

BOOKS BY H. P. BLAVATSKY.

The Secret Doctrine. 3 vols.

Isis Unveiled. 2 vols.

The Key to Theosophy.

The Voice of the Silence.

Practical Occultism and Occultism
versus the Occult Arts.

The Stanzas of Dzyan.

From the Caves and Jungles of
Hindustan.

A Modern Panarion.

Theosophical Glossary.



H. P. Blavatsky

BOOKS ABOUT H. P. BLAVATSKY.

Incidents in the Life of Madame
Blavatsky ... A. P. Sinnett

Blavatsky: An Outline of Her
Life ... Herbert Whyte

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ADDRESS BY

H. BAILLIE - WEAVER

WHITE LOTUS DAY, MAY, 1920.

refused to members of the Anglican Church who are known to belong to the T.S. The largest conference of Anglican bishops which has ever, as far as I know, met in one place, is going to be held in Lambeth Palace this summer and at that conference the subject of Theosophy is going to be formally considered. Possibly some public pronouncement will be made upon it, as a result, and, if so, I imagine that the pronouncement will hardly be sympathetic. From one aspect this is a great compliment, and shows that our movement is being taken very seriously by those in authority in the churches, though from another it is very sad as showing how absolutely Theosophy and the attitude of those who accept its teaching with reference to the Christian churches, are misunderstood.

The worst of it is that in the process of trying to discredit our teaching, the old attempts will probably be renewed to discredit our teachers, and all the mud that has been flung in the past at them in prodigal quantities will be raked over again. And so I am going to tell you of some of the accusations and calumnies launched against Madame Blavatsky, and quote in refutation of them words uttered by those who knew her best through close association and participation in her work. I shall deliberately refrain from quoting Mrs. Besant, because she is as much discredited as Madame Blavatsky herself, and possibly even more mud has been flung at her than has been flung at Madame Blavatsky. Any testimony of hers quoted to outside opponents would certainly be met by some such scoffing reply as, "Oh, naturally, of course she would say that." So I am going to refer you to people who were as closely associated with Madame Blavatsky as Mrs. Besant herself, and in some cases for a much longer time, and whose good faith, so far as I know, has never been impugned, nor their impartiality

questioned.

First I take Col. Olcott, who worked with her almost from the beginning of her career as a Theosophical teacher and was co-founder with her of the Theosophical Society, and its first president, as to the genuineness of the phenomena which occurred so frequently in the earlier days in any place in which Madame Blavatsky was. I am quoting from a few unsolicited testimonials by friends of hers, given just before her death and published in a volume called "H. P. B." At pp. 84-5-6 you will find these words:

"Often and often, when we two were working at our desks far into the night, she would illustrate her descriptions of occult powers in man and nature by impromptu experimental phenomena. Now that I look back to it, I can see that these phenomena were seemingly chosen with the specific design of educating me in psychical science, as the laboratory experiments of Tyndall, Faraday or Crookes are planned so as to lead the pupil *seriatim* through the curriculum of physics or chemistry. There were no Coulombs then above the mud, no third parties to befool, none waiting for jewelry presents or Yoga powers, or special tips about the short cut to Nirvana; she merely wanted my literary help on her book; and, to make me comprehend the occult laws involved in the moment's discussion, she experimentally proved the scientific ground she stood upon. More things were thus shown me than have ever been written about, than all the wondrous works the public has read about her having done in the presence of other witnesses. Is it strange, then, that all the humbugging tales and reports by interested critics, about her trickery and charlatanry, failed to shake

my knowledge of her real psychical powers? And what wonder that I, who have been favoured beyond others in the Theosophical Society with these valid proofs; who was shown by her the realities of transcendental chemistry and physics, and the marvellous dynamic potencies of the human mind, will, and soul; who was led by her into the delightful path of truth which I have ever since joyfully trodden, and who was personally made to see, know, and talk with the Eastern Teachers—what wonder that I have loved her as a friend, prized her as a teacher, and evermore keep her memory sacred? Living, I might quarrel with her, but dead, I must only bewail her irreparable loss, and redouble my exertions to push on our joint work. . . . Much has been made out of the fact that she did not go into court to vindicate her character against the palpable libels of the Missionary and allied parties. For this *she is not to blame*, quite the contrary. But for my vehement protests, she would have dragged the adversaries into the Madras Courts as soon as she got back from London, via Cairo, in 1884. A friend had offered her Rs. 10,000 to cover the expenses. It was then barely a fortnight before the time for the Annual Convention of our Society—December 27th, 1884—and I insisted upon her waiting until a Special Judicial Committee of the Convention should advise her as to her proper course. We were—I told her—the property of the Society, and bound to sink our preferences and selves for the public good. She was stubborn to that degree, that I *had to threaten to quit my official position* before she would listen to reason. The Convention met, and the case was referred to a Committee composed of Hindu Judges and other legal gentlemen of high official and private

