

THEOSOPHY AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETIES

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THEOSOPHY

The modern Theosophical Movement is represented today in the U.S. primarily through six organizations: the Theosophical Society, headquartered in Adyar, Chennai, India; the Theosophical Society, headquartered in Pasadena, California (U.S.A.); the United Lodge of Theosophists, formed in Los Angeles, California; the Temple of the People, with headquarters at Halcyon, near Pismo Beach, California; the Word Foundation of Dallas, Texas; and Point Loma Publications in San Diego, California. Of these groups, the Adyar T.S. is considered by most Theosophists and scholars to be the parent organization. All claim to disseminate Theosophical teachings, “Theosophy” referring to a term popularized and defined by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891) to denote the Wisdom of the Ages, embodying “higher esoteric knowledge”—hence, a “Secret Doctrine”—partially recoverable in imperfect and incomplete form in those portions of the scriptures of the world’s great religions that express mystical teachings and in those philosophies that display a monistic or pantheistic bent.

EARLY HISTORY

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York City in 1875 with Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) becoming its first president, H.P. Blavatsky its first corresponding secretary, George Henry Felt and Seth Pancoast the vice-presidents, and William Quan Judge (1851–1896) the counsel for the Society. First proposed on September 7 by Col. Olcott, the society—entitled “The Theosophical Society” on September 13—was inaugurated on November 17.

Less than three years later, in May 1878, the Theosophical Society affiliated with a reformist Hindu organization known as the Ārya Samāj under the leadership of Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī (1824–1883), whose promotion of the Vedas—the ancient compositions of the north Indian Āryan tribes composed between 1600–500 B.C.E.—as the font of Truth served as the basis of his attempt to return Hinduism to a more pristine form devoid of later corruptive teachings and practices such as polygamy, child-marriage, caste, suttee (*satī*), and polytheism. Due to differences that arose within a few months of affiliation—one of which was the Svāmī’s adoption of a personal Supreme God, a position that was not acceptable to many members of the Theosophical Society—it was decided to modify the association by distinguishing three bodies: (1) the Theosophical Society, (2) The Theosophical Society of the Ārya Samāj of Āryāvarta, i.e., a “link society,” and (3) The Ārya Samāj. Separate diplomas existed for each, with only

members of (2) belonging to both (1) and (3). By 1882, all affiliations were broken due to Svāmī Dayānanda's attacks on the Theosophists for their leaders Olcott and Blavatsky associating with Buddhists and Parses and for their formally converting to Buddhism in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) by taking *pāṅsil (pañcasīla)* "the Five Precepts" in May 1880. Around this period of time, the headquarters of the T.S. in the persons of H.S. Olcott and H.P. Blavatsky, moved first to Bombay in early 1879 and then to Adyar, Madras (now Chennai) in December 1882.

During the 1880s, four significant events occurred in Theosophical history:

- (1) the Coulomb affair (1884),
- (2) the formation of the Esoteric Section of the T.S. under Mme. Blavatsky on October 9, 1888,¹
- (3) the publishing of *The Secret Doctrine*—the seminal work of the Theosophical Movement—in 1888, and
- (4) the joining of the T.S. in May 1889 of Annie Besant (1847–1933), the second President of the T.S. (Adyar) and certainly the most prominent Adyar Theosophist in the 20th century.

(1) **Regarding the Coulomb affair**, Emma Coulomb, a housekeeper at the Adyar headquarters, charged that Blavatsky had produced fraudulent psychic phenomena and was responsible for writing letters in the name of her Masters or Mahatmas. She was investigated by Richard Hodgson on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research (S.P.R.), whose 1885 report (which was the second report issued by the S.P.R. on Blavatsky, the 1884 S.P.R. preliminary report being more neutral) charged that she committed these misdeeds, thus calling to question her claim that Masters or Adepts actually existed.

Although the Hodgson Report was accepted by the S.P.R. at its general meeting held on June 26, 1885, it was never the official or corporate opinion of that organization. Hodgson wrote most of the Report, but it was the product of a Committee consisting not only of Hodgson but also of E. Gurney, F.W.H. Myers, F. Podmore, H. Sidgwick, J.H. Stack, and Mrs. H. Sidgwick. Because the Hodgson Report was never officially adopted, the S.P.R. could not withdraw a

¹ So declared in the anonymously written (most likely Annie Besant) "The Eastern School of Theosophy: Historical Sketch," reprinted in *Theosophical History* VI, no. 1 (January 1996): 10–11. The President's Order to establish "The Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society" appeared in *Lucifer* 3, no. 14 (October 15, 1888): 176.

report that it never issued. What it did instead was to issue a statement making “amends for whatever offence we [the S.P.R.] may have given,” as stated in the editorial note to Vernon Harrison’s article, “J’Accuse.”² The editorial note begins with a strong statement:

*The Report of the Committee appointed to investigate phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society (commonly called the Hodgson Report) is the most celebrated and controversial of all the reports published by the Society for Psychical Research. It passes judgement on Madame H.P. Blavatsky. . . ; and the final sentence in the *Statement and Conclusions of the Committee* has been quoted in book after book, encyclopaedia after encyclopaedia, without hint that it might be wrong. It runs: “For our part we regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting impostors in history.”*

The damage was done, however. Ill at the time, Madame Blavatsky departed from Adyar.

(2) Blavatsky eventually settled in London, where she instituted—at the suggestion of Mr. Judge—the **formation of the Esoteric Section** (or E.S.) under her leadership as Outer Head (the Inner Heads being the Mahatmas), as declared in the anonymously written (but most likely by Annie Besant), “The Eastern School of Theosophy: Historical Sketch,” reprinted in *Theosophical History* 6, no. 1 (January 1996): 11, and originally published in Madame Blavatsky’s journal, *Lucifer* 3, no. 14 (October 15, 1888). The E.S. is an organization designed to “promote the esoteric interests of the Theosophical Society by the deeper study of esoteric philosophy” (Notice of “The Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society,” October 9, 1888). Although it had no institutional connection with the T.S., the E.S. is only open to T.S. members; furthermore, all teachings and activities are conducted privately.

(3) **H. P. Blavatsky’s major work, *The Secret Doctrine*** 1888) states three propositions that serve as the basis of Theosophy for most Theosophists: (1) the existence of an absolute, infinite, reality or principle, (2) the cyclic nature or periodicity of the universe and all therein, and (3) the fundamental identity of the

² Editorial Note to Vernon Harrison’s article “J’Accuse” (*Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. 53, no. 803 (April 1986): 286.

individual soul with the universal oversoul and the pilgrimage of all souls through the cycle of incarnation in accordance with karmic law. Theosophy, in this sense, is a non-dualistic or monistic view of ultimate reality, which is manifested or emanated in a dynamic complementarity and evolutionary progression.

