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Spirits Reformed and Reconstituted

Among the numerous communications that *Banner of Light* medium Mary Theresa Shelhamer reportedly received from Spirit Violet about the afterworld came one describing the "beautiful city" Zencollia. Amid its "spires and towers" stood a building designated the "temple of learning," which Spirit Violet called the "most massive building" she had ever seen. The temple included "four spacious halls," the third of which—after "Science" and "Literature"—was dedicated to "Metaphysics." Spirit Violet had visited it in company with a companion spirit, discovering there a female speaker. "The ideas she expressed were grand and beautiful," Spirit Violet acknowledged, but she also confessed that "the language with which they were clothed was almost too abstruse for me." The accompanying spirit thought that Violet was still "too familiar" with earthly discourse to understand the spirit metaphysician. But she did explain—before Ralph Waldo Emerson's death in 1882—that "Emerson will delight to frequent this place when he comes over to our side of life." There were also "scores of other places" for "such teachers as Theodore Parker, Channing, and hundreds of like noble souls," who would be occupied in "earnest utterance for the lifting up and sanctification of the people."[1]

Clearly, for Shelhamer and her spirit friends in the 1880s, metaphysics meant Transcendentalists and their kind—engaged in a higher calling that was somewhat obscure and somewhat intimidating. Yet it was eminently worthy since it was for the benefit and blessing of ordinary people. The purified atmosphere of the Hall of Metaphysics seemed a far cry from the reported excesses and vaudeville antics of the spirits who came calling in many of the séance rooms. If the air remained a little dry in the Hall of Metaphysics, the spirits themselves apparently honored it and thoroughly recognized its worth. By the post–Civil War period, a number of Americans on the earthly side of the divide were also be-

ginning to prefer the purer, drier air of a more detached metaphysics. The heirs and progeny, perhaps, of the harmonialism of Andrew Jackson Davis, they parsed their metaphysics differently from Spirit Violet, including in it much more than Transcendentalist-style discourse. Still, many of them looked to the Transcendentalists as founders of their tribe. More than that, the emergent metaphysicians carried the reform spirit championed by Davis and other harmonialists into new expressions. The reform began, first, in a spiritualism that looked to the world and saw, in numerous intellectual and social sites, an overwhelming need and demand for change. Reform became synonymous with "progress," the great buzzword of the age, and progress came through "science." Meanwhile, science was an enterprise in which spiritualists delighted since they regarded their own spirit communications as its cutting edge. Reform came also, and most of all, through the transformation of social life as, among other things, slavery and the oppression of women fell away. A new era of equality and justice was dawning that would also be an era of social tranquility and love.

At a certain point, however, the reform spirit turned inward to what constituted spiritualism itself, and spiritualists began to part company with their former practice and to turn to new venues and concerns. We have already seen the beginnings of the process in the flamboyant Pascal Beverly Randolph who moved noisily out of the spiritualist fold and on to other metaphysical pastures. By the 1870s and 1880s he had plenty of company. Individuals as diverse as Madame Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott (who founded the Theosophical Society), Phineas Parkhurst Quimby and Warren Felt Evans (who pointed the way toward New Thought), and Mary Baker Eddy (who established Christian Science) moved past a spiritualism that they knew at least partially and felt they understood. These reformers turned instead to what they considered more sophisticated expressions of their metaphysical inclinations, and in so doing they turned in essentially two directions. All of them harvested the ambience of the world of spirits in works of directed imagination. For some the work continued in material symbols—like Renaissance magicians or later Continental and English practitioners—in a new, mostly Anglo-American, form of "angel-summoning" that became, properly speaking, the occult. For others the work went forward mostly on a mental plane, although they expected that its effects would not remain there. Among this second group, some aimed consciously to banish matter in an exercise of denial that both diminished and exalted the physical. They invoked divine "Principle" or "Truth" to master a sin-filled, mortal body and to bestow upon the chastened physical self the goods of a kingdom of health and well-being. Still others found the ingredients for Self-transformation in a "Spirit" immanent in matter, so that—like the Hermeticists of old and the worldwide

spiritual teachers they admired—they could be as gods, identified with a power of "Good" that kept on giving.

Along a spectrum from occultism to mind cure and the transformation of the Self, we can spot the familiar signature of correspondence, the drawing down of energies of Mind and Spirit, and the strong intent to heal. In the terms of this narrative, too, we can watch the easy glide from a (material) magic resonating, however unconventionally, with the magical practice of a past Hermeticism to a newer, mental magic characterizing Christian Science and New Thought. Here a simpler work of mind and imagination prevailed; and the esoteric turned—as in spiritualism—exoteric. The new metaphysical religion that flowered in these expressions and related ones, however, began with the reform principle that so much preoccupied the spiritualists.

PROGRESS, SCIENCE, AND REFORM AMONG THE SPIRIT-SEEKERS

From the time of the early manifestations of mass spiritualism in the 1840s, the so-called "Law of Progression" reigned unchallenged among believers and their spirit visitors. One way to explain the connection could be in terms of happenstance. The early alliance of the Fox sisters with Isaac and Amy Post and their formerly Hicksite radical Quaker associates began a train of associations in which reform functioned centrally and spiritualism became but one expression of the grand principle of progress. Similarly, for the men and women who turned, with Andrew Jackson Davis, to harmonialism, Fourierist enthusiasm guaranteed that ideas about reform and progress would be uppermost. No doubt happenstance was involved here, too, but once Davis elaborated his spiritualist cosmology the Law of Progression stood at the heart of the spiritualist vision. It became, in effect, the core principle of a spiritualist theology that refused to go away even in the face of a small army of defrauding mediums and their disruptive spirit companions.