standing. They unanimously reported against H.P.B.'s going to law. . . . The Convention adopted unanimously the views of the Committee, and H.P.B. was forced to yield to the majority and nerve herself up to bear the consequences. . . . Though restrained, H.P.B. was not convinced, and but for the constant opposition of her best friends, would have gone into Court at several later stages of the controversy, when the grossest personal insults were used as bait to entice her into the trap set by her enemies, whose bitterest spite has ever been against her personally. She chafed like a caged lioness, and thus aggravated her physical ailments, viz., a form of Bright's disease, an affection of the heart, and a tendency towards apoplexy."

Next, I will invite you to consider the testimony of Mr. A. P. Sinnett, who sacrificed a great position in Anglo-Indian Society in the world of Anglo-Indian journalism, to collaborate with H.P.B., but who is the last person to diminish one jot or tittle of the truth in order to bolster up the reputation even of a friend. I am quoting from the *Occult World*, pp. 43 and 44:

"One conviction we felt had been fully attained. This was the conviction of her (H. P. Blavatsky's) own good faith. It is disagreeable merely to recognise that this can be impugned, but this has been done in India so recklessly and cruelly by people who take up an attitude of hostility to the views with which she is identified, that it would be affectation to pass the question by. On the other hand, it would be too great a concession to an ignoble attack to go minutely over the evidence of her honesty of character with which my intimacy with Madame

Blavatsky has gradually supplied me. At various times she has been a guest of ours for periods now amounting in all to more than three months out of nearly two years. To any impartial intelligence it will be manifest that, under these circumstances, I must have been able to form a better opinion concerning her real character than can possibly be derived from the crude observations of persons who have perhaps met her once or twice. I am not, of course, attributing any scientific value to this sort of testimony as accrediting the abnormal character of phenomena she may be concerned in producing. With such a mighty problem at stake as the trustworthiness of the fundamental theories of modern physical science, it is impossible to proceed by any other but scientific modes of investigation. In any experiments I have tried, I have always been careful to exclude, not merely the probability, but the possibility, of trickery; and where it has been impossible to secure the proper conditions, I have not allowed the results of the experiment to enter into the sum total of my conclusions. But, in its place, it seems only right—only a slight attempt to redress the scandalous wrong which, as far as mere insult and slander can do a wrong, has been done to a very high-minded and perfectly honourable woman—to record the certainty at which in progress of time both my wife and myself arrived, that Madame Blavatsky is a lady of absolutely upright nature, who has sacrificed, not merely rank and fortune, but all thought of personal welfare or comfort in any shape, from enthusiasm for occult studies in the first instance, and latterly for the special task she has taken in hand as an initiate in, if relatively a humble member of, the great occult fraternity—the

direction of the Theosophical Society.”

Next I call before you as a witness, Mr. G. R. S. Mead, one of the most learned, serious and competent students we have ever had in the Society, who will give you his testimony as to her writings; I quote from pp. 139 and 140 of *The Theosophical Review*, of April 15th, 1904, which you will find in the library in bound volume 34.

“Some ten years ago or more the late Professor Max Muller, to whom all lovers of the Sacred Books of the East owe so deep a debt of gratitude, published his most instructive set of Gifford Lectures, entitled ‘Theosophy or Psychological Religion.’ These I reviewed in much detail in a series of three articles in this review. The aged Professor wrote to me a kindly note on the subject, taking exception to one or two points, and we exchanged several letters.

