

Great Esotericists of the Past

Max Heindel (1865-1919)

Carl Louis von Grasshoff, better known as Max Heindel, was born in Aarhus, Denmark on July 23, 1865, into a family with aristocratic roots. His father had emigrated from Prussia, where he served at the court of Prince Otto von Bismark, and married the daughter of a Danish craftsman. The father's death in a workplace explosion, when Carl was six years old, left the family in reduced circumstances. But his widow managed to employ private tutors for Carl and his two younger siblings to ensure that they received a good education and could take their rightful places in society.

Carl von Grasshoff left home at sixteen years of age to seek work in Glasgow, Scotland. He married at age twenty, and through his wife's connections gained employment in a steamship company. In due course, he was hired by the Cunard Line as an engineer to work on the ocean liners crossing the Atlantic. By the time he was thirty von Grasshoff was a consulting engineer in New York City. To help him blend into his new cultural environment he changed his name to Max Heindel.¹

In 1903 Max Heindel found himself in Los Angeles, where he heard lectures by Theosophist Charles W. Leadbeater. He joined the Theosophical Society and soon was elected vice-president of the Los Angeles lodge. He studied astrology, became a vegetarian, and found that a chronic injury sustained in childhood finally healed. At about the same time, his wife, who had given him two children, died and he met Augusta Foss who would become his second wife.

Overwork resulted, in 1905, in a serious heart condition that left Heindel close to death for several months. During that time he had out-of-body experiences in which he awakened to higher states of consciousness and gained esoteric knowledge. Upon recovery he embarked on a lecture tour to share what he had learned.

In 1907, encouraged and accompanied by his friend Alma von Brandis, Max Heindel traveled to Berlin, where he met Rudolf Steiner and attended several of the latter's lectures. Steiner, four years his senior, had already achieved fame as an esoteric writer and lecturer. He was chairman of the German section of the Theosophical Society, though he would leave five years later to found the Anthroposophical Society. Heindel was impressed by what he heard but felt that Steiner's work was unsuited to the American mindset—and perhaps his own—and it was in America where he believed his life's mission lay. Esoteric teachings, he thought, should be presented in practical terms, accessible to the general public, not just to a small elite.

The nature of Heindel's mission became clear when he was visited in Berlin by an Adept who identified himself as an "Elder Brother of the Rose Cross." The Adept instructed him to travel to a house on the German-Bohemian border where a Rosicrucian Temple was located. Heindel stayed there for six months and received more advanced esoteric teachings. Finally, he was told to return to America, translate the teachings into English, and to establish an organization for their dissemination.

Max Heindel duly established the Rosicrucian Fellowship, with headquarters at Mount Ecclesia, Oceanside, California, to teach "the true Rosicrucian Philosophy." Its charter described the Fellowship as "An International Association of Christian Mystics," though "mysticism" hardly represented the range of its activities. Soon the Fellowship enrolled students throughout the United States and many other countries. In 1913 he established *Rays from the Rose Cross*, a Christian esoteric magazine that ran for ninety years.

Max Heindel's magnum opus, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Occult Science*, was

published in 1909/10. It was conceived as a reference work presenting the fundamentals of esotericism from a Rosicrucian perspective. Expanded over the course of several editions, *Cosmo-Conception* remains the basic textbook of the Rosicrucian Fellowship. The first edition was dedicated to “my valued friend, DR. RUDOLPH [sic] STEINER, in grateful recognition of much valuable information received” and to “my friend, DR. ALMA VON BRANDIS, in heartfelt appreciation of the inestimable influence for soul-growth she has exercised in my life” [capitalization in original].

Soon, however, a dispute arose in which Steiner accused Heindel of plagiarism. Steiner alleged that *Cosmo-Conception* contained material similar to what he, Steiner, had discussed in books and printed lectures dating back to 1902. Steiner published his own book *Occult Science* in 1910. In subsequent editions Heindel changed the title of *Cosmo-Conception* to *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Mystic Christianity*. Also, both dedications were removed; Heindel no longer felt indebted to Steiner, and the friendship with von Brandis soured when she sided with Steiner in the dispute.

Heindel’s response to the plagiarism charge was that his work and Steiner’s came from the same source. The material he had published was given to him by the Elder Brothers, and any parallelism with Steiner’s work pointed to the latter’s contact with the same group of Adepts. Moreover, material contained in later editions was not found in Steiner’s teachings. Steiner rejected Heindel’s assertion and continued to press the plagiarism charge. The result was bad blood between the Rosicrucian Fellowship and the Anthroposophical Society. We are sadly reminded of the charges of plagiarism traded back and forth between Alice A. Bailey and Leadbeater, and their respective followers, and the tension that still exists between the Arcane School and the Theosophical Society.

