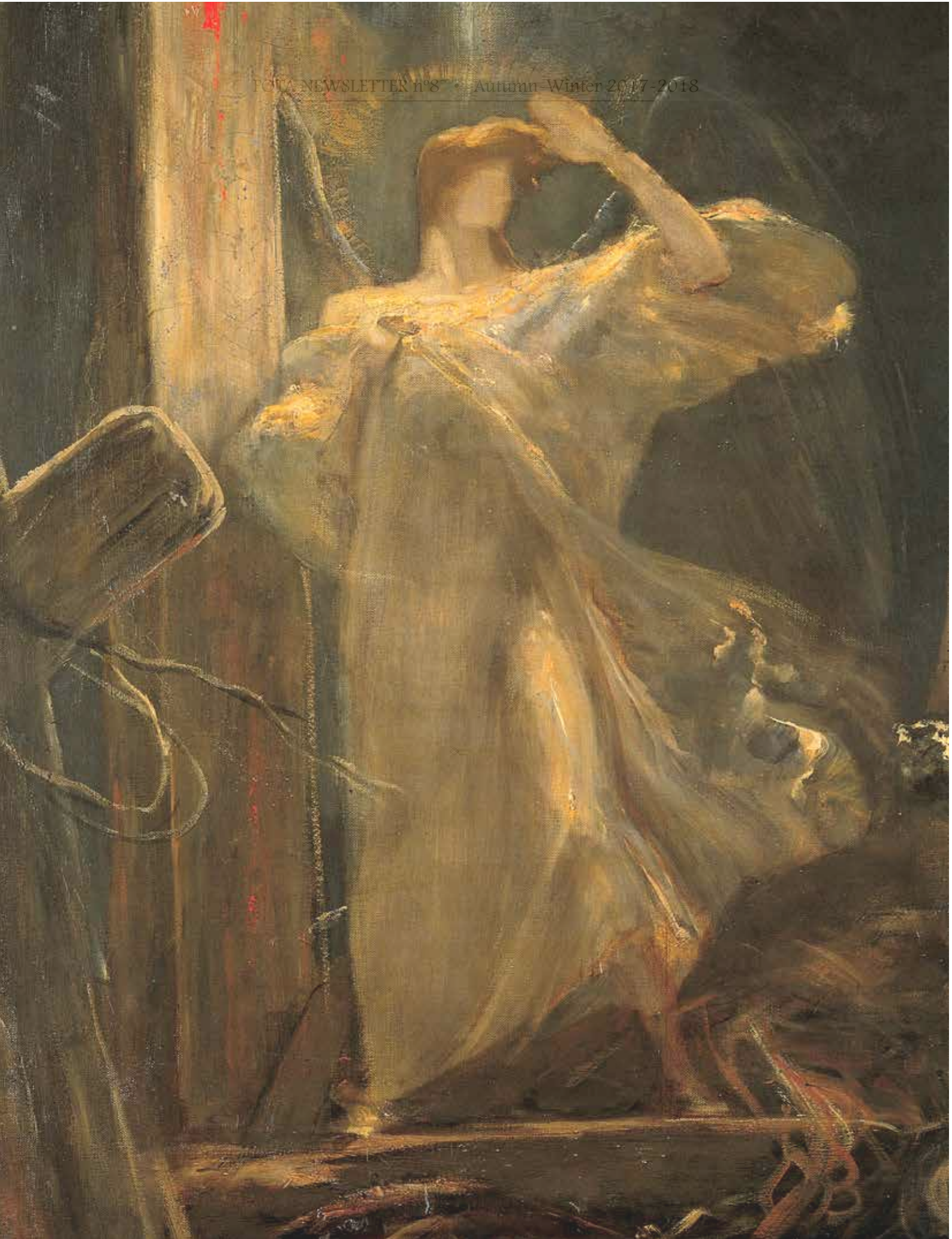
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ABOUT FOTA

FOTA (The Friends of Theosophical Archives) is a charitable organisation being formed to promote knowledge of, and support for, the Theosophical archives across the world. For this purpose, "Theosophy" is defined in the same way as in the editorial pages of *Theosophical History*, and is not restricted to any one tradition or country.

For more information visit this link: <http://www.hypatia.gr/fota/>

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Nikolaos Gyzis, Archangel, Study for the Foundation of the Faith. 1894-1895 Oil on canvas. Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece

Editorial



In this new issue of FOTA Newsletter Orlando Fernandez writes on the *Bohm-Krishnamurti Dialogues*, pointing out that its intellectual aspect may be interesting but the dialogue lacks clarity about where it may lead. Muriel Daw shares with us her article, first published on *The Eastern Buddhist* in 1983, on Christmas Humphreys. She recalls, among other things, the time Humphreys was visiting the Tibetan exile camps in India and assisted the Dalai Lama 'in creating a Council of Tibet to coordinate work for the Tibetans in exile and the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism.' Susan Steven writes a report on the work of the Theosophical Society in Scotland, the challenges the organisation faces, their future plans and the amazing work they have been doing in the library.

The editor interviews Jan Nicolaas Kind and discusses with him his work, consisting of more than three hundred interviews of Theosophists around the world. Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière shares with us her reports on Annie Besant and Anna Kingsford Conferences, both organised by the Theosophical Society in England. The two women, Annie Besant and Anna Kingsford, were social activists, feminists and very influential in esoteric organizations. Oddly both have been highly neglected by scholars.

Arnaldo Sisson writes on *Why the "Anna Kingsford" Site was Created?* focusing on the background history which led him to organise the website. Elaine Bailey writes some preliminaries on her lecture, presented during the Anna Kingsford conference, focusing on *Anna Bonus Kingsford and Edward Maitland*. Karolina Maria Hess shares some interesting material on Annie Besant and Poland. Maria Vassilopoulou comments on the issues of the Greek magazines *Pelikan* and *Ilisos*, now online at IAPSOP. We reproduce here, with the permission of the editor of the *Present Age*, the article *My dear Knight of friend or Iron Heinrich* by Esther Bright.

Two new and interesting books have been recently published: the first one is *Annie Besant Struggles & Quest* by Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière; the second one is *CWL Speaks: C. W. Leadbeater's Correspondence concerning the 1906 Crisis in the Theosophical Society* compiled by Pedro Oliveira. Leslie Price keeps on with his *Cabinet of Curiosities* featuring a number of interesting information related to Theosophical history.

Erica Georgiades



FOTA ENGLAND MEETING

Notes on the meeting of Friends of Theosophical Archives held on 18th October 2017.

Present: Kevin Tingay, Robert Gilbert, Susan Snell, Janet Lee, Alan Walker, Lynda Harris, Leslie Price. Apologies from Geraldine Beskin and Sarah Turner.

Sarah's work commitments made it difficult for her to attend meetings. She had suggested that perhaps James Mansell might be an appropriate person. He lives in Nottingham and so this might be difficult in terms of meetings. It was agreed that we would keep in touch with Sarah and explore contacts with others in the field.

Attendees reported on the Conference on Annie Besant held at 50 Gloucester Place at the end of September. It was adjudged a success. Eight countries were represented. The question of publication of papers was discussed. Possibilities are being explored for print publication for some of the material and/or on a website. JL was exploring this in the context of a distinct site for FOTA which would be separate from any official TS sites, but with the widest possible appropriate links to sources for academic researchers.

It was hoped that the new biography of Annie Besant by Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière would be sent

for review as widely as possible.

Work continues on the archival material held at 50 Gloucester Place. Funding sources were being sought for the digitizing of suitable material.

A discussion took place on material that might be held in Scotland. It was reported that Tania Cheadle was researching the involvement in Alternative Spirituality amongst women in Scotland.

Erica Georgiades' work on the Newsletter was noted with appreciation.

No new information had been received from outside the UK.

LP reported that a day conference on Anna Kingsford would be held at 50 Gloucester Place on 17th February 2018. It was hoped that occasional day conference of the historical aspects of esoteric movements and traditions might take place.

AW asked if anyone had information on the artist Beatrice Offor in respect of any possible connection to esoteric movements. No one present could help immediately.

Other issues were discussed.



Image: Rukmini Devi Wikimedia Commons

Rukmini Devi

On the occasion of Rukmini's anniversary of death, Manu S. Pillai wrote an interesting article on her influence on the "The reinvention of Bharatanatyam."

To read the article please visit this link: <http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/1y3EA1cpOU9eOW5TAMCtTJ/The-reinvention-of-Bharatanatyam.html>



Forgotten Bohemian of Sri Lanka : C. Jinarajadasa

The "Sri Lanka Guardian" published an article, by Punsara Amarasinghe, focusing on C. Jinarajadasa and the Ananda College Colombo.

Source: <https://www.slguardian.org/forgotten-bohemian-of-sri-lanka-c-jinarajadasa/>



Image: Warrington with Jinarajadasas. A. P. Warrington with C. and Dorothy Jinarajadasa. From Theosophical Society in America Archives. Theosophy Wiki.



Image: Catherine Tingley Wikimedia Commons

Point Loma

"A new exhibition at SDSU takes a hard look at Katherine Tingley and the Theosophical society of Lomaland."

Source: <http://sdcitybeat.com/culture/features/point-loma%E2%80%99s-lost-promised-land/>



James Henry Cousins & Margaret Cousins

The “Hindu” published an article by A.D. Rangarajan Madanapalle, on James and Margaret Cousins: “Though Irish by birth, James Henry Cousins and his wife, Margaret Cousins, became as ‘Indian’ as any other Indian of their time. The ardent followers of Theosophy arrived in India to serve their mentor Dr. Annie Besant in her educational and social work. Though they did not intend to stay here for long, their inseparable attachment to this land made them permanent residents of their “beloved nation”...

To read more please visit this link: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/the-cousins-and-their-indian-connection/article22847817.ece>



Annie Besant: An inconvenient woman

An article written by Manu S. Pillai focuses on Annie Besant and her life in India.

To read more please visit this link: <http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/dgXf29xjFPwLz9gYAJotDN/Annie-Besant-An-inconvenient-woman.html>



Suffragettes 100: Women's struggle begins at Bryant & May match factory in Bow 30 years before suffragettes arrive.

An article has been published focusing on the “1,500 strike women brought the factory in Fairfield Road to a standstill on July 7 and “marched out into the streets to make a noisy display before scattering”; the East London Advertiser reported at the time... Reasons for the strike followed a sensational report by socialist activist Annie Besant and the sacking of one of the girl workers.” To read more please visit this link: <http://www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/heritage/suffragettes-100-women-s-struggle-begins-at-bryant-may-match-factory-in-bow-30-years-before-suffragettes-arrive-1-5384183>



Image source: Besant - Stock Image

STRIKE COMMITTEE OF THE MATCHMAKERS' UNION.

How a poem recital in Madanapalle led to India getting its national anthem

An article was published by the “Times of India” focusing on the Indian national movement and narrating how “at the Besant Theosophical College that the original tune of the National Anthem was set.”

To read more please visit this link: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/how-a-poem-recital-in-madanapalle-led-to-india-getting-its-national-anthem/articleshow/63045339.cms>

The Bohm-Krishnamurti Dialogues

Orlando Fernandez PhD



David Bohm and Krishnamurti. Image source: <https://goo.gl/JNiRrG>



Orlando completed an MA in Western Esotericism at the University of Exeter writing a memoir on “Music and Esotericism in the Twentieth Century.” Having obtained a PhD in Mathematical Physics from the University of Paris followed by a series of postgraduate research work in King’s College of London and being trained as a scientist Orlando is also very interested in the relationship between science and the esoteric, and has recently finalised a PhD dissertation “Esoteric Quantization: The Influence of the Esoteric Imagination in the Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics.”

David Bohm (1917-1992), one of the most original physicist of the Twentieth century, and Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986) met personally in 1961 in London. The two men became close associates for more than thirty years and engaged in a common inquiry in the form of dialogues, sometimes in group discussions with other participants, but more often in one to one discussions.

Bohm’s philosophical and scientific concerns regarding the essence of the physical world, and the psychological and sociological state of mankind, found parallels in Krishnamurti’s philosophy. Bohm found in Krishnamurti a man that was totally open, capable of great passion, ready to explore things in a spirit of open dialogue and able to challenge Bohm to the limit.

For Krishnamurti the encounter with Bohm was equally thrilling as there had never been an equivalent individual on a common wavelength, sympathetic to his teaching and with the knowledge and intellectual command that came to Krishnamurti’s aid when his powers of articulation faltered. Bohm’s involvement helped to widen Krishnamurti’s audience whom also met and held discussions with several members of the scientific community thanks to Bohm.

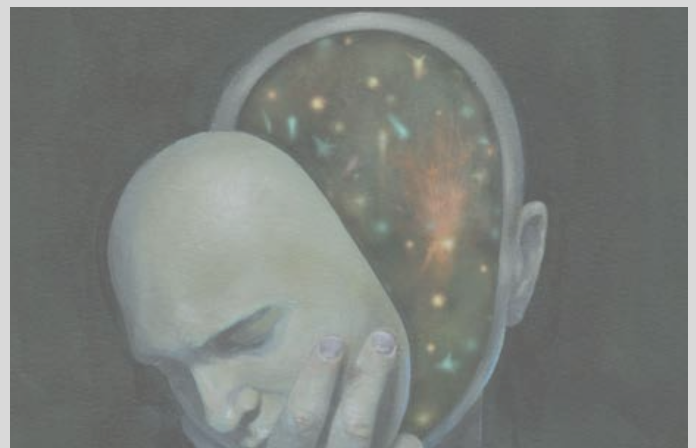
The Bohm-Krishnamurti Dialogues took place over a span of 25 years. The first six recorded dialogues occurred in August of 1965 after one of Krishnamurti’s gatherings in Saanen, Switzerland. The last dialogue took place in 1983 and has been published as *The Future of Humanity*. Many tape recordings exist of informal lunchtime conversations with the Staff and Students of the Brockwood Park School in England and the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust in Ojai, California. Many formal dialogues were recorded, transcribed and published in book form.

Bohm and Krishnamurti complemented each other in important ways. Krishnamurti had the spiritual experience that Bohm seek but never attained. He had a glimpse of it and saw in Krishnamurti a living example of this experience. For Krishnamurti, Bohm’s intellect was invaluable as he was himself incapable of the subtlety

and intelligence of articulation that he admired in Bohm. But they were suspicious of each other, and in the end these suspicion took the best of their relationship. Bohm was critical of Krishnamurti’s many contradiction and Krishnamurti felt that Bohm was dependent, insecure and showed a complete disregard for the science of Bohm, an attitude that hurt Bohm deeply.

For the contemporary Theosophist there is much to like in the Bohm-Krishnamurti dialogues. Many ideas discussed in these exchanges will resonate with the followers of today’s esoteric schools, and the dialogues contain much of intellectual value. However, beyond the purely intellectual curiosities and aha! moments that may be contained in these conversations, it is not clear what these dialogues can offer in terms of actual practice. They remain fairly theoretical in their intention and it is not clear where does these dialogues can lead. For Bohm, the dialogues didn’t help to resolve his deep insecurities and it is not clear that they helped him reaching that spiritual experience that he seek so desperately.

For more about the relationship between Bohm and Krishnamurti and more particularly on the esoteric aspects of the philosophy of nature of David Bohm see *Esoteric Quantization, The Esoteric Imagination in David Bohm’s Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics*. Orlando Fernandez. Exeter University 2016. (download at <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/23551>)





CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS, 1901-1983

A Pioneer of Buddhism in the West

An appreciation by Muriel Daw



You may call me a Theosophist-Buddhist or a Buddhist-Theosophist. I answer happily to both. Theosophy gives the overall picture, and Mahayana Buddhism the individual practice. At the age of five I was fortunate enough to discover Theosophy in the Public Library in the shape of a book on Thought Forms by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater. After the war, came further education, and making a living. Then I discovered the London Buddhist Society, and Christmas Humphreys accepted me as a pupil.

Our friend Christmas Humphreys has died again. ‘Dying again’ and ‘being born again’ were favourite terms of his, and he was quick to cut across the notion of life and death as a pair of opposites: “Birth and death are the opposites, Life transcends both.”

In 1924 he accepted that his dharma for this life was working in the West ‘to publish and make known the principles of Buddhism, and to encourage the study and application of those principles.’ To this end, together with his wife, he founded a Buddhist Society in London. From that moment until his death on 13th April 1983, nearly sixty years later, he never wavered for a moment from that dedication. At the age of 82 he was still the active President of the Buddhist Society; he had just completed a new article for its magazine *The Middle Way*; he had redrafted his history of Buddhism in Britain; a new radio programme was recorded ready for broadcasting, and he had just written a new poem. We could always count on an immediate smile, a pithy comment, and a helping hand from our ever young-in-heart President. After a long life spent in untiringly and unstintedly giving himself for the good of others, he was still steadily ‘walking on’ towards the goal of enlightenment for all beings. When he died he was, relatively speaking, looking forward to continuing his endeavours in whatever next life he might be useful.

Born on 15th February 1901 into a family famous for its associations with law, he was christened Travers Christmas, names which had been traditional in the Humphreys family for nearly two centuries. Nevertheless, during his happy childhood he was dubbed ‘Toby,’ and remained Toby Humphreys to his family and multitudinous friends for the rest of his life. The family’s motto ‘Be Always Just’ gave him food for thought which in later life led to an easy acceptance of the law of karma. He grew up with a natural, joyous Christian faith until the sudden war-time death of his much-loved elder brother. This shocked him into the understanding that no dogmatic form of religion could ever be sufficiently all-embracing to satisfy his needs. At the age of 17, after much self-inquiry and reflection, he recognised that the Buddha offered a Way for himself and for many others like him.

His horizons widened when he went up to Cambridge

University to read Law. He found new and stimulating friends; but, above all, he discovered Theosophy the love of the divine knowledge to be found at the heart of all religions. To his delight he learned that the founders of the Theosophical Society had been Buddhist. Both had taken Pansil; Mme Blavatsky had studied under Tibetan teachers, and Colonel Olcott had done valuable work for Buddhism in Ceylon. With his innate wholeheartedness the young Christmas Humphreys, already in love with the mystery of the totality of all-in-one and one-in-all, formed a determination to follow a practical Buddhist way which might perhaps help his dogmatically-minded English fellow-countrymen to open their minds and hearts to the Buddha. He knew that the ordinary Englishman of that time did not want robes and ritual, but rather a practical and ethical basis for his everyday life, and help in learning to see reality more clearly.

The year 1924 saw the formal opening of both aspects of his future greatness.

Early in the year Christmas Humphreys was called to the Bar; this was the commencement of a distinguished career as fine as that of his famous father. He was later to rise to be Senior Prosecuting Counsel, then a Q.C., and finally to become a Judge at the Old Bailey; all the time naturally putting his Buddhist principles into practice and becoming known as ‘the Gentle Judge.’ On November 19th 1924, together with Miss Aileen Faulkner (his future wife), he founded *The Buddhist Lodge*. This later became *The Buddhist Society, London*, and was to prove the pioneer framework for building up the Buddhist movement in Britain. The new Founding President had a dynamic personality and capacity for leadership; a power of vision with an intuitive sense of right action and timing; and, above all, an impressive ability to teach. All this made it possible for a new transmission of the Dharma to take place in the West. Not only did the Dharma flow directly through him but, by being President of the Society, he acted as a catalyst in transforming the climate of English opinion towards acceptance of the seemingly strange new modes of thought flowing from Ceylon, Thailand, Burma, and later from Japan and Tibet. After all, this was no freakish youngster, this was a highly cultured English gentleman whose intelligence and judgement could only be regarded with deep respect.

From very small beginnings the newly-formed Society took shape. Since the last third of the 19th century there had been a flow of English translations from Buddhist Scriptures, almost all Theravada, but these were mainly a basis for academic study. Now here were laymen, led by a teacher with a diamond mind, demanding to know: "How can we apply these teachings to our ordinary lives?" There were no precedents for such an adaptation to Western life. When the President married, he wrote a wedding ceremony for himself and future Western Buddhists to use. It soon became necessary to compose a funeral service which could also be performed by lay people, and this was still in use for his own cremation nearly sixty years later. There was no English Sangha; but English Buddhism was laying its own foundations. While ready and waiting to welcome visiting teachers, such as the Anagarika Dharmapala from Ceylon, the platform was deliberately kept open for all schools of Buddha-Dharma.

For many years Christmas Humphreys and his beloved wife, always known as 'Puck,' ran a hospitable and friendly house. This was far larger than necessary for a young couple, so that there should be space in their home for a Buddhist meeting room, a shrine, and a library. It was not until 1943 that this devoted pair, who would be inseparable companions until her death fifty years later, had nurtured the young Society into sufficient maturity to necessitate its own larger premises. During these years knowledge of Theravada grew apace. Christmas Humphreys was an inspired speaker, and by now he had written four books on Buddhism, three on law, and two books of poems. So much vitality, joy and love flowed through his whole being that frequently it could only find expression in poetry. He had many and varied interests-from music to kendo, ballet to herbalism, Jungian thought to the Shakespearean Authorship Society-but equally he had a calm, deep, meditative side to his nature. Also he was unfailingly generous with money, goods, help and encouragement; always he watched for ways in which he could aid anyone. "Can I help you?" was one of his favourite phrases.

With such a man as this, is it surprising that the greatest formative experience during this period was the visit to London of Dr. D. T. Suzuki in connection with the 1936 meeting of the World Congress of Faiths? To have an inner contact with Dr. Suzuki, to see Zen in action, to have a wider glimpse of the glorious realm of Mahayana of which the Zen School is part-all this deepened the understanding of Christmas Humphreys and gave him an extra sparkle. The immediacy of Zen spoke directly to the heart of the man and filled his need.

The war came, and the Society continued its meetings in bomb-torn London.

Conditions were extremely difficult, but nevertheless the Society grew. Instead of a group on Mondays only, there was

a demand for several meetings a week; some were open for publicly making known all schools of Buddhism, and others were for members who wished to meditate or study more deeply the tenets of any particular school. Gradually a Council was formed to run what was now becoming a national organisation. Christmas Humphreys continued to lead his own pupils in a now Zen-oriented Monday Group, and acted as President, Chairman and Publisher to the Society as a whole, being able to delegate many of the other duties.

Immediately after the war, Christmas Humphreys had the opportunity to combine his duty as a barrister with his love of Buddhism in a prolonged stay in Japan. This, of course, gave him the opportunity to seek out Dr. Suzuki in Kamakura and they were delighted to see each other after a gap of ten years. Christmas Humphreys continued to spend as much time with him as possible, literally sitting at his feet. He prepared and edited a complete edition of Sensei's work in English, and was delighted to be appointed Agent in Europe for all his writings published there. He accepted as a sacred duty the task of keeping all Suzuki's English writings in print all the time, and his sincere carrying out of this obligation for the rest of his life has helped thousands of Westerners who would not otherwise have had the good fortune to contact Buddha-Dharma in this inspired way. Future visits of Dr. Suzuki to London were planned and later took place in 1953, 1954 and 1958, forging inseparable bonds with Zen and English Buddhism, and laying a firm groundwork for the later flowering of Zen in the West.

Another theme came to the fore while Christmas Humphreys was in Japan and continued to develop throughout his subsequent tour of other Buddhist countries. Since the day of the Buddha the transmission of his teaching had slowly spread during the centuries, and each country had come to specialise in certain aspects of the Dharma. As the living teaching was carried North, South and East, it developed and, being a way of life as well as a religion, it naturally became closely interlinked with the language and customs of each nation. It spread slowly and steadily; it had time to mature as it became fully integrated in each host country. However, after twenty-five centuries Buddhism had come West in the age of speed and instantaneous communication, creating new and interesting problems.

In the short space of one lifetime all schools have reached the English-speaking world. This provides an almost overwhelming mixture of teachings and scriptures, inextricably mingled with the specialist applications of Northern, Southern and Eastern schools. This wisdom comes West dressed in richly woven exotic robes. The first of the many books written by Christmas Humphreys was entitled *What Is Buddhism?*, and one of his lifelong endeavours was to extract the essence of the Buddha's teaching in order that the West might weave its own national costume and learn to live the Way in its own everyday experience. To this end, after much meditation, he compiled

Twelve Principles of Buddhism which all schools could accept as basic. On this foundation English practice could develop.

Another problem raised by the age of instantaneous communication is that of sudden bulk confrontation of these widespread schools holding specialist tenets. Christmas Humphreys felt it essential for all Buddhists to find out where they agreed rather than where they differed, and to proclaim the Dharma which they held in common. His *Twelve Principles* helped to avoid sectarianism and to soften the cultural shock as masses of Buddhist monks and laymen came face to face for the first time. Dr. G. P. Malalasekera was another great figure of our time who saw this danger, and when he founded the *World Fellowship of Buddhists* Christmas Humphreys was happy to become a Vice-President. Through the work of such men Buddhism is consolidating throughout the world.

On his return to England, Christmas Humphreys continued working with the ever-growing Buddhist Society and celebrated his 50th birthday with the publication of Buddhism in a Penguin paperback. This book has done more than any other to propagate the Dharma in Britain, and perhaps in the whole Western world. It has become the standard text-book, is available everywhere, and has already sold over a million copies. Here was the turning point; from being of minor fringe interest, Buddhism became a talked-of subject. Streams of people came for more information; and groups formed in several English towns, wishing to be affiliated to the main Society.

Now the seedling Dharma was well established and must be brought to maturity. Lecturing, writing, radio, television, teaching in the Society, were all dealt with. The resultant letters and requests were invariably answered on the same day. He always carried what he jokingly referred to as his N.T.B.D. list (short for the next-things-to-be-done); and in spare moments between all this and his demanding legal career his buoyant heart still overflowed into poetry. His ever-ready (often impish) wit and twinkling eye endeared him to all.

During this period came contact with the Tibetans and, at the request of the Dalai Lama, he visited and reported on all of the exile camps in India, and then assisted His Holiness in creating a *Council of Tibet* to co-ordinate work for the Tibetans in exile and the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism.

These were busy years, and gradually Buddhism became completely accepted in England. Buddhist lay-groups were forming and re-forming in various towns, for the first time independently of the efforts made from the Buddhist Society in London. Monks from various schools were being invited to teach; Ceylon and Thailand were enlarging their missions, and the Dharma thrived.

In 1977 came the outward and visible sign of the maturity of his life's work.

Christmas Humphreys, as Founding President of the oldest and largest Buddhist organisation in Great Britain, was invited to be present at the Thanksgiving Service in St. Paul's Cathedral in commemoration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. This Royal mark of recognition showed Buddhism to be fully accepted as one of the resident religions of England.

Now, in the year of his death, there are in Great Britain about a hundred Buddhist organisations. They range from monasteries with several acres of ground, through University groups and Societies with their own premises, down to those with a dozen or so members who meet in private houses, in the same way that the Buddhist Society itself started. The Buddha-Dharma is in the British Isles to stay!

How is it possible for us to express our gratitude for a man of such nobility?

We can only marvel that one person was able to do so much to help so many. ~one whom his presence touched remained unchanged; indeed, the warm radiance of his life's work is rippling throughout Western civilisation wherever a place is found for the Buddha's word to be spoken.

Thank you, Christmas Humphreys.

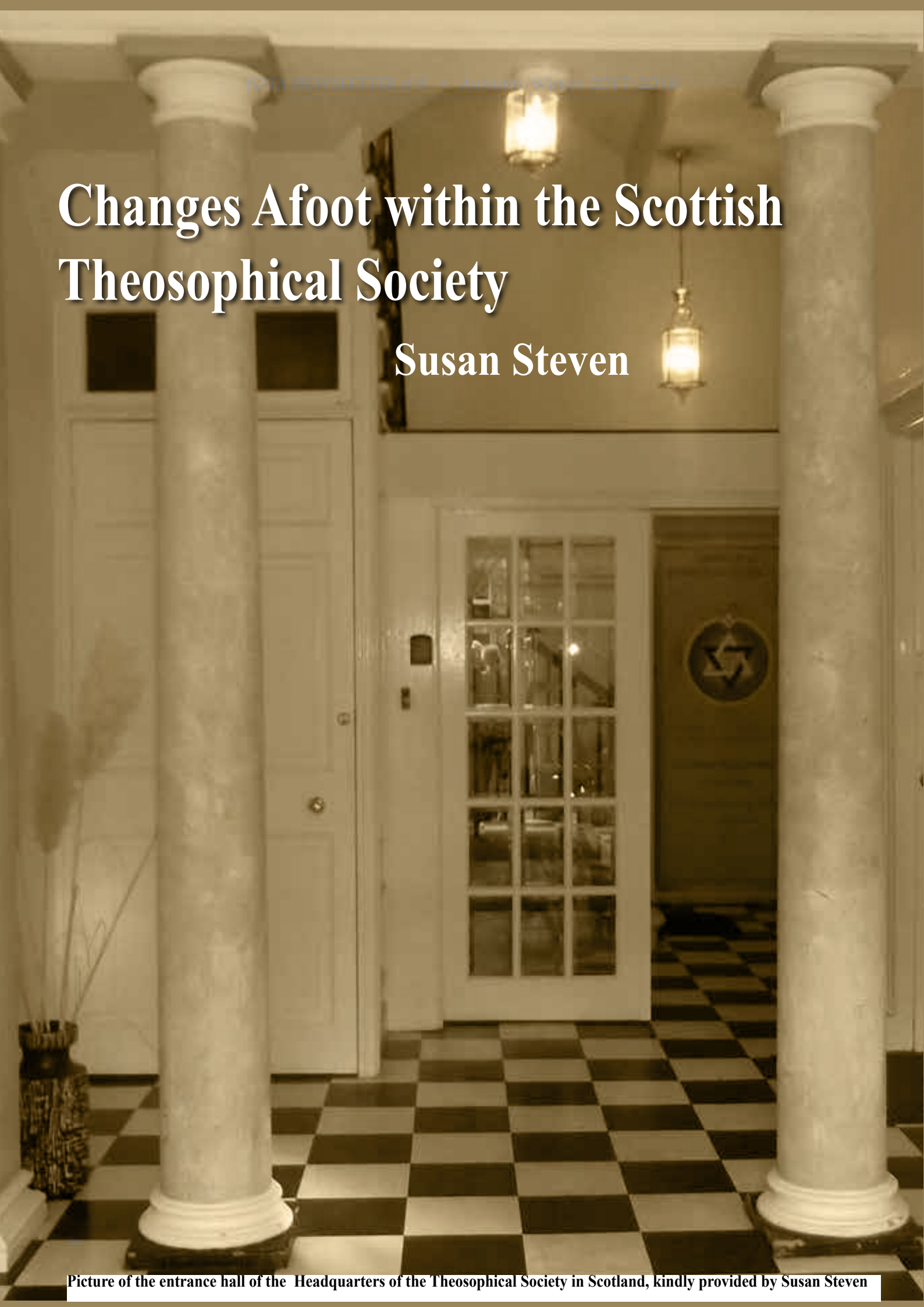
During his life Christmas Humphreys wrote more than 30 books. Of these, his own favourites were:

- 1935. *Concentration and Meditation*. London: The Buddhist Society.
- 1948. *Via Tokyo*. London: Hutchinson.
- 1949. *Zen Buddhism*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- 1951. *Buddhism*. England: Penguin Books.
- 1952. *A Western Approach to Zen*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- 1956. *Walk On! London*: The Buddhist Society.
- 1971. *Buddhist Poems*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- 1977. *The Search Within*. ? : Sheldon Press.
- 1978. *Both Sides of the Circle*. London: George Allen & Unwin.



Changes Afoot within the Scottish Theosophical Society

Susan Steven





Susan Steven became National Treasurer of the TS in Scotland in 2010 and continued in the role for 4 years. She is now the Trustee Treasurer of the Charity, of the Theosophical Society in Scotland.

The Charter for the Theosophical Society in Scotland was signed by the then President of the Society Annie Besant at Adyar on the 3rd March 1910.

The first recorded member of the TS in Scotland was registered in 1892, his name was W. H. Marshall. He lived in Callander Perthshire and was recorded as unattached; the second member was E. Hardcastle registered to the Glasgow Lodge and this person transferred to South Africa in 1914.

Both before and after the Charter there have been numerous Lodges throughout Scotland. Through the endeavours of its Membership, 28 Great King Street was purchased as the Scottish Headquarters on 5th April 1911 and was officially opened by Annie Besant on the 3rd of June 1911.

Since its heyday here in Scotland, in the early to mid 1900s, the Society has seen a decline in membership and more important, a decline in the membership of younger peoples. The management of our affairs and the upkeep of our headquarters became an increasingly onerous task laid at the feet of those who were still able to give their services, on what had become a nearly full-time basis. The increase in such Management being due to the many changes in business and legal matters associated with leasing parts of the building for commercial activities, in order to procure sufficient income to maintain it.

More important to us was the lack of use of our very important Library. The Library, with no Librarian to manage it, was shut away for the safekeeping of its contents. This, together with its inaccessible position within the building, rendered it truly as a "White Elephant".