He then expressed himself as surprised that I should waste, as he thought, what he was good enough to call my abilities on ‘Theosophy,’ when the whole field of Oriental studies lay before me, in which he was kind enough to think I could do useful work. Above all, he was puzzled to understand why I treated seriously that charlatan, Madame Blavatsky, who had done so much harm to the cause of genuine Oriental studies by her parodies of Buddhism and Vedanta, which she had mixed up with Western ideas. Her whole theosophy was a réchauffé of misunderstood translations of Sanscrit and Pali texts.

To this I replied that as I had no object to serve but the cause of truth, if he could convince me that Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophy was merely a clever or ignorant manipulation of

Sanscrit and Pali texts, I would do everything in my power to make the facts known to the Theosophical world; for I naturally did not wish to waste my life on a 'swindle'—the epithet he once used of 'esoteric Buddhism' at an Oriental Congress. I therefore asked him to be so good as to point out what in his opinion were the original texts in Sanscrit or Pali, or in any other language, on which were based either the 'Stanzas of Dzyan' and their commentaries in the 'Secret Doctrine,' or any of the three treatises contained in the 'Voice of the Silence.' I had myself for years been searching for any trace of the originals or of fragments resembling them, and had so far found nothing. If we could get the originals, we asked for nothing better; it was the material we wanted.

To this Professor Max Muller replied in a short note, pointing to two verses in 'The Voice of the Silence,' which he said were quite Western in thought, and therefore betrayed their unguineness.

I answered that I was extremely sorry he had not pointed out the texts on which any sentence of the 'Precepts' or any stanza of the 'Book of Dzyan' was based; nevertheless, I should like to publish his criticism, reserving to myself the right of commenting on it.

To this Professor Max Muller hastily rejoined that he begged I would not do so, but that I would return his letter at once, as he wished to write something more worthy of the review. I, of course, returned his letter, but I have been waiting from that day to this for the promised proof that H. P. B. was in these marvellous literary creations nothing but a sorry centonist who out of tags of misunderstood translations patched together a fantastic motley for fools to wear. And I may add the offer is still open

for any and every Orientalist who desires to make good the, to me, ludicrous contention of the late Nestor of Orientalism."

Also I will quote from Mr. Mead as to what I have termed the "inconvenient frankness" of her temperament and methods, as instanced by her treatment of him when he went to her three years before her death, an unknown young man, to act as her private secretary. You will find this extract at pp. 135-136 of the above-mentioned volume 34 of the *Theosophical Review*.

"To all intents and purposes, as far as any objective knowledge was concerned, I went to work with H. P. B. as an entirely untried factor. I might, for all she knew to the contrary, have been a secret emissary of the enemy, for she was to my knowledge spied on by many. In any case, supposing she had been a cheat, she must have known that it was a very dangerous experiment to admit an untried person to her most intimate environment. Not only, however, did she do this, but she overwhelmed me with the whole-heartedness of her confidence. She handed over to me the charge of all her keys, of her MSS., her writing desk and the nests of drawers in which she kept her most private papers; not only this, but she further, on the plea of being left in peace for her writing, absolutely refused to be bothered with her letters, and made me take over her voluminous correspondence, and that too without opening it first herself. She not only metaphorically, but sometimes actually flung the offending missives at my head. I accordingly had frequently to open all her letters and not only to read them, but to answer them as best I could; for this strange old lady cried out with loud outcry to be relieved of the burden of letter-

writing, that she might write her articles and books, and would wax most wrathful and drive me out whenever I pestered her to answer the most pressing correspondence or even to give me some idea of what to reply in her name.

Now, I am not saying it was right of a woman who, day by day, received a large batch of letters, some of them—many of them—containing the most private thoughts of men and women all over the world, admitting the reader to the intimacy of their inner life, thus to entrust them to a young man comparatively ignorant of life and almost entirely unable to deal with them, otherwise than each morning, so to speak, to beard the lion in his den—for the old lady was leonine—and persist in parading the most important of this correspondence before the eyes of H.P.B., to her ever-increasing annoyance and a regular periodical outburst, when both correspondence and secretary were first committed to an infernal w.p.b., and finally some sort of compromise arrived at. But be this as it may be, it convinced me wholly and surely that whatever H.P.B. may have been, she was not a cheat or a trickster; she had nothing to hide; for a woman who, according to the main hypothesis of the S.P.R. Report, had had confederates all over the world and had lived the life of a scheming adventuress, would have been not only incredibly foolhardy, but positively mad to have let all her private correspondence pass into the hands of a third party, and that, too, without even previously opening it herself."