Where Steiner received his esoteric knowledge is unclear. He claimed the ability to read and understand the Akashic Records—an ability conventionally associated with the grade of “Initiate,” the second of the three grades of

initiation in the western esoteric tradition: “Clairvoyant,” “Initiate,” and “Adept.”² In his discussions of the authenticity of the Theosophical Society, Steiner acknowledged that: “When it concerns the propagation of occult life, it is the Masters [i.e., Adepts] who speak.”³ But he never attributed any of his teachings to an individual Adept or group of Adepts; nor did Steiner ever claim to be an Adept himself. Despite his associations with the Theosophical Society Steiner distanced himself from what he regarded as its flawed presentation of eastern mysticism.⁴ He remained firmly in the western esoteric tradition, but not as overtly Rosicrucian as Heindel was.

Cosmo-Conception is laid out as a textbook, with concise narrative, tables, and carefully prepared diagrams, a far cry from the mystical, stream-of-consciousness style and rough sketches in Steiner’s work. It is divided into three parts: “Man’s Present Constitution and Method of Development,” “Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis,” and “Man’s Future Development and Initiation.”⁵

Heindel’s description of the human constitution was probably inspired by the trans-Himalayan teachings (Table 1). Note that he carefully avoids the term “astral body,” which is defined differently in western and eastern esoteric teachings and, in consequence, has been the subject of endless confusion.

Like the trans-Himalayan teachers, Heindel speaks of seven periods—what Theosophists and others call “chains”—through which the Earth is passing, but he adopts the same convention as does Steiner in naming the first two periods. They are termed the Saturn and Sun periods, whereas trans-Himalayan teachings refer to an unnamed Chain 1 and the Venus Chain. Heindel and Steiner both reserve “Venus” period or evolution for Chain 6.⁶ All agree that the period immediately preceding our current Earth phase is the Moon period/evolution/chain.

Max Heindel spoke of successive lifewaves passing from one period to the next as they evolve. For example, ordinary humanity of the Sun period are now the archangels, and ordinary humanity of the Moon period are now

angels. Most interesting is his depiction of the evolution of the Trinity: “‘The Father’ is the highest Initiate among the humanity of the Saturn Period. . . . ‘The Son’ (Christ) is the highest Initiate of the Sun Period. . . . ‘The Holy Spirit’ (Jehovah) is the highest Initiate of the Moon Period.”⁷

Heindel took aim at a theory offered by Theosophist George R. S. Mead that Jesus was born a century earlier than historians generally believed—a theory unfortunately embraced by Charles Leadbeater. In Heindel’s words:

Jesus of Nazareth was born at about the time stated in the historic records, and not 105 B.C., as stated in some occult works. The name Jesus is common in the East, and an Initiate named Jesus did live 105 B.C., but he took the Egyptian Initiation, and was not Jesus of Nazareth, with whom we are concerned.⁸

He also mentioned the origin of Rosicrucianism’s founder: “The Individual who was later born under the name of Christian Rosenkreuz, who is in the body today, was a highly evolved being when Jesus of Nazareth was born.”⁹ The Rosicrucian Order is composed of twelve Elder Brothers, gathered around a thirteenth who is the invisible Head. These adepts are members of the human lifewave, but they have advanced far beyond the need to incarnate in physical bodies. They are said to belong to the group of exalted Beings who guide mankind’s evolution, known as “the Compassionate Ones.”¹⁰ Importantly, Heindel insisted that his Rosicrucian Fellowship, and similar organizations, serve the Elder Brothers and may be inspired by them; but in themselves the organizations are purely human creations.

In a later work Heindel explained the three initiatory grades recognized in Rosicrucianism: “[T]he Clairvoyant is one who sees the invisible world; the Initiate both sees the invisible world and understands what he sees, while the Adept sees, knows and has power over things and forces there.”¹¹ He never commented on his own status on the initiatory path.

In addition to his work on esoteric philosophy, Heindel established an ongoing program of esoteric healing. The mechanism of healing was described thus:

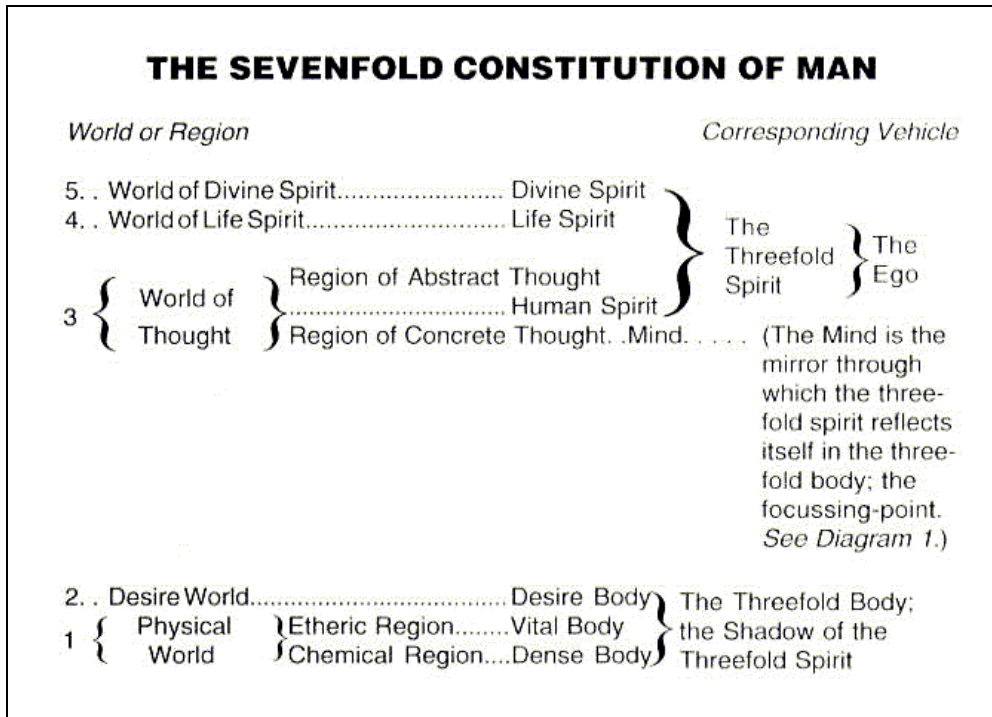
All Healing Force comes from God, our heavenly Father, the Great Physician of the Universe; it is latent everywhere; by prayer and concentration it is liberated and directed to the sufferer; it manifested through the Master, Christ Jesus; it goes forth from the daily and weekly healing meetings held at the Rosicrucian Fellowship Headquarters. . . . Through the workings of this supreme Force, the Invisible Helpers raise the vibrations of the patient to a higher rate, thus enabling him, first, to eliminate the disease poison from the system, and second, to rebuild every blood corpuscle, fiber, tissue, and organ until the whole body is made new. This is done, not in a miraculous manner, but in accordance with Nature’s Laws.¹²

Max Heindel, or to return to his birth name, Carl von Grasshoff, died peacefully on January 6, 1919, at Oceanside, California, near the Rosicrucian Fellowship’s headquarters. The Fellowship continues to operate as an esoteric school offering correspondence courses, regular meetings, and the active healing ministry. Reportedly, it plans to restart publication of *Rays from the Rose Cross*.

Another organization serving the Rosicrucian community is the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, founded by Harvey Spencer Lewis in 1915. And in 1935 two of Heindel’s Dutch students, the brothers Jan and Wim Leene, founded the Rozekruisers Genootschap (“Rosicrucian Society”), later known as Lectorium Rosicrucianum. None of the modern Rosicrucian organizations can claim exoteric lineage from Christian Rosenkreuz, but they express principles contained in the Rosicrucian Manifestoes of the early 17th century and, allegedly, are inspired by a group of western Adepts.

Contributed by John F. Nash

Table 1. Max Heindel’s Description of the Human Constitution



¹ Ger Westenber, *Max Heindel and the Rosicrucian Fellowship*, The Hague, Netherlands: Stichting Zeven, 2009. Online: <http://www.rffriends.org/wpx/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Microsoft-Word-Chapter-2-From-Carl-Grasshoff-to-Max-Heindel1.pdf>.

² These grades will be discussed in due course.

³ Rudolf Steiner, “The Relationship of Occultism to the Theosophical Movement,” lecture, Berlin, October 22, 1905. From *The Temple Legend*, a compilation of 20 lectures given in Berlin between 1904 and 1906, 230.

⁴ Charles Weber, “Steiner’s Relation to Eastern Wisdom,” *The Heindel–Steiner Connection*. Online: http://svmmvmbonvm.org/downloads/Heindel-Steiner_Connection.pdf. (Accessed Oct 23, 2012.)

⁵ Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Mystic Christianity: An Elementary Treatise upon Man’s Past Evolution, Present Constitution and Future Development*, 28/e, Oceanside, CA: The Rosicrucian

Fellowship. Online: <http://www.rosicrucian.com/rcc/rcceng00.htm>. (Accessed Oct. 23, 2012.)

⁶ Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, ch. 6, §3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 15, §2.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Heindel was inconsistent in this regard. Both he and Steiner taught that human beings evolve into angels and then up through the angelic hierarchies. His depiction of the Elder Brothers seems to have been influenced by trans-Himalayan teachings, which carefully distinguish masters from angels.

¹¹ Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Philosophy in Questions and Answers*, 3/e, vol. I, §6:131 (Oceanside, CA: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1922), 262. Emphasis removed.

¹² “How the Rosicrucians Heal the Sick,” Rosicrucian Fellowship. Online: <http://www.rosicrucian.com/zineen/magen501.htm>.