(4) Olcott's activist role was continued by the second president of the T.S., **Annie Besant**, who became involved in numerous activities both within and outside the Society, including such diverse activities as occult investigations, education, politics, social reform, and the introduction of ritual within the Society. Among her numerous contributions, Besant was instrumental in founding the Central Hindu College in Benares in 1898, became active in Indian politics serving as president of the Indian National Congress, forming the Home Rule League and later drafting the Home Rule Bill (1925). Within the Theosophical Society, she founded the Theosophical Order of Service in 1908, which is intended to carry out the first object of the Society—to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity—by carrying out works of compassion and alleviating suffering, including such activities as the giving of goods, medicine, clothes, etc. to the needy, and the abolition of the cruelty of animals.

LATER HISTORY

With the death of H.P. Blavatsky on May 8, 1891, the leadership of the Esoteric Section (by that time called the Eastern School of Theosophy) passed to William Q. Judge and Annie Besant. A few short years later, charges were brought against Judge that he was “misusing the Mahatmas’ names and handwriting,” in other words, claiming that he received messages from the Masters, or, as Mrs. Besant put it, “giving a misleading material form to messages received psychically from the Master.” Although the charges were dropped in July, 1894 by Mrs. Besant and Col. Olcott, they were reopened toward the end of 1894 by Mrs. Besant, who proposed a resolution during the December 1894 Convention of the T.S. at Adyar that President Olcott “at once call upon Mr. W.Q. Judge to resign” his vice-presidency of the Society. The resolution having been passed, Judge refused to resign. Later, at the Convention of the American Section of the T.S. in Boston (April 28-29, 1895), delegates voted for autonomy of the American Section from the Theosophical Society at Adyar with Mr. Judge elected President for life, calling itself “The Theosophical Society in America.”

Whether this separation is to be interpreted as a schism—the position of the Adyar T.S.—or simply the recognition that there was never any legal connection between the Adyar T.S. and the original New York T.S. in the first place (according to the interpretation of “The Theosophical Society in America”)—is a matter of opinion.³ The vote of the American Section was followed by the expulsion by Col. Olcott of Judge and all who followed him. This included over 5,000 members in the U.S. and affiliated Societies elsewhere, including lodges in England and Australia.

After W.Q. Judge’s death in March 21, 1896, Ernest Temple Hargrove (1870–1939) was elected President of Judge’s T.S. in America. The Eastern School of Theosophy (the new name of the Esoteric Section as of 1890) had also split on November 3, 1894: one group remaining in the Adyar Society with Annie Besant as Outer Head, and one within Judge’s Society under an Outer Head whose name was to have been kept secret until 1897, but it was prematurely revealed in the *New York Sun* of May 27-28, 1896, the *New York Tribune* of May 18, and also in the newly-named journal, *Theosophy*,⁴ that Katherine Tingley (1847–1929) was chosen to be Judge’s successor. Tingley followed and further developed the direction that Mr. Judge pursued in the latter years of his life, emphasizing less theoretical and more practical applications of Theosophical teachings in the area of social and educational reform. In February 1897, she laid the cornerstone of a community in Point Loma, San Diego, which was to become the new international headquarters of the T.S. in America (the old headquarters being in New York). In the same year she founded the International Brotherhood League with herself as president, and which was designed to carry on a number of humanitarian functions ranging from educational to philanthropical. Furthermore, all of the lodges of her Society were closed to the public in 1904.

By the latter part of 1897, Hargrove became disenchanted with Tingley’s activities and also perhaps with her unwillingness to share her power with him or with anyone else. He resigned the Presidency and attempted to gain control of the 1898 convention held in Chicago but was unsuccessful both at the convention and in subsequent court action. As a consequence of Hargrove’s intense

³ This is discussed by W.Q. Judge in his article “The Theosophical Society,” *The Path*, X, no. 2 (May 1895): 55–60 and reprinted in *Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge*, vol. II. Compiled by Dara Eklund (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1980), 197–202.

⁴ This was the new name for the *Path* beginning with the April 1896 issue, Tingley is identified in the June 1896 issue.

opposition at the convention over the contents of the new constitution composed by Tingley (about which he knew nothing until its introduction at the convention),⁵ Hargrove left the Society and formed his own organization with about 200 former members of Tingley's T.S. in America.

Hargrove's New York-based reformed Theosophical Society in America, later renaming itself the Theosophical Society in 1908,⁶ with A. H. Spencer becoming the Acting President. It remained a viable organization for many years until the Society, and possibly its own Esoteric School of Theosophy, entered a period of "indrawal" from active work.⁷ The last document ascribed to the E.S.T. is *Aids and Suggestions* No. 18, dated December 7, 1907.⁸ The "indrawal" most likely took place in the latter part of 1938 although John Cooper⁹ considers 1935 to be the actual date. *The Theosophical Quarterly*, the major magazine of the Society, ended its publication run in October 1938.

The direction of Mrs. Tingley's forceful leadership led to two dissenting bodies: The Temple of the People, founded in 1898, and the United Lodge of Theosophists, established in 1909, by Robert Crosbie and others in Los Angeles. According to Jerry Hejka-Ekins in a private communication (February 20, 1996), the U. L. T. actually broke off from the Hargrove Society since Crosbie joined the latter after he left Tingley's Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society. Hejka-Ekins adds, however, that "it [the U. L. T.] appears to be more of a reaction to the Point Loma Society [the U. B. and T. S.]."

In 1898, Mrs. Tingley renamed the T. S. in America the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society,¹⁰ and as its "Leader and Official Head" she pursued her

⁵ This is discussed in Emmett Greenwalt, *California Utopia: Point Loma: 1897-1942* (San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1978), 37-40.

⁶ John Cooper, "The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society," *Theosophical History* IV, no. 6-7 (April - July 1993): 179.

⁷ The "indrawal" most likely took place in the latter part of 1938 although John Cooper ("The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society," 180) considers 1935 to be the actual date. *The Theosophical Quarterly*, the major magazine of the Society, ended its publication run in October 1938.

⁸ Cooper, "The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society," 185.

⁹ "The Esoteric School Within the Hargrove Theosophical Society," 180.

¹⁰ The name of the Society was changed to Universal Brotherhood on January 13, 1898: "With the first day of the new cycle, February 18th, was ushered in before the world THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD founded by Katherine A. Tingley on January 13, 1898." See J. H. Fussell, "Miscellaneous News," *Universal Brotherhood* XII, no. 12 (March 1898): 313. The Proclamation presented at the Fourth Annual Convention of the T. S. A. explains the changes in title. The original name, the Theosophical Society in America, was retained to refer

activities in applied Theosophy, including an ambitious educational program, called Raja Yoga, that was initiated in 1900, and which emphasized an integration of physical, mental, spiritual training, and education. From the earliest student population of five, the number quickly jumped to 100 by 1902, two-thirds of whom were Cuban, owing to her abiding interest in Cuba arising from the Spanish-American War in 1898 and the support by Mayor Bacardí of Santiago of Mrs. Tingley's objectives. In 1919 the educational program was expanded with the establishment of the Theosophical University. With the closing of the lodges in 1903, most of the committed and talented members were now at Point Loma engaging not only in this formal educational experiment but also in related activities such as agriculture and horticulture, writing, researching, publishing, dramatic, and musical productions.

