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# Theosophical Society: Roles and Features of the Movement in India

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## Abstract

The Theosophical Society was established in New York in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott. This philosophy took hold only in 1879 in the Indian community and civilization. It crystallised with its headquarters in Adayar during the Presidency of Madras. Annie Besant popularised the trend in India. Theosophy is the wisdom behind all faiths if they are deprived of superstitions and accretions. It provides a theory that makes life intelligible and shows that the universe is driven by fairness and compassion. His teachings lead to unveiling human beings' hidden divine essence, without reliance on external phenomena. The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 to support theosophy.

## 1. Introduction

In 1875 in New York City, the Theosophical Society was established by seventeen people who held beliefs in spirit and occultism. Among the seventeen who replied to Col. Henry Steel Olcott's appeal (1832-1907) to all who agreed to form and subscribe to a corporation as already stated were Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), Henry Steel Olcott, William Quan Judge (1851-1896), Charles Sotheran (1847-1902), George H. Felt (1851-1902). Consequently, culture should not be understood based on semanticized interpretation of the word theosophy, but on the understanding of the term provided by society. Theosophy, as known, is not a rigid concept and substance in the Theosophical Community and in many of the cultures where it derives, but is an organic body of teachings that have undergone a reinterpretation and creation over time. Nevertheless, most of theosophical organisations — some from the New York-based parent Theosophical Society — recognise theosophy by Helena P. Blavatsky, who is known by others as the ultimate and unfailing source of theosophical research. It is necessary to bear in mind that the history of the Theosophical Community encompasses not only the initial society, but also organisations such as the Theosophical Society (Pasadena), the Unified Lodge of Theosophists and the People's Temple, both of which are still in operation. Other organisations, such as the People's Temple (near Oceano, California), founded by Dr. William H. Dower (1866-1937) and Ms. Francia LaDue (1849-1922), the Arcane School of Alice Bailey (1880-1847), the Guy Ballard Religious Practice "I AM" (1878-1938), and the Universal and Victorious Church, developed by Mark Prophet (191) are based on the Theosophical doctrines of Blavatsky. We'll glance at both of these quickly.

## 2. The Origin and Purpose of the Theosophical Society

During 70 days, from 7 September to 17 November 1875, the founding of the Theosophical Society took place. H was the biggest contributor to its development. P. Blavatsky, who was responsible largely for drawing many influential persons to her soirées and generating curiosity in esoteric and supernatural matters; H. S. Olcott, who first proposed and contributed to the concept of a society and its organisation, and G. H. Felt, who gave the lecture that inspired Olcott to propose a culture. Its popularity was decided by an American atmosphere which accepted the teachings and practises associated with the Theosophical Society: an interpretation of the cosmos, outside the expertise of empirical analysis as well as spirit phenomena (the conviction that the supernatural world was scientifically verifiable and its occupants, the spirits, had contact with the physical realm). The culture reflected in large measure the western esoteric tradition, as described by the scholar Antoine Faivre as a "ensemble of spiritual currents of modern and contemporary Western history that share the same air of family, as well as the common denominator form of thought." The immediate catalyst for forming a business to pursue this subject took place in H on 7 September 1875. P. Blavatsky's 46 Irving Place apartment (New York City). For several months, Blavatsky had drawn more than a

casual understanding of the mystic or esoteric teachings of some individuals to listen to their opinions on the "ancient magic." 3 On the night of September 7 though, a member of the editorial team of New York Observer, Henry M. Stevens, who first introduced Blavatsky, was presumably due to F. Rev. James Henry Wiggin's lecture account in the liberal Christian is probably the most reliable and intelligible description of Felt's remarks (Olcott's Old Diary Leaves provide the other account): First, the illustration unlocking the Cabala was clarified. It is made up of the square of a circle comprising a typical triangle, both within and outside, two Egyptian triangles and the Pentagon, making a complete star. This diagram refers to pictures, sculptures, walls, hieroglyphs, pyramids, plains, tombs, and buildings of ancient Egypt and demonstrates that they are in complete harmony with their dimensions that they must have been created according to their law.