The catalyst for change appeared out of the blue in late

2011, when we learned that a very old Theosophist (101 years old), who had been unattached for most of his adult life and lived in the far North of Scotland, had bequeathed to the TS in Scotland the bulk of his assets, with the proviso that we put the money towards Theosophical Education here in Scotland.

On this basis, we began to organise Speakers Events, offering free entry to all members of the Theosophical Society. However, as time passed, the work involved in maintaining the physical assets of the TS and the new challenge of organising events became an even heavier responsibility. At this point our current way of operating was unsustainable, not least because of lack of new members coming through the ranks to take over the business management. It felt like we needed to do something differently, to be able to get back to the basic tenet of Theosophy.

The idea to sell our beloved HQ and build or acquire a purpose designed Depository for our important Library began to materialise. As did ideas about what we wanted to do with our Library of important books, dating from the 17th century, including works by Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Thomas Taylor, Emmanuel Swedenborg, Eliphas Levi, E A Wallis Budge together with an enormous section of writings by Theosophists and a very good section on all religious and philosophical belief systems.

We considered it appropriate to apply for Charitable Status as a means of offering the Library as a Reference Library accessible to all comers, either by visiting the library by appointment or by Internet enquiries. It was decided to name the Charity "The Theosophical Society in Scotland Charity" and its aims would be:

Advance Education in the fields of religion, science and philosophy and the comparative study thereof, through maintaining a library accessible to academics and students as well as the general public and thereby to promote spiritual welfare.

To promote religious and/or racial harmony through promotion of understanding and fellowship among people of all races, nationalities, philosophies and religions.

Implementing the changes necessary to form a Charity which is independent of the Theosophical Society in Scotland has not been an easy task and the Membership are to be congratulated for their willingness to see the bigger picture, thereby, enabling the changes that are taking place. We still have some way to go to see the dream become fully operable but our plan is unfolding with grace and enthusiasm.

Our Charity has now completed its first year (incorporated on the 3rd February 2017) and the administration work necessary to establish its legal entity is in place.

The Library of books has been totally overhauled with every book, journal and pamphlet handled and assessed (over 7000 handlings in 14 months by two dedicated members). We had quite a few duplicate and even triplicate books, as members from the early 1900s had bequeathed the contents of their own very important collections.

The Trustees of the Charity feel that the surplus books should be offered first to other Theosophical Libraries. We are presently in contact with such Libraries and hope that the dispersal of books will happen in the next few months.

Of greater importance as we establish the Depository, is our need to add to the Library, which seems to have stood still for the past 50 years. We feel a need to embrace new thought, new research and new findings. We consider it of paramount importance that a reiteration of the old ideas and esoteric principles, which are currently pouring forth from many sources in the guise of new ideas, should find space on our library shelves in order to reinforce the ancient and other teachings brought together under the three objects of the Theosophical Society. We feel the present time is exciting and want to be able to expand and share on the bigger stage.

In respect of our proposal to build a Depository, purpose built to suit the books we have and with space to spare

for new books. We are very fortunate in having engaged the services of an internationally renowned Architect, who was interested in designing a library for the Charity – at the present time we are awaiting the outcome of a planning application to build the Depository in the car-park of 28 Great King Street. We expect to know the outcome of our application in the next few months.

Thereafter, 28 Great King Street will be sold to fund the building of the new library (Depository). Before the sale we will apply for 28 Great King Street to be converted back from a commercial property to a residential property. We work toward it being sympathetically upgraded to include all of the original features, which have never altered since it was built in the early 1800s.

What of the Theosophical Society in Scotland. The Society will continue to operate under the rules as laid down by International Headquarters. The Lodges will continue to encourage membership and hopefully gain new members from interaction with the Charity. The new Depository, wherever it is situated will continue to be a registered address for the TS in Scotland, for however long this facility is required. The TS in Scotland and the TS in Scotland Charity, which function on a symbiotic basis, have agreed to jointly fund talks and events for the benefit of members and the general public.

In embracing a New Way the Trustees of the Charity, the Office Bearers of the Society and the Membership hope to bring together like-minded people from all walks of life.

An outline of the work leading up to the creation of the Charity:

Susan Steven became National Treasurer of the TS in Scotland upon the sudden death of Brian Gear in late 2010 (being elected constitutionally in 2011) and continued in the role for 4 years. During this time it became apparent that the best option available to manage the complex business affairs of the Society was to form a Company Limited by Guarantee until such time as a sustainable remedy could be found. Susan became the Finance Director of the Company (with 2 other Directors). The Company was formed on the 30th January 2015 and from that date Susan along with the two other Directors, has worked toward creating the Charity. The Charity came into being on the 3rd February 2017. Susan's involvement has been a very full-on 7 years, of what became a big chunk of her daily life.

She is now the Trustee Treasurer of the Charity, with

2 other Trustees (who were also the original 2 other Directors of the now defunct Company).

Gary Kidgell came on board during the time when the Company was formed in 2015. He has always maintained his independence in order to be able continue his own studies and career.

However, although he has not held official office since his time as Organising Secretary of the TS in Scotland, he has been a stalwart member of the team. Without his in-depth knowledge on the many and varied topics of the material held in the Library, we could not have reached the point we are at today.

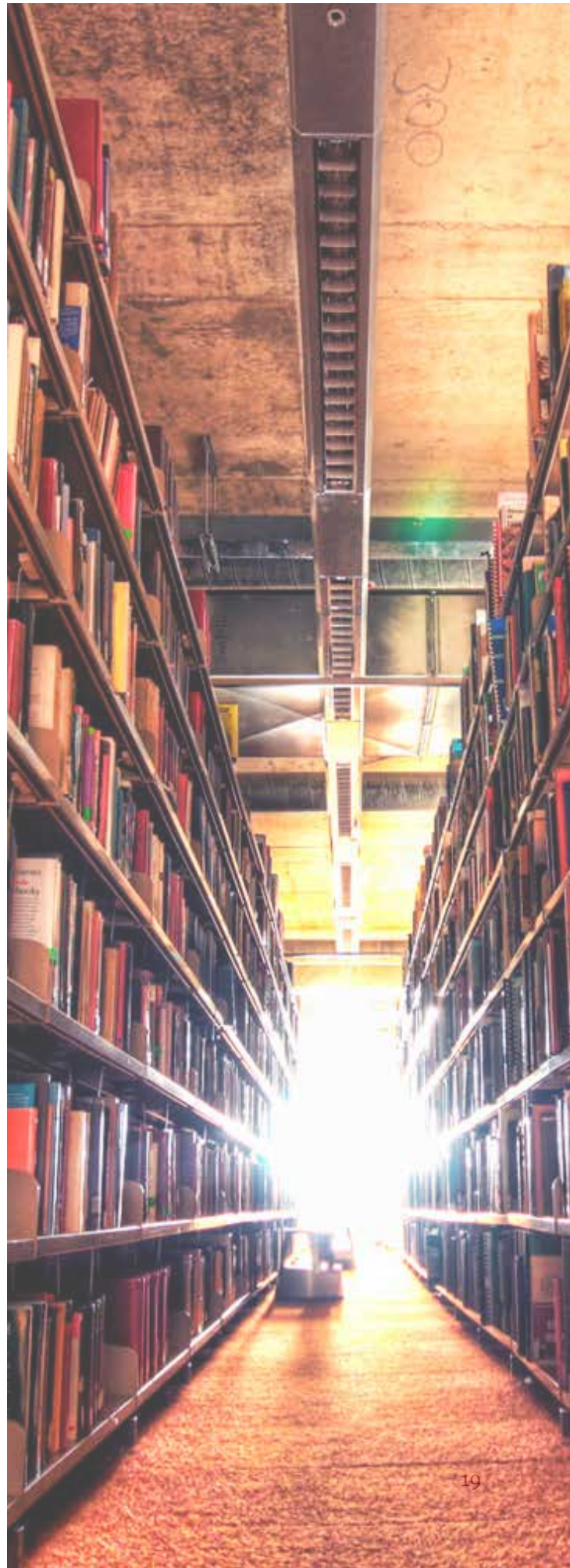
Gary has accepted the role as Librarian and has committed to continue in this role in order to see the job through - to see the books resting in their new home and hopefully beyond, as the work to propel the aims of the Charity will have only just begun.

Gary (from Dundee) and Susan began working together in 2011 in their respective roles of Organising Secretary and National Treasurer and formed a strong and ethical working relationship. It is this relationship, which has carried them forward in the work they have undertaken. Gary (from Dundee) and Susan (from Inverhess-shire) have worked diligently and without any fuss on the job of coordinating the Library contents. Throughout 2017 they have travelled from their respective homes to Edinburgh many times for periods of up to 3 days to work long hours in the Library listing and sifting through the vast material subjects.

At the time of writing they have just completed the Library Content Lists for inclusion on the Charity Website: theosophyscotlandlibrary.org

This report covers the early stages of the Project from Conception to Action. At all times through the inception period, what we are working towards, has always felt the Right Thing To Do - Its hard to put into words - It has always felt like - Being guided towards the goal!

We should be very happy to let you know how we progress at the end of another year of work.



ANNIE BESANT CONFERENCE

Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière



Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière is Senior Lecturer (Maître de Conférences) at Sorbonne Université - Faculté des lettres.

On Saturday and Sunday 30 September and 1 October 2017, the Theosophical Society in England (TSE) held the first ever international conference on Annie Besant (1847-1933), at the TSE Headquarters at 50 Gloucester Place, London. The purpose of the two-day conference was to bring together researchers on all aspects of Besant's public life and work, so as to reflect on her ideological and spiritual evolution within the religious, ethical, social, and political context of her time. The call for papers was very successful and no less than sixteen researchers took part in the conference, that was attended by over fifty people in all: TS members and/or academics and researchers from twelve different countries and four continents.

I had the honour to chair the first day, which was primarily concerned with Annie Besant's public work as a feminist, secularist, socialist and anti-imperialist. The chair of the second day, during which papers mostly focussed on Besant as a Theosophist, was the award-winning poet and composer Kurt Leland, national lecturer for the Theosophical Society in America.

Many of the participants first met informally on the Friday night at the Beehive, a pub not far from the TSE HQ, where Kim Farnell, the president of the Astrological Lodge in London, had booked a large table. This social gathering set the tone for what proved to be a most friendly and open-minded conference.

On the Saturday morning, Jenny Baker, national president of the TSE, officially welcomed participants. The first paper was delivered by Dr Jean-Michel Yvard of the University of Angers, France. Yvard's research field focuses on the question of the secularization of religious and ethical concepts in Britain, so in his paper "Atheist or Agnostic? Annie Besant's Religious Beliefs," Yvard explored the exact nature of Besant's beliefs as a secularist. This was

followed by Deborah Lavin's paper on "Annie Besant's Neo-Malthusian Passion." Lavin is a member of the executive of both the Socialist History Society and Freethought History Research, and her paper re-appraised the context of Besant's decision to go to trial alongside Charles Bradlaugh in 1877 under the Obscenity Law for re-publishing the birth control pamphlet "The Fruits of Philosophy." This led to questions about Besant's particular understanding of feminism, and of neo-malthusianism, then and later in her life. Besant's socialism was the topic of the third paper, by Dr Marie Terrier, that dealt with the "Link," the weekly paper Besant edited and published as a socialist, shortly before she joined the TS.

After a lunch break during which many lively discussions went on, Yves Mühlematter M.A., from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, discussed Besant's translations of the Bhagavad Gita. His thesis was that modes of translation reflected an inner discourse within the TS on "how to access occult knowledge," in which fundamental questions of heterodoxy and orthodoxy were negotiated. His paper was followed by Dr Allan Johnson's. Johnson is Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Surrey, and his talk was meant to draw attention to George Bernard Shaw's dramatic portrayals of Besant in his "Plays Pleasant" as meaningful sources for better understanding Besant's life and work, as well as evidence of her sustained influence on modernist literature and drama. I then gave my own paper that discussed the reasons why Annie Besant was eventually excluded from the National Secular Society in 1891, over two years after she had joined the TS. The conference switched to India with Mriganka Mukhopadhyay's paper on Besant and Bengal, for Mukhopadhyay — who studied Modern Indian History at Presidency University, Kolkata and Ambedkar University, Delhi — is currently doing a PhD at the University of Amsterdam on the history

of the TS in Bengal during late 19th and early 20th century. As a transition to the second day, Kurt Leland explored five potential sources of academic bias with respect to Besant's involvement with the TS and its teachings.

After closing remarks, the first day ended for some of the participants with a delicious vegan dinner booked in an Indian restaurant by the TSE.

The second day opened with a paper from Wim Leys, the General Secretary of the Dutch section of the TS, who offered "a Dutch perspective on Annie Besant." Leys showed a number of photos of Besant from the Dutch TS archives, and a rare film reel of Besant and Krishnamurti at Omen. This was followed by Kurt Leland's second paper, on "Annie Besant: Philosopher King," that focused on the under-explored influence of Plato on Besant and her theosophy, and reassessed her as a philosopher in her own right. Kim Farnell then presented her "Alan Leo's Project," insisting on the astrologer as Besant's friend and travel companion. Thus doing, Farnell showed us a photograph of Besant at the wheel of the car Leo had given to her in 1911. The morning session ended with Daniel Guégén's beautiful presentation. Guégén researches the relation between esotericism and fin-de-siècle art, and talked of the influence of Besant and Krishnamurti on the work of the Belgian symbolist painter Jean Delville. Once again, this was followed by a most lively lunch break, taken in the library of the TS HQ.

The afternoon session opened on art history and theosophy again, with the sociologist of religions Massimo Introvigne's paper on "Annie Besant and the Portraits of the Masters." The next talk focussed on "Annie Besant, Yoga and Meditation". It was delivered by Prof. Karl Baier, the Head of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Vienna, who discussed the lectures Besant had given at Adyar in December 1893 on "The Building of the Cosmos."

The following tea and coffee break turned into Annie Besant's 170th birthday party, thanks to a beautiful cake baked by Dino Moretti, which Kurt Leland and I got to cut. This was the perfect occasion for the official launch and signing of my English translation of my biography of Annie Besant ("Annie Besant: Struggles and Quest") that was first published in French two years ago by Editions Adyar, then in German this spring by Aquamarin Verlag, and now in English (a revised and augmented version) by the Theosophical Publishing House, London. Kurt Leland also signed copies of his annotated compilation of

Besant's theosophical writings, "Invisible Worlds: Annie Besant on Psychic and Spiritual Development," published in 2014 by Quest Books. Then, as during all other breaks, participants could also have a look at the Annie Besant memorabilia exhibited in the tea room: photographs, letters, autographs and even a pair a beautiful embroidered slippers.

John L. Crow could not make it to London from the USA, so the last afternoon session opened with a video of his presentation of his website "Esoteric Fragments." Crow holds a Ph.D. in American religious history from Florida State University, and devised a most useful interactive map of Annie Besant's US tours. This was followed by another short film, this time of Besant laying the cornerstone of the HQ of the TS in America, in Wheaton, Illinois, during a co-masonic ceremony held in August 1926. Prof. Gwyn Hocking then gave us a presentation of Annie Besant's "Occult Chemistry." Hocking, who is Professor of Material Chemistry at the University of London, also offered copies of his book on "World Religion & History Discovered by Remote Viewing." The conference ended most appropriately on post-graduate Alejandro Ninin's paper on Annie Besant's "Sixty years of public work," that allowed us to wrap up the topic nicely.

As rightly underlined by Kurt Leland in his closing remarks, the conference went smoothly thanks to a fantastic and devoted team: Leslie Price, the archivist of the TSE was the programme host; Damon Scothern, the general manager at London TS HQ was in charge of audio-visual; Colin Boyce, the publicist of the London TS HQ took, was the official photographer, along with the French photo-journalist Dimitri Jean, who took great candid pictures of the participants during breaks. Janet Lee, a TSE board member for History and Archives coordinated the arrangements as practical host, and the last afternoon session began with her getting a surprise thank-you bouquet from the chairs and participants.

The International two-day conference on Annie Besant clearly was very successful. The various papers delivered then were of such high standard that TPH is thinking of publishing them. The conference also allowed researchers from very different backgrounds, TS members or not, to meet and to discuss Besant in a very friendly and tolerant atmosphere. We all left intellectually the richer for it, but also with new friendships and promises to meet again.





Annie Besant
(1847-1933)

Struggles and
Quest

Muriel
Pécastaing-Boissière

Annie Besant

From the foreword to the book **Annie Besant (1847-1933) Struggles and Quest**

Author: Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière

Publisher: Theosophical Publishing House, London.

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Book: 325pp Paperback

Originally published in French under the title *Annie Besant (1847-1933) : La lutte et la quête* by Editions Adyar Paris.

It is impossible to study late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Britain without coming across Annie Besant's name. I first encountered it while researching my doctorate dissertation on the social status of Victorian actresses — because of Besant's connection both with Fabian playwright George Bernard Shaw and with the suffragettes. Later on, as a senior lecturer in Victorian studies at the Sorbonne, I had my students work on Besant's socialist fight alongside the matchgirls on strike in the East End of London at the end of the 1880s. Focussing on the condition of Victorian women in my seminars, I often dwelt on Besant's pioneering struggle in the 1870s for the right to information on birth control. Meanwhile, when preparing classes on the British Empire, I realized that Besant's election as president of the Indian National Congress in 1917 had been almost completely forgotten in the West.

My interest in Annie Besant intensified when I decided to refocus my academic research on the underestimated links between the late-Victorian socialist movement, the contemporaneous fight for women's rights and the spiritual and occult revival. I then began to work on understanding the full extent of Besant's personal evolution. I discovered that in the main two biographies of Besant — the first by Arthur Nethercot in 1960-1963, the second by Anne Taylor in 1992 — her conversion to Theosophy is described as yet another fracture in a life these two authors thought to be fragmented to the point of incoherence.

Neither managed to establish a link between Besant's freethinking, socialism, feminism, criticism of the Empire, and conversion to Theosophy. To make matters worse, both works suffer from gender-biased interpretations and prejudices regarding Theosophy that are so strong as to impair their reflective abilities.

I therefore decided to try and remedy the situation, and to write a new biography of Annie Besant. My purpose was not to uncover still potentially unexplored archives, but rather to make Besant both better known and better understood by the general public. The logic behind Besant's evolution, leading from an early religious crisis to secularism, feminism, socialism, Theosophy, and Indian nationalism, had barely been addressed, so I hoped to demonstrate the underlying continuities in her long life of struggles. To do so, I chose to recall and to explain Besant's choices and actions in their moral, social, and spiritual contexts, while relying primarily on her own writings.

This book is the result of that decision, which, during five years of research and reflection I never came to regret — so much have Besant's struggles and quest continued to fascinate me.

TO OBTAIN THE BOOK VISIT THIS LINK:

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THE INTRODUCTORY PRICE IS £10

Annie Besant & Poland

Karolina Maria Hess MA





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The theme of the 2017 London conference devoted to the history of Theosophical Society, centered around the extraordinary figure of Annie Wood Besant (1847–1933) inspired me, as a scholar of the history and ideas of Polish Theosophy, to assemble and organize in a separate text the materials concerning Besant that can be found in Polish-language sources. Besides information, in archival documents and literary works, concerning her visit in Poland, other references to Besant are to be found. I will briefly present them in this outline.

Polish Theosophists, most active in 1920s and 30s, maintained a lively collaboration with Theosophical centers in other countries. Many renowned persons visited Poland on an invitation from the Polish Theosophical Society. Among visitors to Poland (some came more than once) were the presidents of the international Theosophical Society in Adyar, Annie

Besant, and George Sydney Arundale (1878–1945), with his wife Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904–1986); James Ingall Wedgwood (1883–1951), who was a member of the Theosophical Society and a bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church (which was initially connected with the Theosophical movement); Anna Kamensky (1897–1952), the Secretary of the Russian Theosophical Society; Augustus Francis Knudsen (1869–1944) and many others.

A reference to Annie Besant, however, appears in Polish literature long before any Theosophical structures were established in the country, not to mention an official branch of the TS. This is due to an autobiographical essay by Władysław Stanisław Reymont (1867–1925), later Literary Noble Prize winner: *Summer 1894 abroad*, in which he described his holiday travels.¹ Among other places, Reymont visited London, having been invited to accompany Dr. Józef



Photograph from Annie Besant's visit in Poland in August 1927, published in the magazine „Głos Polski. Dodatek Ilustrowany” [The Voice of Poland. Illustrated Supplement], no. 242, 1927, p. 7.

Drzewiecki, a physician and homeopath, who was going there to attend a Theosophical congress, and promised Reymont to take him to the event. The international congress took place in the Blavatsky Lodge, on July 13–15 1894. Reymont relayed his impressions from the meeting, but he remained silent about some of its elements, which he explicitly pointed out. As an external guest he had been instructed about the overt and secret parts and had pledged silence about the latter.

The first session was chaired by George Robert Stowe Mead (1863–1933), whom Reymont described as a “very nice thirty-something man with a cold and penetrating gaze”.² Next to him on the podium sat “Blavatsky’s famous companion”, Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), present was also William Quan Judge (1851–1896). Reymont wrote extensively about the addresses

of the delegates from various countries, as well as about their appearances, and the decorations of the room, including the ornate inscriptions and the extraordinary portrait of Helena P. Blavatsky.³ He devoted most attention, however, to Annie Besant, writing:

The night was falling down slowly; lamps were lit and the session resumed. When Olcott stood up and started talking about Mahatma, who brought him various trinkets from the other world, a new personality entered the room: a slim woman, dressed all in white and resembling Isis. They all rose, until she walked across the room, tilting her head to the left, and sat down in the honorary seat. All eyes were fixed on her. It was the famous Anna Besant, a comrade of Blavatsky, and as it were her successor, the author of “Theosophy,”⁴ a work immensely popular in some circles. The speeches continued, but most people were not listening, only looking at Mrs. Besant. Finally, she spoke herself, talking about the Ma-



Photographs of Annie Besant in the archives of a Polish daily newspaper; they probably come from a foreign press agency, and were used in publications concerning the Theosophical Society and Besant’s visit in Poland. Photographs from the National Digital Archive, department of the Illustrated Daily Courier Concern [Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, zespół Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny] – Archive of Illustrations [Archiwum Ilustracji], sygn.1-E-7726 and 1-E-7727.

hatmas. She spoke very quietly, but her incredibly resonant voice carried across the whole room.⁵

Later, Dr. Drzewiecki also gave an address, but Reymont wrote that he was not permitted to speak about its contents. After that, Besant approached them both, and Reymont was introduced to her. He wrote:

A very strange woman. Her face is such that she can look twenty-five years old one minute, and then from a closer look she looks fifty. She has huge, completely grey hair. Her face is not pale, but completely white, without a drop of blood or a single vein. A low and ugly forehead, deeply wrinkled over the eyebrows. Thin lips, big but deep-set eyes, and an immense sweetness and kindness expressed in her face. She doesn't look at anyone when she speaks, and she tilts her head forward, which makes her look somewhat shy. And this white outfit of a Roman woman [sic!] adds to the mystery of her person. She has a strange gaze, like the gaze of Nari⁶ the Mother from the original Indian trinity, a statue of which I saw in the British Museum, i.e. it is frightened and deceitful at the same time. The whole mask of her face is so still, that one cannot really discern her expression through the sweetness and kindness that seem to be plastered onto it. She told us about Blavatsky, about India, about the backwardness of the materialistic doctrine dominating Europe and the obstinacy of certified scientists, who reject everything they do not know and do not understand. She spoke almost in aphorisms, and summarized splendidly the conceit of pseudo-knowledge and pseudo-scholars. They are fools, who have seen and groped the clothes of man and they don't look any deeper, because in their conceitedness and laziness they took the clothes for the body itself, for the core of everything, while the core is a thing more valuable than anything else – the soul, as it was described in the *Elefanta*[?]: I am everything and in everything. (Wolbórka, 27 August, 1894)⁷

Reymont was greatly impressed by this meeting, and he would return to the memories from London many years later in the novel *Vampire*, where Blavatsky herself appears, among several interesting plot elements inspired by Theosophical ideas.⁸

The history of the origins of the official TS branch in Poland is unavoidably connected with Besant, as she was the president of the TS at the time the branch was established. The main organizer of the

group that was to evolve into the Polish branch of the TS was Wanda Dynowska (1888–1971).¹⁰ Although officially the Polish section was incorporated in the Theosophical Society in 1923, the Society in Poland was registered already in 1921, and first structures were established in 1919. It was then that Dynowska, having discussed matters with Polish members of the Russian and German branches and people who participated in earlier Theosophical groups,¹¹ traveled to Paris to meet with Besant. It was a significant sacrifice for her, because – as noted by Dynowska's biographer, Kazimierz Tokarski – she had to pawn her jewelry and other items donated by friends to finance the trip. While in the end she did not meet with Besant, the efforts of Polish Theosophists persuaded the president of the Theosophical Society to agree in writing to establishing a Polish Section. Moreover, Dynowska met with Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986). As related by Tokarski, Besant sent to Poland a Miss Arnold from England, to set up an Esoteric School of the Polish Theosophical Society.¹²



Polish editions of *Karma* and *Dharma*.

From the very beginning of organized activity, Polish Theosophists published translations of Besant's works. Publication of her books (both reprints and new titles) continued after the Second World War. Polish translations include both works by Annie Besant alone and ones co-authored by her with Charles W. Leadbeater. Among others published in the interwar period were *Wtajemniczenie czyli droga do nadczłowieczeństwa* [Initiation: The Perfecting of Man] (1928), *Potęga myśli* [Thought

Power] (1932), *Dharma: trzy wykłady* [Dharma] (1937), *Karma. Śmierć i co potem?* [Karma] (1st edition in 1937). The last two were especially influential among Polish Theosophists and provided foundations for the development of ideas concerning Poland and its role in history and in the contemporary world.

Some of Besant's works were also published in fragments in the Polish Theosophical journal *Przegląd Teozoficzny* [Theosophical Review] and later *Myśl Teozoficzna* [Theosophical Thought].¹³ It is worth also noting that every yearbook of the journals contained a recommended reading section which listed foreign works in English, German, and French (titles were given in each of the languages in which a given work was published) – it included many works by Besant.

One of the local centers of the Polish TS was named after Besant – the "Knowledge of A. Besant". It was established in September 1922, and its aim was to work on the scientific, theoretical side of Theosophy. There was a closed circle, "methodically and extensively studying Theosophical notions of the genesis of the world, the evolution of life, evolution of form, stages

of creation, permanent atoms, three waves of Life, descent of Spirit (Monad) into matter and the development of Spirit through the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms, individualization of animal in man, formation of the astral body, Reincarnation, Karma etc.", and an open circle or group, which aimed at disseminating this knowledge among all interested sympathizers of Theosophy. The dissemination took form of lectures on the foundations of Theosophy. The meetings of both the closed and the open circles took place every other week. The secretary of the center was Eugeniusz Swirszczewski.¹⁴

Besant herself visited Poland once, on August 30–31, 1927. She was on a lecture tour of European capitals. Her visit was reported in the press and made a deep impression in Warsaw and across the country. An article critical of Theosophy, entitled "Krishnamurti." Mrs Annie Besant's Humbug", published in one of Warsaw dailies, begins with the following: "Mrs. Annie Besant's stay in Poland was welcomed, and her activities recommended by all of our non-Catholic newspapers, as well some not careful enough despite their generally Catholic orientation." It clearly implies that Besant's visit was a big event in Poland.¹⁵



One of the headlines referring to Besant's visit. "84-year old woman in the role of a prophet. Dr. Anna Basant [sic] proclaims faith in the return of Messiah to this world. Besides, she is an enthusiast of fashion a la garçonne and speaks a lot about the evolution of new human race". *Illustrated Evening Express* [Express Wieczorny Ilustrowany] no. 239, 29 August 1927.

The Polish press depicted Besant in varied ways – from serious profiles to sensational or somewhat derisive mentions. The reports concentrated on various aspects: on the philosophy of the Theosophical Society, the popularity of the movement, the person of Besant, her mul-

tifaceted activity, and the subject matter of her lectures. Among other outlets, Besant's visit was reported in a women's magazine – *Modern Woman. Illustrated social and literary weekly* [Kobieta Współczesna. Ilustrowany tygodnik społeczno-literacki].¹⁶ Beside a biographical

note and a description of Besant's work, the piece stated: "In her writings and lectures, Annie Besant, a woman of rare kindness and resolve at the same time, proclaims the idea of brotherhood, tolerance and love of all mankind. A clairvoyant and a scholar, she is a practical social activist and an excellent political mind, a valued speaker etc." and went on to list nine titles of her "most eminent" books.



Photograph from the National Digital Archive, department of the Illustrated Daily Courier Concern [Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, zespół Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny] – Archive of Illustrations [Archiwum Ilustracji], sygn. 1-E-7728.

Naturally, the visit was also commented on in the official publication of the Polish TS, the aforementioned *Theosophical Review*. There was no detailed report of Besant's stay, however, but only a brief summary, which mostly represented Besant as a leader of Theosophists, but also a liaison with the Masters of Wisdom. The text is brief, so I quote it in its entirety:

At the end of September, the President of the Universal Theosophical Society, Dr. Annie Besant visited Poland. She spent only two days in Warsaw, but they were days of intense work. Despite her age, despite the fact She has been traveling for weeks in a row, Dr. Besant remains always indefatigable and full of fervor and endless energy. The attendees of her public lecture could admire the strength of Her voice, which often resounded almost through the whole room. In those two short days, Annie Besant worked from dawn until dusk. She participated in a series of conferences – She penetrated immediately the heart of our work, and gave us new strength and inspiration. Dr. Annie Besant is for us an example of almost superhuman greatness, embodied in a human body, She is for us a source of inspiration and a book of wisdom, in which everyone can read – but She is for us also a representative of Those, Who are the true founders of the Society, Who are the Spiritual Guides of mankind – the Masters of Wisdom. Her visit brought joy to many who love and admire Her as a spiritual guide, who see in Her the Leader and Mother – it was a privilege for the entire Theosophical Society and for all of Poland, because together with Her, Poland was visited by the Blessing of the Masters, of Whom She is a representative.¹⁷

An additional note explains that beside the regular issue of the journal, a special brochure on the occasion of Besant's visit was published, but it is probably not extant. However, we can find more details in personal accounts of Polish Theosophists, especially in the recollections of Ewelina Karaś (who became later the president of the Polish TS), collected by another Theosophist, Kazimierz Tokarski (1930–2007).

There were two congresses of Polish Theosophical Society (PTS) in the summer of 1927, one in July, and an additional one convened because of Besant's visit. It was also in that year that – during a summer camp that took place annually in Mężenin on the river Bug – Polish Theosophist began practicing meditative work (meditation of peace) based on Besant's mantram: "Oh, hidden life of God, beyond which nothing exists. Help us see You in the faces of our enemies and love You in them. Then your peace will flow down on the world and your Great Will will be fulfilled on earth, as it is fulfilled in heavens."¹⁸

Because of Besant's two-day, visit a special four-day congress of PTS was convened on 28–31 August, 1927. The first two days were devoted to

meetings, conferences and participation in masses of the Liberal Catholic Church. The days of Besant's visit were occupied with her lecture for the members of PTS, "Związek Jutrzenki" (Order of the Star in the East) and "Związek Służenia" (a kind of service order, but not a regular Theosophical Order of Service), as well as addresses by other guests accompanying Besant, including an American Theosophist named Wardell – probably Max Wardell, president of The Theosophical Order of Service. Besant also met several times with the press.

We get a glimpse of the practical details of Besant's visit, including her accommodation, as well as some expected trouble caused by right-wing youth, from the report by Ewelina Karaś:

A.B. [Annie Besant] stayed with Ludka Bl. [Blum], who was able to arrange it with her husband, so that he agreed. It was a wonderful apartment on the 8th, I think, floor of a big house on Miodowa street. It had a far view on the Old Town and the Vistula river and Prague [the quarter of Warsaw across the river from the Old Town]. It was there that after the public lecture A.B. said those words of significance to us: "I forgot to tell them that a war in defense of one's country is always just!". Her wish was realized – in the brochure devoted to her and published by *Theosophical Thought*,¹⁹ I quoted those words and in that way they reached at least some people in Poland. The companions of A.B.'s travels, Wardell and others, stayed with her. Wanda [Dynowska] stayed all the time in the same apartment like a guard dog. The crowd of people sleeping in one place astonished the Americans. Already then there was nothing impossible for us. But I don't know if we managed our devotion in the wisest way. I remember the meeting of E.S. [the Esoteric Section] with A.B. and the words she spoke then. I half-remember her conversation with M. [Michał Tokarzewski-Karaszewicz]. She spoke to him concerning I don't know what, that he had learned it already, in his previous lives, throwing so many people, as their commander, into combat, often into death. She also received, for a private conversation, my Janeczka [probably Janina Karaś] and Janka Pawł[owska]. Janka Pawł[owska] was the director of propaganda at the time and she organized A.B. lectures on Karowa street.²⁰ A lot of people came. A poster is preserved in Radom files. During the lectures, Wanda stood beside her and translated. Out of two proposed lecture topics, it was Wanda who chose the one about the nation. Heniek [probably Henryk Münch] warned us that we can expect

some hostile reactions from right-wing youth. Because of his warning, our girls like Kazik, Patyk, Janka Sz. [?], and others created a line, or rather a chain protecting A.B. when she went down from the lecture room to the car. It was completely unnecessary. But they looked pretty running down the stairs, holding hands. When she was departing – I think it was in the morning – M.[ichał Tokarzewski-Karaszewicz] took her with his car, driving incredibly fast. The driver of the taxi in which we were following them could barely keep up. She departed from the airport. They took a photograph of her at the steps of the airplane. She told them to hurry because it was difficult for her to stand like this.²¹

Ewelina Karaś's relations ends with a list of people – mostly just first names, and sometimes initials – who were present at Besant's departure. The list was made based on a photograph, which means a group photograph must have been taken at that time, but it is unknown if it still exists. However, I was able to find the photograph with Besant entering the plane.