Toiling Upward in the Night

Donald Craig

A Western journalist once asked Mahatma Gandhi if he could explain the secret of life—in five words. Gandhi chuckled. The question was so typical of the Western approach to the Ageless Wisdom. But Gandhi loved a challenge, so he said, “I’ll give it to you in three words: ‘Renounce and rejoice.’ That was Gandhi’s secret for living the good life. And it wasn’t mere words. He lived it until the end of his days.

To those of us who live in a consumer-driven society the thought of giving up anything is more likely to cause gloom than it is rejoicing. That is because we have been conditioned to believe that happiness depends on our getting not only the brass ring but the entire merry-go-round.

The trouble with desiring things—and then acquiring them—is that we grow attached to them. Then we think we cannot live without them. A good example of this is our attachment to the physical body. Christ alluded to this when he said, “whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.” Christ was not suggesting that we neglect the body, but that we renounce the shadow for the substance. He was telling us that if we want to attain eternal life, we must stop clinging to appearances and start connecting with the source of life—with Reality.

Christ is the ultimate realist. The fact that Christ Consciousness is born in Capricorn not only attests to the sign’s earthly practicality but also to its divine potential. But if we are to tap that potential, we must be willing to break the chains that hold us to the material world—a world which is so alluring to Capricorn.

We are told that Capricorn is the sign of the mountain top, and it is said to be the most mysterious of the 12 zodiacal signs. Perhaps that is because we have to climb to the top of Capri-

corn mountain before we can see what is on the other side. Only then is our view clear.

In the valley below we can only guess at what glory lies beyond Capricorn’s glistening peak. But we do know this: Capricorn is a sign of extremes. It is a sign in which the Soul measures the height and the depth of human experience. On one hand, Capricorn drives our consciousness deeper into form, imprisoning the Soul; on the other, it leads to the summit of initiation and freedom—freedom from physical appetites, freedom from emotional attachments and freedom from entrenched attitudes. Freedom, therefore, is an ongoing theme in Capricorn. This is borne out by the story of Hercules’ labor in the sign. After freeing himself from many attachments, Hercules scaled Capricorn’s peak and took the first major initiation, the third initiation. He became a soul-directed personality. He stood in the light supernal. But then Hercules did something quite remarkable. Rather than moving forward into the light, he turned around—and carrying the light within himself—climbed down the mountain and returned to the valley. To the expanded consciousness of an initiate this is like descending into the bowels of hell. So why did Hercules do it? To help free the other prisoners of the planet personified by Prometheus.

You may recall that Prometheus was chained to a rock—the rock of matter. He was also guarded by a ferocious dog with three heads. Those three heads represent our physical, emotional and mental attachments. They are always dogging our heels, always barking and distracting us from our true self.

But Hercules, the initiate, dealt with them decisively. There was no hesitation, no negotiation. He simply grabbed the beast by the throat and killed it. Of course, killing in the Ageless Wisdom means killing our vices so that the Soul’s virtues may rise up and flourish. Hercules performed a tremendous feat in Capricorn.

He freed the immortal essence of humanity from the grip of matter. Then what happened? In his next labor in Aquarius, Hercules had to clean the Augean stables—stables that were knee-deep in dung—the dung of humanity’s evil karma. However, he could not tackle that task and serve humanity in Aquarius, without first cleaning up his own karmic mess in Capricorn.

Capricorn brings us face to face with Saturn, the Lord of Karma. Saturn is a double ruler in Capricorn, so it’s twice as potent. As the orthodox ruler, Saturn’s third-ray energy stimulates personal ambition and leads eventually to the height of worldly achievement. At this stage of our development, we use our intelligence to manipulate people and circumstances to further our own ends. So we can be callous, cold, and deceitful. This is our frame of mind as we pass through Capricorn moving clockwise through the signs.

As we evolve and change ourselves for the better, we also change our direction through the signs. Then we pass through Capricorn moving counterclockwise. Like salmon swimming upstream, we fight against the tide of greed and selfishness that would engulf us. That is why we often feel so at odds with the current of the times. This is the path of Discipleship, during which Saturn acts as Capricorn’s esoteric ruler.

At one time Saturn was called a malefic planet. That was when we thought the planets ruled our destiny. We know today they simply distribute certain types of energy. That energy can be used either for good or ill. It’s up to us. We shape our own destiny, by the way we think, the words we speak and the way we act. Saturn symbolizes this process of cause and effect. So rather than being something to fear, Saturn is a planet of opportunity. Why is that? Because

Saturn enables us to stand in the present and meet ourselves as we have created ourselves in the past.

It is the past that makes karma so perplexing. The cause of most of our major problems lies buried in the past—a past we rarely recall. This is what puzzled Job in the Old Testament. Job

thought of himself as a man of God. He claimed repeatedly that he had never sinned—a claim he made with pride. And yet he was visited by a series of calamities: He lost his family, his health and his possessions, and he wondered why. Once Job realized that he had sinned, was still sinning—and the sin was pride—his fortunes were restored; but not until he was brought to his knees.