By the 1920s, however, these activities began to taper off, mainly because of financial problems. With the death of Mrs. Tingley in 1929, the direction under its more intellectual and scholarly Leader, Gottfried de Purucker, moved once again in the direction of theoretical Theosophy, with emphasis on the teaching and study of the core Theosophical works. Renaming the U.B. and T.S. as The Theosophical Society, Dr. de Purucker embarked on a Fraternization Movement—partly because of the approaching hundredth anniversary of the birth of H. P. Blavatsky in 183—with the ultimate aim of reuniting all the societies. Unification, however, was not possible but conventions and other cooperative activities between Adyar and Point Loma were held throughout the 1930s.

De Purucker, toward the end of his tenure, made the practical decision of selling the community holdings at Point Loma, called Lomaland, and moving the Society to Covina, a small community east of Los Angeles. In that same year (1942), de Purucker died, and the Society was led by a Cabinet for the next three years until a new Leader, Col. Arthur Conger, was elected in 1945. According to one dissident account, shortly after his election, those members of the Cabinet who did not acknowledge Col. Conger's esoteric status as "mouthpiece for the Masters"—thereby claiming the same status of H. P. Blavatsky—were stripped of all responsibilities in the T.S. These former officers and several other individuals in

to a department of the Universal Brotherhood: "Through it will be disseminated all literatures regarding the Theosophical philosophy. Books, giving detailed and definite knowledge for the student; pamphlets and leaflets, giving in a simple and readily understood form, the true philosophy of life to those thirsting and hungering for it. ... all literature of any value or importance in this great work for UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD will also be introduced and distributed through the Theosophical Society in America" (317).

the U.S. and Europe eventually left the T.S. Headquarters: some voluntarily resigning their memberships, others having their memberships involuntarily canceled. The work of the Point Loma tradition established by Mrs. Tingley was continued by an organized number of groups in the United States and Europe, one such group being Point Loma Publications, which was chartered in 1971 as a non-profit religious and educational corporation.

In the meantime, The Theosophical Society in Covina remained under the leadership of Col. Conger until his death in early 1951. William Hartley (1879–1955), a long-time resident member of the Society, was appointed by Conger as successor, but James A. Long (1898–1971) was accepted by the Cabinet of the T.S. instead, the argument for his appointment being that the original document containing Col. Conger’s designated appointee was not produced, only a photostatic copy. Hartley, together with his followers, left Covina and established their own Theosophical Society, now headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands.

James Long continued to head The Theosophical Society. A number of significant events took place during his leadership. The Theosophical University and all the lodges (chartered during the tenure of Dr. de Purucker) were closed; the National Sections (including the Swedish property in Visingsö) were also closed; the printing and publishing activities, headquarters, and library were moved to Altadena and Pasadena in 1951; and *Sunrise*, a monthly magazine, was established. Mr. Long also went on extensive lecture tours overseas and set about visiting the membership outside the U.S. Upon his death in 1971, Miss Grace F. Knoche became the Leader of The Theosophical Society.

During the eventful year of 1898, another Theosophical organization came into existence with the founding of the Temple of the People by Dr. William H. Dower (1866–1937) and Mrs. Francia LaDue (1849–1922), who believed that they were following the instructions of the “Master” to separate from the Tingley-led Universal Brotherhood and T.S. and, according to its own declaration, to lay the “mental, physical, and spiritual foundations of the coming sixth race.” Arising out of the Syracuse (New York) Lodge of the U.B. and T.S., they and their group moved to California in 1903, where they settled on land east of Oceano, establishing the headquarters known as Halcyon. By 1904, Dr. Dower opened the Halcyon Hotel and Sanitorium in order to continue his medical practice, treating such maladies as tuberculosis, nervous disorders, alcoholism, and drug addiction. The following year (1905), the Temple Home Association was

incorporated, which laid out a town plan and sold or leased house sites, thus organizing a co-operative colony with Mrs. LaDue, also known as Blue Star, becoming the first head—Guardian in Chief—of the Temple. In 1908, the Temple was incorporated under the title “The Guardian in Chief of the Temple of the People, a Corporation Sole.” After Mrs. LaDue’s death in 1922, Dr. Dower became the second head of the Temple, supervising the construction of the Blue Star Memorial Temple. Begun in 1923 and completed in 1924, the Blue Star Memorial Temple was built in accordance with mathematical and geometrical symbolism illustrating the Unity of all Life, or the Higher Self. Upon Dr. Dower’s death in 1937, Mrs. Pearl Dower became the third Guardian in Chief, who organized the property according to its present specifications, a 95-acre property consisting of 52 homes, 30 of which are owned by the Temple, the William Quan Judge Library, which also houses the Temple offices and an apartment for visitors. The successor to Mrs. Dower in 1968 was Harold Forgostein, who is painted 22 pictures in the early 1930s at Dr. Dower’s request depicting the Native Americans’ contributions to understanding the balance in nature and scenes from the life of Hiawatha, both important in Temple teachings. These paintings are now in the Temple’s University Center. Mr. Forgostein remained head of the Temple until 1990; the present Guardian in Chief is Eleanor L. Shumway.

Another association, the United Lodge of Theosophists, was organized by a former member of the U.B. and T.S. at Point Loma and Hargrove’s Theosophical Society. Robert Crosbie (1849–1919), a Canadian living in Boston who became a Theosophist under the influence of W.Q. Judge, originally lent his support to Mrs. Tingley as Judge’s successor. Around 1900, he moved to Point Loma to help in the work she initiated there. In 1904, losing confidence in her leadership and methods for private reasons, he left Point Loma and moved to Los Angeles, where he associated for a time with Hargrove’s Theosophical Society and with a number of Theosophists who were later to support the U.L.T., John Garrigues among them.

In 1909, Crosbie, with these same interested acquaintances who shared his view that only the Source Theosophy of Blavatsky and Judge contained the teachings of Theosophy as it was intended to be delivered in modern times (*i.e.*, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and beyond), formed the United Lodge of Theosophists in Los Angeles. What set this group apart from other Theosophical societies was (and continues to be) its stress only on Source Theosophy and such writings as are in accord philosophically with those of Blavatsky and Judge but

excluding the letters of the Masters K.H. and M. written between 1880 and 1886 to the prominent Theosophical writer, Vice-President of the T.S., and rival to H.P. Blavatsky, A.P. Sinnett, that is, the letters in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*.¹¹ But those in Sinnett's *The Occult World* are accepted, as is the letter from the Maha-Chohan. The reason for rejecting most of the letters is that private letters are no substitute for the actual Theosophical teachings; also, many U. L. T. members consider that the letters were never intended for publication.

The U. L. T. rejects leaders and teachers (all associates in the U.L.T. are described as students), and lays stress on anonymity for those who write on behalf of the U.L.T. Even Crosbie himself claimed no special status, although he is held in high esteem by associates. After Crosbie's death, the Lodge in Los Angeles established the Theosophy Company in 1925 to serve as fiduciary agent for the associates. No leader was recognized, but John Garrigues was acknowledged as a major figure in the L.A. U.L.T. until his death in 1944, along with Mrs. Grace Clough and Mr. Henry Geiger, but students in the U.L.T. insist that the principle of anonymity outweighs its disadvantages.