How did Wanda Dynowska, the president of PTS at the time, comment on Besant's visit? Before she came, Dynowska said: "Someone of such greatness as Her will share her life with us for a few days, and bring the living current from the Real, which can ignite a fire in our soul. (...) I wish upon each of You from my heart that you can feel at least a small part of her greatness."²² After Besant's departure, Dynowska claimed that while it could have seemed that other important visits (by Arundale or Wedgwood) were experienced more intensely by Polish Theosophists and brought out more emotions, it was during Besant's short stay that "we were touched by her strength on such a level that no emotions were engaged."

Besant's works were still published in Poland after World War 2, even though the Polish Theosophical Society was not re-established. Considering the state of preservation and dispersion of archives in the country, it is possible that further documents concerning Besant will be found. That the material presented here could be compiled is already – in light of the political and cultural history of Poland after the war – significant, especially in the context of the history of the Polish TS. The latter topic is the subject of my doctoral dissertation, which I

am preparing at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. My research was made possible by the "Etiuda" Scholarship from the National Science Centre, Poland, awarded on the basis of decision no. DEC-2016/20/T/HS1/00226.



Annie Besant before departure from the airport in Warsaw, August 1927. Photograph from the the National Digital Archive, department of the Illustrated Daily Courier Concern [Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, zespół Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny] – Archive of Illustrations [Archiwum Ilustracji], sygn. 1-N-1088. First from left is Tadeusz Bibro [note by K.M.H.]

NOTES

1. W. S. Reymont, *Lato 1894 za granicą*, Wrocław: Wydął z autografu Tadeusz Mikulski, 1948.
2. Ibidem, p. 15.
3. Ibidem, p. 14–18.
4. He might be referring to one of Besant's pamphlets, e.g. *An Exposition of Theosophy* from 1893.
5. W. S. Reymont, *Lato...*, p. 17.
6. Reymont's text contains many errors, possibly resulting from the fact he never prepared it for publication and it was only published many years after his death; typographical errors may result from misreading of the manuscript. Here Reymont probably meant Shakti.
7. W. S. Reymont, *Lato...*, p. 17–18.
8. W. Reymont, *Wampir*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza 1986.
9. Cf. K. M. Hess, "Fascination with the Occult and the East: Literature of Władysław Reymont and the First Generation of Polish Theosophists" [forthcoming].
10. Cf. L. Hass, "Liberałowie, ezoterycy, piśsudczycy. Z dziejów polityki w Polsce w latach 1925–1928," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 1973, No. 3, idem, *Ambicje, rachuby, rzeczywistość. Wolnomularstwo w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej 1905–1928*, Warszawa 1984, and K.M. Hess, "The Beginnings of Theosophy in Poland: From Early Visions to Polish Theosophical Society," *The Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture*, 2015 Vol. 1 (13), p. 53–72.
11. Among others with Henryk Münch, a member of the German branch and Jerzy Znamierowski, who belonged to the Russian one, cf. K. Tokarski, „O Wandzie Dynowskiej-Umadevi,” at <http://www.jkrishnamurti.republika.pl/rozne.dynowska.bio.htm>, and idem, "Wanda Dynowska-Umadevi: A Biographical Essay," *Theosophical*

History: A Quarterly Journal of Research, Vol. V, No. 3, July 1994.

12. Ibidem.

13. Polish titles of the fragments were, among others: *O ewolucji ludzkości*, *Z Nauki Serca*, *Teozofia a nowa Psychologia*, *Szukanie szczęścia*, *Mityczne znaczenie Bożego Narodzenia*, *Ideal Teozoficzny*, *Plan astralny*, *Mądrość odwieczna* (fragments), *Szukanie Boga*, *Ganga* (Legenda Arjawatry).

14. *Przegląd Teozoficzny* No. 8, R. 3., Warszawa May–Dec. 1923, p. 63–64.

15. Kriznamurti. Balamuctwa Pani Annie Besant," *Warszawianka* No. 242, 4 Sep. 1927, p. 3.

16. J. Kr-a, Anna Besant w Warszawie," *Kobieta Współczesna. Ilustrowany tygodnik społeczno-literacki* No. 23, R. 1, 4.09.1927, p. 15.

17. *Przegląd teozoficzny* [Theosophical Review] No. 13, 1927, p. 37.

18. Archiwum Nauki PAN i PAU w Krakowie, Kazimierz Tokarski (1930-2007) KIII-180 j.a. 18, file *Lato 1927 c.d.*, p. 3.

19. In fact, it had to be *Theosophical Review*, which only became the *Theosophical Thought* several years later.

20. The exact address was Karowa 31, where many lectures of the PTS took place.

21. Archiwum Nauki PAN i PAU w Krakowie, Kazimierz Tokarski (1930-2007) KIII-180 j.a. 18, file *Lato 1927 c.d.*, p. 3.

22. Wanda Dynowska, Fragment of an address on July 28, 1927. Archiwum Nauki PAN i PAU w Krakowie, Kazimierz Tokarski (1930-2007) KIII-180 j.a. 18, file *Lato 1927 c.d.*, p. 2.

23. Ibidem, p. 4.

ΠΕΛΕΚΑΝ

ΠΕΡΙΟΔΙΚΟΝ ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΣΟΦΙΚΗΣ ΕΝΩΣΕΩΣ



Ὡςπερ Πελεκάν, τετρωμένος τήν πλευ-
ράν Σου, Λόγε, σοὺς θανόντας παῖδας ἐ-
ζώωσας, ἐπιστάξας ζωτικούς αὐτοῖς κρουνοὺς.

Ἀπὸ τὸν ὄρθρο τοῦ Μ. Σαββάτου.



Maria Vasilopoulou is the director of the Hellenic Publishing House Tetractys.

ILISOS

The first 100 issues of *Ilisos*, the official journal of the Theosophical Society in Greece, have been scanned and can be download at IAPSOP, <http://www.iapsop.com/archive/materials/ilisos/>

Ilisos is the bimonthly journal of the Theosophical Society in Greece, printed by the Theosophical Publishing House of Greece. It has been published annually since 1956 to our days. The first editor was Kostas Melissaropoulos (1904 – 1988), who was also for many years President of the Theosophical Society. Christos Rizopoulos was appointed an editor of the issues 38-39 in 1965. Thanks to the personal collection of Georgios Chimaras we were able to digitise these issues.

PELECAN

The *Pelecan* was a quarterly magazine published by the Theosophical Union. The Theosophical Union was founded on 2/01/1960 and operated simultaneously with the Theosophical Society in Greece, until November 1983 when it merged with the Theosophical Society.

The Theosophical Union had its headquarters on the ground floor at 26 Harilaou Trikoupi Street in Athens. This place was originally owned by Mrs Aglaia Zannou, who later donated it to Theosophical Society in Greece.

Most contributors of *Pelecan* were intellectuals of their time, writing their thoughts, ideas on Theosophy and philosophical themes. They also have contributed to the magazine by translating classical works from French, English, German, Sanskrit ancient Greek. Some of the contributors are:

- Timoleon Vratsanos (President of Plato Lodge)
- Aglaia Zannou (Editor-in-Chief)
- Nikos Panagopoulos (Head of Printing Office)
- Dimitris Theodoridis
- Tasos Valadoros
- Costas Pangalos
- Kal. Koutsoyianni (President of Arundale Lodge)
- Leonidas Polimeropoulos (President of Dimocritus

Lodge)

- Louise Montesandou (made the covers)
- Kostas Xyndas (President of Lodge Plato)
- Maria G. Economou
- Eleni K. Georgantas
- Lampis Lucos
- Eve Ornstein
- Nikos Vouropoulos
- Aris Diktaios
- Nikos Vrettakosikoc
- Pantelis Prevelakis
- Z. Mamalakisaλάκη
- Takis Varvitsiotis
- Dimitris Kapetanakis
- Rita Boume Pappa
- Loukis Akritas
- Markos Avgeris
- Kostas Varnalis
- Olga Votsi
- C. Theotokis
- Aimilia Ivou
- Nikos Kazantzakis
- Nikos Karvounis
- Fotis Kontoglou
- Panagis Lekatsas
- Aristomenis Proveleggios
- Andreas Deligiannis
- Melissanthi
- Aggelos Sikelianos

The issues 14-33 (Spring 1962 - Winter 1966-1967) are from the personal collection of Sophocles Theodotus who also digitized them. This material is now available at IAPSOP in this link: <http://www.iapsop.com/archive/materials/pelecan/>

IAPSOP is doing a wonderful working by creating and storing a large database of historical newsletters, magazines and more. We are glad to have contributed to their work by sending them the issues of PELECAN and ILISSOS.

Anna Kingsford Conference



Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière is Senior Lecturer (Maître de Conférences) at Sorbonne Université - Faculté des lettres.

On Saturday, 17 February 2018, the Theosophical Society in England (TSE) held the first scholarly event dedicated to Anna Kingsford (1846-1888) at the TSE Headquarters, at 50 Gloucester Place, London. The purpose of this Anna Kingsford day — which I had the honour and pleasure to chair — was to reassess Kingsford's life and work, while marking the 130th anniversary of her death on 22 February 1888.

The event was Daemon Scothern's idea, who came up with it during the Annie Besant Conference held by the TSE last October. Leslie Price then did a fantastic job organising the day's programme, but he was unfortunately too unwell to attend, and was much missed.

The event brought together seven researchers on all aspects of Kingsford's public life and work, from her struggles for women's rights and to become medical doctor, to her vegetarianism, her anti-vivisection stance and, of course, her spirituality. The event was well attended, by TSE members and / or academics and researchers — including Clare Goodrick-Clarke, Honorary Fellow and Course Lecturer in "the Hermetic art of alchemy" and "the esoteric body" at the University of Exeter, and Prof. Christine Ferguson from the University of Stirling, who currently works on the periodical culture of the Victorian occult revival, and who is on the board of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE).

After Jenny Baker, national president of the TSE, officially welcomed participants, Elaine Bailey, who had studied under the late Professor Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke for a Master of Western Esotericism, gave a paper entitled *Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland*, discussing their close collaboration as esoteric writers and where their views differed. She looked at Maitland's influence on Kingsford's beliefs and on the development of their theosophical brand of esoteric Christianity.

I followed with a paper that focussed on *An Essay on the Admission of Women to the Parliamentary Franchise* — the pamphlet Anna Kingsford published in 1868 —, and on the issues of *The Lady's Own Paper* she edited in 1872. I discussed Kingsford's somewhat class-biased feminist views expressed in them, but in the context of the specificities of the fight for women's rights in Britain at the time. I also showed how subversive her advocacy of women's control over their own bodies was, and I set right some facts about her editorship of *The Lady's Own Paper* that Maitland got wrong in his controversial 1896 biography *Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work*.

The next paper was given by actress and playwright Deborah Lavin, who is member of the executive of both the Socialist History Soci-

ety and Freethought History Research. In the paper entitled *Anna Kingsford vs Vivisection and Annie Besant*, Deborah's talk explored Kingsford and Annie Besant's clash over the issue vivisection in 1881, expressed in the pages of the National Secular Society weekly *The National Reformer*, when Besant still positioned herself as pro-vivisection.

After a lunch break kindly provided by the TSE, during which lively discussions between participants went on — and we enjoyed Marlena Meczynska-Shiibashi's lovely piano music — Kim Farnell, President of the Astrological Lodge of London, spoke about *Astrological Anna*. Kim had noticed that Kingsford's natal chart was the least examined of all the theosophical leaders, and that those analyses that exist were based on incorrect data, although Kingsford clearly was interested in astrology, and even said she received a visit from the spirit of the seventeenth-century astrologer William Lilly in 1881.

The following paper, *The Lost Leader: Anna Kingsford and Leadership in the Theosophical Society*, was given by Geraldine Beskin, the owner of the much-loved Atlantis Bookshop near the British Museum. She focussed on Kingsford's brief leadership of the British Theosophical Society, reminding us that Kingsford had exceptional qualifications for leadership: "visionary powers, a professional education, a fluent pen, confidence on the platform, persistence in adversity, even a supportive spouse." Geraldine, like many of us, could not help comparing Kingsford with Besant, wondering if Kingsford could have led the Theosophical Society on a different path if she had lived longer.


Leslie Price is the founder of Theosophical History, the archivist of the TSE and the organizer of many Theosophical History Conferences. As Leslie could not attend, a summary of his paper on *Anna Kingsford and Esoteric Christianity* was read by TSE librarian Barry Thompson. Leslie aimed at showing that although some of the particular symbolic meanings which Kingsford and Maitland proposed had not been generally accepted, they were central exponents, not just of Esoteric Christianity, but of Theosophy itself, which can be expressed through any spiritual tradition.

The last paper was given by Arnaldo Sisson Filho, the creator and administrator of the invaluable Anna Kingsford website (<http://www.anna-kingsford.com/>) that includes a compilation of almost all of Kingsford's and Maitland's works. Arnaldo had come all the way from Brazil to talk about *Anna Kingsford and the Greatest Need of our Times: the Advent of a Truly Catholic and Scientific Religion*, and to help us understand why the Chohan of the Mahatmas wanted Kingsford to be the President of the London Lodge of the TS. He also examined the


similarities between some of the Mahatma Letters and the writings of Kingsford and Maitland.

In my closing remarks, I concluded that apart from Edward Maitland's and Alan Pert's not flawless biographies, Anna Kingsford's short but eventful life had often been reduced to a footnote or at best a paragraph in the history of Victorian women's fight for their rights, in that of the anti-vivisection movement, of vegetarianism, and of course of Theosophy — so that our first comprehensive reassessment of Kingsford's life and work was long overdue, and I was grateful to the TSE for giving us this great opportunity to meet and to share our personal research on Kingsford.

Most of the papers were recorded by Daemon Scothern, and can be watched online on his You Tube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVR0mIPCyzeRpctY9I8vp7A>).

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"That Remarkable Seeress"

Koot Hoomi Mahatma Letter No 59

A reassessment of Anna Kingsford to mark the 130th anniversary of her passing.

Saturday 17th February 2018

In the chair: Dr Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière

Elaine Bailey
"Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland".

Dr Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière
"Anna Kingsford and Women's Rights"

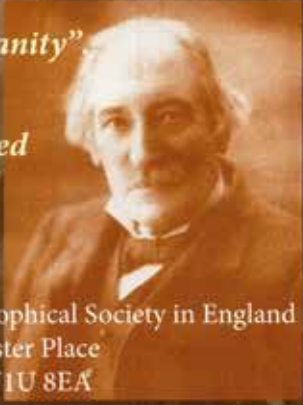
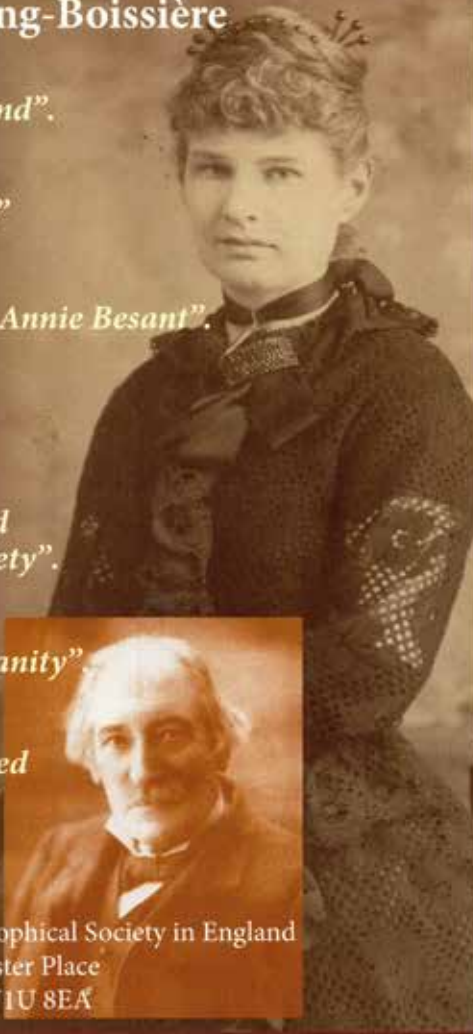
Deborah Lavin
"Anna Kingsford vs. Vivisection and Annie Besant".

Kim Farnell
"Astrological Anna"

Geraldine Beskin
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Leslie Price
"Anna Kingsford and Esoteric Christianity"

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Why the “Anna Kingsford Site” Was Created?

Arnaldo Sisson MSc



Arnaldo Sisson Filho is Economist and has a Master degree in Political Science. He is the creator of the "Anna Kingsford Site", where are all the works by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland. Sisson translated and revised the translation into Portuguese of some of those works. Author of *Theosophy and Universal Brotherhood (Decisive Elements to the Glory or to the Failure of the Theosophical Society)*; *O Que Há de Errado com a Política? (What is Wrong With Politics?)*; and *A Roda e a Cruz: Uma Introdução ao Cristianismo Budista (The Wheel and the Cross: an Introduction to Buddhist Christianity)*. He was for many years the Chairman of the World Theosophical Youth Federation. He traveled and lectured in Brazil, as in several other countries. He directed the Annie Besant Project, when the byelaws of TS in Brazil were completely reformed. He was also one of the founders and framer of the byelaws of the Brazilian Vegetarian Society.

First of all, I want to express my gratitude to Leslie Price for the suggestion about writing this article.

The Anna Kingsford Site contains all the works by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland. The main reason that motivated the construction of the Site was the aspiration to help the understanding of original Christianity; and in this manner to assist in the great intellectual reform so urgently needed in the world today. This quotation may shed some light on this matter:

"At the present moment there are two things about the Christian religion which must be obvious to every percipient person; one, that men cannot do without it; the other, that they cannot do with it as it is." (Matthew Arnold, quoted in *The Perfect Way*, Preface to the Second Edition, p. lxxi).

These two aspects may generate a vast array of interpretations, but we can somewhat explain some facts related to them. The first fact, is that Christianity, as the heir of the Greek-Roman civilization, is one of the pillars of the Western world. It is irrelevant if this is good or bad because the Western civilization is largely dominating the world nowadays. This fact alone should justify the statement that the present world cannot do without Christianity. The second fact, is that the ideas and the great institutions of the Western civilization (hegemonic in the world) are generating enormous problems. Problems that they cannot resolve, since they are at their core cause. As a result these ideas and institutions, in their turn, are leading the world in the direction of gigantic catastrophes. In summary, the Western civilization needs a profound reform in its philosophic-religious fundaments, as well as in its great institutions rooted in these fundaments. Anna Kingsford gave an extraordinary contribution to the understanding of true Christianity. In spite of that, only relatively small attention has been

given to her works and life. In light of this fact, it seemed to us that it would be important to make her message more widely known.

After many years of active participation in the Theosophical Society, I have learned that we must help to improve the understanding of the sacred Scriptures, of all traditions, in order that these Scriptures may accomplish their role in the great intellectual reform, so much needed. In this sense, as I live in the sphere of the Christian Western world, it is but natural to have as an objective to bring to the Western people (and to the world in general) a greater and deeper comprehension of the Christian tradition. The idea of doing something for Christianity was already occupying my mind for a long time. For instance, in the many years that I was leading the *World Theosophical Youth Federation* I tried to incentive some people, with sufficient intellectual training, to study and to write on the origins of Christianity. This, however, is no easy task and as result I could not find anyone interested in doing so. It was very difficult to find people with sufficient free time and intellectual background to accomplish such a task.

Having in mind the purpose of helping Christianity to recover its origins and, therefore, its harmony with the truths of all great religions, I was translating into Portuguese the autobiography of the Christian monk Bede Griffiths (*The Golden String*), bridging Hindu and the Christian religions. By the same time, my wife, Marina Sisson, was writing a biography of Helena Blavatsky entitled *The Sphinx Helena Blavatsky (A Esfinge Helena Blavatsky)*. On reading Marina's writings I came to realise that the difficult relationship between Blavatsky and Kingsford, as well as between A.P. Sinnett and Kingsford eventually resulted with Kingsford leaving the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society. This was a great lost opportunity to the understanding and to realization of the work of the Theosophical Society.

Additionally, during that period of time, my wife and I were participating in a group which had the object of creating in Brazil an ecumenical monastery. This group was led by a Christian religious man, a priest, who apparently has some psychic faculties. It was him who conveyed to me the advice that "I should study the works of Dr Anna Kingsford, since I was interested in helping Christianity."

Considering I was trying to work towards the objectivation of my old aspiration of doing something for Christianity, the influence of my wife's research, as well as the advice conveyed to me by the priest, led me to make a more in depth study of the works of Kingsford and Maitland. It did not take me long to realize the importance of their work, in the sense of answering to what I was looking for, that is, to help in the recovering of true Christianity.

Naturally, coming to know the importance of their writings I became very surprised when I realized that their work was not widely known, and in some cases almost lost even in the sphere of the Theosophical Society; which has as its duty to enlighten the religious Scriptures, mainly with the help of the comparative study of religions, philosophical traditions and modern science. Therefore, the Anna Kingsford Site was born as the result of my aspiration to help Christianity, my studies and the other influences previously mentioned.

Following the decision to create the site, we started collecting all the works by Kingsford and Maitland; those who wrote about them; also works related to their works. Our aim was to preserve and make more easily accessible their message to the interested people around the world. For the same reason the site was developed in two languages: English and Portuguese.

To reach the present stage – where all the known works by Kingsford and Maitland are online – it took us nearly 10 years of work, with the help of several people both from Brazil and abroad. In this process we have recovered some books in a surprising way, something which suggests that this work deserved the help of the Celestial Church, to use a Christian terminology. Our quest led us to meet new friends, including, as it should be expected, from England, the native country of Kingsford and Maitland.

As to the message brought to the world by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, in our viewpoint, one of its most relevant aspects is the catholicity (universality) of their interpretations of the most important parts of the Christian Scriptures. That is why their message was named the New Gospel of Interpretation. Actually, as they explain to us, there is nothing new in the message they brought to the world, but, it is the recovery of something that was so long forgotten and degraded that when it was recovered it seems to be something new. To exemplify this, below we quote *The Credo of Christendom* expressing the true catholicity of the message of the New Gospel of Interpretation:

"The Christian Faith is the direct heir of the old Roman faith. Rome was the heir of Greece, and Greece of Egypt, whence the Mosaic dispensation and Hebrew ritual sprang.

Egypt was but the focus of a light whose true fountain and centre was the Orient in general – Ex Oriente Lux. For the East, in every sense, geographically, astronomically, and spiritually, is ever the source of light.

But although originally derived from the East, the Church of our day and country is modelled immediately upon the Greco-Roman mythology, and draws thence all its rites, doctrines, ceremonies, sacraments, and festivals. (...)

The Christian Church is Catholic, or it is nothing worthy the name of Church at all. For Catholic signifies universal, all-embracing: – the faith everywhere and always received. The prevalent limited view of the term is wrong and mischievous.

The Christian Church was first called Catholic because she enfolded, comprehended, and made her own all the religious past of the whole world, gathering up into and around her central figure of the Christ all the characteristics, legends, and symbols hitherto appertaining to the central figures of preceding dispensations, proclaiming the unity of all human aspiration, and formulating in one grand ecumenical system the doctrines of East and West.

Thus the Catholic Church is Vedic, Buddhist, Zend, and Semitic. She is Egyptian, Hermetic, Pythagorean, and Platonic. She is Scandinavian, Mexican, and Druidic. She is Grecian and Roman. She is scientific, philosophic, and spiritual.

We find in her teachings the Pantheism of the East, and the individualism of the West. She speaks the language and thinks the thoughts of all the children of men; and in her temple all the gods are shrined.

I am Vedantist, Buddhist, Hellenist, Hermetic, and Christian, because I am Catholic. For in that one word all Past, Present, and Future are enfolded" (*The Credo of Christendom*, pp. 94-96.)

There are many reasons why this catholicity is very important for our times. First, because we live in a world with an on-growing connection characterised by satellites, the communication media, with the paradigmatic example of the Internet, by air transportation and by an on-growing globalized economy. Second, because we live in a world dominated by the scientific thought, in which it is only through the understanding derived from logic explanations and, as far as it is possible, supported by testable evidences that the more intellectualized minds may reach the truth.

In relation to the great metaphysical truths – so decisive to the advent of a true system of ethics and of new great institutions – it is only by way of a comparative methodology that it will be possible to demonstrate that in all places and in all times the wise ones had taught the same truths. The demonstration of this fact will make evident (among other principles of great relevance) the existence of superior faculties of cognition, faculties that enable the human being to have a direct realization of the truth. Such demonstration and realization will necessarily result into a more truthful vision about what is the human being, a vision that is fundamental and decisive to the great intellectual reform in the world dominating ideas. This can be summarized in the following quotation from Helena Blavatsky:

"It is only by studying the various great religions and philosophers of humanity, by comparing them dispassionately and with an unbiassed mind, that men can hope to arrive at the truth. It is especially by finding out and noting their various points of agreement that we may achieve this result." (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 58)

Therefore, the catholicity of the message of the New Gospel of Interpretation is in perfect harmony with this requirement of our age e.g.

logical explanations based on testable evidences. Additionally, there are two other aspects important to emphasize:

1) In the New Gospel of Interpretation was presented – more clearly than in any other author or book – the necessary union of Christianity with Buddhism. Let us remember here that Buddhism, with its logical and non-theistic fundaments, is well adapted to be the moral basis of an era dominated by the scientific thought.

2) The New Gospel of Interpretation is in perfect harmony with the principles of the Esoteric Philosophy (or the Perennial Philosophy), and with the due emphasis to the aspect of the "unity in diversity", since this aspect is decisive to the right understanding of the principle of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, which is the vision of the human being (collectively considered) derived from the Perennial Philosophy. This vision is present in all the main religious and philosophic traditions.

We close this article with a few more quotations:

1) "Christianity, (...) far from being intended as a rival and supplanter of Buddhism, it was the direct and necessary sequel to that system; and the two are but parts of one continuous, harmonious whole, whereof the later division is but the indispensable supplement and complement of the earlier. (...)

Thus the two religions constitute, respectively, the exterior and interior of the same Gospel (...). And **as without Christianity Buddhism is incomplete, so without Buddhism Christianity is unintelligible.**" (*The Perfect Way*, pp. 250-251)

2) "Of the spiritual union in the one faith of Buddha and Christ, will be born the world's coming redemption". (*The Perfect Way*, p. 252)

3) "Once the veil of symbolism is lifted from the divine face of Truth, all Churches are akin, and the basic doctrine of all is identical (...). Greek, Hermetic, Buddhist, Vedantist, Christian – all these Lodges of the Mysteries are fundamentally one and identical in doctrine. (...)

We hold that no single ecclesiastical creed is

comprehensible by itself alone, uninterpreted by its predecessors and its contemporaries." (*Life of Anna Kingsford*, vol. II, pp. 123-124)

4) "See that, above all things, you teach the doctrine of Caste. **The Christians made a serious mistake in requiring the same rule of all persons.** Castes are as ladders whereby to ascend from the lower to the higher. They are properly spiritual grades, and have no relation to the outward condition of life. Like all other doctrines, that of Caste has been materialised." (*Clothed with the Sun, Illumination* n. XVIII)

5) "That great principle of Reincarnation must ever go hand in hand with the principle of Universal Brotherhood if Universal Brotherhood is to be applied, if it **is to be made a working principle of ordinary life. For it is out of these differences of age that grow up all the possibilities of an ordered and happy society** amongst ourselves. (A. Besant, *The Changing World*, p. 80)

Notes:

1) Several of the bold characters were added by the author.

2) This is an abbreviated version. See complete version in the Anna Kingsford Site:
http://www.humanitarismo.com.br/annakingsford/english/Other_Related_Works/Texts/OOR-I-WhyAKSite.htm

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Anna Kingsford (1846-1888), née Bonus, and her mother.
Source: Wiki commons

Anna Bonus Kingsford & Edward Maitland



Elaine Bailey considers herself fortunate to have been able to study under the late Professor Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke for a Master of Western Esotericism degree at Exeter University, graduating in 2012. She had lived in Rheinland-Pfalz in Germany for many years and taught English language and literature courses for mature students, she was also a part time lecturer in Business English at the Berufs Akademie Mannheim. She is married with two grown up children and has happily settled into retirement in England. However, she still writes articles and presents the occasional lecture and workshop at esoteric conferences.

Preliminaries to the Lecture

Many people here will have heard of Anna Bonus Kingsford but possibly quite a number will not know who Edward Maitland is. I shall therefore start with an abbreviated biography of Anna Kingsford and a slightly longer one for Edward Maitland as it is very relevant to the subject of my talk. I hope to shed some light on their close collaboration as esoteric writers, why it became so close and where their views differed. I shall look at their almost symbiotic twin-soul relationship in Paris, where Anna was studying to become a doctor of medicine, but importantly also on Edward Maitland's influence on Anna Kingsford's beliefs at that time. Many have regarded him as purely her chaperone and amanuensis but this was not in fact the case as I hope to show, for his input was equal to hers in most of their important work, for example *The Perfect Way*. His own solo works written prior to accompanying Anna to Paris show that it was his personal thoughts on Christianity that crucially led to the development of their theosophical brand of esoteric Christianity. But I shall also show where their views were most definitely not harmonious or sanguine, which mostly relates to Anna delving into practical occultism and receiving coaching from other magicians. Edward Maitland has been much maligned by recent writers and anybody who has struggled through his biography *Anna Bonus Kingsford- Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work* with its crucial lack of proper dating, and general absence of relationships Anna had with other people will feel a great frustration with him but this should not prejudice their views on his contribution or scholarship to their esoteric work. Anna and Edward were a remarkable team as writers and esoteric thinkers and this partnership should not be forgotten or ignored.

Two questions answered:

1 - How did you become interested in Anna Bonus Kingsford and Edward Maitland?

Initially when I was searching for a topic for my MA dissertation, I decided to research Anna Bonus Kingsford and her influence on magical and mystical groups in the late 19th Century; this was because she had been so revered by the original members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. As I began my research it began to dawn on me that she epitomised the MA in Western Esotericism itself. She was well versed in the classics and had studied the neo-Platonists, the Christian mystic Jacob Boehme, and many other 17th Century esotericists including the magician astrologer William Lilly, Anna had also studied the Kabbala, and much more. Anna Kingsford had also studied Emanuel Swedenborg, read Joseph Ennemoser's *History of Magic*, Mme Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* and Eliphas Lévi's works.

As I started the writing process I began to realise that the title would have to be changed to include Edward Maitland because on esoteric matters they appeared to be joined at the hip and so it became: 'Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland: their influence on Magical and Mystical Groups formed in late 19th and early 20th Century Britain'. Anna was an early feminist, a woman of independent means with original thoughts, it was that feminism that led her to be not just influential on the new magical orders but on the whole goddess movement that has grown enormously in the 20th century for she boldly proposed that the divine is ultimately the feminine principle, it was her writings on Isis that achieved that result, she was a bold thinker and a pantheist in her beliefs. I find her ideas fascinating and her writing style is forthright, modern, and incredibly readable.

2 - Edward Maitland notoriously burnt the letters and papers of AK shortly before he died. Are there any significant surviving papers of Anna?

To be honest I don't know if anything might possibly have survived that bonfire. Edward Maitland had put her papers in order and managed to publish with the help of E.M. Forsyth and Samuel Hopgood Hart: *Dreams and Dream Stories*, *Intima Sacra: a manual of Esoteric Devotion, Addresses and Essays on Vegetarianism*, and the extremely important *Clothed with the Sun: being the Illuminations of Anna (Bonus) Kingsford*, and *The Credo of Christendom: and other Addresses and Essays on Esoteric Christianity*. That he burnt the rest has obviously exasperated her biographers but if the other papers were just random notes or private correspondence I wouldn't feel terribly annoyed. If there were papers on her magical practices that were destroyed that would be a different matter, unfortunately we'll never know just how important the burnt papers were. Often when private letters are published posthumously the writers, and the recipients privacy has in some way been violated and so if it wasn't directly related to their subject matter perhaps it is best that it remains unpublished. I'm an esotericist and historian and for me the interest in Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland lies in their original esoteric thinking, it is their magical and esoteric written works that are the important thing, for that of course is their legacy to future seekers and posterity. I am slowly writing up my notes and rephrasing the dissertation with an end to publishing a book but it won't be a biography, it will be about her esoteric teachings for Anna was a whole and complicated person with a great many interests, and a complete biography of one so complex would lie beyond my capabilities.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Occult Revival: Myth or Reality?