The same canon of proportion he extends then to Greek art to demonstrate how his masterpieces of sculpture were sculpted by this law without templates and how imperfect nature itself is living in proportion. According to the prospectus, Felt's thesis was conducted between the end of 1874 and 1876 by J. The occult publisher W. Bouton believed that Felt had found "the true geometrical system of the Egyptians, a lasting and long-looking key with Egypt unlocking the mysteries of nature and art." Bouton wrote, "The cabbala was the wisdom gathered by the Egyptians which comprises a mathematical structure, geometrically and mystically at the same time, and a key to the early days." The fusion of geometry and design, which Masons might treat as an appeal, was a way of catching the sagacity of the ages. Felt (in Bouton's prospectus) considered "Kaballa" to represent the knowledge handed down from instructor to disciple. Thus is it related with the priscatheologia (first in theology) of Christian cabbala, stressed in a long-standing decline from the Religious philosopher Hermes Trismegistos to Asclepius, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, the Neo-Platons, and the Renaissance platonist philosopher Mars. The prospectus describes "kaballa" as follows: the word was an abstract concept meaning recognition, a philosophy which was obtained through oral transmission, and used to instruct orally from influenced teachers and hierophantes. The "literature of wisdom," the esoteric theological sciences, the mystery, the Oracles, and the occult signs, the characters, and the terms used to express them, as well as an awareness of the mysterious sense connected to the ordinary signs, contained both hidden and abstruse knowledge, in particular the mystical and the root. It occurred in the earliest traditional ages and in it the secrets of Nature and the mysteries of faith were expressed in the signs described above, and all knowledge is assumed to be included and understood by the Cabala.

### 3. Theosophical Society Movement in India

Olcott and Blavatsky both agreed in 1878 to abandon New York for India, which was perceived to be one of the key centres of theological knowledge. Both representatives resigned in December of that year, but only after Olcott applied to General Abner Doubleday (1819–1893) to serve as the acting chairman of the society. They left the Speke Hall for India, after a stay in Great Britain, and arrived in Bombay Harbor on February 16, 1879. Shortly after their entry, an incident which the people and the British Government greeted with great interest received a letter from the Pioneer (Allahabad) editor A. P. Sinnett (1840–1921), who tried to get to know him. As soon as his paper will publish its actions and express his opinions, Sinnett should be of tremendous benefit to the theosophical representatives. The first to be published in October 1879 at its Foreign headquarters in Adyar (Chennai) was the pioneer who revealed the leaders' intentions to construct a paper to be named Theosophist.<sup>28</sup> The journal featured a vast number of important papers on Theosophy, including two Blavatsky identifying posts, "What Is Theosophy?" And "Who the Theosophists Are?" Sinnett quickly became significant in the teaching of the Theosophy by lengthy communication (1880-1885) with two supposed occult instructors and Masters of Knowledge (also referred to as Mahatmas, adepts, Arhants, Brothers, Initiates, Moryas). The masters were not the invention of theosopher; there were definitely parallels to Mahayana's interpreting the bodhisattve, the angelic and the archangel, yogis and swamis and maybe even more specifically the disciples of the novelist Bulwer-Lytton Zanon (1842) and The Coming Race (1871). Thus, those who know West esotericism and Eastern (South Asian) doctrine understood the idea of the master. They were and still are "the proponents of occult knowledge," custodians of the wisdom upon

which the great religions build their philosophy, who are themselves "a brotherhood or a secret association that spreads over all the East," in particular in Tibet, and who only obtain such knowledge by 'long and weary probation and anxious ordeals of a truly dreadful gravity.' In short, the Mahatmas trigger what are just potential capacities in regular human beings. In five years, Sinnett was to be the chief beneficiary of well over 100 letters from the Mahatmas. During this time, he completed a description of the lessons in the letters and published them in *Esoteric Buddhism* in 1883.<sup>33</sup> *The Occult Universe* his previous work mostly addresses the phenomenon created by Blavatsky and thus both books help to make the Theosophical Community and Blavatsky more understood.