Capricorn rules the knees. Alice Bailey says that at

some point in Capricorn we have to be humbled; we have to learn to kneel, not with our knees but with a humble heart dedicated to human service. Until we learn that lesson, karma will continue forcing us to our knees.

If we take a close look at the present state of the world, we know that humanity is being brought to its knees. There is not one nation on earth that is not beset by some kind of crisis. We know some of the elements that have led to the crisis. Pisces is fading out and we are moving into Aquarius. The Sixth Ray of Devotion is moving out with Pisces and we are learning to respond to the pragmatic energy of the Seventh Ray. This shifting around of energies is like a great stirring of the pot of consciousness. And it has led us into a state of almost permanent crisis.

But let us not forget karma. We cannot rely on a mythical Hercules to clean our stables for us. We have to clean up after ourselves. Karma is forcing us to face the consequences of our own arrogance, greed and pride. There is no need to enumerate our problems, for we are surround-

On one hand, Capricorn drives our consciousness deeper into form, imprisoning the Soul; on the other, it leads to the summit of initiation and freedom—freedom from physical appetites, freedom from emotional attachments and freedom from entrenched attitudes. Freedom, therefore, is an ongoing theme in Capricorn.

ed by them: economic, social, political, environmental, the threat of extremism. No wonder people feel frustrated and insecure. It's a grim picture. But that is the way the persona sees the world. The view from the top of Capricorn mountain is quite different. The Soul sees the crisis as an opportunity for growth. Crisis marks a point of awareness. It means that humanity is awakening from a long sleep of irresponsibility.

We are finally learning that economic, political and social injustice cause conflict. We are learning that the unequal distribution of resources causes poverty and we are learning that amassing wealth for its own sake serves no one's best interest.

Thanks to the crisis that we have brought upon ourselves, we are coming to realize that what humans have created, they can re-create and that gives us hope. There is hope too in recognizing that greed and selfishness are defeating themselves. Ideologies based on purely material values are now so crystallized, they are cracking.

It is worth noting that Capricorn also rules the body's bony structure. Just as bones become brittle and break, so do man-made concepts and forms. They crack when the energy of life can no longer express itself through them. Well, humanity's limbs are cracking under the weight of karma and it hurts. People are demanding relief, demanding that something be done. We are calling for new values—values that not only enhance our own lives but also improve the lives of everyone on the planet. This emerging spirit of inclusiveness is

spreading. In fact, it is opening a new field of experience for us. In time it will take us into a new dimension of living—a dimension in which all the old patterns of separative thought and behavior are replaced, replaced by the full realization that humanity, the solar system and stars, all belong to the same cosmic family, embraced and sustained by one eternal life.

That realization will cause an infusion of light supernal that will not only transfigure the human persona but also the world. That is the mystery, the revelation awaiting us on Capricorn's peak—on the summit of initiation. And that is where we meet Venus, Capricorn's hierarchical ruler. Whereas Saturn—like Moses on Mount Sinai—imposes the Law of Karma upon us; Venus—like Christ on Mount Tabor—brings us a higher law, the Law of Love.

These two energies meet and blend in Capricorn. The result is Christ Consciousness and freedom—freedom from all of the claims and demands of the personality. The personality then becomes a willing servant of the Soul. We can draw strength from that goal as we toil upward toward Capricorn's peak.

The poet Longfellow, himself a struggling disciple, left us these words of encouragement. He said this:

The heights by great men reached and kept,
were not attained by sudden flight. But
they, while their companions slept, were
toiling upward in the night.¹

¹Excerpt from *The Complete Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Dodo Press, 2008).

Book Reviews

***The Masters Revealed: Madame Blavatsky and the Myth of the Great White Lodge*, by K. Paul Johnson.** Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1994, 288 pages. List price US\$31.32. Available in hardcover and paperback from online and other booksellers.

In *The Masters Revealed* Paul Johnson seeks to position himself in the middle ground between opposing viewpoints. One is the belief that the mahatmas who corresponded with Helena Blavatsky and other early members of the Theosophical Society were masters of the Great White Lodge. The other is that the mahatmas were purely fictitious characters invented to inflate Blavatsky's personal standing as an occultist and to give the Theosophical Society legitimacy in the spiritualist environment of the 19th century.

Johnson's thesis is that the mahatmas were fictionalized representation of actual historical figures. Johnson provides biographies, ranging in length from a single page to more than twenty pages, of thirty-two individuals whose lives intersected with Blavatsky's or impinged on the work of the Theosophical Society in its formative years. The book comes with a foreword by Jocelyn Godwin, well-known writer on the history of occultism.