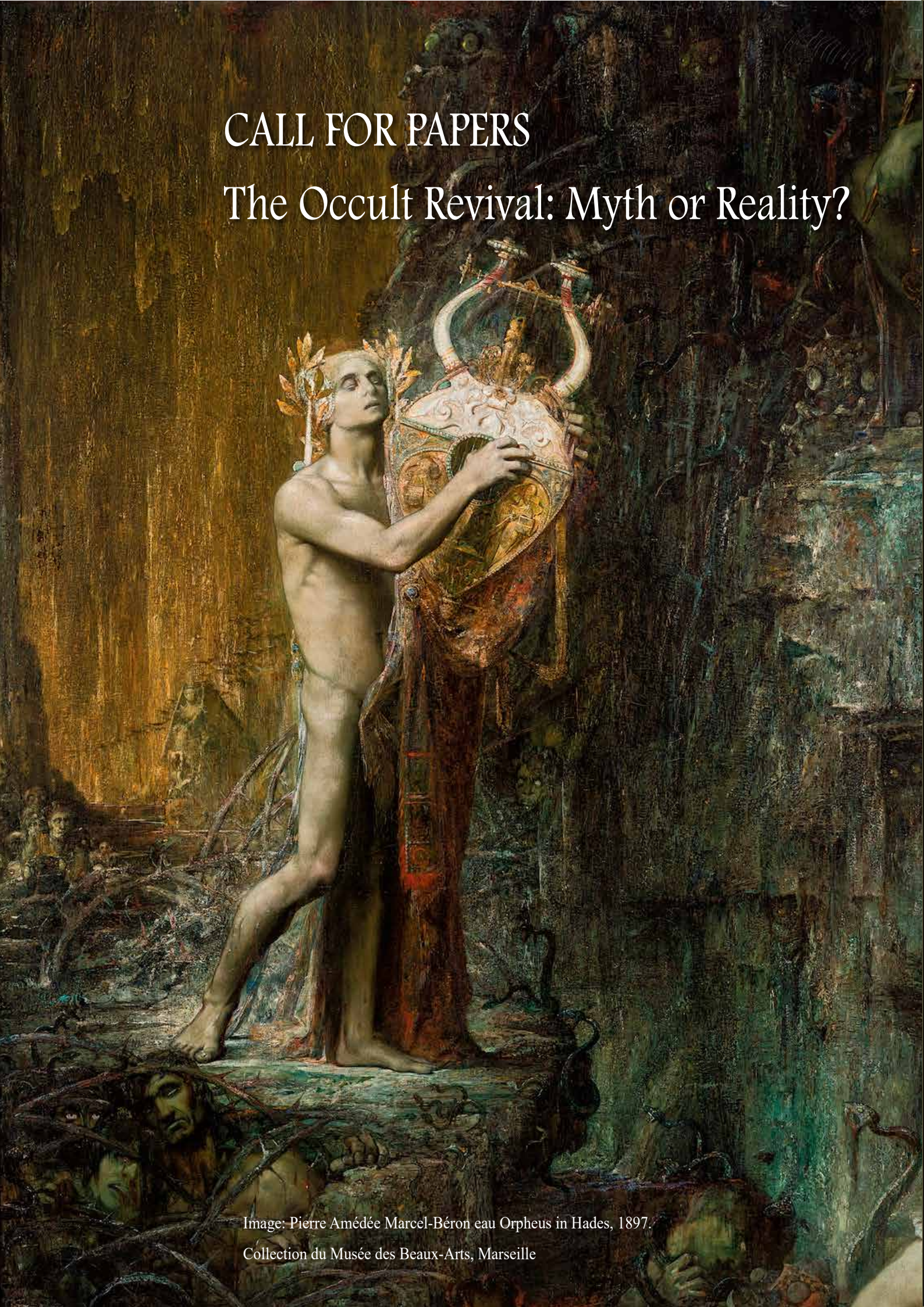


Image: Pierre Amédée Marcel-Béron eau Orpheus in Hades, 1897.

Collection du Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille

The Theosophical Society in England (<http://www.theosoc.org.uk>) is holding a two-day international conference on The Occult Revival at the TSE Headquarters at 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA on Saturday and Sunday, 29 and 30 September 2018. The Occult Revival is a term used by scholars to refer to the growth of movements, like Theosophy, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries.

Papers may deal with any individual or group associated the Revival, or with methodological issues, such as the scope of the Revival, or indeed its reality. The Programme Committee of the conference includes Dr Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière of the Sorbonne (also co-chair) and Professor Christine Ferguson of Stirling University.

Those who wish to submit a paper on any aspect of the subject should send a summary of not more than 200 words by 1 June 2018 to Mr Leslie Price, secretary of the Programme Committee, at leslie@theosoc.org.uk. Speakers will normally have 30 minutes including questions.

Conference participants will be responsible for their own travel, meals and accommodation. Those presenting papers will be exempt from registration fees. If you wish to register for the conference, or to be kept informed of the programme, please contact The Theosophical Society in England (office@theosoc.org.uk).

Dr Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière, co- chair of the Conference writes:

"For some years, Dr Robert Gilbert, a respected authority on the Golden Dawn, Masonic history, and similar topics, has been expressing doubts that there was an occult revival in the late nineteenth Century — as, for instance, in this paper given to a Swedenborgian audience. <http://www.swedenborgstudy.com/articles/history-religion/occult.htm>.

Nevertheless, the concept of the occult revival is a familiar one to scholars of Western esotericism, and is a convenient umbrella for a wide range of studies in early modern movements, including Theosophy. Among academics and other researchers into the history of the occult, Dr Gilbert's viewpoint is a minority one— but it deserves serious consideration.

First of all, when it comes to popular interest or belief in the occult, there might have been more continuities than generally estimated, and consequently some class and culture bias at work when speaking of a "revival". We may here refer to folk beliefs and practices that had actually never disappeared and were only "revived" when studied, taken up or reinterpreted by middle- and upper-classes esotericists (age-old belief in ghosts / spiritualism; so-called superstitious folk rituals / the magical revival, etc.). Dr Gilbert himself may express some class bias when he concludes in the paper quoted above: "... occultism, in all its aspects, was a minority activity in the nineteenth century". His and many other attempts at definitions of late-nineteenth Century occultism may be considered to be too narrow and intellectual, not taking into account its popular expressions, so that it might be argued that the "revival" occurred among an educated minority only, since the occult had never disappeared from popular culture.

This is the point made by Alison Butler in "Magical Beginnings: The Intellectual Origins of the Victorian Occult Revival" (*Limina*, vol. 9, 2003), a paper that "examines the origins

of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn through an analysis of the intellectual environment of the nineteenth century as well as through the identification of the presence and influence of a continuous magical tradition." She explains: "Despite the apparent dominance of science and materialism in mainstream thought in the nineteenth century, there was a persistence of magical belief that was expressed in forms of popular magic such as astrology, magical cures, and a variety of methods of divination."

However, Butler also argues that "Evolutionism, rationalism and scientific methodology all worked their way into this occult system of thought, creating a *new* kind of occultism." (my italics). So, to Butler, occultism was not so much revived as transformed by the context of late-nineteenth Century Britain.

In the abstract to her 2007 PhD dissertation on "Magical Revival: Occultism and the Culture of Regeneration in Britain, c. 1880-1929," Jennifer Walters, from the University of Stirling, argues : "Magical Revival denotes a period in the history of occultism, and the cultural history of Britain, during which an upsurge in interest in occult and magical ideas is marked by the emergence of newly-formed societies dedicated to the exploration of the occult, and into its bearing on life. Organisations discussed are the Theosophical Society, the Golden Dawn, and the less well known Astrum Argentum." (<https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/323/1/Thesis.pdf>).

This here, is a strong argument in favour of the revival hypothesis, considering how culturally influential these societies turned out to be, in spite of their social and intellectual rather narrow direct appeal.

Prof Marco Pasi made the same point when he reacted to Dr Gilbert's thesis in 2009 : "such groups did not exist before. [...] This has of course some cultural significance, and means that something happened at that moment when they came to light for the first time." More recently, Prof Pasi also commented on the "relative increases or decreases of public interest in esoteric subjects." He explained : "if we take a broad historical perspective, I see a decrease of visibility of esotericism after the French Revolution and during the post-1815 Restauration, until the mid-19th century. This is when spiritualism comes into life and E. Lévi begins to publish his "occult" works in France. This is the starting point of a new interest in occult subjects which becomes quite significant by the end of the century. It is in this sense a "revival" if compared to earlier historical periods when such subjects had been just as fashionable."

So we think the question of the late-nineteenth century occult revival offers ground for fertile debates, either on the validity of this historical concept itself, or — at least — on its definition and potential limits. We are also aware of much detailed research in progress into individual personalities and movements, of which we hope to learn more, that may change the picture. Dr Gilbert has indicated that, subject to the views of the Programme Committee, he is ready to come and defend his interpretation.

“My dear Knight of Friendship” or Iron Heinrich Esther Bright

An Appreciation

Esther Bright was born on February 19, 1868, daughter of Jacob Bright, a progressive member of the British Parliament and Ursula M. Bright, daughter of a wealthy merchant and an ardent activist for women's rights. The affluent family traveled widely in Europe. The parents had a Quaker background and mother and daughter eventually embraced Theosophy, always with the inclination of helping the downtrodden and unfortunate. Growing up, Esther Bright dreamed of fighting “for a great cause, under a trusted leader, with good comrades at my side.” This she eventually found in Annie Besant, with whom she shared a strong interest in social reform, and the Theosophical Society. Esther Bright joined the Theosophical Society on September 7, 1891, and was an active worker for several humanitarian movements throughout her life. She met H.P. Blavatsky only during the last year of the latter's life, when HPB was living in Annie Besant's home. “How can one describe H. P. Blavatsky? It is impossible. To me she seemed a being full of force and deep mystery, with a pathetic asking for sympathy and friendship; but this lay hidden below the surface. I was young and shy. I wish I had been older during her lifetime. *She has been so shamefully abused. I should have liked to stand by her*, for I know she was utterly loyal and true to her ideals, a splendid friend, a devoted servant to her Master.” (italics are mine, TAO, p. 141) This shows one of Esther Bright's outstanding qualities, which she then offered to Annie Besant instead, standing by her in a lifelong friendship. For this Annie Besant addressed her in many of her letters so adequately as “My dear Knight of Friendship”. In 1907 Esther Bright became the Secretary of the Esoteric Section and as such had a great influence within the TS, yet her activities seem to have left not much of a trace in the public records. She was a silent worker, whose loving look on life is inherent in her two books from which I am quoting for this article. If she looked at family life, nature (with a most profound connectedness and appreciation of the mountains and mountaineering), animals (the whole family loved horses and riding), theosophy, vegetarianism,



Esther Bright (1868-1957)

music... her writing is always radiating a quiet, but enthusiastic love and care for her subject, joy and a striving for a deeper understanding. For some time she worked once a week for a club in the East End of London that Madame Blavatsky had started and that was to bring some culture and social exchange to working class women there. In the 1920s she was also a member of the Women's Freedom League. She and her mother were instrumental in bringing Rudolf Steiner and Annie Besant together. Miss Bright had learnt German when, at the age of 18, she went to Berlin to study music at the conservatory of the great violinist Joseph Joachim, whom she had been introduced to in England. She remembers him fondly in

“Spiritual loyalty is not combative.”

Gradually a strong love for Annie Besant - Besant - “A.B.,” as we called her - grew up in my heart. I quote from the diary I kept at that time, which shows that I was influenced by the greatness of an idea as much or more, than by a beloved personality:

May, 1894

“People do not understand. It is A.B.'s ideal and thought that I love even better than I do herself. The grand outlook for the future! What is one personality compared to this? But it is she who has opened up life to me; no wonder I love her. However, what does it matter what people think? Young people look at things in such a tragic manner at times. I know I do. I shall grow out of it in time; there is much humour in life, if we could but find it. We attach so much importance to our little selves. I, the real I, see what a fool E.B. is at times; but I am getting more even-minded.”

“Dear, strong, brave, gentle teacher, may I live to do for others what you have done for me.”

She said to me one day: “Spiritual loyalty is not the loyalty usually understood in the world. Spiritual loyalty is not combative.”

from TAO, p. 144

her book, dedicating a whole chapter to him. Teacher and student became good friends, and J. Joachim said of her to a mutual friend: "Sie hat ein goldenes Herz - she has a heart of gold."¹ She describes him like this: "Simple, unassuming, unaffected, childlike, easily ruffled, but easily set right again, with very kindly, noble instincts and a desire to help others." And: "Knowing him is one of the greatest pleasures of my life."² It was in the house of the Brights in London where Rudolf Steiner and Annie Besant met for the first time. Esther Bright was their first interpreter. Despite being a close friend of Annie Besant's, she always remembered Rudolf Steiner in a friendly way.⁴ And vice versa, Rudolf Steiner was very fond of her and her mother: "Mrs. Bright and her daughter, Miss Esther Bright, constituted the family; persons who were like an embodiment of loveliness."³

Her criticism, that in his autobiography he misunderstood her relationship to Annie Besant, expressing it as being bound "by bonds of steel", while she said that it was love and understanding that bound them, are partially based on, as I think, a misunderstanding, due to the error in translation of one word. In the German version it says "bonds of iron" (mit eisernen Banden) instead of "bonds of steel". Iron has a 'warmer' connotation and a deep meaning for the understanding of the human being. As we know from the fairy tale "The Frog Prince or Iron Heinrich", Heinrich had kept

Faithful Heinrich lifted them both inside and took his place at the rear. He was filled with joy over the redemption. After they had gone a short distance, the prince heard a crack from behind, as though something had broken. He turned around and said, "Heinrich, the carriage is breaking apart."

No, my lord, the carriage it's not,
But one of the bands surrounding my heart,
That suffered such great pain,
When you were sitting in the well,
When you were a frog.

Once again, and then once again the prince heard a cracking sound and thought that the carriage was breaking apart, but it was the bands springing from faithful Heinrich's heart because his master was now redeemed and happy.

*From the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm
"The Frog Prince or Iron Heinrich"*

his heart in iron bonds, while his master was enchanted, so his heart would not crack and burst of pain, an expression of faithfulness, a virtue Rudolf Steiner would actually greatly value, despite the critique that the Brights were holding on utterly uncritical to Annie Besant, which Esther Bright denied as well. However, Steiner's remark expresses a truth as this in the end was a matter of the heart. And I think it pained him that the Brights were indeed bound to Annie Besant. May the reader decide, also by contemplating this image: "a golden heart", "in bonds of iron". Iron bonds as something positive, something that makes one unfree, but is also liberating, while rendering a service out of devotion and love. "The path from gold to iron is the path outward into the universe."⁵ Through her deed of bringing Rudolf Steiner and Annie Besant together, interpreting for them, Esther Bright has been instrumental in the creation of a deeper connection of the representatives of Consciousness Soul and the I, thus preparing a fruitful ground for Rudolf Steiner's lecturing activities in the future. And what a great service that was!

Esther Bright died on June 1, 1957 at St. Anthony's Hospital, Cheam, Surrey.

Bernhard Kuhn, Viroqua / Wisconsin (USA)

About the author:

Bernhard Kuhn lives in Viroqua, Wisconsin, USA. He grew up in the former East Germany (GDR) and has worked in the USA since 1990, first for twelve years in New York City, then in rural Wisconsin, as a translator and gardener. He has a special interest in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy, Christian Morgenstern, Thoreau, and the New England Transcendentalists, Celtic culture, Glastonbury, Scandinavia, painting and the crossroads of human destinies.

Notes

- 1 TAO, p. 58
- 2 TAO, p.55 & 57
- 3 I would like to underline her remark: "I wrote to him when the split came, but he never answered; I do not believe that the letter was allowed to reach his hands." (OML, p. 13)
- 4 Rudolf Steiner "The Story of My Life", chapter 32
- 5 Rudolf Steiner "Initiate Consciousness", p.39, Anthroposophic Press, NYC 1928

Books from which I quoted:

Esther Bright: *The Ancient One To the Young Folks at Home* (ref. to as: TAO), The Theosophical Publishing House Ltd., London, 1927.

Esther Bright: *Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant* (ref. to as: OML), The Theosophical Publishing House, London, 1936.

Rudolf Steiner: "The Story of My Life" Authorized Translation, Edited by H. Collison, Anthroposophical Publishing Co., 1928

Rudolf Steiner "Initiate Consciousness", p.39, Anthroposophic Press, NYC 1928
Brothers Grimm "Fairy Tales"

"Steiner was a remarkable individual in many ways..."

Esther Bright on Rudolf Steiner

My mother, Ursula Mellor Bright, was an independent, warrior Soul, but very tender and loving. She did not always agree with Annie Besant, but she gave her a big-hearted friendship, a loyal devotion, even from the very early days, when the press was attacking the brave woman who stood up with Charles Bradlaugh in the memorable fight for the mothers of the Nation. My mother and I always kept our independence of judgment, and I know A. B. appreciated this. She wrote to me once: "I do not thank you for your love. I thank you for your understanding." I will quote here a paragraph from one of Rudolf Steiner's books - *The Story of My Life* - which a friend sent me some time ago. I had a sincere and affectionate friendship for Dr. Steiner. He was a most lovable man, a great orator, and a deep mystical student. I knew him well and often heard him lecture. His knowledge of Goethe was profound, for he had been the custodian of the Weimar Archives for some years, and to hear him speak in his rich, eloquent German on this subject was a real delight. Here is what he wrote of us:

Marie von Sievers and I came closer to Mrs. Besant by reason of the fact that she lived with Mrs. Bright of London and we were invited for our second London visit to this lovable home. Mrs. Bright and her daughter, Miss Esther Bright, constituted the family - persons who were like an embodiment of loveliness. I look back with inner joy upon the time I was privileged to spend in this home. The Brights were loyal friends of Mrs. Besant. Their endeavour was to knit a closer tie between us and the latter. Since it was impossible that I should stand with Mrs. Besant in certain things - of which some have already been mentioned here - this gave pain to the Brights *who were bound by bonds of steel - utterly uncritical they were - to the leader of the T.S.*

No, we were not bound by "bonds of steel" but by bonds of love and understanding - and we were not "utterly uncritical".

It was a grief to me when later Dr. Steiner became very critical of Annie Besant, and the Germans who idolised him, separated off from the Theosophical Society. For it was I who introduced

him to A.B. and acted as interpreter between them; he spoke no English, and she but little German. I was very keen that he should understand her and work with her, but it became impossible; the terrible forces of hate which swayed our two nations were already at work before 1914. But he was a fine soul; communion with him was full of life and deep interest. I wrote to him when the split came, but he never answered; I do not believe that the letter was allowed to reach his hands.

It is curious how few people can realise that one may be devoted to a leader, and yet have a strong affection for another who is at variance with that leader, and even, possibly, hostile to her. I remember A. P. Sinnett's surprise once when he was lunching with me at the Old House in Wimbledon. I was speaking with enthusiasm of Dr. Steiner's gifts and personal charm. "Why I thought you were devoted to Dr. Besant!" he remarked. "I am," I said.

Steiner was a remarkable individual in many ways. He had a wonderful power over his body. He ate hardly anything. He stayed with us for some time, and I tried to make him explain to me how he managed to live. For he lived on salad and a little bread and coffee - hardly anything else - and he only slept two or three hours at night. He was very thin, but full of rich life and vitality. In reply to my smiling questions and curiosity he kept a smiling silence. But I know from a few words he said to me one day that he had trained himself in his own peculiar methods, and he could nourish his body in ways not known to the rest of us.

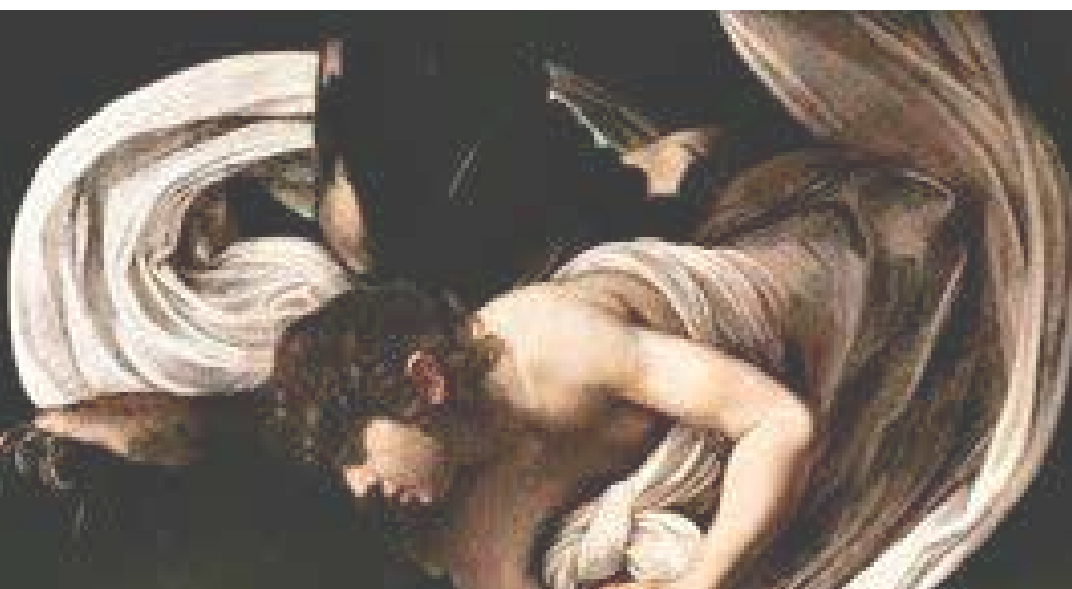
[Esther Bright *"Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant"*

Introduction pp. 12-14.]

At the Munich congress May 1907

... Steiner impresses her (A.B.) favourably; I am glad. His Masonic ceremonies are full of life and reality and he looks fine in his black robes and brilliant red decorations. She and he understand each other better now. ...Many good people in Munich; Gräfin [Countess] Moltke most enthusiastic.

[*Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant*, p.106.]



Memento Mori:

WORLDVIEWS ON DEATH & DYING

EUROPEAN SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY

OCTOBER \ 2018



<http://europeanschooloftheosophy.eu/>

A sepia-toned portrait of C.W. Leadbeater, a man with a full, long beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket. The portrait is the background for the book cover.

CWL SPEAKS

C.W. Leadbeater's Correspondence concerning
the 1906 Crisis in the Theosophical Society

Foreword by
Robert Ellwood

Compiled by
Pedro Oliveira

From the Introduction to the book *CWL Speaks: C. W. Leadbeater's Correspondence concerning the 1906 Crisis in the Theosophical Society*

Compiled by Pedro Oliveira

Foreword by Robert Ellwood

Published in Australia, February 2018, 311 pp.

The foundational legal principle – a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty – did not apply to Charles Webster Leadbeater (CWL) in his lifetime. At different times in his life serious accusations were thrown at him, mostly involving alleged immoral (and reportedly criminal) behaviour towards boys. His accusers were so thoroughly convinced that he was guilty that they communicated this conviction to many others and to the press. And yet, in spite of an almost lifelong campaign of denunciation and defamation he was never charged or prosecuted. But he was ‘proven’ guilty by his accusers and such a ‘proof’ became an integral part of almost every biographical rendering of his life.

The ‘received tradition’ about CWL, which begins in 1906 in the United States, portrays him as a ‘tantric’, ‘black magician’, who made of his business to sexually abuse boys in his care. Later on, this view was expanded to supposedly connect him with sex magic. These allegations were never proven nor substantiated. None of his many books or thousands of articles, written over several decades, advocates any such theories or practices. This ‘received tradition’ was seized upon and adhered to by many within the Theosophical Movement, in the US, England and Australia, both at that time and even today. Adherents to this tradition still portray CWL as one of the main corruptors of Theosophy as taught by H. P. Blavatsky. In spite of this portrayal, his books are among the most popular in theosophical literature and have led tens of thousands of people, in many

countries in the world, in the past one hundred years into an introductory study of Theosophy.

Charles Webster Leadbeater was born in Stockport, Cheshire, United Kingdom, on 16 February 1854. His father, Charles Leadbeater, worked for a railway contractor. His mother was Emma Leadbeater. His father died in 1862. Leadbeater was ordained a priest in the Church of England on 21 December 1879 and took residence in the village of Liphook with his mother. At Church he organised several activities for young people. He was also interested in psychic phenomena and conducted his own investigations in the Scottish Highlands. He joined the Theosophical Society in 1883 in London and travelled with H. P. Blavatsky to India in 1884 after having received a letter of one of her Adept-Teachers to do so.

After his arrival in India he helped Col. Henry S. Olcott in his work for Buddhist education in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. He helped to found many Buddhist schools in that country and wrote a Buddhist catechism. While at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, in India, he was taught some meditation exercises by one of Madame Blavatsky's Adept-Teachers, who had accepted him as a Chela (disciple), in 1884. The exercises helped him to develop the faculty of clairvoyance. He returned to England in 1889.

From 1900 to 1905 he was a popular international lecturer for the TS, concentrating his visits to the United States. While in that country

he was approached by more than one mother with their concerns about sexual difficulties faced by their sons. One of them was Helen I. Dennis. Some American families wanted their sons to accompany him in his travels to be trained in Theosophical work by him. In 1906 he was charged by the leadership of the American Section of the TS with teaching self-abuse (masturbation) to some boys under his care. Following an enquiry in London, on 16 May 1906, presided over Col. Olcott, he resigned his membership of the Society. A crisis would then ensue which lasted for more than two years, centred mostly in the United States and England.

For many, the episodes of 1906 sealed his image as an immoral man, although he was never charged or prosecuted in any country. Many members, in different countries, vigorously defended him. CWL, however, never defended himself of the accusations. After 110 years, all his relevant correspondence regarding that crisis is gathered together in this book. For the first time, his full thoughts and views about those events are presented to the public. Here, CWL speaks.

From the Foreword by Robert Ellwood:

This fine account by Pedro Oliveira of the 1906 crisis in the Theosophical Society, in which the prominent Theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater was accused of sexual teaching and perhaps practice deemed unacceptable by the Society's leadership, is important not only for its contribution to Theosophical history, but also because it represents one response to a time of rapid change in the life of the world, above all in social and psychological attitudes. Good historical writing is not just the narrative of a

certain slice of time, often a narrow slice. It also offers a window into an era and its people, for no one lives entirely apart from his or her times, whether in sympathy with its trends or in reaction against them.

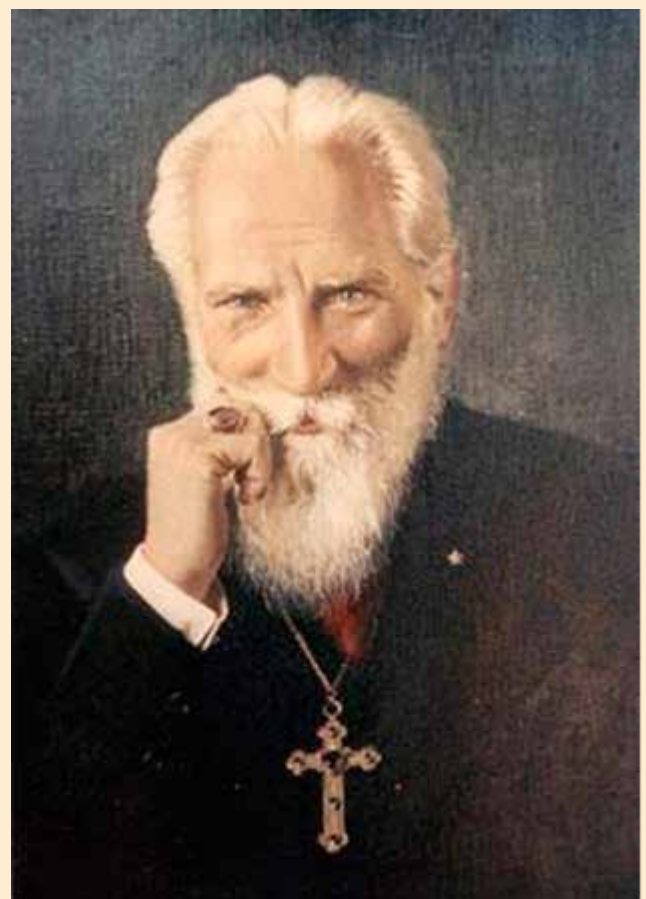
How to obtain a copy of *CWL Speaks: C. W. Leadbeater's Correspondence concerning the 1906 Crisis in the Theosophical Society*

Cost per copy: Australia - AUD\$ 35.00 including postage

Overseas - AUD\$ 40.00 including postage

Orders may be placed with Olive Tree Publishing via PayPal - email address: otpublishing@bigpond.com

or Direct Bank Transfer (enquiries at the email address above).



CWL: image source <http://bit.ly/2G2kTYx>

**11th World Congress of
the Theosophical Society**

Consciousness,
Contemplation,
Commitment:

The Future
is Now

In Singapore 4 - 8 August 2018

<http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/world-congress-2018>



Interview with Jan Nicolaas Kind by Erica Georgiades



Jan Nicolaas Kind is the editor of the magazine *Theosophy Forward*. The interview session of the magazine is what we could call the *Who's is Who* of the Theosophical Movement. This is a very interesting source of material for researchers of Theosophical history.

How many persons have you interviewed?

Let me begin to thank you for giving me this opportunity. The first question is an interesting one, but I must honestly admit that I lost count half way. My guess is that by now, it all started in 2010 during the World Congress in Rome, we come close to 300.

What are the questions you focus on, in your interviews?

Perhaps I need to explain why it all took off to begin with. At the time, the TS Adyar had gone through some turbulent times and good people all of a sudden were confronted with conflict and mistrust. Long standing members, due all that what was happening, found that they had become opponents; obviously very much in contradiction with our First Object. Thought that it would be wise to show that Theosophists are human beings first and foremost. By asking them simple, or if you wish basic questions, they were given the opportunity to present themselves to the world as ordinary and sincere women and men, seeking for Life's answers.

What criteria did you use to formulate the questionnaire?

Not too many, as long as the interviewees are students of Theosophy. Membership of the TS Adyar, or in that respect any other Theosophical vehicle is not at all a must. Independent Theosophists, and surprisingly there are quite a few, are also more than welcome to partake.

What is your aim doing this work?

In question number two, I have already referred to the aim. Could add, that although the TS Adyar for example is a relatively small organization with around 27,000 members world-wide, the sections are so widespread, that if one lives in Latin-American one hardly knows anyone living in the Russian Federation, Greece, Singapore, the Netherlands or India. With the interviews we try to make our Theosophical world a little smaller and better accessible.

How can we access the interviews?

Simply follow the link to *Theosophy Forward* and click on the category THE SOCIETY in the top bar: <http://www.theosophyforward.com/>

It seems that one early question, in your questionnaire, focused on Theosophical SocietyAdyar. Now it seems that you have shifted the focus of the question to the Theosophical Movement. Could you comment, please?

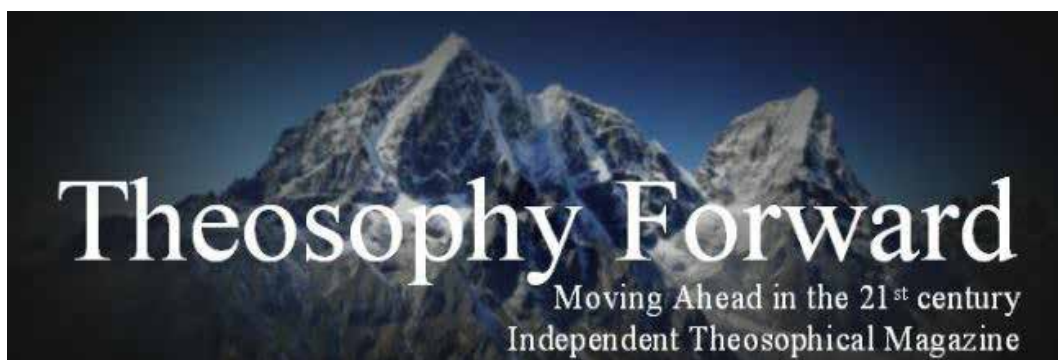
Glad you ask me this. At the start we were focused on the TS Adyar only, but that changed quickly. Have been active through the initiatives of International Theosophy Conferences, bringing Theosophist from the various vehicles together. Not to found one large Theosophical organization, but to offer a platform where all can meet, in order to learn from each other. In my opinion there is but one Theosophical movement and the various vehicles are mere branches of the family tree. Here I really want to quote a few striking lines by our dear friend Dorothy Bell from Australia, who in her piece "Roots and Shoots", referring to the many offshoots, wrote the following:

"But the original impulse that produced the seed and the tree, the branches and offshoots, the underground runners with their place in the sun, is still within, seeking expression and fulfillment. There is no need to change any boundaries, annex other territories, or dissolve any compartments, save in the prison of the mind. And a mind that is crippled by memory – by separation and fear – can never be free. We can find our own place in the sun by going beyond the bondage of the past and serving that impulse wherever we are. That is our territory; that is our center; that is our Theosophical family."