But perhaps a critic will say, "This is all very well; but I observe that you have carefully chosen as witnesses three of her co-workers, who, for all I know may have been co-plotters and co-tricksters with her in her varied deceptions. Can you give

us any testimony from outside in her favour? "

Yes; I think I can: I can give you the testimony of a writer in Mr. W. T. Stead's publication, *Borderland*. The article was unsigned, but it appears clear that it was written by Mr. Stead himself. At any rate, it was not written by one of H.P.B.'s followers, or known supporters. It was published in 1894.

"In this sketch I have no intention of reviving the controversy about the sliding panel and the Coulombs. If everything be true that Dr. Hodgson and the Psychical Research Society say about her, it only heightens the mystery and adds to the marvel of the influence which Madame Blavatsky undoubtedly has exercised, and is exercising at the present moment. For the most irate of the sceptics cannot deny, and will not dispute the fact that the Theosophical Society exists, that it is far and away the most influential of all the associations which have endeavoured to popularise occultism, and that its influence is, at the present time, felt far and wide in many lands, and in many churches. The number of pledged Theosophists may be few, although it is probably greater than most people imagine. But the Theosophical ideas are subtly penetrating the minds of multitudes who know nothing about Theosophy, and are profoundly ignorant of all the controversies which have raged round Madame Blavatsky.

This is eminently the case with the doctrine of reincarnation, and with the altered estimate which the average man is beginning to form of the mystic teachers and seers of India. Reincarnation may or may not be true. Whether true or false it has, until the last decade, been almost unthinkable by the average Western. This is no longer the

case. Multitudes who still reject it as unproved have learned to recognise its value as a hypothesis explaining many of the mysteries of human life.

Altogether apart from the question of the actual truth of the doctrine, it is indisputable that the sympathetic recognition of the possibility of reincarnation has widened the range of popular thought, and infused into religious speculation some much needed charity. And this, which is unquestionably a greater achievement, will ever be associated with the name of Madame Blavatsky.

Still more remarkable has been the success with which this remarkable woman has succeeded in driving into the somewhat wooden head of the Anglo-Saxon the conviction—long ago arrived at by a select circle of students and Orientalists, of whom Professor Max Muller may be said to be the most distinguished living representative—that the East is—in matters of religious and metaphysical speculation, at least entitled to claim as much respect as the West. 'The snub-nosed Saxons,' as Disraeli used to love to describe the race which made him Prime Minister, are learning somewhat of humility and self-abasement before the races whom, by the use of material force, they have reduced to vassalage.

These two achievements, even if they stood alone, would have made Madame Blavatsky notable among the leaders and moulders of the thought of this generation. But they did not stand alone. Perhaps even more important was the impetus which she gave to the revival of the doctrine of the continuity of existence beyond the grave, and the Divine justice which enforces the law of moral responsibility, unthwarted and uninterrupted by death. In an age when materialism has entrenched itself in the churches, she made men realise that

the things which are seen are but temporal and evanescent, and that it is the things which are unseen which alone are eternal. "The future life" which had become a mere phrase to many, has acquired a fresh and awful significance; and the essential spirituality of man has been asserted with no uncertain sound in the midst of a carnal and material civilisation. Nor must it be forgotten in the midst of the clash of polemical strife that, despite all ridicule and misrepresentation and abuse, Madame Blavatsky, by her unswerving and passionate assertion of the reality and continuity of her communications from the Mahatmas, has revived the almost extinct belief of Christendom in the constant presence and active intervention of guardian angels and saints in the affairs of men.

Those who, after duly considering what Madame Blavatsky accomplished, still cling to the belief that they have 'demolished the whole fraud,' by their conclusive demonstrations of the sliding panel at Adyar, brought to light by the Coulombs, are welcome to their conclusion. For us, and for most men, Carlyle's terse and weighty words in reference to the complacent stupidity, which for centuries dealt in similar fashion with the Apostle of Arabia, suffice as a warning."

I do not, of course, pretend that by the above extracts, or others to the like effect which I could quote, I am solving the many problems which arise from the life and character of Madame Blavatsky. Persons even with first-hand knowledge on the subject admit they cannot solve them.