#### 4. Great Britain and India

The first division of the Theosophical Society was established by its treasurer, John Storer Cobb in the United Kingdom on June 27, 1878. In the early 1880s, the British Theosophical Society had a major influence on society and its members. Olcott and Blavatsky understood much about the realities of India's people and its ancient ideology following their arrival in India in 1879. The consequence was that Olcott became more interested in supporting indigenous people in India and Ceylon to recover and preserve their faiths from the assaults of Christian missionaries and from the acts of British colonial rule, and Blavatsky most definitely became more conscious of Hinduism and Buddhism in their pandits and bhikkhus. The first public advocacy on behalf of the Buddhists started in May 1880 when the two leaders, along with six members of the company, took their first visit to Ceylon. During that time, all the Five Precepts and probably the Triple Gem (taking shelter in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) officially were embraced, and became Buddhists. The tour was good because the leaders empathised with the people and became Buddhists. This led Olcott to revive the Buddhism through a campaign that began by Gunananda Mohottivatte, an activist mountain who mobilised the Society for the Propagation of Buddhism and which was an efficient debater against the Christian missionaries. Olcott would proceed throughout the 1890s on behalf of the Buddhist cause. The early affiliation with Arya Samaj, Olcott's and Blavatsky's transfer to India and Olcott's involvement with Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka among other factors helped to establish the impression that, at the cost of Western occultism or ésoférisim, the Theosophical Culture became more interwoven with Eastern occultism. Olcott and Blavatsky introduced in their literature more Hindu and Buddhist teachings, but never lost sight of Western esoteric authors and teachings. However, the idea that they are more interested with Eastern occultism existed, in fact, in reaction to the anticlericalism of Blavatsky and the repeated affirmations regarding the dogmatic deficiencies of Christianity and the evangelization of its missionaries in India and in other parts of the colonised nation. The product of that antagonism was an early effort by George Wyld (1821–1906), President of the British Theosophical Society, to establish an autonomous society more in accordance with Christian enlightenment than the Hindu and Buddhist teaching of its founders. In 1882, Wyld quit after attempting to reform society, but shortly after that, Mrs Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846–1888) and her near associate, Edward Maitland (1824–1897), a talentsome and more dynamic leader, were to prosper where Wyld had struggled. Initially, Kingsford's goal was not to maintain existing Christian dogma and practise but to launch a "new esoteric church." The consequence of this the job was the publishing of *The Ideal Path*, or the hunt for Christ, Concentrated on Catholic rather than the Hindu and Buddhist Blavatsky theosophy. On 3 January 1883 Kingsford and Maitland were voted president and vice president respectively at the Annual General Meeting of the Theosophical Society of Great Britain just 4 days later, following their participation of the Theosophical Society. In April 1883, as A. P. Sinnett entered London, problems emerged between him and Kingsford and his eventual publication (June 1883) *Esoteric Buddhism* dissociated itself from the previous publication by Kingsford, *The Ideal Route*. The latest teachings found in Sinnett's book drew fellows from the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society (the new name of the Theosophical Society of Great Britain after June 1883). But Kingsford would like to have interpreted theosophy more broadly than the Masters or Mahatmas theosophy that Sinnett portrayed. Owing to the two-position tensions, the London Lodge was reorganised into two branches: one to research Eastern theosophy and the other to study

Christian or Hermetic theosophy. The latter was founded on April 7, 1884, and members of the London Lodge could be members of both branches for a brief period. Kingsford and Maitland founded the modern, separate "Hermetic Society" after Olcott disallowed double membership. This was inaugurated on 9th May 1884, and it was the first independent offshoot of the Theosophical Community. Its purpose was to focus on the study of Hermetic teachings (named after Hermes, initiator of the Sacred Mysteries) and of the schools built on these teachings—Pythagorean, Platonic, and Alexandrian—and the Greek Mysteries. Although the new society was initiated because of Olcott's order that dual membership was not possible, the president of the Theosophical Society did not harbor negative thoughts toward the Hermetic Society and, in fact, offered "good wishes and sympathy for the new society." Also, Kingsford and Maitland, while resigning from the London Lodge, did remain members-at-large of the Theosophical Society.