This answers your question I think.

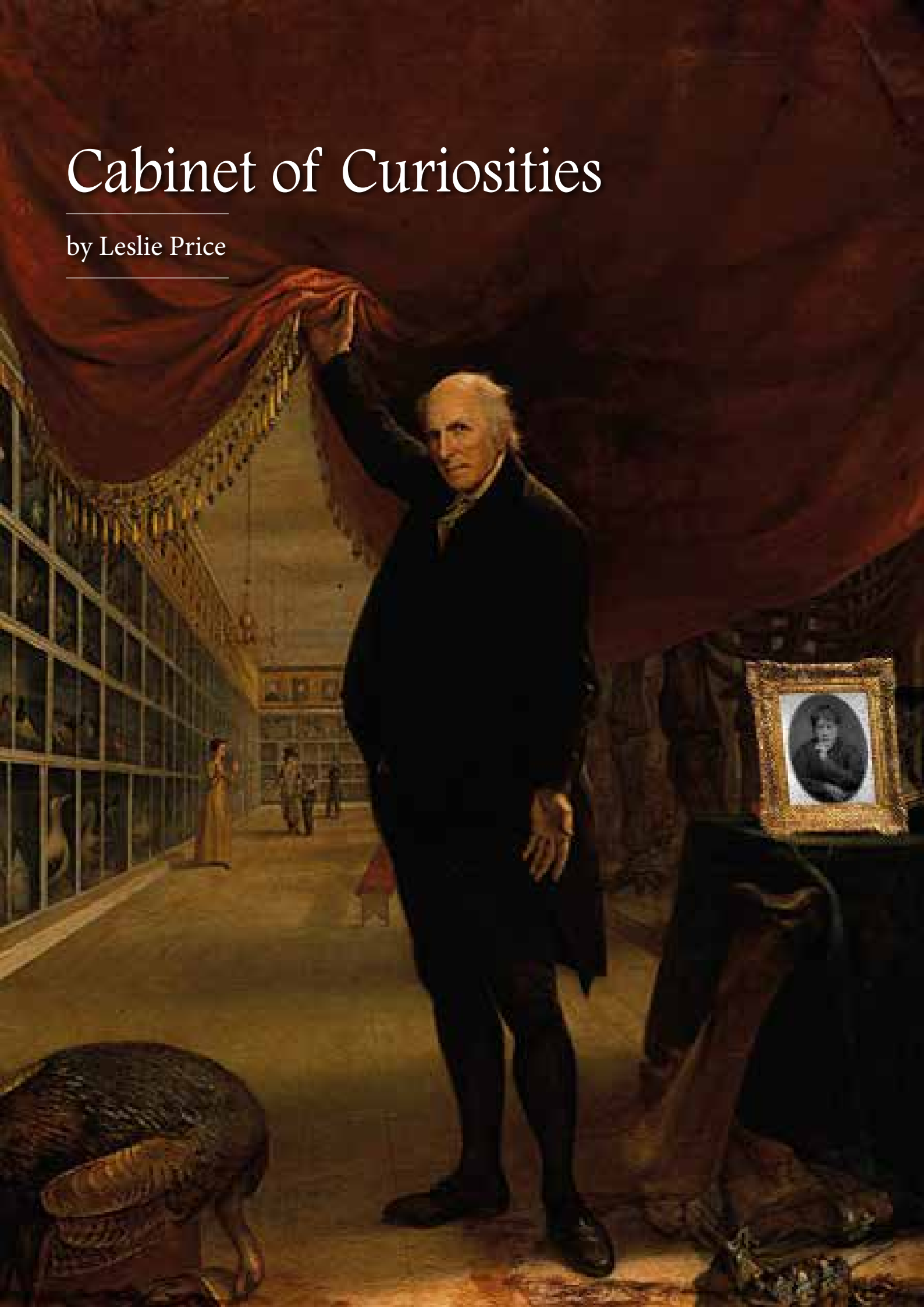
Do you plan to include more questions of practical nature, such as profession for example?

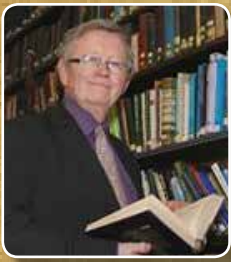
Over the years it was sensed that those who are being interviewed, prefer to fully concentrate on their Theosophical endeavors, rather than elaborating on their professional lives, also for privacy reasons.



Cabinet of Curiosities

by Leslie Price





Leslie Price is the founder of "Theosophical History" and "Psypioneer" journal, and a past editor of "The Christian Parapsychologist". Currently an associate editor of TH and sub-editor of "Psypioneer" journal. He was the Secretary of the first Society for Psychical Research conference in 1977, and served on the SPR's Library Committee and as a member of Council and is currently an Honorary Member.



We present below a second series of posts by Leslie Price on the FOTA facebook page. Facebook users will also find some relevant material by Leslie on the page of the Theosophical Society in London, which is mentioned below



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, SOMERSET HOUSE, LONDON.

Application Number: B36812

REGISTRATION DISTRICT										
BIRTH in the Sub-district of Peckham in the County of Surrey										
No.	Date and Day of Year	Name, Surname	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname, and address of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and address of informant	When registered	Signature of Registrar	Remarks
65	Twentieth and March 1863	George Robert Mead	Boy	Robert Mead	Mary Mead formerly Stone	Lieutenant (Military Store Staff)	R. Mead Father 2 Montague Cottages Albert Grove Peckham	Sixteenth April 1863	Chas. Jno. Nicolson Registrar	

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned

Given at the General Register Office, Somerset House, London, under the Seal of the said Office, the 19th day of March 1887

BB 569883

Birth certificates & Baptism records

February 8, 2017

Before the civil registration of English births from 1837, church records may help. Thus John Clarke, formerly manager of TPH Adyar, kindly visited for me Tower Hamlets records office, and found there the baptismal entry of Emma Hardinge Britten at St. Matthew's Church Bethnal Green in 1823. Sometimes however a birth was registered in one place but a baptism, perhaps for family reasons, might be distant.

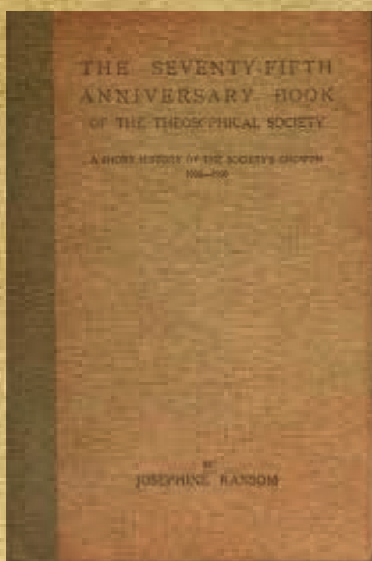
Many writers, including me, have written that Madame Blavatsky's private secretary, G.R.S. Mead was born in Nuneaton in the English Midlands, but his birth certificate says 2 Montague Cottages, Albert Grove, Peckham, London. Dr Robert Gilbert tells me that he was however baptised at Nuneaton, on 30 May, and adds "The 1871 census shows G.R.S. Mead, plus brother Reginald, at Nuneaton with their grandmother"



Theosophical Library Found in Castle

February 15, 2017

Somewhat neglected is Josephine Ransom "The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Book of the Theosophical Society" (TPH Adyar 1950). It is less exciting than her "Short History" (1938) partly because the internal fractures that sometimes shake the T.S. were less apparent in the decade before 1950. But anyone interested in archives will profit from reading the chapters from 1938. As countries were invaded by war, their members, libraries and archives were at risk. So at times membership lists had to be destroyed to protect the names on them, and other archives buried. The invaders often seized buildings, books and papers. Occasionally there was good news. In 1948 "The whole library of some 2000 books of the Austrian Section was recovered from the Castle in Czechoslovakia where it had been taken by the Gestapo in 1938." (p.193)



More volumes of Theosophist Digitised

February 25, 2017

Most users of Theosophical archives will know that the web site of the International Association for the Preservation of Occult and Spiritualist Periodicals (IAPSOP) contains much material relevant to Theosophy, including digitised books. The early volumes of "The Theosophist" have long been there, but Marc Demarest now reports to us.

"Thanks to a Herculean effort by John Buescher, we have the Theosophist captured through early 1931. Volumes 44, 45 and 46 have been processed and are posted on IAPSOP"

www.iapsop.com

We eagerly await the next volumes which describe the final preparations for the Coming of the World Teacher.



New Assessment of the Count of St, Germain

• February 28, 2017 •

The Count of St Germain is a significant person in Theosophy. He has reportedly been quite busy in recent decades channelling messages, especially in America. But how do we sort fact from fiction?

Jean Overton Fuller (1915-2009), the doyenne of lady Theosophical historians in England, in her 1988 biography of him concluded that some of the St Germain archival sources were spurious. Has her claim stood the test of time? In a 2012 assessment of St Germain, David Pratt tends to agree with Jean.

<http://davidpratt.info/st-germain1.htm>

Unfortunately Jean's book is out of print and rather expensive. We need a reprint with a new introduction.



Other Mahatma Letters

March 8, 2017

What Theosophical archives could be more valuable than letters dictated by the Masters? Apart from those included in "The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett" others survive.

When Margaret Conger published her "Combined Chronology" for the Sinnett letters, she added this general comment. (p.5 TUP edition)

"The two slender volumes of "Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom", edited by Mr Jinarajadasa, are arresting and of much spiritual value. Unfortunately they need to be read with discrimination, for, taken as the letters sometimes are, not merely from copies but from copies of copies, and differing in some instances from H.P.B.'s reproductions from the original, they cannot be considered as authentic material."

Rather a harsh verdict, but even though CJ made later corrections, a new edition based on the surviving archival material is clearly desirable. This should also take account of, for example, the additional Laura Holloway letters, lately published.



New sources of Theosophical Archives

March 9, 2017

What are the important new sources of Theosophical archives? I have attempted to answer this question in a blog for the "Popular Occulture in Britain, 1875-1947" project which is now based at the University of Stirling in Scotland.

Of course we would be delighted to learn of omissions!

“Popular Occulture in Britain, 1875-1947”

<http://www.stir.ac.uk/popular-occulture-in-britain/>



Tibetan Material in Mahatma Letters

April 1, 2017 ·

Perhaps the most important Theosophical archives are the Mahatma Letters, now in the British Library. But what are we to make of the Tibetan references therein, some of which are puzzling? An important clarification of one passage has been published on 31 March by David Reigle on the Prajnaquest blog.

<http://prajnaquest.fr/blog/>

This research reminds us that the Letters with their imperishable message are complicated productions.

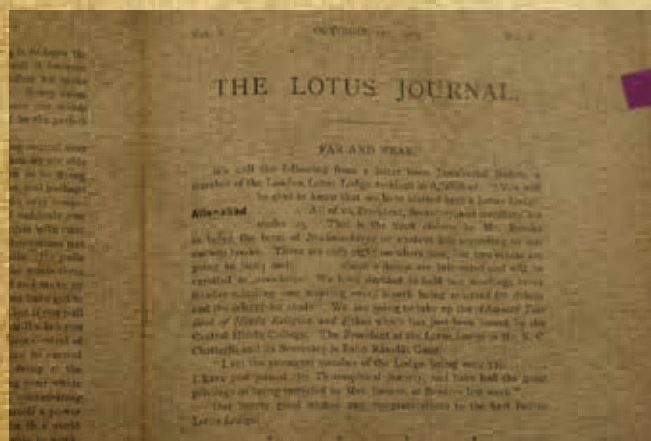


Lotus Lodges

April 3, 2017

Although there are Lotus Lodges in various parts of the Theosophical world, the most important use of the term was in a younger people's lodge. Some of those who joined became prominent in later life. Here for example is a news item from Allahabad in the Lotus Journal of October 1st 1903.

What records of a Lotus Lodge or Circle do you have?



Leadbeater's Theology

April 11, 2017

C.W. Leadbeater left an unpublished book on theology, and Dr Gregory Tillett who edits a Leadbeater blog has been contemplating publishing the text with annotations. This would assuredly be helpful to scholars. There have already been two editions of a partial text.

<https://cwleadbeater.wordpress.com/>

There is at least one scholarly edition of a Leadbeater book already- "The Chakras" (Quest) edited by Kurt Leland. There is clearly a need for many more.



The Age of HPB

April 24, 2017

Madame Blavatsky was born on 12 August 1831 (31 July Russian calendar old style) and died on 8th May 1891.

She was therefore 59 when she passed, or as we might say, in her sixtieth year.

<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/.../the-secr.../9780399166808/>

Nevertheless authors still get this not quite right. Thus Gary Lachman in his important new book "The Secret Teachers of the Western World" (2015) writes: "Blavatsky died on May 8th, 1891, at the age of 60."

But she wasn't. This is a slip. Gary Lachman, who has written a sympathetic biography of her, knows this.

One person, ironically who was often inaccurate about her own age was H.P.B. herself!



Crookes in Paperback

May 4, 2017

William Crookes was the most distinguished scientist to be active in the Theosophical Society, from 1883 until his death in 1919. He was a friend of Madame Blavatsky; she visited his laboratory in his house, and he came for

tea at her home in London. In 2008, Professor William Brock published a full biography of Crookes, which paid due attention to his work in Theosophy and psychical research.

<https://www.routledge.com/William-Crookes-1.../9781138259881>

As a scholarly hardback, it was rather expensive. so it is excellent news that a paperback edition is at last available. There is still much research to be done on Crookes' Theosophical role, which was chiefly in the London Lodge led by Mr Sinnett, and on his place in HPB's "The Secret Doctrine"



Indian Rope Trick

May 31, 2017

In "People from the Other World", Col. Olcott described how an African materialised at an Eddy séance. Madame Blavatsky also at the séance, identified him as a juggler who when she was in Egypt, had produced a tape up which a boy climbed and disappeared. The African had pursued him up the rope, and apparently dis-membered him, but the boy shortly reappeared unharmed.

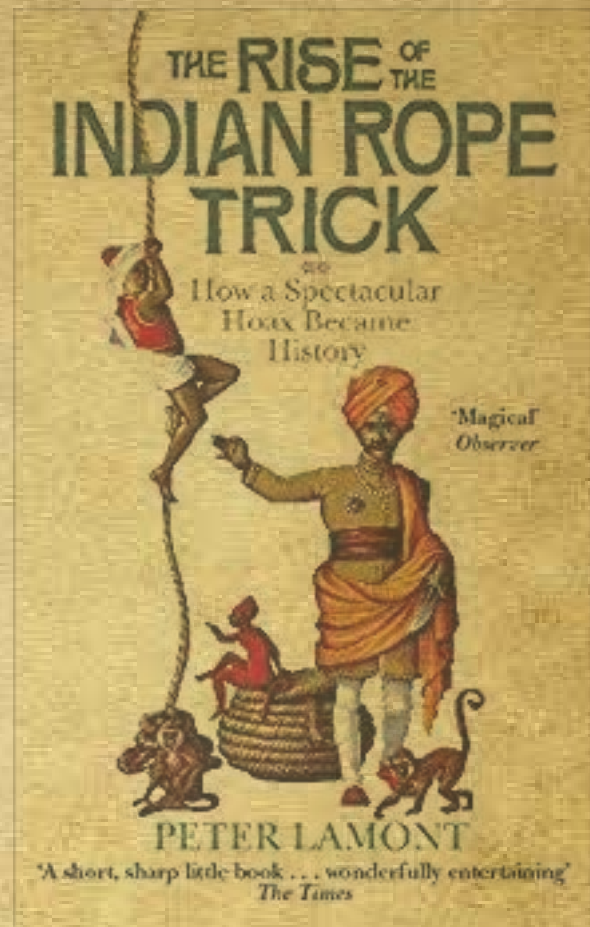
HPB discussed such tricks more than once in "Isis Unveiled" (1877) and pronounced them a powerful group illusion worthy of study by science (vol. 1 p.473).

The debate goes on, but much archival material was reviewed by Peter Lamont in his book "The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick" (2004).

Theosophists have naturally been interested. Raphael Hurst, for example, discussed a then recent case in "Theosophy in England & Wales" December 1921.

Hurst later became famous under the name Paul Brunton. We may surmise that he was a TSE member in 1921. But his name has not yet been found in the old register.

UPDATE. In June 2017 Kurt Leland discovered that Paul Brunton joined the Astrological Lodge (London) of the TS under the name, Raphael Hurst, on 30 April 1920. LP.



George Russell and the Aeon

July 20, 2017

Madame Blavatsky wrote many important letters, and she also received some. George Russell, the Irish poet, who was a life long student of "The Secret Doctrine", first used his mystic pseudonym AE in letters to HPB, which appeared in her journal "Lucifer."

Now the book in which he read the gnostic term "Aeon" may have been located.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/hidden-aeons-searching-for-a-literary-relic-1.3043433>



Pitfalls in Identifying Membership of the T.S.

July 20, 2017

Claims that a person was a T.S. member are full of pitfalls, not least because there have been a variety of Theosophical Societies. Likewise the circumstances of alleged departures from the T.S. can be confused. How often have you read that Yeats was expelled from the T.S., by HPB?

<http://blavatskynews.blogspot.co.uk/.../yeats-and-theosophy.h...>

The basic resource for early TS membership is the list maintained at Adyar, which however is not officially published. If someone's name appears there, like Alfred Russel Wallace (1876) or Frederic Myers (circa 1883) ...then it's going to be hard to deny they were a member. National registers, like that of the TS in England, which at one time included much of Europe in a European Section, are also informative.

We can't accept at face value the claim that a person was a T.S. member. This issue has arisen lately in the case of Scriabin, the composer. His obituary in *The Vahan*, the English T.S. magazine (May 1915) p.167 says Skriabin (sic) had visited TS hq in London and that he was a TS member. But his name has not been located in the Adyar list, though it could yet be. The composer was undoubtedly much influenced by H.P.B.'s work, but he may not have joined. The term "Theosophist" sometimes applied to him has a degree of truth, but he was actually critical of Theosophists in his own time.



Action Lodge

August 17, 2017

In a Theosophical archive, there is sometimes that special moment when an unexplored box is found. Last Sunday, Annelene Hursthouse, who is working on records management at the TS in England, noticed a small suitcase labelled Action Lodge. This lodge was formed in England in 1919 after the Great War (1914-18) to help relieve distress in central Europe, in Hungary in particular. The Lodge had an early association with the charity Save the Children, also founded in 1919.

Annie Besant told a conference in London on November 12th 1919 of

"its first real great activity, in which it is sending out to Hungary some eight persons, helped by money from the 'Save the Children Fund,' which was able apparently to provide the money but not the workers. And that band of eight people is going out almost immediately to Hungary in order to take charge there of the immense work which is opening up before us, to endeavour to feed, help and thereby save the children who will make the future nations."

Annie Besant became President of Honour of the new Lodge and nominated its first council - Lady Emily Lutyens (president) Mrs Duckworth, Mrs Ensor, J. Krishnamurti, J. Nityananda and Dr L. Haden Guest M.P. . Major D. Graham Pole became treasurer, and Miss J.B. Chambers hon. sec.(succeeding Major Haden Guest).

The minutes and circulars of the Lodge will enable us to reconstruct the work that was accomplished. There was also some relief work in Germany after the next war (1939-45). The Lodge continued until 1977.



Braille Lodge

August 17, 2017

Still on the object of Theosophical lodges for special purposes, Annelene Hursthouse has drawn my attention to the 1925 charter of the Braille Lodge, formed in the English Section, known also as the Margaret Dudley

Braille Lodge.

The description of the Braille Lodge, in the Year Books the TSE formerly issued, was “Sole Activity – Production of Theosophical Braille Literature” – it’s not clear whether some members were visually impaired, or whether they were sighted members who helped to produce the braille texts.

Clearly there is much more to be discovered about Theosophical work for and with, the blind and other groups.

from 12 to 50 Gloucester Place on March 1st 1936.



Threat to Theosophical Archives

August 24, 2017

Theosophical archives and libraries are more important than ever. They are essential for the study of esotericism, and such resources are threatened. So argues Wouter J. Hanegraaff in an important paper “Ad loca se-cretiora” : Rejected Knowledge and the future of Libraries”.

Such material is at risk in the general cutback by public bodies, including universities, of assets that are expensive to maintain, and don’t generate much profit. This is especially the case for subject areas of “rejected knowledge” like esotericism. Ironically, this coincides with an upsurge of academic interest in the field.

https://www.academia.edu/.../Ad_loca_secretiora_Rejected_Know...

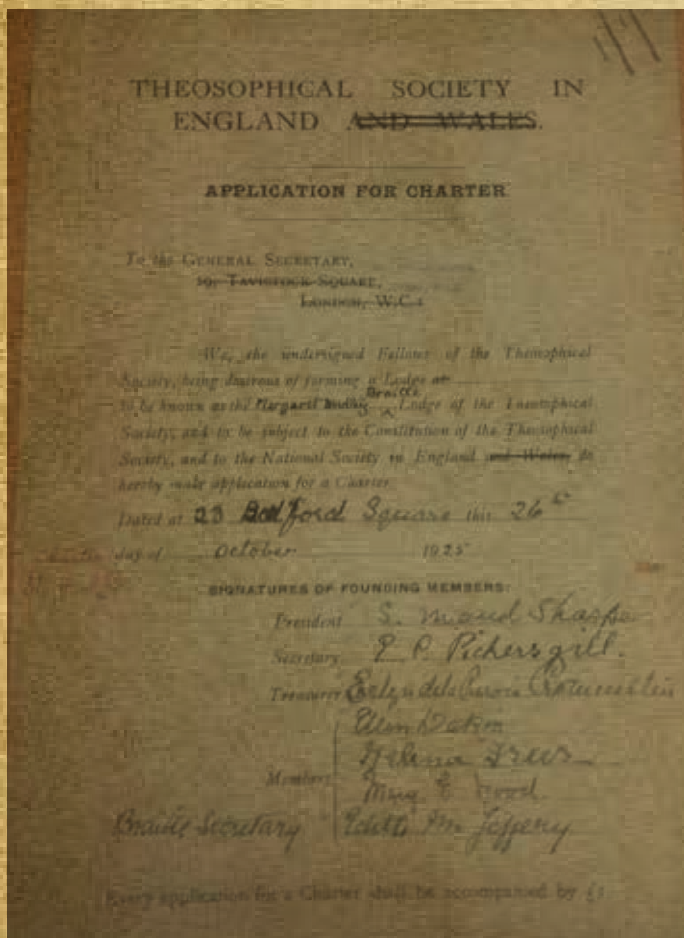
Dr Hanegraaff warns that digitisation is not an adequate solution to the problem.



How True Are Written Records?

August 25, 2017 •

Written records are important. But they may not be the



T.S. in London Change of Address

August 23, 2017

Would it not have been exciting to receive a memo from When did the TS in London last change its address?

This is a trick question. The TS moved into its building in 1934, and is still there. But by order of the London County Council, the number of the building changed

whole truth. All those who deal with minutes of meetings know this!

I'm reminded of this in the latest issue of Theosophical History July-October 2016, p.184 where there is a footnote (no.13 p.184) about Col. Olcott's divorce, granted in New York 1874 to Mrs Olcott. Evidence was presented of him in a house of ill repute. Pat Deveney, lawyer and Theosophical historian, comments "The affair was a legal contrivance." so she could get the divorce.

www.theohistory.org

Jean Overton Fuller, who had obtained the Olcott legal papers when she was writing "Blavatsky and her Teachers" (1988), gave a specifically English comparison where in the old days, a man would go to a hotel at the seaside resort of Brighton, and a private detective would observe him in the company of a lady. This provided the necessary evidence for divorce.

My point is not to approve of these ploys, but to advise caution in assessing written records.



A Masonic Letter from Anne Besant

August 25, 2017

As a prominent mason, Annie Besant often appears in photos. But how about actual letters from Annie? Such a letter was recently found in the Yarker Library in England; it had been sent to Miss Bothwell Gosse. The Library is kindly lending it to the TS in England, to be included in the archival exhibition during the Annie Besant conference in London (30 September - 1 October 2017).



T.P.H. London Logo

September 4, 2017

An emblem, or as we might say today, a logo, can be an important part of Theosophical heritage. Here for example is the image which appeared on old books of the Theosophical Publishing House, London, a business which had a chequered history and was once owned personally by Annie Besant herself.

TPH London as an imprint has survived in recent years on published Blavatsky Lectures from the TS in England, but on 30 September, on the occasion of the Annie Besant weekend at 50 Gloucester Place, a new book will appear from TPH London. (More on that book soon.)

In the book, there will be an updated emblem, still using a sphinx. This raised tricky design questions. Should the sphinx, for example be male, female, or both?



Anna Kingsford Presidential Address

September 14, 2017

Anna Kingsford was the first woman to head a national T.S. She was elected president of the British Theosophical Society in 1883. Anna was eloquent - and outspoken.

Her first presidential address, delivered in absentia, upset both Madame Blavatsky and the Mahatmas! Apparently the full text was not published, but somehow a handwritten copy and a typed version were preserved in the TSE archives in London, in a drawer in the office

of the elected general secretary (now called national president). The address was finally published in 1987 in "Theosophical History" and is now reprinted on line.

<http://www.humanitarismo.com.br/.../Tex.../OAKM-I-AKPresiAdd.htm>

Just as well her colleague Edward Maitland did not have the material, as he infamously burnt many of her papers.

The 1988 conference on Anna Kingsford mentioned in a 1987 footnote did not take place, but it is hoped it can be arranged for February 2018. More soon on this..



Anne Besant Autograph Book

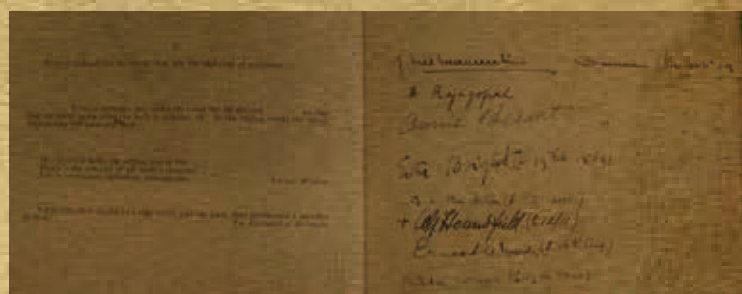
September 16, 2017

Autograph and birthday books can give valuable historical information. In the archives of the TS in London, there is an unusual book devised by Eveline Lauder. Was she the wife of Col. Lauder, late of Hong Kong?. Certainly, Col. Lauder's birthday is noted (June 26th) but the actual donor seems to be Mrs. Lauder (Daph-ne). The recipient was Mrs. Hewitson, circa 1927, and the book was kept at the premises of Harrogate Lodge in northern England. Perhaps others received the same gift.

In the book, the quotes from Annie Besant's writings are on the left, and the signatures are on the right. It appears that people chose where they wished to sign, and may or may not have dated the entry.

Some famous people sign; others are unknown. There are 3 Coddys in different places, Mabel Besant-Scott, Annie's daughter 1929, and John Coats (later international president) for example.

Was the book taken to places? On August 6th, 1929, it was signed by Krishnamurti, apparently at Ommen, and by Rajagopal. AB herself, and Esther Bright. K had dissolved his Order on August 3rd.



A COLLECTION OF QUOTATIONS FROM THE
LECTURES AND WRITINGS OF MRS. ANNIE
BESANT ARRANGED AND COMPILED AS AN
AUTOGRAPH ALBUM BY EVELINE LAUDER

Geoffrey Hodson and Family

September 18, 2017

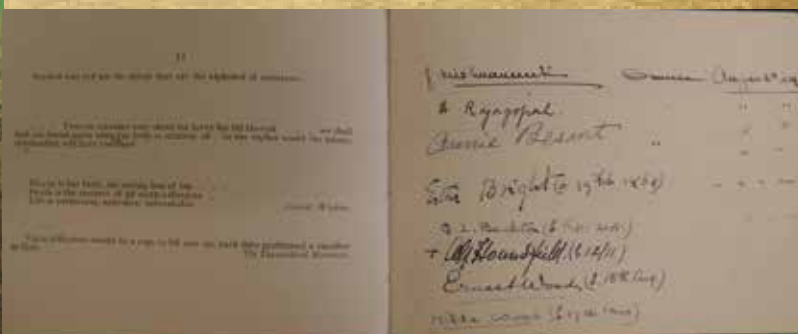
Here's another page from the Autograph book of Annie Besant quotations, to be exhibited at the weekend devoted to her at the Theosophical Society in London, 30 September - 1 October. (see the TSE web site for details).

Geoffrey Hodson, the Theosophical clairvoyant, signs the book. But who are the other Hodsons?

Diana Dunningham Chapotin kindly explained.

"Constance was Geoffrey's mother, Jane was his first wife (who died of multiple sclerosis) and Margaret was his sister. They were Lincolnshire people."

<http://www.wizardsbookshelf.com/hpb-secret-books/>



The Best Lecture of Annie Besant

September 19, 2017

Which Theosophist gave the most lectures ever? Probably Annie Besant. Kurt Leland has been compiling a list for his Annie Besant Shrine.

<http://www.kurtleland.com/.../61-x-theosophical-pamphlets-189...>

And which was her best? Harold Jones of Southport Lodge, England recalled:

"I was stewarding at that wonderful public lecture which she gave in the Queens Hall, The Coming of the World Teacher. I think that meeting must have been the greatest public lecture I have ever heard. She was a direct channel for her Master's power which just flowed through her.

All through these years we were awaiting the unfoldment and flowering of Krishnamurti".

In Kurt's list, this is probably :

1925 The Coming of the World-Teacher. Lecture of November 1, 1925, London, Queen's Hall. TPH.

There will be more about Annie Besant and Krishnamurti at a weekend AB conference (30 September- 1 October 2017) at the TS in London, 50 Gloucester Place, details of which are on the TSE web site. Scholars from half a dozen countries will share the latest research.



Golden Dawn Database

September 28, 2017

The London writer Sally Davis has been researching the lives of members of the famous Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in 1887-8. As her investigations proceed, she has been putting her findings on her family web site Wright and Davis. Some GD members were also TS members, so her work is of considerable relevance to Theosophical archivists.

Take for example Percy Bullock, whose name appears on the British membership register for the T.S. on the same page as Annie Besant, and who, with his wife, was active also in the GD.

<http://www.wrightanddavis.co.uk/GD/BULLOCKPANDP.htm>

Sally typically puts at the end of her entries a full account of her sources. Thus she tells us that Percy Bullock became Hon. Sec. of the Ananda Lodge in 1893; what it did privately, and how it was overtaken by events. And in her sources section at the end, she reveals that some papers relating to this Ananda Lodge have ended up in the Freemasons' Library, London.

Theosophical historians will find it worthwhile to check out the growing list of names on Sally's web site, and to contribute further data.



Esoteric Archives

October 2, 2017

In an address to the Annie Besant conference in London last week, Kurt Leland was critical of the bias and neglect of her by the academic world. But could Theosophists themselves be hindering the proper appreciation of Annie Besant's work?

He mentioned the private esoteric school in the Theosophical Society, of which Annie Besant was Outer Head until her death in 1933, having become a member soon after joining in the T.S. in 1889.

Kurt Leland noted:

"The ES still exists and its archives and publications remain off limits to non members. Indeed, it could be argued that an unbiased portrait of Besant's work within the Theosophical movement is impossible until ES records of her movements, policies, and teachings within the organization have been released."

Of course the same could be said of a number of other Theosophists of historical interest, including Madame Blavatsky herself, who had created the school.

On 17 November 2015, UNESCO adopted a resolution (38 C/70) declaring 28 September of every year as International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAL).

The Jesuits, who were often criticised by earlier Theosophical leaders, are taking this seriously.