The fact is that Madame Blavatsky was a Sphinx,

a human enigma, a wonderful inexplicable personality, and she remained so to the day of her death and to her best and nearest friends and intimates.

But there was one note which she struck above and louder than all the many others she sounded, which everyone, friends and enemies alike, could not fail to hear. Mr. Mead describes this note admirably on p. 8 of the "H. P. B." collection already mentioned.

"H. P. Blavatsky is dead, but H.P.B., our teacher and friend is alive, and will live for ever in our hearts and memories. In our present sorrow, it is this thought especially that we should keep ever before our minds. It is true that the personality we know as H. P. Blavatsky will be with us no longer; but it is equally true that the grand and noble individuality, the great soul that has taught all of us men and women to live purer and more unselfish lives, is still active. . . . As we all know so well, the one great purpose of our teacher's life in this her present incarnation, a purpose which she pursued with such complete unselfishness and singleness of motive, was to restore to mankind the knowledge of those great spiritual truths we to-day call Theosophy.

Her unvarying fidelity to her great mission, from which neither contumely nor misrepresentation ever made her swerve, was the key note of her strong and fearless nature. To her who knew so well its true and inner meaning, Theosophy was an ever-present power in her life, and she was ceaseless in her endeavours to spread the knowledge of the living truths of which she had such full assurance, so that by their ever-widening influence the wave of materiality in Science and Religion might be checked, and a real and

lasting spiritual foundation laid for the true progress and brotherhood of mankind."

And that is the final answer which the younger members of the Society—I mean younger in membership—should make to anyone who asks, "Why do you believe in H.P.B.?"

They should say, "We never knew her; we are only imperfectly acquainted with the facts of the controversies which raged round her; we have not all of us had time to study either her writings or the past history of the Society. But we have that for which she lived and that for which in truth she died. We believe in her because she was the foremost, most profound teacher of the truths which to us mean everything, which have become to us a light to illumine our path through life as no other light has ever done."

And no one has emphasised the debt of gratitude which we owe her in this respect more than our present President, Mrs. Besant, and our present Vice-President, Mr. Sinnett.

As Mr. Mead put it once in the *Theosophical Review*, Vol. 34, p. 131:

"It is Theosophy in which we are interested, and *this* would remain an immovable rock of strength and comfort, an inexhaustible source of study, the most noble of all quests, and the most desirable of paths on which to set our feet, even if it were possible, which it is not, conclusively to prove that H. P. Blavatsky was the cleverest trickster and most consummate charlatan of the ages."

Or take what was said by Mr. Herbert Burrows, that distinguished co-worker with Mrs. Besant in

progressive reforms long before either of them knew Madame Blavatsky or had joined the Theosophical Society, and who was, in fact, Mrs. Besant's companion when she paid her first visit to her whom she is proud to acknowledge as her earliest teacher. You will find what I am quoting on p. 37 of the "H.P.B." collection.

"Of the real H.P.B., we only caught occasional glimpses, and so necessarily we are thrown back on that human side of her life which appeals most to the human in us. Of her vast and profound knowledge this is not the time to speak, and if it were, how could one speak? Only its ripples ever reached us, but those would make an ordinary ocean. Probably we shall never know all the why and the wherefore of her recent incarnation. . . . Be that as it may, the real key for us is to be found in the example of her self-sacrificing devotion to her work. This is the note which was struck in the hearts of the hushed crowd who but yesterday gathered for the last time round the body of their loved teacher. That body has vanished from our sight, but the work remains. No great thought can ever die, no great effort for humanity can ever cease, but thought and effort can be accelerated by faithful service for mankind. More than ever now is that service needed, and they who would read aright the lesson of H.P.B.'s life will give that service unstintingly, ungrudgingly, if need be, to the bitter end."

And thus believing in her, what is our duty? I give it to you in her own words written in her letter of resignation of her position as corresponding secretary of the T.S., on the 21st March, 1885, on leaving India for the last time:

"Should this be my last word, I would implore you all as you have regard for the welfare of the world and your own Karma, be true to the Society, and do not permit it to be overthrown by the enemy."

Aye! True to the Society; true to it by the constant personal effort at self-purification which each of us should make, aspiring to be an ever widening and more unobstructed channel for the power of the Masters to pour through into the world; true to it in that we never fail by word and example to spread the teachings which are so dear to us.