#### 5. The Division of the Theosophical Society

The split of the Theosophical Community cannot only be based on doctrinal contradictions because it was often because of personal desires and dreams about where society will go. In the circumstances that contributed to the founding in 1884 of the Hermetic Community under Kingsford and Maitland and the role of Christian theosophy within the theosophical movement this issue was clear. In France, another prominent theosopher, Lady Caithness, also showed an affinity for Christian Theosophy, especially in her book *The Perfect Way and The Universal Osophy*. Unlike Kingsford, Lady Caithness never resisted the Eastern Theosophy of Sinnett and Blavatsky, but she stayed in a theosophical orbit until her death in 1895. In the same year, there was a rift in the Theosophical Society, exacerbated by incidents never entirely known by commentators. The two Outer Heads of the Eastern School of Theosophy, the Judge, and Besant, and Col. Olcott, founder of the Theosophical Society, are often interested in a simplistic clarification. The immediate circumstances of the division included "the alleged abuse by the judge of the names and the handwriting of the Mahatmas," an allegation that was brought to Olcott by Besant on 6 February 1894, which prompted Olcott to recommend the formation of a judicial committee to examine the charge. The committee assembled in London, in June of 1894, to consider "some charges of misconduct that Mrs. Besant preferred against the Vice-President of the Society and which she made, dated 24 March 1894." The one protest that was relevant was that an inquiry was not stopped. Such an inquiry can not be stopped. However, with regard to the constitutional and executive standards I shall object from start to finish to any committee of the Theosophical Society which considers any charge against any individual which concerns an investigation and decision regarding the nature, titles, competences, roles or methods of the 'Mahatmas or masters' The Community may not have any doctrine as to the nature of these Masters, however by debating upon such a topic by an official committee of the Society and necessarily starting such a debate with the first inquiry and judgement, the Theosophical Society would be determined to resolve this dogma after over 19 years of unsectular work and bring it into the Constitution of the So The committee agreed that the case was beyond its control, so Mrs. Besant then recommended that the Jury of Honor considered the charges.<sup>51</sup> The Judge refused for legal purposes and the compromise that was introduced was two comments made by Judge and Besant before the European Sectional Convention. While the entire matter was resolved by the European Sectional Convention, the problem did not conclude. Disarray persisted with those of society. One member, Walter Old, Treasurer and Recording Secretary at Adyar, who had been expelled from the Eastern School of Theosophy for breaching the Occult Confidentiality Code of August 1893, was found to be a disdain for Olcott for all the intent and purposes that Besant described in her convention address as a Judge Hater. His plot led him to turn around

Documents to a Westminster Gazette journalist Edmund Garrett, who then released a series of articles entitled "Essis Very Much Unveiled: The Great Mahatma Hoax Story" from October 1894. Following this publication on November 3, the judge provided by Master's Order a declaration stating that he was the Eastern Section's founder, Mrs Besant fell under the control of Mahatma Besant One of the agents selected was Professor Gyanendra N. Chakravarti, a close collaborator and chief of Mrs. Besant. The specifics of the conspiracy is that