The individuals are divided into "adepts" and "mahatmas." The eighteen "adepts," whose biographies comprise Part I of the book, include several Russians: Blavatsky's great-grandfather Prince Pavel Dolgorukii, Freemason Prince Aleksandr Golitsyn, explorer Lydia Pashkov, and occult book publisher Mikhail Katkov. Four came from Britain: Rosicrucian Charles Sotheman, orientalist Sir Richard Burton, diplomat Raphael Borg, and Scot-Parisienne Countess Marie of Caithness. Two were Americans: spiritualist James Peebles and artist Albert Rawson. Among the rest were Polish Kabbalist Louis Maximilien Bimstein, Sufi sheik Abdelkader, Egyptian playwright James Sanua, Hungarian opera singer Agardi Metrovitch, Italian national-

ist Giuseppe Mazzini, and Persian political agitator Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani.

The fourteen "mahatmas," the subject of Part II, include Swamis Dayananda Sarasvati and Sankaracharya of Mysore, the Maharajas Ranbir Singh of Kashmir and Holkar of Indore, government official Sengchen Tulku, and a variety of other Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists.

The "adepts" were people Blavatsky interacted with before she and Henry Olcott settled in India and moved the Theosophical Society's headquarters there in 1883. Their biographies provide a wealth of information on 19th-century Masonic orders and their members who operated in the shadows of European and Middle Eastern society. The book provides a good account of the extent to which Freemasonry influenced Blavatsky's esoteric outlook at the time.

Blavatsky sought to join adoptive Masonic organizations in France but was rejected after demanding conditions the lodges found unacceptable. Subsequently, she was admitted to a lodge in New York City. (Masonic institutions traditionally excluded women, but adoptive or co-Masonry was established earlier in the 19th century to admit both men and women.) We learn that initial plans called for the Theosophical Society to have degrees and rituals resembling those of Freemasonry. The plans were abandoned when the leaders moved to India, but branches continue to be referred to as "lodges." Moreover, the Esoteric Section was formed to provide an environment in which occult knowledge could be disseminated among the Society's elite, in somewhat the same way as Masonic orders restrict certain rites to their senior members.

When Blavatsky took up residence in India she was not entirely unacquainted with the subcontinent and its culture. She had traveled widely and visited India at least twice. Interaction with "adepts" like Sir Richard Burton may have provided her with additional knowledge. But Johnson's "mahatmas" are portrayed as her primary

teachers. Surprisingly, Tallapragada Subba Row, on whom Blavatsky heaped praise for his knowledge of Vedantic philosophy, is mentioned only in passing.

What the book brings out, is that the “adepts” and “mahatmas” were more interested in politics than spirituality. Indeed, the biographies are full of political intrigue. Many of the mahatmas allegedly were involved in India’s campaign for independence from British rule, a campaign that received various levels of support from France, Turkey, and particularly Russia. Richard Hodgson’s critical report to the Society for Psychic Research accused Blavatsky not only of fraud but also of being a Russian spy!

The Masters Revealed makes good reading for anyone interested in Blavatsky’s personal history, the environment of the early Theosophical Society, and political unrest in late 19th-century India. Where the book fails is in its attempt to explain the masters to whom Blavatsky and others referred as disguised “adepts” and “mahatmas.”

The Master Serapis is identified with the Coptic magician Paolos Matamon, an “adept.” The Master Hilarion is identified with Cypriot magician Ooton Liatto, another “adept.” The Master Morya, whom Helena Blavatsky regarded as her personal master, is identified as Ranbir Singh, the Maharaja of Kashmir, a philanthropist and life-long participant in anti-British conspiracies. The Master Koot Hoomi was Thakar Singh Sandhanwalia, prominent member of the Singh Sabha, a Sikh reform organization. The Master Djwhal Khul was Sirdar Dayal Singh Majithia, Sikh philanthropist and political figure. Finally, “the Chohan,” mentioned in *The Mahatma Letters of A. P. Sinnett*, was the Sikh guru Baba Khem Singh Bedi who, like Ranbir, was involved in independence-related activism.

Certainly the masters described in the Theosophical literature, in the Alice Bailey writings, and elsewhere were “historical figures”; they were not angels who had never incarnated in physical bodies. They had distinctive ethnic characteristics and national origins and had, in various lives, engaged in recognizable occupations. But their resemblance to the individuals identified by Johnson is weak.

Blavatsky described the Master Morya as a Rajput *thakur*, or lord, and gave his name as Gulab-Singh. Johnson discusses a Maharaja Gulab Singh of Kashmir who was “notorious for abuse of power and cruelty” [p. 128]. But he links Morya to Gulab’s son Ranbir, who inherited the title upon his father’s death in 1857. Ranbir may have been a philanthropist, well-liked by his people, but he devoted much of his life to attempts to secure Russian military support for his political ambitions. In the end, Johnson concludes that it is “extremely unlikely” that Ranbir served as Blavatsky’s master.