The U.L.T. developed into an international association of study groups through the efforts of another important figure in the Theosophical Movement, the Indian Parsi B. P. Wadia (1881–1958). Originally a member of the Adyar T.S., which he joined in 1903 and where he served in a number of capacities—including that of Mrs. Besant's secretary—he resigned in 1922 because of his perception that the Theosophical Society “strayed away from the ‘Original Programme.’” From 1922 to 1928 he remained in the U.S. and assisted in founding U.L.T. lodges in New York, Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. Following his departure for India via Europe, he encouraged local students to found U.L.T. lodges, including those in Antwerp, Amsterdam, London, Paris, Bangalore, and Bombay. At present, U.L.T. lodges and study groups are located throughout the U.S. and in Belgium, Canada, England, France, India, Italy, Mexico, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Sweden, and Trinidad (West Indies). Because of the considerable contributions of Mr. Wadia, he is the only person, with the exception of Mr. Crosbie, within the U.L.T. who is identified by name.

¹¹ *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. & K.H.*, transcribed, compiled, and with an introduction by A.T. Barker, 2nd edition (London: Rider and Company, 1926).

ADYAR

The Theosophical Society, Adyar, is the largest Society by far (despite the loss of most of the original American Section in 1895¹³), the work that was conducted primarily by Col. Olcott, and also to a lesser extent by Mme. Blavatsky during her abbreviated stay in India, adopted an activist stance with their championing of Hinduism and Buddhism upon their arrival in India in 1879. Col. Olcott was especially active in helping to initiate a Buddhist revival in India and Sri Lanka and to upgrade the position of the outcastes in India. As the first American to convert to Buddhism overseas in 1880, he worked with great enthusiasm for the cause of Buddhism not only in Sri Lanka but also in other Buddhist nations: promoting the foundation of Buddhist schools, writing the *Buddhist Catechism*—which attempted to unite both Northern and Southern Buddhists—helping to design a Buddhist flag that all Buddhist nations could adopt as their universal emblem symbolizing Buddhist unity. In India, Col. Olcott established “pariah schools” for the uplift of the depressed classes.

One such school, known today as the Olcott Memorial School in the vicinity of Adyar, was established in 1894 for the purpose of offering free education for the children of these classes in skills that would provide self-sufficiency, such as tailoring, gardening, carpentry, and printing. One further contribution made by Col. Olcott was the establishment of the Oriental Library in December 1886 in order to preserve Indian manuscripts from neglect and to keep them in India. The manuscripts are now housed in the Adyar Library building built in 1967.

LEADBEATER, KRISHNAMURTI, AND LATER

Besant’s activities within the Society during her presidency are closely associated with another prominent though controversial Theosophist, Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854–1934). In large part, under his influence, Theosophical teachings were introduced in the T.S. that were considered by Blavatskyites to have deviated from the original teachings of Blavatsky and her Masters. Derisively called “Neo-Theosophy” by F. T. Brooks, a Theosophical writer and the tutor of Jawaharlal Nehru in the early years of the twentieth century, these teachings were considered by those who limited themselves to the writings of Blavatsky and Judge to be heretical, judging from the opinions that appeared in Theosophical literature of the 1920s.

“Neo-Theosophy” included two highly significant and innovative actions: Leadbeater’s discovery, in 1909, of the physical vehicle for the coming World Teacher—known as Maitreya or the Christ—Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), and also an alliance with the Old (later, Liberal) Catholic Church from 1917 under the direction of Bishops Leadbeater and James Wedgwood. As if the foregoing activities were not controversial enough for many within the Theosophical movement, the man behind these innovations, Leadbeater, was himself under a cloud of scandal. In 1906, charges were raised by the Secretary of the Esoteric Section in America, Helen Dennis, that he was teaching her young son and other boys masturbation as a form of occult practice. This charge, which raised the specter of pederasty in the eyes of his accuser, led to Leadbeater’s resignation from the Society. Upon his reinstatement in 1908, with the help of Mrs. Besant, Leadbeater soon thereafter discovered J. Krishnamurti, a young Hindu boy who he said was to be the vehicle for the coming World Teacher. Much of the work of the Society revolved around the training of the boy and preparing the way for the World Teacher’s coming.

In 1911, another organization known as the Order of the Star in the East (O.S.E.) was founded in Benares by George Arundale—which soon became a worldwide organization with the help of Mrs. Besant—specifically for this purpose. In the official organ of The Order of the Star in the East, *The Herald of the Star*,¹² J. Krishnamurti (or whoever wrote on his behalf) notes that George S. Arundale, the Principal of the Central Hindu College, was the true founder of the Order, known at the time of its formation (January 11, 1911) the “Order of the Rising Sun.” Its purpose was “to draw together those ... who believed in the near coming of a great Teacher, and were anxious to work in some way to prepare for Him.”

Not long thereafter, the General Secretary of the German Section, Rudolf Steiner, disenchanted with the O. S. E. and displeased with Besant’s Presidency, took action that caused the General Council of the T.S. to advise the President to cancel the German sectional charter and to issue a new sectional charter to some German Lodges.¹³ Fifty-five out of sixty-nine German lodges followed Dr. Steiner, who soon organized a new society, the Anthroposophical Society, in early 1913. Despite the defections of Steiner and others, however, the Theosophical Society gained more members than it had lost. The promise of the imminent coming of the World Teacher in the vehicle of Krishnamurti contributed to both unprecedented

¹² Vol. I, no. 1 (January 11, 1912): 1-2.

¹³ “On the Watch-Tower,” *The Theosophist* XXXIV, no. 5 (February 1913): 637.

controversy within, and wider popularity of, the Theosophical Society until 1929, when Krishnamurti renounced his role and left the Society. Thereafter, the Society never regained the popularity that it had in the 1920s.

The second event that generated controversy was the promotion of the Old Catholic, later Liberal Catholic, Church by members of the Society. This promotion was primarily the brainchild of C.W. Leadbeater, who, with James Ingall Wedgwood (1883–1951), helped to establish the Church. Theosophists, especially those belonging to non-Adyar groups, viewed the L.C.C. ritual and the acceptance of the apostolic succession, on which the bishopric is authenticated, as having no place in Theosophical teaching. As the 1920s progressed, there was an attempt to combine the claims centering on the World Teacher with the ritual of the L.C.C., including the selection of twelve “apostles” for Krishnamurti, but ultimately the whole plan dissolved with Krishnamurti’s rejection of the role of World Teacher.