Olcott must withdraw from the chairmanship of the Theosophical Society. Judge concluded that the Theosophical Society's role was to represent western esoteric learning rather than India's learning. Finally, the Eastern School of Theosophy Order proclaimed Judge to be the supreme leader of the Eastern school and finished with Mrs. Besant's headquarters at the close of this paper. One month later (April 1895), Olcott made it very evident at the Theosophical Society Convention that he was unhappy with the accusations made by Judge against Chakravarti and Besant. He knew also that the American Theosophical Society must definitely at this juncture assert its separation from the Adyar Theosophical Society (Olcott) and that the Judge should be compelled to resign. In December 1894, Mrs. Besant addressed the convention and again reviewed the situation, culminating with the request to renounce the position of vice-president of the Theosophical Society. It was evident that decisions were taken with and against the Judge: the American section was behind him, but those outside the United States resigned or became increasingly upset with the whole situation. The condition remained unstable during the beginning of 1895 until it resulted in a declaration of sovereignty by the American section and the election of the judge for life in his convention held on 28-29 April 1895. The new society saw its conduct at the Convention not as seceding from the Adyar Theosophical Society but as a statement of their sovereignty from the Adyar Headquarters and reaffirmed its clear connection to the society left by Blavatsky and Olcott in 1878 when they set sail to India. The American portion of the Theosophical Community then stopped. The Theosophical Culture was in its place in America.

#### 6. Salient Features of the Theosophical Movement in India

The Theosophical society was another influential movement which took the mantle of reforming and reviving the ancient glory of Hinduism. His preaching contributed to a lot of fermentation for theological successes. The term "theosophy" is extracted from two Greek terms, Theos and Sophia, which denote Deity and knowledge. Therefore, the essence of theosophy was God's knowledge.

It meant the knowledge of the Absolute in its Indian counterpart. The cornerstone of the new Theosophical Community was laid in 1875 in the United States by Madame H.P. Blavatsky, a Russian woman, and Colonel H.S.Olcott, former army official of England. The Indian Theosophical Society was founded in 1886. Its branches in Bangalore, Bombay, Kumbakonam, Ludhiana and Surat were created. The company's offices is in Adyar, Madras.

#### 7. Meaning of Theosophy

Theosophy is born from the Greek term 'theosophy' meaning simply "God's wisdom" It refers to systems of esoteric philosophy relating to the supposed mysteries of being and existence or finding direct knowledge of them, particularly concerning divine nature. Its nature refers to secret knowledge or wisdom which offers person illumination and redemption. The Theosophist attempts to explain the mysteries of the cosmos and the connections between the universe, mankind, and the spiritual. The aim of theosophy is to examine the roots of divinity, mankind and the universe. Theosophers attempt to discover a clear explanation of the meaning and origin of the cosmos by studying these subjects. The Theosophical Society was established in New York in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott. This philosophy took hold only in 1879 in the Indian community and civilization. It crystallised with its headquarters in Adayar during the Presidency of Madras. Annie Besant popularised the trend in India. Three concepts is focused on theosophy:

- Universal brotherhood.
- The study of comparative religion and philosophy.
- Investigations into the natural laws which seek to understand the unexplained mystic laws!

#### 8. Roles of Theosophical Society and Theosophist

Both faiths were respected by the Theosophists. They rejected conversions and believed in spirit and occult mysticism transmigration. Theosophical culture was an important part of Hinduism's resurgence in India, which has also generated a certain degree of social unity. To quote Annie Besant, "India has no future without

Hinduism. Hinduism is the ground on which India's roots are hit, and ripped off as a tree ripped out of its position."

In addition, the theosophists focused on caste abolition, untouchability and the theory of assimilation. They really tried to render the oppressed segments appropriate to society and incorporate them. They attempted, by enabling them to take conventional schooling, to strengthen the conditions of the socially excluded. In this regard, Annie Besant also founded a variety of educational societies and spread the need for modern education.

#### 9. Contribution of Annie Besant

Via reflection, meditation, revelation etc, a special connection may be formed between the soul of a human and Heaven. The Community has embraced the Hindu belief of re-incarnation, Karma and was influenced by the doctrine of the Upanishads and Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta.

It called for inclusive fraternity with no distinction or ethnicity, religion, sex, caste or colour. The corporation tried to explore the unexplained rules of existence and hidden forces of man. The campaign directed at the quest for Hindu divine knowledge by Western illumination. The movement resurrected and reinforced confidence in Hindus ancient teachings and ideologies. Studying and preaching Aryan theology and ideology. The Upanishads exposed the real truth: the cosmos and creation. It was cosmopolitan enough to appreciate all religious forms and all worship types. Besides the intellectual and theological discourses that the Society carries out, the literature and academic efforts of the Society have contributed valuably to Hindu awakening. Hindu texts have been written and translated. The Culture has been promoting changes and framing educational services.