<https://www.jesuit.org.uk/blog/archives->

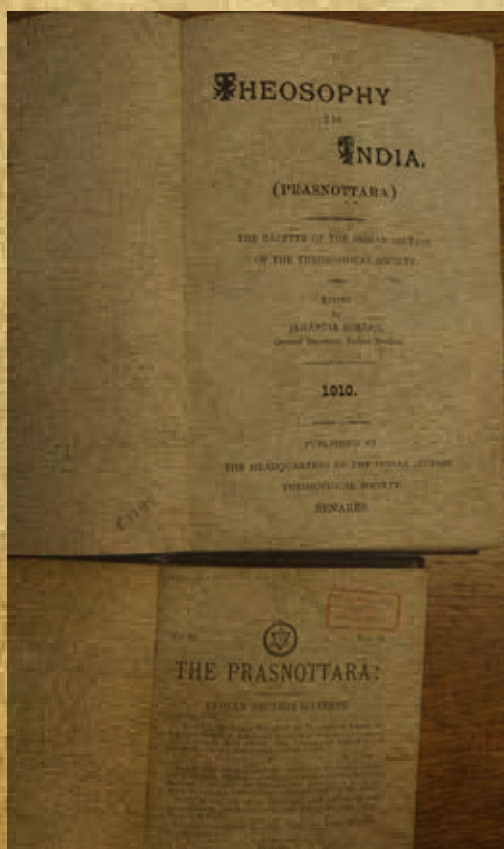
making-available-archives-jesuits-britain



Indian Theosophical Archives

October 5, 2017

The history of Modern Theosophy in India has been little explored, although Indian publications can reach distant archives. Last Monday Kurt Leland and Mriganka Mukhopadhyay were working in adjoining libraries at 50 Gloucester Place, London. Kurt discovered several volumes of the Indian national magazine of a century ago, under two different titles. Mriganka found the Transactions of the Bengal Theosophical Society, a volume which had once belonged, according to an inscription, to the Oxford Theosophical Society.



Annie Besant and Socialism

October 5, 2017

As scholars expand their work on Theosophy, their Theses, by no means all of which are ever published in book form, or even made available on line, become important. At the recent Annie Besant conference in London, Dr Marie Terrier gave to the archives of the T.S.in England, a copy of her 2015 thesis at the Sorbonne, a gift which has been received with great appreciation.

La contribution théorique et militante d'Annie Besant (1847-1933) au renouveau socialiste en Grande-Bretagne. Genèse et prolongements par Marie Terrier.

We very much hope that the thesis will be the basis of a book, published in several languages.



1998 English Summer School Photograph

October 23, 2017

Summer schools and annual conventions are often represented in our photographic archives. These photos are informative and often moving, though identifying everyone shown, can be a challenge!

This photograph was taken at Leicester England, at the summer school of the TSE in 1998. Here on 26 July, Professor Ellison (right, in front of photo) delivered the Blavatsky lecture "Science, Consciousness and the Paranormal" which has some claim to be the most controversial over the past century of such lectures. (You can still buy it from TSE.)

Professor Arthur James Ellison passed away on September 6th, 2000, at the age of 80. His lifelong contribution to the Third Object of the T.S. in particular was immense.



Mahatma Letters chronological Edition

November 6, 2017

The Mahatma Letters received by A.P. Sinnett and A.O. Hume in the 1880s are perhaps the most important Theosophical records. They may be consulted in the British Library in London .

For the serious student, the recent Chronological edition of the Letters is an indispensable aid. It is to be hoped that there will be an updated edition before long, to take account of rapid advances in our knowledge of the background, as old journals are digitised.

Very serious students sometimes have more than one copy of the Chronological Edition in the house. . After all, a couple may attend different study classes, and insert notes about various passages. Last week I was the guest in such a household. A colleague, meanwhile has a copy where he works, and another at home.

Also "H. P. Blavatsky and the SPR, an Examination of the Hodgson Report of 1885" by Vernon Harrison, Ph.D. (Theosophical University Press 1997) may be recommended as the most important forensic discussion of how the letters were written. It may be downloaded free, but the actual book should be in every Theosophical library.



The Will of Annie Besant

September 25, 2017

At the Annie Besant conference, this coming weekend at 50 Gloucester Place, London, the TS in England hope to exhibit her the last will and testament. Other material relating to this will is in the British Library, among the papers of David Graham Pole, the solicitor of Mrs Besant.

After probate has been obtained, wills become public documents, and copies can normally be ordered.

Annie Besant passed away on 20 September 1933. She made a codicil to her will on 15 January 1933, revoking the appointment of one of her executors, Albert Schwarz, and replacing him with Sri Ram. The other executor was David Graham Pole.



Leeds Lodge Visitors Book

November 8, 2017

Recently I had the privilege of visiting Leeds Lodge, which has a splendid library and a remarkable artistic heritage. My host, the Lodge president, Paul Barker, kindly showed me their Visitors Book which included some notable names like Arthur Conan Doyle, Annie Besant (three times) and at least twice Ernest Oaten, the editor of "Two Worlds" a weekly Spiritualist newspaper which was produced in Manchester, perhaps the most outstanding Spiritualist of his time.

I was intrigued to see that Alice Bailey visited Leeds Lodge. Very little historical research has been done into the Baileys and the Lucis Trust, perhaps in reaction against the interest in personalities in some other parts of the Theosophical Movement. One might assume that after the disagreements with the TS leadership recorded in her "Autobiography" Mrs Bailey did not have contact. But she lectured widely, and I would expect that she was welcomed at a number of Lodges. Whose signatures are in your Visitors Book?



Gandhi and Edward Maitland

November 25, 2017

Did you know that Mahatma Gandhi (at a time when simplifying his life) destroyed some Theosophical correspondence and regretted doing so later? This was from Edward Maitland of the Esoteric Christian Union, with which Gandhi was associated in South Africa. You can read more about this in an important paper by Shimon Lev "Gandhi and his Jewish Theosophist supporters in South Africa."

https://cwleadbeater.wordpress.com/.../gandhi-and-jewish-the-...

At the London conference at TSE on 17 February about Anna Kingsford, there will be exploration of her influence (with Edward Maitland) on later thinkers.

Gandhi is one, but can we agree with his statement in 1894 "To me there is little difference between Theosophy and Esoteric Christianity."?



Georgiana Eagle

December 14, 2017

The Spiritualist journal LIGHT, founded in London in 1881, was read by Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott and was an important means of communication between Theosophists before the English Theosophical journal "The Vahan" appeared in 1890. Many of the early volumes may be consulted on line on the IAPSOP web site. (as can also "The Theosophist" and "Lucifer").

The College of Psychic Studies has continued to publish LIGHT, and the latest issue can be read free on line.

https://issuu.com/collegeofpsychicstudies/docs/light_2018

This issue is concerned with a mentalist called Georgiana Eagle, who in 1846 received a gold watch from Queen Victoria for meritorious clairvoyance, stolen from CPS in 1962 but retrieved in 2017. When Elizabeth Longford wrote her standard biography of Victoria in 1964, she was doubtful of this story, but about 2000 the BBC Leicester journalist Stephen Butt located contemporary theatre bills which had featured Georgiana and her father in a double "thought reading" act. Now thanks to digitisation, Vivienne Roberts, CPS archivist, has found newspaper reports of the watch and of the royal patronage from shortly after the event.

Some Spiritualists had thought that Georgiana was a clairvoyant in the sense used in C.W. Leadbeater's book "Clairvoyance" (1899). Some sceptics had believed her a myth, or at least boasting a spurious royal connection. This case demonstrates the importance of archives for establishing truth.

https://issuu.com/collegeofpsychicstudies/docs/light_2018



In search of Dorothy Clutterbuck

December 14, 2017 ·

Wicca is modern religion developed in Britain.

Theosophical historians will find the study of its history enlightening, and not only because of the part played by Theosophists. The standard work is Ronald Hutton "The Triumph of the Moon" (2000).

One of the witch pioneers was Gerald Gardner, who claimed to have been initiated by "Old Dorothy" in the New Forest, southern England. Unwisely, an academic historian in America, Jeffrey Russell, suggested in a 1980 book that she was fictitious. But Doreen Valiente who had worked with Gardner, was able to locate the vital records of Dorothy Clutterbuck. Doreen did this traveling by public transport, and before the days of the internet; however Doreen had been at Bletchley Park for part of the war, and made a good agent.

So Dorothy existed, but was she a witch, or just a conventional churchwoman, on whom Gardner foisted a false charge?

Here the argument continues, as with various characters in the nearby field of Theosophical history.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Clutterbuck



1929 Theosophical Directory Missing Page

December 19, 2017 · ·

Year books and directories produced by National Sections are important archival sources. The TS in England regularly produced such a booklet from 1929-1983, possibly longer. Here Alan Walker, a member of FOTA England examines the year book for 1929. He is doing some research into Theosophical buildings, and a list of Theosophical addresses is a valuable tool.

But this particular directory has a page torn out. Did anything happen in 1929 that might trigger such a surprising act? This might be connected with Krishnamurti's declaration in August 1929 that truth was a pathless land - in which, of course, no directories are needed.

Occult Revival Archives

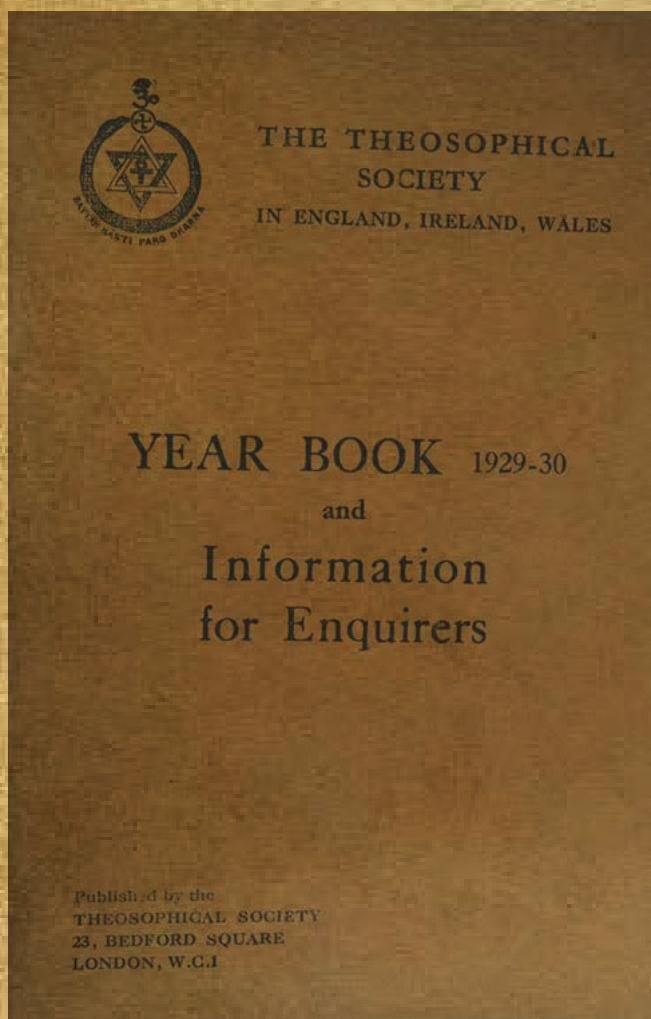
December 28, 2017 ·

Plans are being made for a conference at the T.S. in London in late September 2018 to reassess The Occult Revival. This is a term used by scholars to refer to the growth of movements like Theosophy in the late nine-teenth and early twentieth centuries.

There would be a Call for Papers. Dr Robert Gilbert (right in photo, on a recent visit to the TSE at 50 Gloucester Place in London), a member of FOTA England, would hopefully be interested as he is a celebrated authority on such movements as the Golden Dawn, founded in 1887.

Dr Gilbert, however, is also noted for his disbelief that there was any actual Revival!

How is such a disagreement to be resolved? Part of the solution must be in the study of archives - member-ship lists, subscription records, newspaper cuttings books and so on.



❧

“The Occult World” First Edition

December 29, 2017 ·

Sometimes in the absence of written evidence, we can only guess at the story behind a gift. In the TSE reference library is a first edition of “The Occult World” by A.P. Sinnett.

When and why did he give it to the London Lodge? That was the name of the British Theosophical Society assumed on 3 June 1883 at the proposal of its new president Dr Anna Kingsford. Sinnett later became lodge president for many years.

Why did he give the Lodge a first edition- had they lost their original copy? Why did he not give a later edition, with the additional material? This was incidentally the first Modern Theosophical book to go through different editions.



How did the book end up in the library of the British Section?
The London Lodge preceded and outlived the British Section.

None of these questions is important, but the book itself was very important. It was the first book to bring into the open the “brothers” of H.P. Blavatsky. Indeed it carried a dedication to the author’s friend Koot Hoomi Lal Singh.

No wonder its claims created a sensation. And the argument continues today. If we are not shocked by the claims of the book, such as the existence of “a Brotherhood or Secret Association, which ramifies all over the East, the principal seat of which for the present I gather to be in Thibet” (p.24) it is because familiarity has dulled such an assertion at the very moment when materialistic science was triumphant and western imperial-ism rising rapidly,

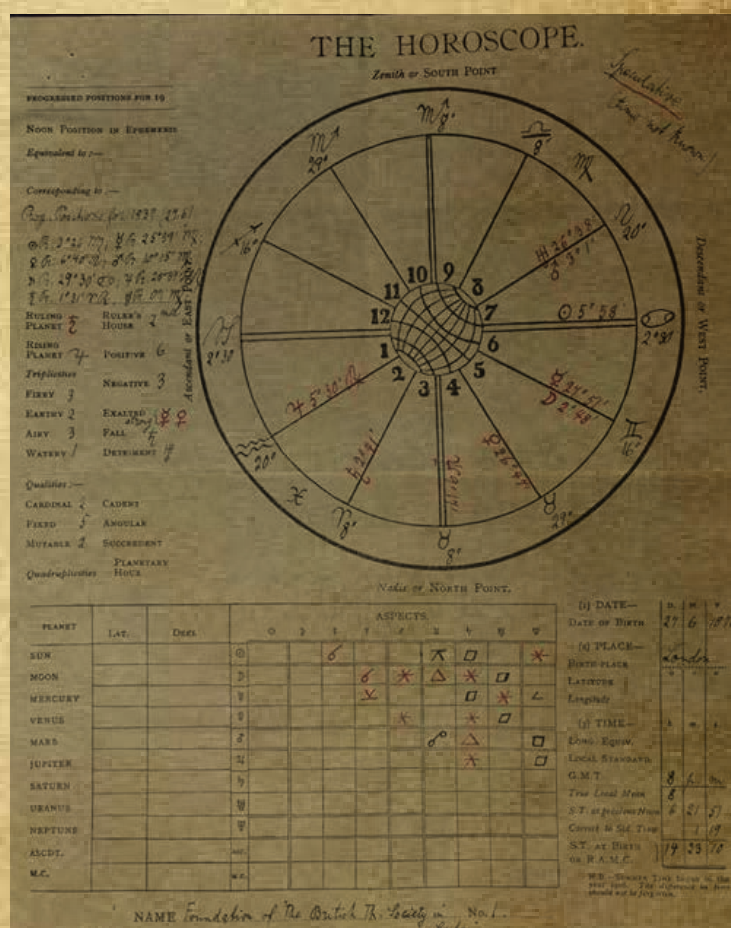
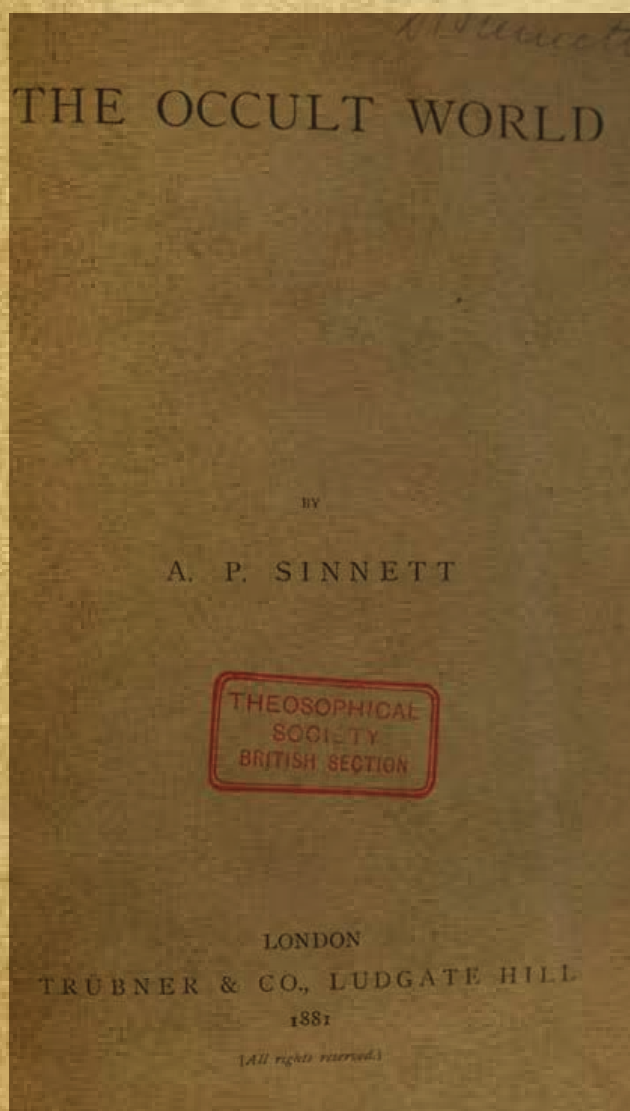
Astrological Charts as Archives

January 19 2018 at 2:24pm ·

An unusual, sometimes fragile, type of archive is an astrological chart for a person or organisation. Here for example is one of a set of three charts for the British Theosophical Society founded in 1878. The other two, with slightly later dates, remind us that identifying the date when an organisation began is not always easy. The T.S. itself in New York in 1875 is a classic example.

These charts, now in the archives of the T.S.E. appear to have been made much later - in WW2, but why.

Colleagues in the Astrological Lodge have kindly examined them. This is not only a matter of handwriting identification, but also the techniques of different astrologers. The investigation continues.



Arnaldo Sisson Filho, one of the creators of the site, will speak at the AK day.

A lost original Russian letter of H.P.B.

February 7 at 2:10pm

Dr Wouter Hanegraaff has recently published an important paper which begins by discussing a famous letter by Madame Blavatsky in which she revealed to her sister that she was assisted by the goddess in writing her book "Isis Unveiled".

<http://correspondencesjournal.com/.../hanegraaff-the-theosop.../>

There are several English translations of that letter available. There are also two variant published Russian versions. But when the first volume of the "The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky" appeared in 2003, of this item ("Letter 62") it was stated "Russian original unavailable". This means that we don't know what changes the recipient Vera might have introduced when she prepared the Russian original for the press, or indeed the changes Russian editors might have made.

And how reliable was Vera? In summer 2015, FOTA Newsletter published a very significant special issue in which Vera's own biography of HPB was printed. This can be found on line on the FOTA Newsletter page. It would appear that HPB edited this biography quite drastically into an English version.

It is also apparent from Dr Hanegraaff's paper that the version of the Isis letter published in Sinnett's biography of HPB had interpolations, probably by HPB.

So the situation is not straightforward. We must hope the original letter turns up in an archive.



Anna Kingsford Archive

February 9 at 12:19pm

Here in London we are preparing for our Anna Kingsford conference on Saturday 17 February (details on the TSE website). An essential resource for all study of her work is the Anna Kingsford web site.

<http://www.humanitarismo.com.br/annakingsford/index.htm>

Most of her works are not easily available, nor those of her co-worker Edward Maitland. We owe a great deal to those who worked on this site. Would that we had similar sites for the works of other luminaries!



FACEBOOK PAGE OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN LONDON

Recent book on Clairvoyant Investigations

February 12, 2017

The clairvoyant investigations of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater are not much studied today. But research into them is continued by Professor Gwyn Hocking, who is the secretary of the TSE.

<http://www.4-d.org.uk/>

Their findings in both occult chemistry and history are explained with reference to the recent use of remote viewing. The student will find however that Professor Hocking's interpretation of occult chemistry differs from that of Dr Lester Smith.



Dr Vernon Harrison

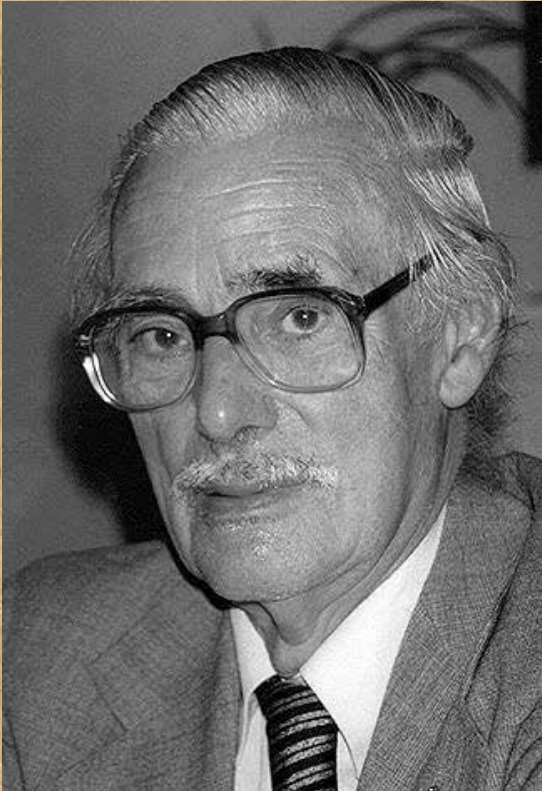
February 22, 2017

Do you recognise this man? Probably not. There's no image of him on Google Images, nor with his Wikipedia entry. But he is of considerable significance to Modern Theosophy. In April 1986, he published in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research a re-examination of the 1885 SPR report into Theosophical phenomena. He concluded that there were 3 separate hands in the Mahatma Letters, Blavatsky herself, and the distinctive personalities we call K.H. and M. it was not a case of HPB disguising her handwriting and dashing off the sometimes long and intricate Mahatma Letters.

This meant that the Mahatma Letters (now in the British Library) and the problems around them could be re-considered. Who were the Mahatmas? What were their Tibetan links? How were the letters actually written; there is no doubt that HPB was associated with them, though they were known to appear when she was far away. Then there is the question of the validity of the teaching, about psychism for example, and about God.

Dr Harrison was a forgery expert and a long-time SPR member. Until he made his investigation, Providence had

preserved him from ever knowing any Theosophists. So he came to his re-examination with a more open mind than many people. He was the person for the hour, perhaps worth waiting a century for.



1986 JSPR paper which freed HPB from the aspersion of having forged the *Mahatma Letters*.



Women's Indian Association Centenary

April 1, 2017 · ·



Theosophists in Parliament

March 7, 2017 ·

Several general secretaries have also served as members of the UK Parliament. David Graham Pole in Scotland and England, and Peter Freeman in Wales for example. The last one was Hugh Gray, general secretary in England (a post now called national president).

Dr Gray, a university lecturer who was a specialist on India, said yes to the idea that Vernon Harrison a senior SPR member should be invited to lecture one Sunday evening at 50 Gloucester Place. Dr Harrison's choice of subject led to a rethink of the 1885 SPR exposure of Madame Blavatsky.

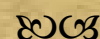
It might be foolish to suggest that this affirmative was Hugh's chief contribution to Theosophy – he was also for example, a noted exponent of Plato's relevance – but it did ensure him a place in history. Indeed Dr Gray was quoted in the SPR press release about Dr Harrison's April

Who can calculate the achievements of Annie Besant, the subject of an international conference at the T.S. in London on 30 September- 1 October 2017?

For example, it was in the gardens of the Theosophical Society at Adyar that the idea of the Women's Indian Association (WIA) came to be in 1917. The first president was Dr Annie Besant.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/.../articlesh.../57440594.cms>

The WIA is now celebrating its centenary.



A century of Blavatsky Lectures

April 2, 2017

One of the notable institutions of the T.S. in England is the Blavatsky Lecture, normally given at the annual summer

school, and published immediately in printed form. We are however indebted to the T.S. in America which has been digitising these.

<http://theosophy.wiki/w-en/index.php...>

This year is the centenary of the Blavatsky Lectures, and it is appropriate that the Theosophical historian Mi-chael Gomes will take for his subject a review of the last hundred years of lectures.

Some of these lectures have become classic contributions to Theosophical thought, worthy of re-reading.



Children and Past Lives

April 20, 2017 ·

Theosophists who expound reincarnation find it useful to point to recent scientific research – such an idea is indeed an ancient teaching, but one increasingly supported by many carefully studied cases. It is very helpful that the work of Dr Ian Stevenson with children who apparently remember previous lives, was discussed in the journal “Scientific American” in 2013

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/.../ian-stevensone28099.../>

But note the claim by Professor Bering ;

“Interestingly, and contrary to most religious notions of reincarnation, there was zero evidence of karma. On the whole, it appeared to be a fairly mechanical soul-rebirthing process, not a moralistic one.”

Stevenson’s work therefore needs careful examination by Theosophical students; it may not be typical of what happens.

The outstanding Theosophical response so far has been David Pratt’s review of Stevenson’s summary book on birthmark evidence “Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect” which can be found on line.

<http://davidpratt.info/stevenson.htm>



Hypnosis and Past Life Memories

April 21, 2017 ·

Madame Blavatsky often warned of the dangers of hypnosis. In recent decades however, even Theosophists may have seen this as a way to quickly release memories of past lives. We should however take note of a warning by a psychiatrist.

<https://med.virginia.edu/.../uplo.../sites/267/2015/11/STE40.pdf>

This particular doctor studied hundreds of cases of children who apparently remembered their past life. Yet Dr Ian Stevenson was very wary of hypnotic evidence. The third object of the T.S. is concerned with the powers latent in man, which need to be approached carefully.



When Annie Besant Came to the Lodge

April 27, 2017 ·

Lodges of the T.S. in England have been asked to examine what records of Annie Besant they have in their archives. This is in preparation for the international conference at TSE headquarters on September 30 - October 1 2017, which will feature the social reform and Theosophical work of the most famous international president.

This image from Leeds Lodge, used by permission of the photographer and of the Lodge, is an inspiring ex-ample; a sentence written by Annie Besant to mark three of her visits to the lodge.

It’s historically useful too, for the itinerary of Annie’s travels which Kurt Leland is compiling for the on-line “Annie Besant Shrine”, an invaluable database on her work.

Date.	Name.
4.7.11	For the highest in the face of the lower, is small and cloudy appearance & left others with me. Annie Besant
27.10.11	God manifests in beauty & wisdom & strength and infinite nature beauty divine through us. Annie Besant
14.11.11	Look down the depths of your own being. When you have found him there, you will see him everywhere. Annie Besant

ESSWE Erfurt Meeting

May 16, 2017 ·

Here in England we are preparing for our Annie Besant weekend on 30 September- 1 October. Although we have had a good response to our call for papers, not least from scholars whose work was unknown to us pre-viously, we have decided to extend our call for papers from 1 June to 16 June. This is because of the Europe-an Society for the Study of Western Esotericism meeting at Erfurt, Germany on 1-3 June:

<http://www.esswe.org/event-2135867>

Dr Muriel Pecastaing-Boissiere will there give a paper "I would not have left your platform had I not been compelled...": Annie Besant's exclusion from the National Secular Society (1891).

We want to provide scholars who learn of the AB weekend only at Erfurt the late opportunity of offering a paper, and anyone else of course!

Incidentally, Annie Besant herself lectured at many conferences in Europe, both Theosophical and non-Theosophical.



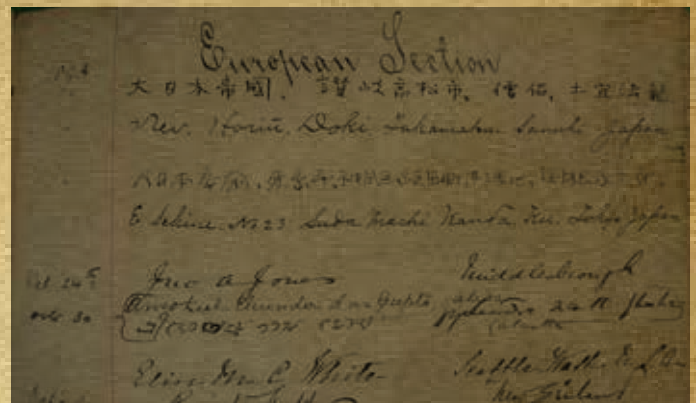
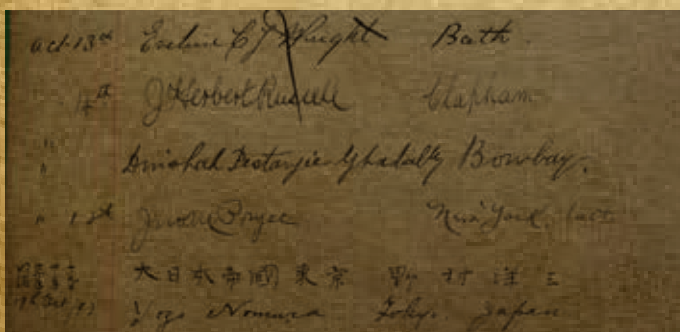
Japanese Visitors 1893

July 18, 2017 ·

One of the treasures of the T.S. in England is the visitors book used at headquarters from 1889 to 1897. Here are three Japanese visitors on 19 October 1893.

Was their visit connected with the Parliament of Religions in Chicago on September 15-17 1893?

UPDATE . From Japan, Shin'ichi Yoshinaga responded. "Great discovery! Exactly. They joined World Parliament of Religions and visited T.S. on their way back home round the world. One is the signature of Toki (or Doki) Horyu, who was a famous monk of Shingon sect. "



Sikhs and the Theosophical Society

July 19, 2017

Rajbir Singh Judge visited 50 Gloucester Place recently. He is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of California, Davis. Among his research interests is Sikh involvement in the Theosophical Society. Mr Judge is well acquainted with Paul Johnson's groundbreaking work "The Masters Revealed", (1994) and we may hope that his own work will advance our understanding of early Theosophy in the Punjab.

Picture shows Leslie Price, Rajbir Singh Judge and Janet Lee, the TSE executive committee member who supervises our history work.



Annie Besant Lecture Maps

July 21, 2017 ·

Can geography help in researching the spread of Theosophy? Dr John Crow of Florida State University, who spoke at the 2014 history conference at 50 Gloucester Place, returned recently with new insights into the impact of Annie Besant's lectures. It's well known that Mrs Besant made lecture tours in the USA, before and after the Judge affair in 1895. Using data collected by Kurt Leland, Dr Crow has created maps of the tours, and compared them with the emergence of new lodges in the states.

A film of his investigation will be shown at the Annie Besant conference on 30 September- 1 October. See the TSE web site for more details.

Picture shows Janet Lee, the TSE executive committee member who supervises historical work at HQ, Dr Crow and Leslie Price.



Dr. Allan Johnson and Esotericism

August 4, 2017

What part can the study of esotericism play in a modern university? And how may long-established bodies like the Theosophical Society help? Dr Allan Johnson, who lectures in English at the University of Surrey at Guildford, was at 50 Gloucester Place last week. He is the associate editor of the "on line" journal for the academic study of western esotericism, "Correspondences.", and Director of the Magic, Language, and Society project. Dr Johnson joined Janet Lee, executive committee member responsible for archival and historical work in the TSE, and myself, for a discussion of the way ahead. Dr Johnson will be speaking at the Annie Besant weekend on 30 September-1 October, on three plays of George Bernard Shaw in which Annie's character appears.



St. Christopher School

July 28, 2017 ·

David Cursons of the St. Christopher Club recently visited 50 Gloucester Place again to continue research into the early history of the famous Letchworth school, which began in 1915 under Theosophical auspices. At some point the minute books of the Theosophical Educational Trust in Great Britain and Ireland, which supported the school, became separated. Unknown to the two parties, the first volume remained at the school, while the second volume, covering the early 1920s, is at 50 Gloucester Place!

David (right) is holding this second volume in the photograph.



Kurt Leland and Annie Besant

August 8, 2017 ·

Fellows of the Theosophical Society in America are well acquainted with composer Kurt Leland who is one of their National Lecturers and a contributor to their magazine "Quest". Kurt spent some days at 50 Gloucester Place, London last autumn engaged in research, especially for his indispensable on line database the Annie Besant Shrine.

Kurt will return to London to present two papers at the TSE Annie Besant conference on 30 September - 1 October 2017; he is also co-chair of the conference.

This the first time Kurt Leland has lectured in the U.K, and his two papers are of some significance.

In the first he enquires into the reasons why Annie Besant has been somewhat neglected by scholars. In the second "Annie Besant; Philosopher King" he focuses attention on a man whose influence on the Theosophical work of Mrs Besant often has not been recognised.



FOTA Newsletter issue 7

August 15, 2017 ·

"The Friends of Theosophical Archives"(FOTA) is an international network of Theosophists and non-Theosophists dedicated to raising awareness of conservation and research. The TS in England provides support for FOTA England which meets at hq several times a year to discuss archival developments. The Newsletter of FOTA is edited by Erica Georgiades in Athens, and available free on the FOTA webpages. It has become an indispensable resource for anyone interested in Theosophical heritage.

The seventh issue of FOTA Newsletter is now available on line and contains a hundred pages of information.

http://hypatia.gr/.../images/newsletter/Fota_Newsletter-07.pdf

As we approach the conference on Annie Besant at 50 Gloucester Place on 30 September- 1 October 2017, the Newsletter contains two papers on her work for India, and an interview with Muriel Pecasting-Boussiere, whose biography of Annie Besant is to be published by TPH London at the same time.