After 1929, the T.S. retrenched and returned more to those teachings generally associated with Theosophy. After the death of Mrs. Besant in 1933, the presidency passed on to George Arundale (1934–1945), who continued the activism that was so typical of Mrs. Besant’s term. During his tenure, his wife, Srimati Rukmini Devi (1904–1986), established the International Academy of Arts on January 6, 1936 (later known as Kālakshetra “the Field or Holy place of Arts”), having as its objects (1) “[t]o emphasise the essential unity of all true Art,” (2) “[t]o work for the recognition of the arts as vital to individual, national, religious and international growth,” (3) [t]o provide for such activities as may be incidental to the above objects.” Associated with the second purpose of Kālakshetra was a revival and development of the ancient culture of India. To Dr. Arundale, Indian dance revealed occult ritual, in his words “the occultism of beauty.” Following him was a protégé of Leadbeater’s, C. Jinarājādāsa (1946–1953), who, among his many contributions to the Society, displayed an active interest in publishing many documents relating to the history of the Society from the early years of the T.S. As one of the foremost Theosophical authors, Jinarājādāsa displayed a distinctly scholarly bent in his published works, and, in order to carry out the third object of the Society, inaugurated in 1949 The School of the Wisdom at the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar on the date of the T. S.’s own inauguration, November 17. It was called the International Centre of Theosophical Studies in the 1970s but renamed The School of the Wisdom in 1985.

In his Address on the inauguration of the school, Jinarājādāsa stated that its purpose was “to equip its students to become, each according to his temperament and aptitude, philosophers, scientists, ethical teachers, artists, givers of economic law, statesmen, educators, town planners and every other possible type of server of humanity.”¹⁴

Following Mr. Jinarājādāsa were N. Sri Ram (1953–1973), responsible for building the current Adyar Library building, John S. Coats (1973–1979),¹⁵ Radha Burnier (1980–2013), and the current International President, Tim Boyd (2014-).

BELIEFS/PRACTICES

The teachings promulgated by the Theosophical societies are ultimately those that have secured the attention of its members as well as what individuals understand Theosophy to be. As a rule, most Theosophists associate the basic teachings with the “three fundamental propositions” contained in the Proem of H.P. Blavatsky’s *magnum opus*, *The Secret Doctrine*. An overview of the development of Blavatsky’s and other Theosophists’ understanding of Theosophy reveal a variety of interpretations. In fact, the term ‘theosophy’, chosen to represent the aspirations and objects of the Society, had little to do with its later development. Theosophy was accepted as the name of the Society in accordance with the definition found in the American edition of Webster’s unabridged dictionary (published ca. 1875),¹⁶ which is as follows:

supposed intercourse with God and superior spirits, and consequent attainment of superhuman knowledge by physical processes as by the theurgic operations of ancient Platonists, or by the chemical processes of the German fire philosophers.

The term, however, was not unknown prior to this period (September, 1875). Blavatsky employed the term in February 1875 in a letter to Professor Hiram Corson (“theosophy taught by the Angels”) and in her “A Few Questions to ‘Hiraf’” (“Theosophic Seminary”).

¹⁴ “The School of the Wisdom: Inaugural Address Delivered on November 17, 1949,” *The Theosophist*, 71, no. 3 (December 1949): 156.

¹⁵ John Coats died on December 26, 1979. From January to June 1980, Surendra Narayan became the Vice-President in Charge. Mrs. Burnier took office in July 1980.

¹⁶ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. Revised by Chauncey A. Goodrich and Noah Porter (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam, State Street, 1875), 1373.

In a gathering held on September 7, 1875, a lecture given by one George H. Felt on “The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians.” echoed this definition. The future President of the Theosophical Society, Henry S. Olcott, proposed the formation of a society for the purpose of obtaining “knowledge of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Power and of the higher spirits *by the aid of physical processes,*” Such was the statement in the Society’s “Preamble and By-Laws” (October 30, 1875) as well as in Col. Olcott’s Inaugural Address as President of the Society:

...how can we expect that as *a society* we can have any very remarkable illustrations of the control of the adept theurgist over the subtle powers of nature? But here is where Mr. Felt’s alleged discoveries will come into play. Without claiming to be a theurgist, a mesmerist, or a spiritualist, our Vice-President promises, by simple chemical appliances, to exhibit to us, as he has to others before, the races of beings which, invisible to our eyes, people the elements.... Fancy the consequences of the practical demonstration of its truth, for which Mr. Felt is now preparing the requisite apparatus!

In other words, the original purpose of the Theosophical Society embodies—in the words of the Minutes taken on September 8, 1875—“the study and elucidation of Occultism, the Cabala &c. . .” or perhaps to use a term that more directly reflects the remarks given by Olcott above: to demonstrate, by what passed as scientific means, the existence of a hidden world, replete with occult forces and beings therein. Taken in this light, the Society’s original 1875 objects (“to collect and diffuse a knowledge of the laws which govern the universe.”) take on enhanced meaning. Over the ensuing years, however, the term assumed different connotations, with most Theosophists viewing it as the Wisdom that has existed from the dawn of humanity, preserved and transmitted by great teachers such as Pythagoras, Buddha, Krishna, and Jesus from its inception to the present and ascertained in the myths, legends, and doctrines of the historical religious traditions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and lesser known mystery cults. The first book-length expression of this Wisdom and of the Theosophical Society’s original (1875) objects was Mme. Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled*, published in 1877. In the ensuing two years, over 10,000 copies were sold, making it one of the most popular books of its kind in the nineteenth century. It continues to have considerable influence in Theosophical circles, with over 150,000 sold since its publication.

The Wisdom described in *Isis Unveiled* was given a more “Oriental” (i.e., Indian) flavor in the 1888 publication of H.P. Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*. Its three propositions stated above as the existence of an absolute underlying all manifestation, the cyclicity of the universe, and the identity of the individual with the universal oversoul and the pilgrimage of all souls through reincarnation and karma. Theosophy, in this sense, took on a non-dualistic or monistic view of ultimate reality, manifested or emanated in a dynamic complementarity and evolutionary progression. These general “Propositions” presented by Blavatsky were restated in more specific teachings in the *Secret Doctrine* and elsewhere, some of which may be summarized in the following statements:

- the evolution of the immortal individual continues through innumerable lives, such continuity made possible through reincarnation: the entrance of Self—the trinity of Spirit, Soul, and Mind—into another (human) body
- the complement of reincarnation is that force, known as the “Law of Cause and effect (Karma)” that fuels future rebirths and determines the quality of the experience therein;
- the structure of the manifested universe, humanity included, may be viewed as septenary in composition, and cooperative in all relationships;
- Humanity evolves through seven major groups or periods called Root Races, each of which is divided into seven sub-races. At the present time, we humans belong to the fifth Root Race, known as the Aryan (Sanskrit “Noble”) Race. The term, however, is not limited here to “Indo-European” peoples; it has a much broader meaning;
- the individual is in actuality but a miniature copy or microcosm of the macrocosm;
- the universe—and humanity—is guided and animated by a cosmic Hierarchy of sentient beings, each having a specific mission to fulfill.

Although most Theosophists would subscribe to all or part of the above statements, one should keep in mind that the above statements may take on

various interpretations depending on the understanding of each Theosophist. Furthermore, although some commentators emphasize the presence of Eastern (Hindu and Buddhist) philosophy in Theosophical teaching after 1880 when Blavatsky and Olcott arrived in India, this does not preclude the presence of important Western (Kabbalistic, Christian, Masonic, and pre-Christian) teachings and myths and doctrines after 1880 or the presence of Eastern thought prior to 1880 as evidenced in *Isis Unveiled*.