#### Reference

1. The minutes of the meeting held at 46 Irving Place in New York City on September 8, 1875.
2. Antoine Faivre, "Questions of Terminology Proper to the Study of Esoteric Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe," in *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, edited by Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 2.
3. Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: First Series America 1874-1878*, second edition (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1974), 13. Originally published in 1895. Hereafter abbreviated ODL, I, 114. This is a six-volume set of the reminiscences of Henry Olcott. The reminiscences surround the activities of Blatavsky, Olcott, and others vis à vis the Theosophical Society. The dates extend from 1874 to 1898.
4. On Felt's connection to Stevens, see Michael Gomes, "Studies in Early American Theosophical History: VI. Rev. Wiggan's Review of George Henry Felt's 1875 Lecture on the Cabala," *Canadian Theosophist* 71/3 (July-August 1990): 67. It is also confirmed by Henry J. Newton, who was to become the first treasurer of the Theosophical Society, in the article "Theosophy's Origin Exposed," which appeared in the *New York Herald*, November 10, 1895. On the subject of the presentation, see Olcott, ODL, I, 115; and *The Liberal Christian*, 25 September 1875, reprinted in Michael Gomes's "Studies in Early American Theosophical History," 63-69.
5. Felt was a 32 member of the Scottish Rite who later (1877) joined the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (popularly known as the Shrine and its members the Shriners). He was also an inventor and by profession a civil and mechanical engineer. For his Masonic connection, see John Patrick Deveney, "Nobles of the Secret Mosque: Albert L. Rawson, Abd al-Kader, George H. Felt and the Mystic Shrine," *Theosophical History*, 8/9 (July 2002): 250 and 255; for his career as inventor and engineer, see James A. Santucci, "George Henry Felt: The Life Unknown," *Theosophical History*, 6/7 (July 1997): 248-52. His lecture, "The Kaballah of the Egyptians and Canon of Proportions [sic] of the Greeks," appeared in the *New York Dispatch* on May 26, 1872.
6. Compare Olcott, ODL, I, 115. Therein, Olcott mentions that the lecture was accompanied by "drawings to illustrate his theory that the canon of architectural proportion, employed by the Egyptians as well as by the great architects of Greece, was actually preserved in the temple hieroglyphics of the Land of Khemi." He claimed that the "secret of the geometrical problem of proportion" could be read on a temple wall that agrees

with the actual “pictures, statues, doors, hieroglyphs, pyramids, planes, tombs and buildings of Ancient Egypt.”

7. Prospectus for The Kaballah of the Egyptians and the Greek Canon of Proportion, issued by J. W. Bouton (N.Y.: J. W. Bouton, 1877). On file at the Library Company of Philadelphia. Here is what Josephine Ransom wrote in *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1938), 77: “This diagram not only unlocked the secrets of the Kabala, but when applied to ancient Egyptian architecture as well as to the Greek, showed how all masterpieces of both were constructed, even the statues. In music, in prismatic colours, in the configuration of leaves, and in the world’s circumference, he found the same law of proportional harmony. This diagram, applied to the Egyptian table of hieroglyphics, indicated the parts to be read, and revealed startling correspondences. He applied it also to the Mosaic account of creation and the story of Eden, and showed here also the correspondences, all pointing to a common knowledge in the Kabalistic schools of the long past.”