FOTA Newsletter issue 7

August 20, 2017 ·

Should we study Dr Besant?

Two groups of people may be worried about the forthcoming Annie Besant weekend in London. First, there are Theosophists who are critical of her policies, whose consequences are still apparent today. Is it right to give attention to her?

On the other hand, there are many Theosophists who venerate Annie Besant. The idea of scholars from various countries, poring over her life and work, perhaps speculating about her motives and so on, can be unappealing.

We can take comfort from the long experience of the TS in England in hosting historical conferences where the atmosphere has been harmonious and constructive. At the first one in 1986, Lilian Storey, then librarian, updated us on "The Search for Leadbeater". At a later conference, Dr Robert Gilbert and Miss Jean Overton Fuller strongly disagreed over HPB's travels in Tibet. There have been at least 3 papers on the Judge Case, the most recent in 2016. Krishnamurti is sometimes discussed....

I know there are going to be surprises at the conference. Our view of Dr Annie Besant will change, as we learn new things, and remember old ones. But those who take part in the conference - and we expect guests from as far away as India - may remember with advantages what feats are done that weekend.



Theosophy and Science

August 23, 2017 ·

The TS in England had a special interest in science, as far back as William Crookes who joined London Lodge in 1883. In the 1920s a Science Group was founded, and from the 1930s to 1980s, the Theosophical Research Centre flourished, with numerous publications. Egil Asprem has recently surveyed "Theosophical Attitudes towards Science Past and Present". This was for an expensive Brill survey "Handbook of The Theosophical Current" (2013).

https://www.academia.edu/.../Theosophical_Attitudes_towards_S...

Dr Asprem gives particular attention to occult chemistry investigations by Besant and Leadbeater, and how they have been successively interpreted. There is however a new interpretation, and if you are at the Annie Besant conference at 50 Gloucester Place on 30 September- 1 October, you can hear about this from Professor Gwyn Hocking, the TSE secretary, and see his book.

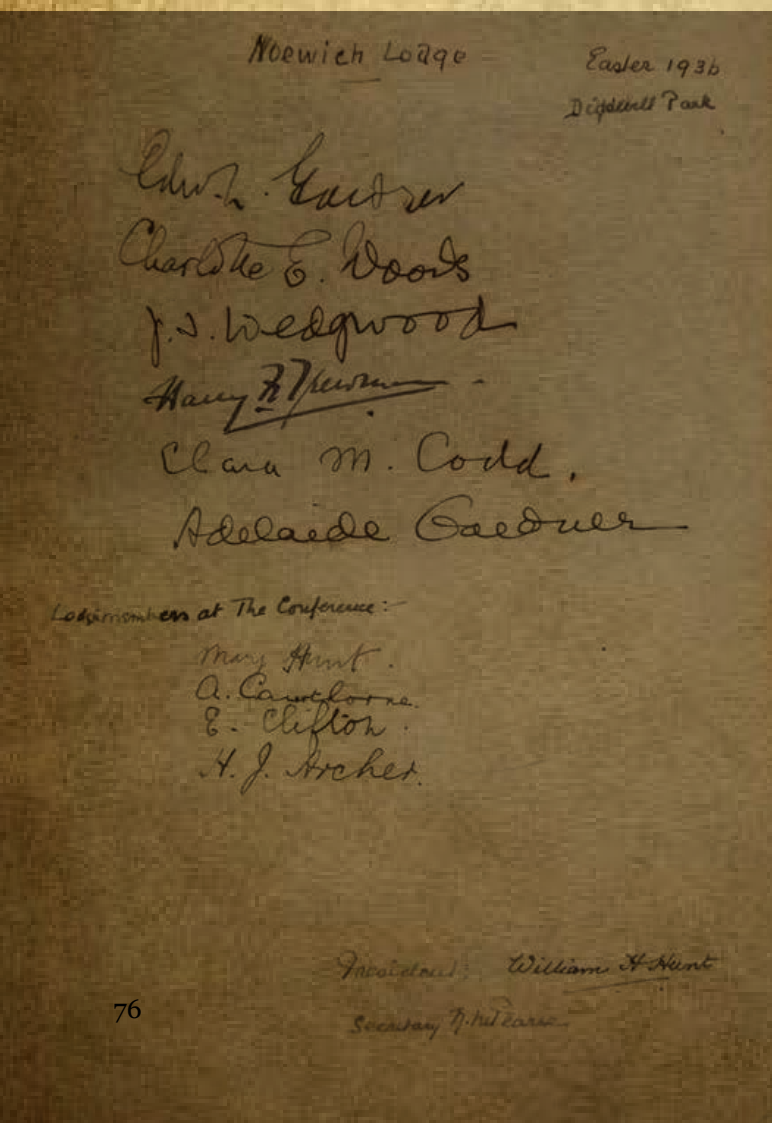
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Easter 1936 Study Weekend

August 23, 2017

In former times, TSE members used to attend more study weekends. And what speakers guided their studies! At Easter 1936, there was a gathering at Digswell Park, near Welwyn Garden City. Some of the speakers signed a book which was preserved for many years by Norwich Lodge (four of whose members were pre-sent).

The book in question was "Clairvoyance" by C.W. Leadbeater, who had passed in 1934. If we can recover the programme for the weekend, we may understand why this particular book was chosen for the autographs.



Grave of Anna Kingsford

August 23, 2017

For the late wife of a clergyman, what prettier spot could there be on resurrection morn than the bank of the River Severn? This was no ordinary lady however. She was the first female president of the British Theosophical Society, renamed London Lodge. Anna Kingsford was also an implacable defender of animal rights, and one of the first women medical doctors. A variety of esoteric Christian groups remember her as a pioneer. Like Annie Besant, she is in "The Mahatma Letters."

Damon Scothern has just returned from Atcham, Shropshire.
More of his photos and film before long.



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A Century of Blavatsky Lectures

August 23, 2017 -

The 2017 summer school, 5-12 August of the T.S. in England, held near Birmingham, is generally considered the best for some time. Michael Gomes (seen here with national president, Jenny Baker) gave his third Blavatsky lecture. "A Multitudinous Universe The Blavatsky Lecture at 100."

The Blavatsky Lecture, unique among theosophical presentations, will be achieving its centenary in 2018. Michael presented an overview of this prestigious series, examining its wide array of subject matter, and revealing what it tells us about the development of Theosophy and society in general.

The lecture is available from the TSE at £5 plus postage. An Appendix gives a list of lectures since 1918, nearly all published as booklets. How many have you read?



Anna Kingsford's Final Home

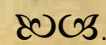
August 30, 2017 ·

The London house in which Madame Blavatsky died (in Avenue Road, St John's Wood) is now demolished. But the last home of another leading Theosophical contemporary remains.

Edward Maitland writes in the "Life of Anna Kingsford" of her return from the Continent in July 1887, to live in a Kensington apartment, on 22 February 1888.

"There was at least so much of improvement in some respects that I had no apprehension in having sole charge on the journey home, long as it was. Travelling by short stages, we reached London without mishap, saving only a detention for four days at Boulogne, through stress of weather, on July 13, and at once took up our abode at 15 Wynnstay Gardens, of which she had taken over the furniture with the lease, so that we were able at once to take possession. Her own maid was already there, and we were speedily joined by A., [Al-gernon, her husband] who from that time forth passed with her as much of his time as could be spared from his clerical duties, and placed her under the charge of Dr. W.H. White of Weymouth Street, an old friend of his own, in whose skill he had much reliance, and whose attention was unremitting, notwithstanding that he was precluded from accepting a fee from a fellow-doctor. It was clear from the first that he considered the case hopeless."

On 22 February 1888, Dr Kingsford, the first woman to lead the Theosophists in Britain, left much for Theosophists, Christian mystics and pioneers in animal welfare, to ponder.



Annie Besant and Anna Kingsford Linked

September 1, 2017

Are you aware of certain parallels between two notable British Theosophists, Annie Besant and Anna Kingsford, who was actually born Annie Bonus? As well as their similar forenames, only a year apart in age, and the mention of each with some approval in "The Mahatma Letters"?

Historian Joscelyn Godwin in his classic work "The Theosophical Enlightenment" (1894) noticed more parallels.

If Anna had survived her lung illness which proved fatal in 1888, would the history of Theosophy have been significantly different?

Woodman, and Samuel L. McGregor Mathers.

It is remarkable in how many respects the life of Anna Kingsford (1846-1888) resembled that of Annie Besant, Blavatsky's heir-apparent and future President of the Theosophical Society. Intensely pious as children, they both moved on to freethought; married clergymen, found marriage physically unsatisfying and separated from their husbands; were good at French, edited journals, worked for women's enfranchisement, and with great difficulty earned a scientific degree; led a life of vigorous political activism; had an intense but sexless relationship with an older man (in Besant's case, Charles Bradlaugh); rose quickly to the top of the Theosophical Society; cooperated with a man in occult researches (Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater; Kingsford and Maitland); wrote on esoteric Christianity, and nurtured messianic ambitions (projected, in Besant's case, onto Krishnamurti).

When Henry Olcott met Anna Kingsford in 1884, she laid bare the heart of her problems. The Colonel writes:



T.O.S

September 4, 2017

Last month, Nancy Sechrest, international secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service, was at the 2017 TS in England summer school, where the T.O.S. AGM for England took place. Back in London she discussed with Leslie Price and Janet Lee of the TSE historical team, the records of the T.O.S. work which go back to its foundation in 1908 by Annie Besant, soon after she was elected international president of the T.S.

Then as now the T.O.S. has been active in an astonishing range of service.



Church where Annie and Anna were Married

September 5, 2017

A Greek Orthodox (formerly Anglican) church in the seaside resort of St.Leonards in Sussex may provide another link between two notable Theosophists, Annie Besant and Anna Kingsford.

https://en.wikipedia.org/.../St_Mary_Magdalene%27s_Church,_St...

Annie Wood's mother moved from Harrow to St. Leonards in Spring 1867, and on 21 December 1867, An-nie Wood married Frank Besant in that church, then called St. Mary Magdalen(?) .

Meanwhile, the Bonus family had already moved to St. Leonards in 1864, and it was in the same church that Anna Bonus (who had actually been christened Annie) was married on 31 December 1867 to Algernon Kings-ford.

Alan Pert in his biography of Anna "Red Cactus" (2006) drew attention to this. But can this coincidence real-ly be true?



Theosophy in Scotland

September 8, 2017

Dr Tanya Cheadle, who lectures in modern history at the University of Glasgow, visited 50 Gloucester Place recently to discuss her new research project on alternative spiritualities in late Victorian and Edwardian Scot-land.

In the days before there was a separate Scottish Section, membership applications and subscriptions from Scottish Lodges were forwarded to London, which indeed, in the 1890s administered a European Section. Details appear in our old membership registers.

We consulted Col. Olcott's Old Diary Leaves (Third Series, p.167) and found that in 1884, he went to Edin-burgh.

" where I founded the Scottish Theosophical Society, with the late Robert M. Cameron as president, and E.D. Ewen as secretary."

Most of the names of this private group were kept secret, because of fear of religious opinion.



The Stature of Annie Besant

September 12, 2017

Annie Besant was not a tall woman. One can see that from photos of her (here with Col. Olcott and C.W. Leadbeater). But did her height change? Harold Jones of Southport Lodge, England, often heard her. On her last visit to

Liverpool in 1928, (he recalled).

“Annie Besant signed me her photograph, and thanked me for organising her meetings. Her public lectures showed a technical grasp of her subject, and she used to literally grow in stature - from being on first sight fairly small and somewhat frail in appearance, she became powerful, and her voice used to ring out. Her speeches were planned to reach high levels as she came to the peroration. Every time I heard her, I knew at what moment she was being overshadowed by her Master. The power was tremendous.” .

This an extract from the “Reminiscences” of Mr Jones. These were published in the first issue of the NW Federation Journal in 1983. A complete set of the Journal, which still appears, has been presented to the TSE archives, by the NW Federation.



❧.

The Great White Brotherhood

September 18, 2017

A hundred years ago, many Theosophists spoke about the Great White Brotherhood.

These were believed to be in continuity with Madame Blavatsky's “Brothers” (though there had been some promotions). However the GWB was not a term HPB

used herself.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_White_Brotherhood

One might assume that the GWB was a term coined by Mrs Besant, or more likely her colleague C.W. Leadbeater.

However Kurt Leland has traced the expression back to a certain date and person in the Theosophical Society, with surprising results.

He will reveal these in his talk on Sunday, October 1st, the second day of the Annie Besant conference at 50 Gloucester Place.

❧.

Haunted Theosophical Building?

September 19, 2017

What was 50 Gloucester Place, the London hq of the TS in England, like a generation ago?

The writer (and dynamic lecturer) Joyce Collin-Smith, was a member.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/.../8317131/Joyce-Collin-Smith.html>

In her 1988 book “Call No Man Master” she recalled.

“At the Theosophical Society I made friends of my own generation, attended talks on the Secret Doctrine, Madame Blavatsky's six volume major work, and enjoyed the feeling of widening my field of study. But the members were not advancing much themselves, I thought. Staying in the flat at their London headquarters, in Gloucester Place, before giving a seminar and lecture there, I had the curious feeling that the beautiful old house with its sweeping spiral staircase was full of ghosts. At night there were presences everywhere – in the library, the lecture room, the members' room, on the stairs and even in the basement schoolroom area. The ones down there seemed a bit malevolent to me. But mainly they were benign, though dedicated, as it seemed to keeping the status quo. The inspiration of an earlier age had crystalized, I thought, within these walls.” (2011.)

Certainly it is a challenge to everyone in the TS, those with buildings and those without, not to become earth-bound in our Theosophical lives.

❧.

Mr Jones Meets Annie Besant

September 21, 2017

There are well-known accounts of senior Theosophists working with Annie Besant in past lives. But Harold Jones of Southport Lodge, NW England had a personal experience.

"I remember vividly the first time I met her, it was in the year 1919, at Bolton Lodge, which was a very flourishing Lodge with lovely premises. During her first talk to members in the afternoon, I saw her look at me, and for a second our eyes held. After the meeting I was taken to a small room where Annie Besant was. She took my hand, looked me in the eye, and said,

"I know you from the past. Are you willing to work for me again in my work for India?"

I had a feeling of being drawn back to distant past times, and was just about able to say "yes".

She was such a magnetic person, that one felt quite overcome when meeting her."



Annie Besant as a Celebrity

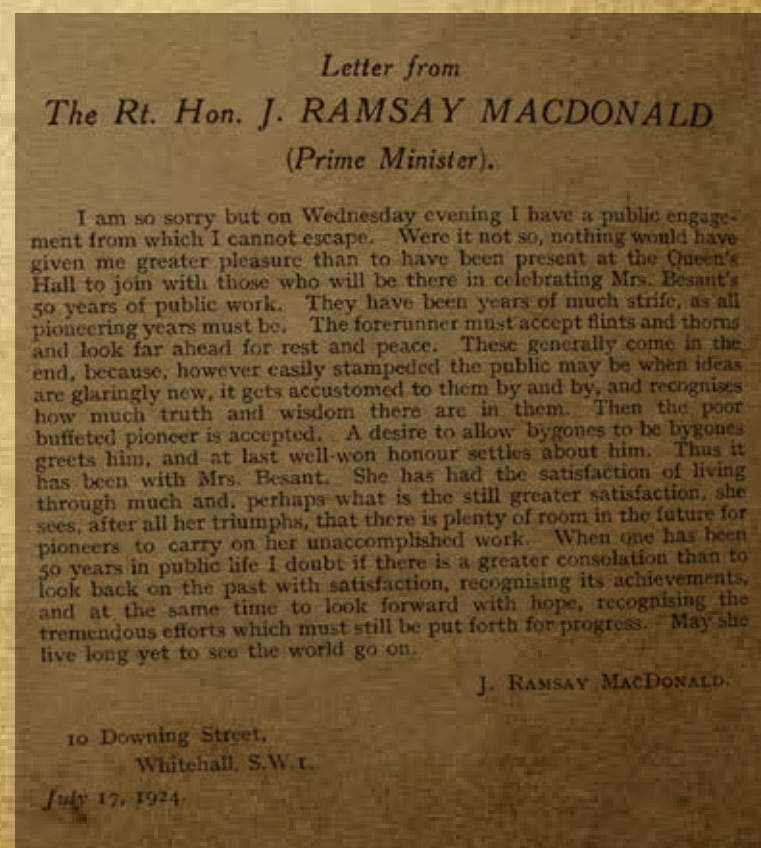
September 22, 2017

In her younger days, Annie Besant suffered much. For her role in republishing birth control information, she was prosecuted for obscenity, and escaped only on a technicality. She was then in court again and lost custody of her daughter. Many malicious obstacles prevented her completing her university studies in London; and so on.

But in her later years, she became a celebrity in a more positive sense. Indeed the celebration of her fifty years of public work in 1924 was marked by a message from the Prime Minister, and with Members of Parliament speaking at a big public meeting. The Labour Party had just come to power, in the U.K. (though in a minority government) for the first time.

In a smaller way, but doubtless replicated in numerous places, Harold Jones of Southport Lodge recalled:

"The last time she came to Liverpool was in 1928, and I remember going to Lime Street Station, to meet her on arrival from London. It was like the arrival of royalty. The Station Master turned out to welcome her in top hat and frock coat, so much was she thought of in Liverpool, - and the press and press photographers were waiting her arrival at the Adelphi Hotel. All this had to be arranged in advance."



Not Esoteric Buddhism

September 23, 2017

Madame Blavatsky was affiliated in various ways with Buddhism, and the Buddhist Society in the U.K. actually began as a Buddhist Lodge within the T.S. so problems in the Buddhist community are naturally of concern to Theosophists.

One of the leading London newspapers has published a long and very critical article about an esoteric Tibetan Buddhist group.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/.../sexual-assaults-violent-rages.../>

This is a reminder of the vulnerability of alternative forms of spirituality, and of our need in the T.S. to keep our own affairs in order. H.P.B. was notoriously strict with her own students (as the poet W.B. Yeats, for example, found!); history indicates her wisdom.



Perth Lodge, Australia

September 25, 2017

David McGregor of Perth Lodge, Australia, visited 50 Gloucester Place today. Perth Lodge itself has recently had visits from the international president, Tim Boyd and the Australian president, Linda Oliveira.

Perth Lodge has an illustrious history.

<http://tsperth.com.au/index.php/Main/HistoryOfThePerthBranch>

Behind David is the personal library of Madame Blavatsky. HPB also left a personal library in Adyar. Although Michael Gomes catalogued the Adyar one, scholars have yet to make full use of the collections.



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1 October

October 2, 2017

All over the Theosophical world, 1 October was marked as the birthday of Dr Annie Besant. At the international conference devoted to her work, then being held at 50 Gloucester Place, London, participants adjourned to share in a birthday cake, which was cut by the co-chairs of the conference, Kurt Leland and Dr Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière.



Flowers for Janet Lee

October 2, 2017

Janet Lee, who on behalf of the Executive Committee of the TSE, coordinated the arrangements for the very successful Annie Besant conference in London last weekend, received a surprise on the final day. Flowers arrived. The card on the main bouquet read:

“To Janet, from the Chairs and participants in the historic Annie Besant conference, London 2017, in most grateful appreciation of all your work.”



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Annie Besant Conference Speakers

September 21, 2017

Jenny Baker, national president of the T.S. in England, welcomed participants to the international conference on Annie Besant last weekend at 50 Gloucester Place.

Here is she (back row, in white) surrounded by the speakers, who came from eight countries.



That Remarkable Seeress

October 5, 2017


At the Annie Besant conference last weekend, it was revealed that the TS in London was going to present a day conference to mark the 130th anniversary of the passing of Anna Kingsford on 22 February 1888.

This will be on Saturday 17 February 2018 at 50 Gloucester Place.

But what should the day be called?

One possibility was "The Divine Anna". This was what Madame Blavatsky called Anna, but as the two ladies did not see eye to eye, HPB was possibly being sarcastic.

"That Remarkable Seeress" sounds better. This is a quotation from the Master K.H. in the Mahatma Letters.



THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN ENGLAND presents
'That Remarkable Seeress'
Koot Hoomi Mahatma Letter No 59
A reassessment of **Anna Kingsford**
to mark the 130th anniversary of her passing.
Saturday 17th February 2018

In the chair: Dr Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière

Elaine Bailey
"Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland".

Deborah Lavin
"Anna Kingsford vs. Vivisection and Annie Besant".

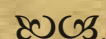
Geraldine Beskin
"The Lost Leader, Anna Kingsford and Leadership in the Theosophical Society".

Leslie Price
"Anna Kingsford and Esoteric Christianity".

Venue
The Theosophical Society in England
50 Gloucester Place
London W1U 8EA

To reserve places
Phone: 020 7563 9817
or book on line at
www.theosophicalsociety.org.uk

10am - 6pm Tickets £40 Concessions £25



Did Dr Anna Kingsford attempt Murder?

October 13, 2017

At the one day conference at 50 Gloucester Place about Anna Kingsford on Saturday 17 February 2018, some serious questions about Anna will be faced. For example, a scholar who has given attention to Anna is Dr Alison Butler. She actually introduced her 2011 book "Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic." by recalling that Dr Kingsford used magic to try to kill vivisectionists. But did she? This is linked with the reliability or otherwise of Edward Maitland's recollections.

Again, Dr Butler suggests that Anna's visions may have been caused by an alleged addiction to chloroform, which she used to help her breathing. But does the chronology of the visions support this.



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Occultism in Britain

October 16, 2017

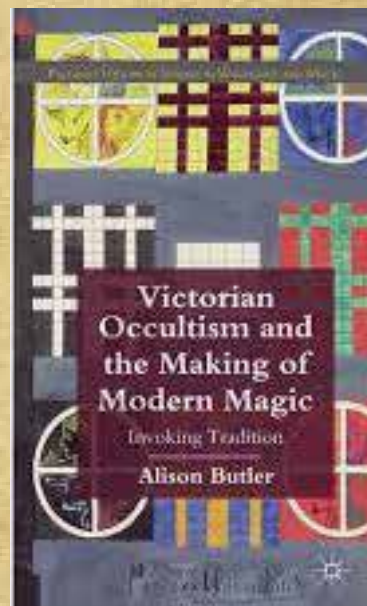
The British Theosophical Society was founded in 1878. Its first president, C.C. Massey, had actually been present at the creation of the Theosophical Society in New York

in 1875. So we might think that organised occultism in Britain more or less starts with the B.T.S.

But a paper in the January 2017 issue of the journal "Theosophical History" corrects this impression. In "The British Birth of the Occult Revival 1869-1875", Patrick Bowen identifies a number of groups which were active immediately before the T.S. such as the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia. These groups often had a masonic connection. Perhaps it would be more true to say that organised occultism grew out of masonry, though the latter was limited by the general prohibition of women members, who were to play a major part in the spread of Theosophy.

www.theohistory.org

Barry Lofts and Geraldine Beskin presented a paper about another of these groups, Sat-B'Hai, at a recent theosophical history conference in London. Doubtless there is much more to come on these questions.



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How Esther Bright gave up Flesh Eating

October 20, 2017

Sometimes a person is ready to make a change, but needs a spiritual push.

When Esther Bright (in photo) was a girl she ate flesh food only to please her parents. "Then" as she recalled in her book "The Ancient One":

"Dr Anna Kingsford came to pay us a visit at Alderley Edge"

Dr K. described how fashionable ladies in Paris drank fresh blood at slaughter houses for their health. Esther turned vegetarian that day.

But did become a follower of Dr Kingsford? Esther explained. "She did not attract me. She simply lit the bonfire which had long been waiting for the match." (

p.125)

In fact Esther did not join the T.S. until 7 July 1891, sponsored by Mabel Besant and G.R.S. Mead, and then became active in Blavatsky Lodge.



A Magical Exhibition

October 25, 2017

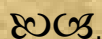
There are already a number of Theosophical interpreters of the Harry Potter books. In reaching the public, these books may form an introduction to the questions with which Theosophy deals. Dr John Algeo was an early respondent to this opportunity.

<http://www.katinkahesselink.net/other/Harry-Potter-7.htm>

Last week an exhibition on Harry Potter and the history of magic opened at the British Library- in the same building as the Mahatma Letters. Like Theosophical literature, the exhibition contains treasures that go back millennia, some written by alchemists who sought the philosopher's stone.

But it's worth pondering also on an image in the exhibition of a bird eating spider, observed and pictured by Maria Meriam in Surinam, South America. 300 years ago.

Some scientists, male, denied what the female scientist had seen. Madame Blavatsky would have sympathised, as the reception to her descriptions of some of what she had seen on her travels, was similarly sceptical.



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Annie Besant & Charles Bradlaugh

November 4, 2017

If you were at our recent exciting Annie Besant weekend, you will recall Deborah Lavin's lively reassessment of her involvement in birth control. But what are we to make of her long-time co-worker Charles Bradlaugh, who as an atheist was for years excluded from the House of Commons (see cartoon) ?

Deborah will be discussing this in a lecture shortly:

"The Life and Legacy of Charles Bradlaugh" Tuesday 14th November 7.30pm

at Guildford and Woking Humanists

The Guildford Institute in Ward Street, Guildford, GU1 4LH, Surrey.



Great White Lodge Meetings

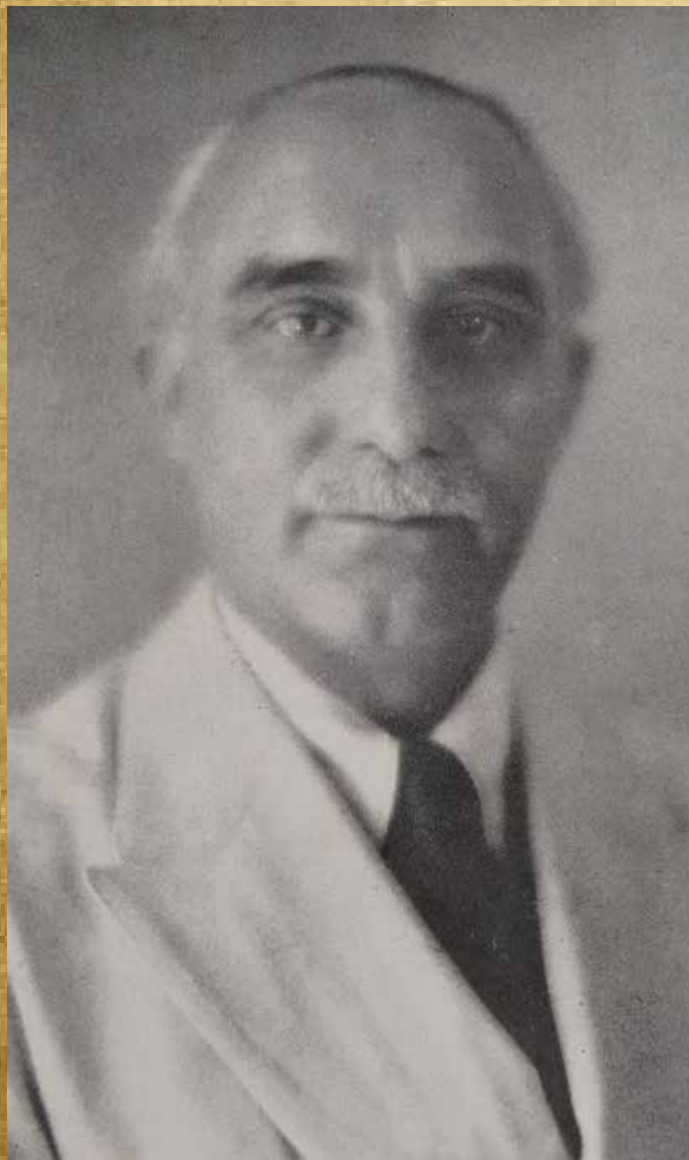
November 6, 2017

A century ago, many Theosophists believed that their leaders shared in meetings of the Great White Lodge. In his 1932 American lectures "Mount Everest; its spiritual attainment" George Arundale revealed that at those where the very highest Authority Himself presided, no one else spoke, and He gave his commands. These meetings were "sometimes attended by splendid representatives from infinitely distant stars." (p.26).

At other meetings, even the youngest member of the Brotherhood would be expected to contribute. Could Dr Arundale have been such a younger member?

Dr Arundale also paid many warm tributes to Dr Besant, then nearing her passing. "If you will think of the Master to Whom you have devoted your life and the principles which mean so much to you, or if you will think of our beloved President-Mother, remember that you only know Him or her in small part."(p.47)

Dr Arundale was elected president in succession to Dr Besant.



Cottingley Fairy Photos

November 15, 2017

Bradford Theosophical Lodge is immortalised as the place where the Cottingley fairy photos were first re-vealed.

In the wildly unhistorical but enjoyable film about the case, a sparsely attended lodge meeting was shown. Doubtless this saved money on actors, but in those days lodge meetings were well attended!

<https://www.theguardian.com/.../i-believe-in-fairies-you-shou...>



Annie Besant & Birth Control

November 23, 2017

It is well known that Annie Besant was a major pioneer of birth control information in England. She was assailed in court, and shortly lost custody of her daughter, so she suffered much for her courage. She modified her views when she became a Theosophist. Historian Deborah Lavin explained what happened in her live-ly talk to the Annie Besant conference at 50 Gloucester Place recently.

If you missed this, Deborah will again be presenting the latest research in London this weekend.

<https://conwayhall.org.uk/event/annie-besants-passion-malthusianism/>



A Theosophical Cabinet Minister

November 25, 2017

If you are ending the Lodge term with a social and a quiz, here's a good question. Who was the first T.S. member to become a British Cabinet minister?

The answer is George Lansbury M.P. in 1929 in the Labour government. He was also an enthusiastic participant in the Ommen camps addressed by Krishnamurti. Wouldn't it have been fun to sit around the camp fire with George and recall the platforms he had shared with his old comrade, Annie Besant?

George Lansbury went on to become Leader of the Labour Party, and Leader of the Opposition (an official position under the British Constitution).

George Russell and T.S. Membership

November 28, 2017

Some people wait years before they join the Theosophical Society. Such was the case with the Irish poet, George Russell (AE). He hesitated for almost half a decade.

The TSE membership register indicates that he eventually applied on 9 September 1890. What decided him appears to have been his meetings with Madame Blavatsky in London. Whatever his disagreements with the later leadership of the T.S. (leading him more than once to leave the Society) he remained faithful to her.

He once wrote:

"The enthusiastic love which is felt for her by those who lived with her, some of them personal and old friends of my own, is quite sufficient guarantee of character even if her vast learning [and] her public conduct were not of themselves sufficient to persuade me about her sincerity."

Would you agree that his friend Yeats was a greater poet, but Russell was a greater Theosophist? There's a helpful book about their relationship "Yeats and AE, the antagonism that unites dear friends" (1986) by Peter Kuch.



∞∞∞.

Ted Davy Passes

November 30, 2017

Ted Davy, who was evacuated from the U.K. to Canada in 1940, passed away age 91 in late November 2017. I met him when he was in England to give the Blavatsky Lecture "The Descent into Hades" in 1983. As a later lecturer Michael Gomes commented this week. "He was a great early supporter of the journal "Theosophical History" (launched in London in 1985). In fact before TH his journal, "The Canadian Theosophist" was the main source for anything remotely related to the subject."

Ted was perhaps the outstanding Canadian Theosophist of his time. One need only peruse the bibliography of his work included in the tribute volume edited by Michael Gomes "Keeping the Link Unbroken", being Theosophical Studies presented to him on the occasion of his 75th birthday in 2004. One of his most significant contributions was a 1998 conference paper "A Material Body which Suffocates the Soul: H.P. Blavatsky's Attitude to Ritual."

In the tribute volume, his wife Doris wrote "An auspicious event in our lives was to be able to peruse the Mahatma Letters at the British Museum while visiting England in 1962. To be able to sit in the Manuscript Room and turn those pages was an event never to be forgotten.". The Letters were later moved to the new British Library.



Christmas at Sea

November 30, 2017

I'm feeling rather nervous about a Christmas lecture to the Theosophical Society in the TSE library here in London. The problem is it will contain some radical statements. True, they have been made by respected Theosophical teachers, but they challenge conventional views. So perhaps they are not in the spirit of Christmas? Ought Christmas to be a time of controversy, least of all about Christmas?

Incidentally, do you recall how Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky spent Christmas 1878, on their way by boat to England en route to India. As Col. Olcott recalled in "Old Diary Leaves".