ORGANIZATION and MEMBERSHIP

The Theosophical Society, with international headquarters in Adyar, Chennai, India, as of the end of has a worldwide membership of about 25,306 distributed in almost fifty countries as of 2017; the Theosophical Society in America, one of its sections, has a national membership of 3,306, (General Report, 2017) It considers itself to be the parent Theosophical Society and thus goes back to its New York origins in 1875 although the Theosophical Society (Pasadena) currently takes the position that the original Theosophical Society divided in 1895, with each Society having equal claim to the 1875 New York origins. The Theosophical Society (Adyar), incorporated at Madras (now Chennai) in 1905, is under the Presidency of Mr. Tim Boyd, who has held this office since 2014. It is comprised of fifty-seven sections worldwide, the oldest being the American Section (The Theosophical Society in America, as it is now known), formed in 1886, and the English Section (chartered in 1888). After the separation of Judge's society from Adyar in 1895, Col. Olcott declared that the Aryan Branch of the T. S.'s charter was forfeited and therefore "ceased to exist as a part of the Theosophical Society proper."¹⁷ Olcott then rechartered the remaining fourteen branches that remained loyal to Adyar as the American Section T. S.¹⁸

Sections are composed of lodges. A small number of Lodges are directly attached to the International Headquarters at Adyar. The governing body of the T.S. is the General Council consisting of the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, all elected General Secretaries of the national sections, and up to twelve additional members nominated by the president and elected by the General Council. The international President is elected by popular vote of all eligible

¹⁷ Supplement to *The Theosophist* (October 1895): iii. H. O. Olcott, "Appendix. Theosophical Society, President's Office, Zumarraga, Spain, 5th June 1895," *Supplement to The Theosophist* (August 1895):

¹⁸ Alexander Fullerton, "Report of the American Section T. S." *General Report of the Theosophical Society* (1895), 24; *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, compiled by Josephine Ransom (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1938), 313–14.

members every seven years from among candidates who receive at least twelve nominations from the General Council members. The national president of the American Section is similarly elected every three years. An international convention is held annually, usually at Adyar. The Society boasts a magnificent library on the grounds of the headquarters, which houses original manuscripts in Sanskrit and other Asian languages, books and journals on Theosophy, philosophy, and religion. The archives of the Society are currently housed in the Headquarters building and contain many thousands of documents, including the important scrapbooks of Blavatsky and the Olcott diaries. The Theosophical Publishing House also functions in Adyar and produces a number of pamphlets and books, written primarily by its members, and continues to issue the oldest Theosophical periodical, *The Theosophist*. In addition, the quarterly *Adyar Newsletter* is published by the Society as is also the respected *Adyar Library Bulletin*, a scholarly journal specializing in oriental research.

THEOSOPHY IN AMERICA

The Adyar Theosophical Society's American Section, though substantially decreased in members in 1895, when many of its Lodges followed Judge in becoming independent of Adyar, quickly regained its strength under the leadership of Alexander Fullerton (1895-1907), and as a result of an 1897 tour of the American Section by Annie Besant and Countess Constance Wachtmeister (1839-1907), a close associate of H. P. Blavatsky and enthusiastic worker for the Theosophical cause. This and subsequent tours by Charles Webster Leadbeater beginning in 1900 and by Olcott and Countess Wachtmeister in 1901 led to a membership increase from 288 in 1895¹⁹ to 1391 by the end of 1900.²⁰ The American Section continued as a major player within the Theosophical Society under a number of General Secretaries (or Presidents as the leaders were later called). Following Alexander Fullerton were Weller Van Hook (1907-1912), who moved the headquarters of the Section from New York to Chicago; A. P. Warrington (1912-1920), who was responsible for establishing a new headquarters at Krotona, Hollywood, and L. W. Rogers (1920-1931), under whose stewardship the cornerstone of the new headquarters building at Wheaton, Illinois, was laid in 1926. Membership of the Section reached 8,520 by 1927.²¹ Sidney A.

¹⁹ Fullerton, "Report of the American Section T. S." *General Report of the Theosophical Society* (1895), 24.

²⁰ Alexander Fullerton, "Report of the American Section," *General Report of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary and Convention of the Theosophical Society* (1900), 17.

²¹ "Lodges and Members," *General Report of the Fifty-Second Anniversary and Convention of the Theosophical Society* (1927), 7.

Cook (1931–1945) presided over “The Theosophical Society in America”²² at a time when its membership declined to a low figure of about 3144 in 1941,²³ due in part to Krishnamurti’s dissolving the Order of the Star and in part to the Depression, he was succeeded by James S. Perkins (1945–1960), Henry Smith (1960–1965), Joy Mills (1965 as acting national president and 1966–1974) as president), Ann Wylie (1974–1975, acting president), Dora Kunz (1975–1987), Dorothy Abbenhouse (1987–1993), John Algeo (1993–2002), Betty Bland (2002–2011) and Tim Boyd (2011–2017), and Dr. Barbara Hebert (2017–present).

The Theosophical Society in America’s headquarters in Wheaton, Illinois, is the site of an extensive lending and research library. It also publishes a number of works, including Quest Books, through the Theosophical Publishing House (Wheaton). The T. S. A. also publishes *Messenger* for its members, *Quest* magazine for the general readership, and a monthly e-mail newsletter. Although organizationally not a part of the Theosophical Society, the Esoteric Section is closely associated with the Society. Its headquarters in the U.S. is in Ojai, California at the Krotona Institute. On its grounds is also the Krotona School of Theosophy, whose principal purpose is to serve as an educational arm of the Society, to promote its work, and to implement the three objects of the T.S. since they “form the foundation for the work of the Theosophical Society.”²⁴ These objects (according to the international Society’s wording) are:

1. To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color;
2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.[the Theosophical Society in America has “. . . comparative study of religion”];
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man. [The T. S. A. substitutes “humanity” for “man.”]

Members of The T. S. are expected to approve and promote these Objects. They are also expected to search for Truth through study, service, and devotion to high

²² The American Theosophical Society was renamed “The Theosophical Society in America” in 1934. See “Changes in the By-Laws,” *The American Theosophist* 22, no. 9 (September 1934), 206.

²³ Sidney A. Cook, “(Report of the General Secretary of the National Society:) United States of America,” *General Report of the Theosophical Society* (1941), 43.

²⁴ This quotation is located on the T. S. A.’s website under the “Three Objects” (<https://www.theosophical.org/about/about-the-society>).

ideals. As the Society states: “All in sympathy with its Three Objects are welcomed as members.”²⁵

OTHER THEOSOPHICAL ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the Adyar-connected Society in America, several others sprang up in that country, although most of them subsequently spread abroad.