Alice Bailey described the Master Koot Hoomi in *Initiation, Human and Solar*:

[He] is a man of noble presence, and tall, though of rather slighter build than the Master M. He is of fair complexion, with golden-brown hair and beard, and eyes of a wonderful deep blue, through which seem to pour the love and the wisdom of the ages. He has had a wide experience and education, having been originally educated at one of the British universities, and speaks English fluently. . . . He concerns Himself largely with the vitalising of certain of the great philosophies, and interests Himself in a number of philanthropic agencies.

In *The Masters and the Path* Charles Leadbeater, who claimed to have met Koot Hoomi, confirmed his fair complexion and added that he “wears the body a Kashmiri Brahmin.” For comparison, he described Morya as six feet, six inches tall, with a dark beard and piercing eyes.

Johnson’s candidate for the Master Koot Hoomi, however, was Thakar Singh Sandhanwalia, first cousin of the Maharaja Dalip Singh of the Punjab. Dalip Singh had been sent into exile, following the Sikh wars of the 1840s, and spent the rest of his life attempting, with French, Russian and other foreign support, to return to India. Or failing that, at least he wanted to recover his family property, which included the Koh-i-Noor diamond eventually given to Queen Victoria. Thakar Singh died in 1887, six years before his more famous cousin. Johnson suggests that he may have been poisoned by agents of the British Raj suspicious of his involvement in Dalip’s political intrigues. Although Thakar Singh visited

England, there is no evidence that he studied there.

In the foreword to Alice Bailey's books the Master Djwhal Khul identifies himself as a Tibetan. Also: "I live in a physical body like other men, on the borders of Tibet, and at times (from the exoteric standpoint) preside over a large group of Tibetan lamas." Johnson's candidate for him was Dayal Singh based in part on the similarity of names! But Dayal Singh was born near Amritsar in the Punjab. Johnson cites a complimentary comment that he was "one of the truest and noblest men whom I have ever come across." Dayal Singh is also described as "an advocate of women's rights, religious reform, and liberal education" [p. 187]. But he is not portrayed as the abbot of a lamasery.

In order to get his work accepted by academic publishers Paul Johnson had to adopt a skeptical stance toward notions of a Planetary Hierarchy. He could have insisted that Blavatsky's mahatmas were entirely fictitious, but that option had already been explored by many others. Instead, Johnson proposed that the mahatmas were historical figures whose biographies could be pieced together from available records. He is to be complimented on his exhaustive research, which ranged from earlier biographies and news reports, to letters exchanged among the Theosophists, to informants' messages to British government agencies.

The book succeeds as a historical exploration of the environment of early Theosophy. It fails in its stated objective of explaining away the

"myth" of the Great White Lodge. There is every reason to assume that Blavatsky and her coworkers in the Theosophical Society had encounters with most of the individuals Johnson identifies. Some of them supported the Society financially. But Johnson's suggestion that six of those individuals were intentionally fictionalized to create the masters featured in early Theosophical writings and the later esoteric literature is simply unconvincing. Twenty-six other individuals, whose biographies appear in the book, are not identified with any of the masters. One wonders why they were included.

This book, like many before it that tried to dismiss the mahatmas, has to confront a fundamental issue: if Helena Blavatsky did not have help from the inner planes to write *The Secret Doctrine*, she must have had superhuman intellectual power. To be sure, she learned from many sources, but we have to ask whether she was capable of writing at that level. Blavatsky was an accomplished medium and psychic; she is known to have had an especially sharp mind. Whether she was the towering intellectual needed to produce the works attributed to her has not been demonstrated.

Although *The Masters Revealed* represents an interesting chronicle of Helena Blavatsky's personal history, it will disappoint anyone looking for insights into the masters' lives and their interactions with Blavatsky and the other early Theosophists.

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***Shine Forth: The Soul's Magical Destiny*, by William A. Meader.** Source Publications, Mariposa, CA. 2004, 312 pages. List price \$22.00 US. Available online at: source@yosemite.net and from other booksellers.

Shine Forth, by William A. Meader, is an open-hearted and learned book. Written as a practical introduction to the perennial philosophy, this book makes a central contribution to its subject. Inspired by *A Treatise on White Magic* and the Trans-Himalaya teaching of the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul, *Shine Forth* sets out to provide greater clarity on how we can unfold the Soul's creative potential and live the life of a practical magician in service to the larger whole. Based on the philosophical proposition that "every human being is destined to become a spiritual magician," Meader explores the means by which the personality can become sensitive to the Soul's creative intentions and give shape to its powers or vibrations.

The book is divided into three main sections. Part One—*The Foundation*—furnishes a basis for understanding the magical process. It discusses the principles governing existence and the nature of the Soul. The author touches on such axiological themes as oneness and multiplicity, the notion of duality, the interplay of spirit and matter, and the seven rays. While many of the precepts in this section and throughout the book will be familiar to esoterically informed students, they are articulated with such precision and clarity of thought that even long time students will be enriched by the author's mastery of his subject, the elegance of his language and the depth of understanding that his words convey.