"the storm-fiends pursued us as if they were in the service of the opponents of our T.S. It seemed as though all the winds that Æolus tied up in paper bags for Ulysses had broken loose and gone on the rampage. One entry of mine runs through the pages for 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st December, viz., "Here follow a train of days and nights of ennui, turmoil, and distress. By night, tossed about like a shuttlecock between battledores. By day, the hours hanging so heavily as to seem whole days each. A small company of incongruous passengers, tiring of the sight of each others' faces." H. P. B. writes on one day's page: "Night of tossing and rolling; H. S. O. sick abed; monotonous, stupid, wearisome. Oh for the Land! Oh for India and HOME!"

At least Sunday's lecture won't be as stressful as that, will it?



Mead and the Brotherhood of Luxor

December 5, 2017

In the T.S. in England, we are rather proud of G. R. S. Mead, the classical scholar who was H.P.B.'s last private secretary, and became a notable hermetic pioneer.

True, some Theosophists would not be happy that he did not endorse William Judge in the 1895 schism, while others would deplore his departure from the T.S. over the readmission of Leadbeater in 1909.

There's one group however who question Mead's behaviour in an earlier dispute, with the Hermetic Brother-

hood of Luxor. We may tend to automatically think of this group as wholly a bad thing, but supposing it was not? Historian Paul Johnson has concluded that Mead treated the Brotherhood unfairly.

<http://adepts.light.org/2017/11/06/g-r-s-mead-on-the-light-of-egypt/>



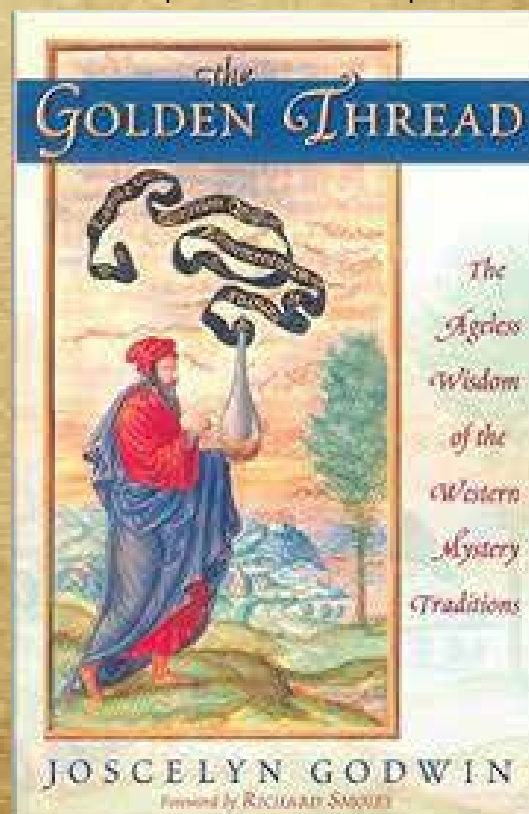
Joscelyn Godwin and "The Golden Thread"

December 8, 2017

Professor Joscelyn Godwin is a senior member of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism, and a long-serving associate editor of the journal "Theosophical History". As an early participant in Theosophical History conferences at 50 Gloucester Place, he is no stranger to the building.

Planning is underway for a one day event with him here on Saturday June 30 2018. Almost all his vast scholarly output is relevant to Theosophy, and his magnum opus "The Theosophical Enlightenment" is a standard text for students of Theosophical Society origins.

But his 2007 Quest book "The Golden Thread", which traces the ageless wisdom in the Western Mystery Traditions, is an important presentation of the latest research which benefits from his knowledge of French, German and Italian sources. A special interactive session on 30 June will be devoted to the book, which incidentally makes an excellent Christmas present for a Theosophical friend.



Anna Kingsford and Astrology

December 14, 2017

At the Anna Kingsford day at 50 Gloucester Place on 17 February 2018, for which you can now book through the TS in England web site, there is a session on astrology.

Kim Farnell, president of the Astrological Lodge of London, notes:

"Due to a quirk of astrological publishing history, Anna Kingsford's natal chart was the least examined of all the theosophical leaders, and those analyses that exist were based on incorrect data. However, her astrological interests are clear: in 1881 she received a visit from the spirit of the seventeenth century astrologer William Lilly who explained her horoscope to her."



A Forgotten Match Girl

December 14, 2017

All Theosophists know of Annie Besant's role in the Match Girls Strike. But have you heard of Sarah Chapman? She was another leader in the Strike and was named by Annie Besant as one of the Strike Committee that negotiated with the Bryant and May directors. You can see her in the linked photo of the Committee of the new Matchmakers' Union, standing at the back, second from the left, next to Herbert Burrows [who soon joined the T.S. with Annie]. Following the strike, Sarah went on to represent their new Union at the 1888 and 1890 TUC, where she seconded a motion to extend protection under the Truck Acts.

Sarah is the Grandmother of Samantha Johnson from Southampton. Only in the last year did she discover Sarah's role in the Strike. She died in 1945, and Sam found her grave to be an unmarked pauper's plot, a mere grassy patch in Manor Park Cemetery, Forest Gate, London. Sam wants to preserve and mark her grave, not just for family reasons, but also to recognise her role in Labour history.

<https://www.change.org/p/minister-of-justice-save-sarah-chapman-s-grave-a-leader-of-the-1888-matchgirls-strike-trade-union-heroine>



Anna Kingsford's Biography

December 18, 2017

Edward Maitland's two volume biography of his colleague Anna Kingsford is important, not only as a semi-nal source about the first woman president of the British Theosophical Society (in 1883) but also because it offers a different perspective from those of Olcott or Sinnett. However, not every reviewer was enthusiastic. G. R. S. Mead, who had been H.P.B.'s private secretary, and was a classical scholar, was very critical.

http://www.iapsop.com/.../lu.../lucifer_v18_n103_mar_15_1896.pdf

We will draw attention to a more positive Theosophical review soon. Students will want to be aware of the different viewpoints.



National Theosophical Journals

December 18, 2017

There's a welcome trend for T.S. national sections to make their journals freely available on line. Notable examples include the Indian and Australian Sections.

In England, the situation is complicated by the existence of two national journals. Esoterica, published by the Foundation for Theosophical Studies, the educational charity of the TSE, is available free, in print or on line.

<http://foundationfortheosophicalstudies.co.uk/esoterica-2>

Incidentally, there is much more valuable material on the FTS web site.

The TSE also has a house journal for members called "Insight". This is now available in print or on line, but only to TSE members.



Dion Fortune and the Underworld

December 20, 2017

Members of the TS do not usually have inside knowledge of the criminal underworld, but should we make an exception for Dion Fortune the pen name of Violet M. Firth, who was active in the TSE in the 1920s?

It is well-known that she used fiction to convey esoteric truths, and indeed a new book "The Keys to the Temple" by Penny Billington and Ian Rees is subtitled "Unlocking Dion Fortune's Mystical Qabalah through her Occult Novels."

But Geraldine Beskin of the TSE National Council has reminded me that Dion Fortune published four other novels under the name "V.M. Steele." And it is in two of these that she writes in detail of various villains and the Scotland Yard detectives who pursue them.

The novels are not explicitly occult, but as well as being an excellent read, being composed by an occultist they have a special quality,

<https://theresacrater.wordpress.com/.../dion-fortune-writing.../>



Meat Eating and Theosophists

December 28, 2017

Readers of Col. Olcott's "Old Diary Leaves" will be well aware that Madame Blavatsky ate meat. As he observed in his character sketch of her (volume one).

"She was never an ascetic, not even a vegetarian while I knew her, flesh diet seeming to be indispensable for her health and comfort ; as it is to so many others in our Society, including myself, I know many who have tried their best to get on with vegetable diet, and some, myself for example, who have

followed up the experiment for several years together, yet have been forced finally to revert to their old diet against their will. Some, on the contrary, like Mrs. Besant and other prominent Theosophists I could name, have found themselves much healthier, stronger, and better on non-flesh food, and gradually acquire a positive loathing for meat in any of its forms."

Edward Maitland, in his Life of Anna Kingsford, in his account of their visit to HPB also testifies to this (see image) but here we encounter a problem. The Countess Wachtmeister, HPB's companion at the time, accused AK of being a meat eater. Maitland vehemently repudiated this. But if this is false, (and I know of no other suggestion that AK ate meat) how does this leave the Countess as a witness to the writing of "The Secret Doctrine" whom all Theosophists would like to believe?



Sax Rohmer and Theosophy

December 28, 2017

The Birmingham-born English writer Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward (1883-1959) took the pseudonym Sax Rohmer, and was interested in the occult. But was he in the T.S.? Was he perhaps Arthur H. Ward, author of "The Song of the Flaming Heart" (1908), "The Seven Rays of Development" (1910), "The Threefold Way" (1912), and "Masonic Symbolism and the Mystic Way" (1913), all issued by the Theosophical Publishing Society in London?

<https://www.blackgate.com/.../blogging-sax-rohmerin-the-begi.../>

Alas, Kurt Leland of the T.S. in America explained. "This is completely wrong. I dealt with it in an end note for Rainbow Body. [Kurt's recent book on western chakra systems] The Arthur Henry Ward who wrote the books in question joined the TS on 20 December 1897, when the A. H. S. Ward who wrote as Sax Rohmer would have been only ten years old. The entry in the TS General Register places the initials F.R.C.S after Ward's name (Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons), which is another distinguishing feature between the two Wards."

Dr Robert Gilbert , one of the Friends of Theosophical Archives here in England adds: "M.R. James [who also features in on line speculation - LP] was not a member of the TS and Sax Rohmer (A H S Ward) was not a member of any branch of the Golden Dawn (nor, for that matter, was A.H. Ward)."



Mr Sinnett and Dr Kingsford

December 30, 2017

If you are interested in the role of Anna Kingsford in the British Theosophical Society, of which she was elected the first woman president it is useful to scrutinise a posthumously published narrative by A.P. Sinnett " The Early Days of Theosophy in Europe"

<http://hpb.narod.ru/EarlyDaysTheosophyAPS.htm>

Mr Sinnett's memory was imperfect and one would need to check, for example, when AK joined the T.S. or when the Hermetic Society was formed, but he did have the advantage of the minute book of the B.T.S, later called the London Lodge, and could give precise dates for certain events (7 January 1883 for her being elect-ed B.T.S.

president).

Of course his understanding of Theosophy differed from hers, and also (as became apparent later in the 1880s) from that of Madame Blavatsky.



Anna Kingsford and Parliament

January 2 · 2018

6 February 2018 marks the centenary of 8.4m. British women getting the vote. Theosophists had played a significant part in that parliamentary achievement, as described in Dr Joy Dixon's classic work "The Divine Feminine". The book is currently available half price from the publisher John Hopkins Press. It was praised by Kurt Leland at the recent Annie Besant conference as one of the best books on theosophical history ever written.

A highlight of the 2016 Theosophical History conference was the personal account by Kevin Tingay who (as a young Theosophist) had met some of the Theosophical suffragettes.

But did you know Dr Kingsford was an early supporter? At our Anna Kingsford study day at 50 Gloucester Place, on Saturday 17 February, for which you can book via the TSE web site, Dr Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière will speak briefly about An Essay on the Admission of Women to Parliament — the pamphlet that twenty-one-year-old, just-married Anna Kingsford published in 1868 —, and on the issues of The Lady's Own Paper she edited in 1872-3. She will assess Kingsford's problematical proto-feminist stance expressed in them, in the context of the specificities of the fight for women's rights in Britain at the time. She will also study these texts as possible keys to understanding some of Kingsford's later commitments, especially to women's access to medical studies.

This means that Anna was a campaigner well before Annie Besant. Who ever realised that? Will either name be mentioned in the official celebrations?



Basil Hodgson-Smith Remembered

January 9, 2018

Many fine Theosophists have died in war. Captain Basil

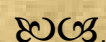
Hodgson-Smith, though injured, did not pass until a decade later.]

<http://www.greatwarbritishofficers.com/.../Captain%20Basil%20...>

In a tribute to him in the "News and Notes" of the TSE in October 1929, Maud Sharpe wrote:

"When Basil was only ten years old and then at Avenue Road, it was my privilege to be there almost every day, and I saw him constantly. Even then, those qualities of sympathy, unselfishness, adaptability and generosity were outstanding."

A lost leader indeed.



Call for Papers- The Occult Revival

January 9, 2018

Jenny Baker, the national president of the Theosophical Society in England has approved the drafting of a Call for Papers for a weekend conference on the Occult Revival, to be held at 50 Gloucester Place on 29/30 September 2018. This is a term used by scholars to refer to the growth of movements like Theosophy, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries.

The conference would consider not only some of the various groups, leaders and teachings, but also more basic questions. Was there an actual revival? If so, was it just local, or confined to certain classes? Did the revival die out?

We hope to circulate a Call for Papers later this month, but you can register your interest by contacting the TS in England now.

Madame Blavatsky might have been cautious.

<http://www.katinkahesselink.net/path3.htm>

Part of her response to the occult revival was to create her own esoteric school, which offered a better way than some other groups.



Dr Kingsford and Kabbalah

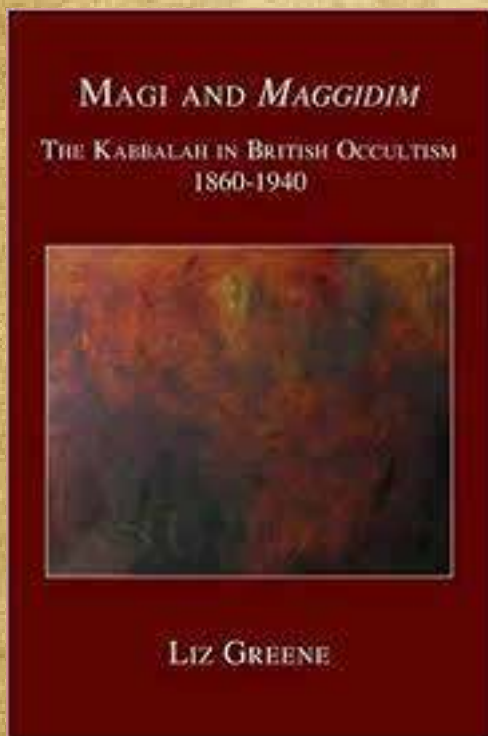
January 9, 2018

The T.S. in England is having a one day re-examination of Dr Anna Kingsford on Saturday 17 February, whose programme appears under Special Events on the web site of the T.S. in England, and for which it is possible to book on line.

Dr Kingsford made an important contribution is the subject of "Magi and Maggidim, the Kabbalah in British Occultism 1860-1940" (2012) . In this 500 page book, Liz Greene the author observes (p.188):

"The Lurianic Kabbalah dominates Kingsford's writings... She seems to have acquired her Lurianic doctrines from both Levi and Kabbalah denudata."

Liz Greene also notes that Anna's "short, illness-ridden life, belies the enormous influence her understanding of the Kabbalah exercised on Westcott, Mathers, and the structure and rituals of the Golden Dawn" (p.186).



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Theosophy Libeled

January 15, 2018

There is concern, and not only in the U.K. about an article published by a national newspaper which repeats some old canards about HPB, Annie Besant and the

Theosophical Society. Steps are being taken to get these corrected, including letters to the editor.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/.../eugenics-ucl-toby-young-conf...>

My own letter to the newspaper said

"In her article, Louise Raw grossly libels the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, whose first object is "To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity", The Society has always admitted members of all races and religions, and they have shared in its leadership since the 1880s. As the research of Boaz Huss has demonstrated, the Theosophical Society, because of its opposition to racial discrimination, made a particular appeal to Jewish people, and an association of Jewish Theosophists was active in several countries.

To link Theosophy with the Nazis is egregious, because the Nazis (and in Italy, the Fascists) persecuted Theosophists, and prohibited their activities. "The Theosophist" their official international organ, condemned the treatment of Jews in Germany as early as 1934. In 1940 their international president George Arundale echoed Churchill in a stirring editorial "If Britain Falls". In occupied Europe, Theosophists hid their libraries and archives, but much was seized, This included the hq of the French Theosophical Society, which became a Gestapo building. A leading Theosophist of Jewish origin, Dora Kunz, later president of the Theosophical Society in America, lost several relatives in the Holocaust.

The charge of racism, past or present, is a grave one, and no organisation can claim innocence, but pioneering work against racism and religious bigotry should be recognised.

Yours faithfully

Leslie Price

[The writer is associate editor of the independent quarterly "Theosophical History" www.theohistory.org]

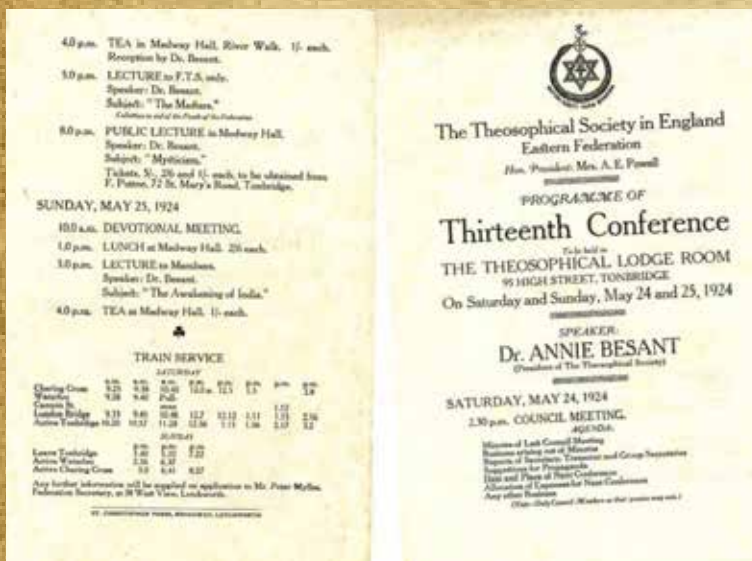
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Annie Besant Visits a Lodge

January 15 · 2018

What is the high spot in the history of a Theosophical Lodge? For many, it would be a visit by Dr Annie Besant. For Tonbridge in Kent, the Eastern Federation conference in 1924 was such an occasion. Dr Besant gave three lectures over the weekend. The venue was the Lodge room in the High Street.

Incidentally the name of the Lodge in the T.S. Year Book was Alycone, the pseudonym of the young Krishnamurti.. The Lodge retained this name after Krishnamurti went his own way.



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Dr Rupert Sheldrake- 40 years in the T.S.

January 18, 2018

Dr Rupert Sheldrake, who is lecturing at 50 Gloucester Place on Wednesday 31 January, is a life member of the TS in England. But he originally joined the Theosophical Society when researching plant physiology in India in February 1978. So his 40th anniversary as a Fellow is imminent!

Although he has regularly lectured at TSE, he recalls early lecturing to T.S. in America members at Krotona and Wheaton, and indeed we find him writing of "The Hypothesis of Formative Causation" in "The American Theosophist" November 1982. His work has also been discussed in the Theosophy-Science Group Newsletter in

Australia.

Dr Lester Smith F.R.S. reviewed his classic work "A New Science of Life" in "The Theosophist" in January 1982. Thus, all over the world and the decades, Theosophists have given a sympathetic but not uncritical reception to Dr Sheldrake's work. His new book on science and spiritual practices is particularly relevant to a Society which studies and practises both.

<http://theosophicalsociety.org.uk/special-events>

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Should lodges Specialise?

January 18, 2018

One of the practical suggestions in the Mahatma Letters was that Theosophical lodges should specialise.

"let every Branch before it is chartered, choose some one object to work for, an object, naturally, in sympathy with the general principles of the T.S. — yet a distinct and definite object of its own, whether in the religious, educational or philosophical line. This would allow the Society a broader margin for its general operations; more real, useful work would be done; and, as every Branch would be so to say, independent in its modus operandus.....",

Generally, this advice has been somewhat neglected, but three examples we remember in England are the Buddhist Lodge, which evolved into the Buddhist Society; the Action Lodge, which was devoted to practical social work, after disasters for example; and the Theosophical Research Centre which, though not technically a Lodge, produced numerous experiments, papers, books and conferences.

Do we need more specialist Lodges?

<http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/mahatma/ml-54.htm>

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The Theosophical Book of 2017?

January 19, 2018

What was the most important Theosophical book of 2017? I would nominate the English translation of Annie Besant (1847-1933) "Struggles and Quest" by Dr Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière

<http://shop.theosophicalsociety.org.uk/.../annie-besant-1847-...>

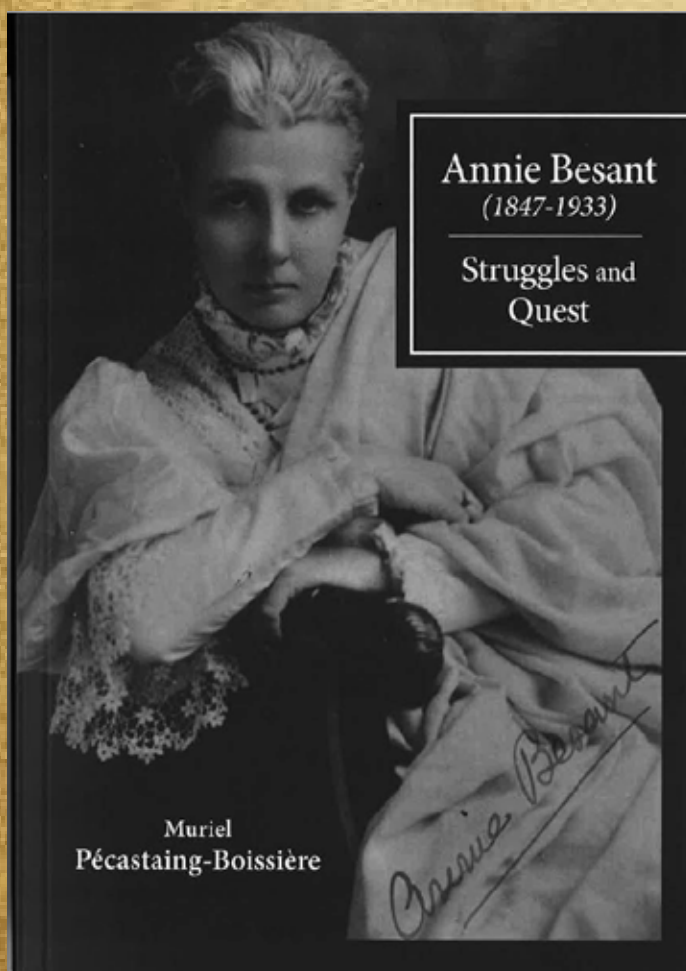
Gandhi and Theosophy

January 20, 2018

We Theosophists may think we know about Annie Besant, but actually we have forgotten much of her achievement, which extended far beyond Theosophy, but also into many fields of social reform. With the passing of those who knew Dr Besant, her work and early struggles gradually faded from memory. And her biographers outside the Society, few in number, did not treat with respect her evolution into a Theosophist.

In over 300 pages, this new readable biography, updated for the English edition, and drawing on both original sources and the latest scholarship, does justice to Annie Besant. If you are an admirer, you should not miss it, but likewise if you are a critic. If you disapprove of what she became, you need to know the struggles which shaped her.

Quite soon, this book will become available through Amazon. But at present, you can obtain it more cheaply direct from the TS in England.



Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948. This tragic event will be marked by TV programmes and other media attention across the world on the anniversary. His youthful interest in Theosophy will sometimes be recalled. We can be proud of the stimulus the T.S. gave to his development in Britain, South Africa and India.

Gandhi's name has not been found in the international register of T.S. members at Adyar, but at 50 Gloucester Place we sometimes exhibit the minutes of Blavatsky Lodge London, in which he is listed as an associate member with his London address. How can this discrepancy be explained?

In an old article in our "Theosophical Journal" called "The Early Years of Blavatsky Lodge" by Grace Blanch. (November-December 1962), she says that the Lodge for a time had 3 categories of membership.

"The third category comprised associates who need not necessarily be members of the Society but who pledged themselves to study Theosophy and to defend it and spread it on all occasions to the best of their power. A number of familiar names appear in this class among them M.K. Gandhi and W.B. Yeats."

Yeats of course joined the T.S. and indeed (for a time) the E.S. but Gandhi left England. Later in South Africa he was assisted by Theosophists (especially by Jewish Theosophists), and inspired by Esoteric Christianity, corresponding with Edward Maitland, who had rejoined the T.S. after Dr Kingsford passed.

In the attached quotation, it is thought the two brothers were actually uncle and nephew of the same age, the Keightleys..



I recall having read, at the brothers' instance, Madame Blavatsky's Key to Theosophy. This book stimulated in me the desire to read books on Hinduism, and disabused me of the notion fostered by the missionaries that Hinduism was rife with superstition.

— Mahatma Gandhi —

AZ QUOTES

Where do Theosophical Lodges come from?

January 28 · 2018

Every Theosophist who belongs to a lodge is indebted to Dr Anna Kingsford, who is the subject of a one day conference at 50 Gloucester Place on 17 February 2017

<http://theosophicalsociety.org.uk/special-events>



The Origin of Lodges

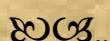
January 28, 2018

Josephine Ransom explained why in an article "The Origin of Lodges" for the "News and Notes" of the TS in England, in March/April 1943.

"The title Branch was used throughout the world until In June 1883, the English Fellows, at the request of their president, Dr Anna Kingsford, changed their name to the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society" Mrs Ransom explains. "This was done because probably the Founders spoke of The Great Brotherhood as 'The Lodge'. It was suggested to the President, T.S., that other Branches might do likewise. In many countries the title 'Lodge' became and remained the usage: while some countries retained the older title of Branch, or its equivalent translation"

In fact, each Branch had at first been called a Society. Mrs Ransom gives as examples the British T.S. 1878, the Bombay T.S. 1878, the Galle T.S. 1880 and the Poona T.S. 1882.

As author of the standard work "A Short History of the Theosophical Society" (1938), Mrs Ransom had a profound acquaintance with its history, but there is more to discover about why Dr Kingsford sought the name change for local groups.



Anna Kingsford Programme

January 28, 2018

If you have access to youtube, you can check the outstanding programme for our Anna Kingsford Day at 50 Gloucester Place on Saturday 17 February.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHkIRycV2A8>



Why are Theosophists Difficult?

January 29, 2018

Have you ever wondered why Theosophists can sometimes be difficult? The answer has often been given. Jo-sephine Ransom, for example, in her 1941 Blavatsky lecture "The Direction of the Theosophical Society by Masters of Wisdom" 1942 said:

"The Masters know, for they have been through it, that each candidate—chosen for all sorts of reasons, including karmic—must have his nature tested for fitness to deal with the risks of the inner worlds, where emotions and minds are open to subtle and intricate influences, and where both feeling and thought may be mis-led, sowing thereby seeds of future trouble."

http://resources.theosophical.org/.../BL_1942_Ransom_The%20Di...

Serious Theosophists aspire to tread the Path, which means that circumstances will test them and their weaknesses. As well as the challenges of everyday life, the T.S. serves as a crucible, which means that matters will become heated at times!



A Disturbance at a Lecture

January 31, 2018

1881 was an important year for Theosophists in England. The weekly newspaper LIGHT was launched by Spiritualists, and was a major means of communication in the T.S. The newspaper was read by Col. Olcott and H.P.B., far away in India and also (as The Mahatma Letters indicate) , even by K.H. on occasion.

Also that year, edited letters by K.H. and M. were published by A.P. Sinnett in "The Occult World", making known to the world a hitherto secret brotherhood.

In London, Dr Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland gave a series of lectures on "The Perfect Way". Though greatly admired by many Theosophists, one lecture caused a disturbance.

<http://www.humanitarismo.com.br/.../OAKM-I-Life-22-Chap20-web...>

You can read about it at the end of chapter 20 of Maitland's life of Dr Kingsford, to be found on the invaluable Anna Kingsford web site.

The leading medium, Stainton Moses, was in the audience, and took exception to some criticisms of mediumship.

Subsequently AK and EM had a very disturbed night. But was this an occult attack?

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Conference Call for papers – The Occult Revival

February 1, 2018

The Theosophical Society in England has published its Call for Papers for the conference on the Occult Revival on 29-30 September 2018.

The painting, incidentally, is by Pierre Amédée Marcel-Béronneau, and shows Orpheus in Hades, holding his lyre. Orpheus is a suitable inspiration for this conference, as students of H.P. Blavatsky's writings will appreciate!



How Dr Sheldrake joined the Theosophical Society

February 1, 2018

When Dr Rupert Sheldrake lectured at 50 Gloucester Place yesterday evening, on his new book "Science and Spiritual Practices", Jenny Baker the National President offered special congratulations.

This February marks his forty years of fellowship in the Theosophical Society, of which he is a Life Member. When he was doing plant research in India, his work took him to Madras (Chennai) sometimes, and he found Adyar a congenial place to stay. Then he discovered that in taking his research further (his classic work "A New Science of Life" as germinating), the Adyar Library was very useful. And he realised that his hypotheses (morphic resonance and so on) got a warm reception from Theosophists, but not in general from scientists.

Though he joined in India, he is now attached to the T.S. in England. He is the leading scientist T.S. member in the world.

In the audience was engineer Peter Barton who recently celebrated his 90th birthday. The Theosophical Research Centre, of which he is the senior surviving member, had called attention to Dr Sheldrake's classic 1981 book even before its publication.

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Annie Besant and the Theosophical Bookshop

February 5, 2018

Older members of the TS in England, and overseas visitors, will remember the Theosophical Bookshop in Gt. Russell Street, London, near the British Museum. But did you know that Annie Besant was responsible for this? The old Theosophical Publishing House had been obliged to go into liquidation. The international president Annie Besant stepped in and acquired these different premises, of which she became the proprietor. When she passed away, her son Digby became the owner, but later, the TS in England took over. Mrs Besant announced the new bookshop in the TSE news and Notes for March 1930.

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Orpheus and Esoteric Religion

February 5 at 4:36pm · 2018

The Call for Papers for this autumn's conference at the TSE on the Occult Revival (29-30 September) carries an image of Orpheus. Early Theosophists were quite interested in this legendary Greek teacher, and G.R.S. Mead contributed a series of lectures about him to the magazine *Lucifer*, issued as a volume in 1896.

Joscelyn Godwin in his Quest book "The Golden Thread" 2007 has a chapter on "The Orphic Mysteries" and notes:

"In two respects, Orphism was the first known esoteric religion. First, it imposed the seal of the Mysteries, so that the teachings given in initiation were not revealed to outsiders. Second, it gave a profounder, symbolic interpretation to existing myths...."

The first known esoteric religion? That's quite a claim isn't it.



Christmas as Seen Through the Eyes of a Turkey

February 5 at 4:36pm · 2018

As we approach our day conference on 17 February about Dr Anna Kingsford, the vegetarian pioneer, can you help with a recent enquiry?

A correspondent asks: "My late aunt, Miss Hetty Finley, was born in the UK and lived in London between 1930 and 1946, when the family then migrated to Perth, Western Australia. During her time in London, she attended a number of lectures at the TS.

One particular lecture she attended, probably in the early/mid 1930s had a permanent impact on our family. The talk was titled something like, "Christmas as Seen Through the Eyes of a Turkey". Hetty returned home after the talk, and related the essence of the talk to her mother, brothers and sister. They became vegetarian straight after that and several members of the family remain vegetarian and vegan as a direct result. As this particular talk has had such a profound effect on the spirituality of our family, I would like to refer to it in more detail in the history of my aunt. I would be most grateful for any information you can provide. "

<http://theosophicalsociety.org.uk/special-events>

Madame Blavatsky & Reincarnation

February 7 at 4:36pm · 2018

What did Madame Blavatsky teach about reincarnation? You might think that is an easy question for Theosophists to answer, but Dr Julie Chajes suggests in a new paper that "a guide to Blavatsky's reincarnation doctrine is necessary because it is not possible to simply open one of her books and discover what she taught without considerable effort."

<http://correspondencesjournal.com/16403-2/>

Of course since the time of HPB herself, there has been discussion of how her later teaching relates to her first book "Isis Unveiled", An answer if offered here.

Incidentally, a footnote reveals "The publication of this paper was made possible by grants from The Blavatsky Trust and the Israel Science Foundation".



Charles Carleton Massey

February 7, 2018

At the Anna Kingsford day at 50 Gloucester Place, on Saturday 17 February, I intend to say something about Charles Carleton Massey, the subject of a 2015 biography by Jeffrey D. Lavoie.

Dr Kingsford was the first woman president of the British Theosophical Society, but it was Massey, a barrister, who had been the first BTS president in 1878. Indeed Massey had been in New York in 1875, and present at the original T.S. creation. At that time of his life Massey assisted in the birth of several bodies, notably the Society for Psychical Research in 1882, and the London Spiritualist Alliance in 1884.

But Massey was also an Esoteric Christian. He was instrumental in securing Dr Kingsford's election as BTS president in January 1883, and Mr Maitland's as vice-president. Their term of office in what was now called the London Lodge ended in schism in 1884, and the formation of the Hermetic Society, which Massey joined. Sadly AK's declining health ensured a short life for the Hermetic Society

Although Massey admired and supported up to a point the new gospel of interpretation, he gradually moved to a different position, of which more on Saturday 17th. Jeff Lavoie's biography offers some new material which helps us to understand Massey.

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