The Theosophical Society, headquartered in Pasadena, is the direct descendant of the original Theosophical Society in America established in 1895, of which W.Q. Judge was its first President. Judge was succeeded by Mrs. Katherine Tingley, who followed by Mrs. Tingley’s Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society. It is currently described as a worldwide association of members “dedicated to the uplifting of humanity through a better understanding of the oneness of life and the practical application of this principle.”

Membership figures are not given out; the number, however, is probably low, perhaps no more than a few hundred. Members are known as Fellows of The Theosophical Society (F.T.S.), their only obligation the acceptance of the principle of universal brotherhood and a willingness to try to live it. Fellows are received as probationary Fellows; full Fellowship is implemented with the issuance of a diploma, signed by the Leader and Secretary General, which is issued by the International Theosophical Headquarters. Other groups within the T.S. include Branches, formed by three or more F.T.S. who apply for a charter, and National Sections, the latter headed by a National Secretary. The head of the T.S. is designated as Leader—at present Randell C. Grubb—who serves for life and who is also responsible for appointing a successor. The General Officers include the Members of the Cabinet, the Secretary General, Treasurer General, and the National Secretaries, all of whom are appointed by the Leader. The Leader has the power to remove from office any officer of the Society. The publishing arm of The T.S. is the Theosophical University Press, which publishes over forty book titles authored by H.P. Blavatsky, Katherine Tingley, G. de Purucker, A. Trevor Barker, William Q. Judge, James A. Long, Charles J. Ryan, and others. The Theosophical Society (Pasadena) has initiated correspondence courses, library centers, public meetings and study groups, and overseas translation and publishing agencies in The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, Germany, South Africa, and Nigeria. The objects of The T.S. are as follows:

²⁵ My thanks to Dr. John Algeo for providing information on the Theosophical Society in America.

1. To diffuse among men a knowledge of the laws inherent in the Universe;
2. To promulgate the knowledge of the essential unity of all that is, and to demonstrate that this unity is fundamental in Nature;
3. To form an active brotherhood among men;
4. To study ancient and modern religion, science, and philosophy;
5. To investigate the powers innate in man.

The United Lodge of Theosophists is “a voluntary association of students of Theosophy” founded in 1909 by Robert Crosbie and others, having as its main purpose the study of Theosophy using the writings of Blavatsky and Judge as their guide. Because personality or ego is considered to have negative effects, “associates” pursue anonymity in their Theosophical work. Regarding this work, the U.L.T. Declaration, the only document that unites associates, states that its purpose “is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the philosophy of Theosophy and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF; a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.” It regards as Theosophists all “who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization.”

The work of the U.L.T. is mainly practical and educational, conducting meetings and classes on various Theosophical subjects, and publishing books, pamphlets, and magazines. Lodges and study groups exist, with lodges typically consisting of between twenty and one hundred associates, and study groups from five to thirty associates. Associates can voluntarily participate in the work of a study group or lodge, ranging from attending or teaching classes in the public dissemination of Theosophical teachings. All activities are voluntary. In addition, there are associates who do not belong to any lodge because they live in countries and regions that have no proximate U.L.T. center. No leader exists in the U.L.T., nor is there any formal organization although The Theosophy Company serves as fiduciary agent for the U.L.T. and its publications. All lodges and study groups are independent of one another but are united in a common goal, the individual goal of pursuing the three objects of the U.L.T., which are nearly identical to the objects of the Adyar T.S.: (1) “To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color”; (2) “The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and (3) the investigation of the

unexplained laws of Nature and the psychological powers latent in man”. The work of the lodges focuses on the dissemination of source Theosophy.

Those who are in accord with the U.L.T. Declaration are considered associates.” They express their sympathy with the work of the U.L.T. in the following manner:

Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its “Declaration,” I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The number of associates is uncertain because renewable or “sustaining” memberships do not exist, nor is there a published list of associates. The only figure supplied by an associate in Los Angeles is that “many thousands of associates” have belonged to the U.L.T. since 1909, but the figure today is not more than a few thousand worldwide. Lodges and study groups exist in Los Angeles but also in other parts of the U.S., Canada, Belgium, England, France, India, Italy, Mexico, The Netherlands, and Sweden. Publications include the works of Blavatsky and Judge, compilations of articles, letters, and talks by Robert Crosbie, entitled *The Friendly Philosopher*, his commentary and discussion on Judge’s *The Ocean of Theosophy* entitled *Answers to Questions on the Ocean of Theosophy*, and a small book, *Universal Theosophy*. The Theosophy Company also publishes works that are associated with ancient theosophy (such as *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Patañjali’s *Yoga Sūtras*, and *The Dhammapada*), and the magazines *Theosophy*, *The Theosophical Movement* (Bombay), and *Vidya* (Santa Barbara, California).

The Temple of the People as a religious society and the village of Halcyon are both currently under the leadership (known as Guardian in Chief) of Eleanor L. Shumway,²⁶ who was selected by her predecessor, Harold Forgostein. Besides this office, there is a seven-member board of officers, selected each year by the Guardian in Chief. On the board is an Inner Guard and Treasurer, both reserved for women, an Outer Guard and a Scribe, both reserved for men, and three Delegates at Large, selected from members not living in Halcyon. Membership of the Temple is neither solicited nor closed to any individual; the only responsibility of the member is his/her own development. Of the total of some 250 members

²⁶ Paul Eli Ivey, *Radiance from Halcyon: A Utopian Experiment in Religion and Science* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 237.

worldwide, about eighty reside at Halcyon. An annual Convention that lasts about a week begins on the first Sunday of August. The objects of The Temple are:

- (1) To formulate the truths of religion as the fundamental factor in the evolution of the human race. And this does not mean the formulation of a creed;
- (2) To set forth a philosophy of life that is in accord with natural and divine law;
- (3) To promote the study of the sciences and the fundamental facts and laws upon which the sciences are based which will permit us to extend our belief and knowledge from what is known to the unknown;
- (4) To promote the study and practice of art on fundamental lines, showing that art is in reality the application of knowledge to human good and welfare, and that the Christos can speak to humanity through art as well as through any other fundamental line of manifestation;
- (5) The promotion of a knowledge of true social science based on immutable law, showing the relationship between one human being and another, and between human beings, God, and nature. When these relationships are understood we will instinctively formulate and follow the law of true brotherhood: the unity of ALL life.

The Word Foundation, Inc. was established in 1950 “to make known to the people of the world all books written by Harold Waldwin Percival (1868–1953), and to ensure the perpetuation of his legacy to humanity.” Percival’s books include *Thinking and Destiny*, *Adepts, Masters and Mahatmas*, *Masonry and its Symbols*, *Man and Woman and Child*, and *Democracy is Self-Government*. Percival (1868–1953) was born in Bridgetown, Barbados, British West Indies. He came first to Boston, then to New York City with his mother after the death of his father. There, he joined the Theosophical Society in 1892, eventually established The Theosophical Society Independent, which emphasized the study of the writings of H.P. Blavatsky and Eastern “scriptures” and from 1904 to 1917 published *The Word* magazine. In addition, he established the Theosophical Publishing Company of New York. In 1946, the Word Publishing Co., Inc. was constituted and it was under this aegis that Percival’s books were first published and distributed. The Foundation is directed by a Board of Directors consisting of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary. In addition to publishing the works of Percival, it also has introduced in 1986 a new series of *The Word* magazine,

published quarterly. The Foundation claims a worldwide membership of about 1000 as of 1994. The purpose of membership is to support the Foundation's publishing activities and to facilitate "student-to-student" study groups.