In his examination on the mystery of Oneness and the enigma of Duality for example, the author punctuates his remarks with the simple but profound declaration that the "principle of oneness ensures that the paradox of duality, the idea of the one and the many, will be synthetically understood." He goes on to point out that "every unit of life within the One Life carries a measure of Its incarnational intention and seeks to shine forth within the field of duality."

Part One also includes a discussion of the attributes and evolutionary function of the Cosmic Fa-

ther and Cosmic Mother, as well as an explanation of the use of the masculine pronoun in esoteric, religious and philosophical literature.

Meader acknowledges that the "masculine pronoun (which was never intended to suggest that God is male), has historically been abused," but points out that its usage is "rooted in a sacred truth." He specifies three reasons why he believes its utilization in certain contexts is occultly correct. The first concerns an effort to influence and stimulate the active or masculine aspect of the human being. The second concerns the principle of Identity, or the "formation of the self-construct" which is related to the quality of God inherent in the Father Principle. The third and deeper reason that God is identified as "he" is when it is used to depict "God as an entity," in contrast to feminine expressions of the Divine which are best represented as the "attributes of divine intelligence, beauty or wisdom" and the "livingness of substance."

The second and largest part of Meader's book—*The Art and Science of Magic*—offers an in-depth but entirely accessible examination of the entire magical process, i.e., the emergence of evolutionary ideas or thoughtforms within the human mind and their use for spiritual ends. Deeply esoteric themes, such as the nature, composition and synergy of thought are considered, along with a lucid description of how intuitive impressions descend and make their way through the mental, emotional and physical planes. Also discussed are the all-important roles of meditation and alignment as they build "a communicative bridge between the Soul and its outer garment or form." This is followed with a discussion of the "Cave" or "anchor point of Soul inspired thought," in addition to a meditation for finding the elusive cave.

Meader's discourse on the art and science of spiritual magic continues with a section that addresses the problems that arise when a formless thought begins to take shape within the mind. These include the "factor of diminishment" (the abatement or decline of the original thought or inspiration), and the various other dangers associated with thoughtform construction, such as the four main perils that impede the creative effort. Here the author touches upon an effective remedy or antidote to the chief dangers of men-

tal fixation, too little or too much emotion and unbridled thought.

In addition to an investigation of the psychological process involved in bringing formless thoughts into outer expression, the author examines the role of the third eye, the director of the magical process, as well as the various centers that work together to manifest the Soul's purpose. These concepts are related to the principle of Hierarchy and to the initiatory steps that must be undergone before the disciple's inner fire can fully *shine forth*.

Particular attention is given to the important role of emotion in the creative process, or to what Meader calls, "magic on the astral plane." Both the negative and positive aspects of desire or emotion are considered at length. Personality desire and the problem of inversion (which the author defines as an up-ending or distortion of the truth), are viewed as some of the greatest obstacles to spiritual development and to magical work. Before discussing the positive attributes of emotion in relationship to the magical process, the reader is provided with a good deal of practical information of how these distortions and inversions manifest as foggy mist of obscurity and bewilderment. Of special interest, are the pages devoted to helping the magician distinguish between the Soul-infused personality and the Soul's imposter, an aspect of the personality that mistakenly believes itself to be the Soul. These pages contain a number of useful graphics showing the imposter's emergence, development and diminishment, the clarifying characterizations of the imposter, as well as a series of questions for self-evaluation that are designed to help the individual counteract the imposter's influence.

The closing section of the book examines the magical process from a wider perspective. The preceding pages focused on the Soul as "the origin point of the creative process." But in part three—*The Larger Agenda*—the Soul is seen as a "conduit for the creative will and intention of the larger life of which it is a part." Here the author touches upon the theme of "white magic on a cosmic scale." His primary objective is to expose the reader to the creative process of our Planetary Logos or God. While Meader confines his analysis to the manifestation of societal systems, he points out that the principles discussed "extend to the Solar System and beyond," and are "the same for a human being or a God."

In his final comments, Meader brings the reader back to the central theme of his thesis—the destiny of every human Soul and its innate potential to function as a conscious co-creator whose lighted thoughts can transform the world. The capacity to work as a white magician and make an uplifting contribution in the outer field of service is an evolutionary imperative, and "the One Life's magical decree."

Shine Forth takes the reader on an inspired and brilliantly clear journey through the intricacies and abstractions of white magic. Along the way, it reveals William Meader to be one of the foremost interpreters and teachers of the esoteric tradition. This book is a gift to every student of the esoteric philosophy with its rare blend of perspicuity and practical insight. It merits our gratitude, our careful consideration and assimilation.

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