8. Prospectus for the Kaballah of the Egyptians.

9. One of the attendees, Henry J. Newton, stated in the *New York Herald* many years later (November 10, 1895) that the “lecture was very disappointing, as it was not at all what was expected, but was a dry dissertation on geometry and ancient mathematics generally without reference to cabbala.” Newton, who was to become the first treasurer of the Theosophical Society, claimed it was he, not Olcott, who “moved a committee be appointed to investigate the phenomena referred to [by Felt], and made a statement quite at length, setting out the importance of the information received, if true, and our duty to determine whether or not it was true.” This claim also appeared in other publications, including *Light* (a spiritualist journal) in the November 23 and 30 (1895) issues, and reprinted in *Theosophical History*, 1/7 (July 1986), 175–85, which published an article by “Quæstor Vitæ.”

10. Olcott, ODL, I, 117. Felt’s own extensive account of his researches appears in this letter, reprinted in Olcott, ODL, I, 126–31.

11. One early source states that Paracelsus borrowed from Plato’s *Phædrus*, Faust’s “Compulsion of Hell,” and Petro de Albano’s *Heptameron*. See Joseph Ennemoser, *The History of Magic*, translated by William Howitt (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1970), I, 6 (originally published in German under the title *Geschichte der Magie* [Leipzig]: F. A. Brockhaus, 1844).

12. “Inaugural Address of the President, Delivered before the Society, November 17, 1875,” Archives of the Theosophical Society, Pasadena, Cal. 17.

13. *Ibid.*, 23, 24.

14. *Ibid.*, 16, 17.

15. My thanks to Joscelyn Godwin for giving additional information on the elementals in an e-mail dated April 30, 2003.

16. “Preamble and By-Laws of the Theosophical Society,” Archives of the Theosophical Society, Pasadena, Cal., 5: “to obtain knowledge of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Power and of the higher spirits by the aid of physical processes.”

17. Compare this definition with Antoine Faivre’s understanding of “theosophy” in Faivre and Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, 23: “Theosophy is a gnosis that has a bearing not only on the salvific relations the individual maintains with the divine world, but also on the nature of God Himself, or of divine persons, and on the natural universe, the origin of that universe, the hidden structures that constitute it in its actual state, its relationship to mankind, and its final ends.” The lecture was also delivered on December 1, 1875, before the Theosophical Society and later published in the *Spiritual Scientist* (Boston) in nine installments: 4/6

(April 13, 1876): 61–62; 4/7 (April 20, 1876): 76–77; 4/8 (April 27, 1876): 88; 4/9

(May 4, 1876): 101; 4/10 (May 11, 1876): 116–17; 4/11 (May 18, 1876): 124–25; 4/12

(May 25, 1876): 140–41; 4/13 (June 1, 1876): 1,148–49; 4/14 (June 8, 1876): 161.

18. John Patrick Deveney, *Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society* (Fullerton, Cal.: Theosophical History, 1997) (Theosophical History Occasional Papers, vol. 6). In a letter from Olcott to W. Stainton-Moses (1839–1892), dated May 18, 1875 (reprinted in W. Stainton-Moses, “Early Story of the Theosophical Society,” *Light* [July 9, 1892]: 331), Olcott remarked that he believed that his spirit did travel outside his body while asleep. Also, W. Q. Judge, in a lecture given in 1876 (reprinted in John Patrick Deveney, “An 1876 Lecture by W. Q. Judge on His Magical Progress in the Theosophical Society,” *Theosophical History* 9/3[July 2004]: 12–20), claimed the abilities of engaging in out of body experiences, of influencing others by impressing his thoughts upon them, of precognition, and of clairaudience.
19. Deveney, *Astral Projection*, 65–73.
20. H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (N.Y.: J. W. Bouton, 1877; reprinted Los Angeles: Theosophy Company, 1931).
21. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, I, vii. The Wisdom Religion is identified with magic in *Isis Unveiled*, II, 590: “MAGIC is spiritual WISDOM; nature, the material ally, pupil and servant of the magician.”
22. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, II, 216.
23. H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings: 1874–1878*, compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Volume I, 3rd edition (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1988), 193–94.
24. Circular composed chiefly by Olcott and dated May 3, 1878. It was reprinted in H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings: 1874–1878*, I, 375–78.
25. Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, 548.