Point Loma Publications, Inc. is not a society but an independent publishing firm whose aim is to carry on the literary legacy of members of the Point Loma Theosophical Society (now the T.S., Pasadena). It was established on January 22, 1971 by former members of the Cabinet of the T.S. who refused to acknowledge the esoteric status of Col. Conger, the new Leader of the T.S., in 1945. These individuals were originally members of the Esoteric Section led by Gottfried de Purucker, the Leader of the Theosophical Society (Point Loma) from 1929 to 1942, including Gordon Plummer, Helen Harris, Jan Venema, Geoffrey and Ila Barboraka, Elsie Benjamin, Helen Todd and Emmett and Carmen Small. The former Chairman of the Cabinet of the T.S., Iverson L. Harris, became the president and chairman of the Board of Directors. In the 1950s, many of these individuals started to organize and give public lectures in San Diego, California. Some published their own material around this time, including Boris de Zirkoff (1902–1981), who edited the journal *Theosophia* from 1944 to 1981. The importance of the name "Point Loma" in the history of the Theosophical Movement, however, led eventually to the establishment of Point Loma Publications in San Diego as is evident in the Articles of Incorporation:

...to publish and disseminate literature of a philosophical, scientific, religious, historical and cultural character, faithful to the traditions and high standards maintained by the Theosophical Society with International Headquarters formerly at Point Loma, California, under the leadership of Katherine Tingley from 1900 to 1929, and of Gottfried de Purucker, from 1929 to 1942: to pursue and perpetuate the aims of the original T.S., founded in New York City by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Col. H.S. Olcott, Wm. Q. Judge and others, as enunciated by them on October 30, 1875....

P.L.P. remained under the leadership of Mr. Harris until his death in 1979. W. Emmett Small became the new President that year and remained so until his retirement in 1993. Branches of P.L.P. are in The Hague, The Netherlands, and Costa Rica. There are no members belonging to P.L.P., only associates or "friends" who support the work of the corporation. As a side note, other

organizations based on the original work of Point Loma T.S. arose in Europe. One group is the Theosophical Society—HPB, which was founded by William Hartley after James Long was elected Leader (see above). This Society now functions in The Hague, the site of its International Headquarters, under the Presidency of Mr. Herman C. Vermeulen. England and Germany also have small groups following the Point Loma tradition.

PUBLICATIONS and EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

The first magazine of the Theosophical Society, *The Theosophist*, was initiated with the October 1879 issue in Bombay under the editorship of H.P. Blavatsky. The periodical, published at the international headquarters in Adyar, Chennai, continues to this day and is the official organ of the international President of the T.S. (Adyar). Also published are the *Adyar Newsletter* and *Adyar Library Bulletin*. *Quest* and *Messenger* are both published by the T.S. in America, and journals are published by each of the fifty-one national sections of the Society. In addition to periodical literature, the T.S. also carries on an active publishing program through The Theosophical Publishing House in Adyar (India) and Wheaton, (Illinois), the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in America, and in Quezon City, Philippines. The T.P.H. of the T.S. in America also publishes Quest Books, books devoted to a variety of subjects that reflect the Theosophical viewpoint in its broadest perspective. Additional outreach of the T.S. in America comes in the form of audio and video recordings, webcasts and webinars.

The Theosophical Society (Pasadena) through its publishing arm, Theosophical University Press, features the source literature and classics of Theosophy, including the works of H.P. Blavatsky, W.Q. Judge, Katherine Tingley, G. de Purucker, and others. An extensive library is available online. Currently, the Society is focusing on placing its publication online at its official website, <https://www.theosociety.org>. Its most work has been to trace the references of Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* (https://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sdrefs/sdr_vol-1.htm) and (https://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sdrefs/sdr_vol-2.htm).

The Theosophy Company, the fiduciary agent of The United Lodge of Theosophists, publishes the journal *Theosophy*. In addition, *Vidya* is published by students at the Santa Barbara Lodge U.L.T., California, and *The Theosophical Movement*, founded by B.P. Wadia, is published in Bombay, India.

Both the Theosophical Society (Pasadena)—through its Theosophical University Press—and U.L.T.—through the Theosophy Company—publish the major works of Blavatsky (*The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*) and Judge (*The Ocean of Theosophy*) as well as a variety of other works.

The Temple of the People publishes the quarterly, *The Temple Artisan*, at Halcyon as well as several works unique to its organization, *Theogenesis*, *Temple Messages*, *Teachings of the Temple*, and *From the Mountain Top*.

The Word Foundation publishes *The Word*, revived in 1986, as well as the works of Harold W. Percival mentioned above.

Point Loma Publications published *The Eclectic Theosophist* from 1971 to 1995, first as a bimonthly journal, later as a quarterly, under the joint editorship of W. Emmett Small (1903–2001) and Helen Todd (until her death in 1992). Point Loma Publications also published a variety of works that were originally issued during the Point Loma years of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society as well as a number of original works, including *The Buddhism of H. P. Blavatsky* by H. J. Spierenburg, *The Way to the Mysteries* by L. Gordon Plummer, and *Introduction to Sanskrit* by Thomas Egenes.

In early 2007, the entire inventory of P. L. P. was relocated to a site outside Dulzura, California, east of San Diego, where during the extraordinary wildfires of October 2007 about 95 percent of the entire inventory was destroyed. The contents of the archives that burned were those that had already been photocopied by Jerry and April Hejka-Ekins of Alexandria West Archives (Turlock, CA) in the mid-1990s. These photocopies, together with other archival material not in Dulzura were then then sent to Herman and Johanna Vermeulen, both of the Theosophical Society (Point Loma , Covina, the Hague) to be digitally copied in the Netherlands and then returned. Many of the Lomaland and Theosophical historical photo archival albums assembled and composed by Helen Harris were not stored in Dulzura and so survived the fire.

Since the time of the fire a total reorganization of the focus and networking of Theosophical activity was instituted. Collaboration with other Theosophical publishing groups in Europe and elsewhere maintained the availability of books previously published, beginning with reprinting a number of out of print books and formatting them as digital publications. Additionally, Point Loma Publications has

now “re-birthed” itself as the “Point Loma School of Theosophic Perennialism,” of which Point Loma Publications is its publishing outreach arm. The School holds regular classes and presentations in San Diego and co-hosts presentations with “Blavatsky House” in The Hague, The Netherlands, the annual “Point Loma Convivium: Theosophic Insight on Religion, Philosophy, Science and the Arts.” Collaboration with the Point Loma Netherlands group on publishing and other activities also ended in 2014-15.²⁷

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²⁷ My thanks to Mr. Kenneth Small for providing information on Point Loma Publications.

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