Davis had begun the turn to progress as early as the trance productions that were published as *The Principles of Nature* (1847). There, as we have seen, he revised the received Swedenborgian account of the afterworld. Its three hells were transmuted into the lower three spheres of the spirit abode, beginning with the closest to earth, which came to be called the Summerland, and continuing with the former Swedenborgian heavens, which now became the outer spheres. For Davis, in accord with his planetary travels, there were other earths beside this one, but "all earths and their inhabitants" constituted the first sphere. When inhabitants died and left it, they *progressed* through succeeding spheres, so

that the eternity he and other spiritualists envisioned meant pilgrimage through landscapes of ever-increasing perfection rather than eternal rest. Meanwhile, on earth, it was already incumbent on inhabitants to refine and perfect their minds. When this was "properly accomplished," the "social world" would be "correspondingly elevated, and thus be advanced to honor, goodness, and UNIVERSAL PEACE."[2]

But this was not all. As Davis's grand vision developed, he began to explain that when all spirits reached the second sphere, the "various earths and planets" would be "depopulated," and only Spirit would remain. The spirits would not stay there, however, but would continue to progress to the sixth sphere, arriving "as near the great Positive Mind as spirits can ever locally or physically approach." (Davis's spirits, remember, were highly refined matter and thus retained a certain physicality.) When all the spirits had come to the sixth sphere and "not a single atom of life" was "wandering from home in the fields and forests of immensity," the Deity contracted inward, and the "boundless vortex" was "convulsed with a new manifestation of Motion . . . passing to and from center to circumference, like mighty tides of Infinite Power." The cataclysmic contraction, in turn, brought the "law of Association or *gravitation*" to bear, so that "new suns, new planets, and new earths" appeared. Once again, the "law of progression or *refinement*" could be applied, and so could the "law of Development." Thus God created "a new Universe" and opened "new spheres of spiritual existences." "These spheres," Davis prophesied, "will be *as much* superior to the present unspeakable glories of the sixth sphere, as the *sixth* sphere is *now* above the *second* sphere; because the *highest* sphere in the *present* order of the Universe will constitute the *second* sphere in the *new* order which is to be developed." And, we may surmise, the process would continue through countless eons of earth time in a vision not unlike that of the yugas, or great years, in a vastly expansive Hindu theology that Helena Blavatsky would later invoke (see the next chapter). Davis clinched his case with the observation that the spirit would have "no 'final home,'" since "to an immortal being, *rest* would be intolerable," "next to annihilation," and worse than "the miseries of the fabled hell." "The spirit," he proclaimed, "will progress eternally!"[3]

Davis's pronouncements found echoes seemingly everywhere within the huge spiritualist community, and revered texts reiterated for their readers the canonicity of the Law of Progression. Judge Edmonds, for example, found space in his well-known work to hail the "grand doctrine of PROGRESSION, whereby we learn that as the soul of man is an emanation from the germ of the great First Cause, so its destiny is to return toward the source whence it sprang." His co-author and medium George Dexter, the doctor, left no doubts that he agreed. After his own

account of spirit visits, he proclaimed as grandly, "I see *progress* stamped on every aspiration of the human mind, as it is on every part of God's universe—progress from the animal to the intellectual—from the material to the spiritual, and bestowed on the spirit . . . as the highest boon of its Almighty Creator." And in his introduction to Charles Linton's *Healing of the Nations*, Nathaniel Tallmadge was as effusive. "The great doctrine derived from spiritual communications," he testified, "is that of everlasting PROGRESSION." In his reading, too, not only did nature teach the doctrine, but it was also eminently biblical. "The Bible teaches Progression," he affirmed, and it showed "different gradations of the progressed and progressing spirit to that of the spirit of the just man made perfect."[4]

Summarizing the beliefs of mid-nineteenth-century spiritualists, R. Laurence Moore pointed to four unwavering "principles." Spiritualists rejected supernaturalism, hailed natural law as inviolable, put their premium on external occurrences rather than inward states, and saw knowledge as progressively developing and unfolding.[5] Arguably, the last of these subsumed the first three, since the séance sitters of the era saw their practice as the living demonstration of natural and scientific process. Moreover, the process was neither secret nor "occult" but —as they saw it—clearly visible and testable for right-minded, rational observers. That they, the séance sitters, had broken from centuries of superstition and mystification was paramount evidence of the law of progression and their own place at the very edge of its unfoldment. Indeed, spiritualist practice represented the prior reform of knowledge now being corroborated in the reform of life and society.

Moore, in fact, identifies the "rhetoric of denial" that spiritualists, at least by the 1870s, employed in their rejection of their ancestry. "Spiritualist publications in the last quarter of the nineteenth century," he says, "systematically repudiated black magic, white magic, Rosicrucianism, and Cabalism. They further attacked the 'musty tomes' of such individuals as Paracelsus, Cornelius Agrippa, Raymond Tully, Nostradamus, Albertus Magnus, Eugenius Philalithes, Girolamo Cardano, Robert Fludd, and Éliphas Lévi." Hermeticism, decidedly, was out, as spiritualists reformed esotericism. Ironically, among the first wave of reformers of spiritualism would be the Theosophists, who self-consciously embraced the "occult" in a global version. Spiritualists themselves, however, were livid in their declamations against "crude speculations," "spurious philosophies," and "pseudoscience."[6] And if Hermeticism was out, true science, spiritualist science, was in.

With "science" as their second buzzword alongside "progress," spiritualists used the term in various ways that were ambiguous and also sometimes contradictory. They thought that spiritualism itself was scientific, that it followed certain universal laws and represented a sure body of knowledge. We have already seen the eagerness with which those in the séance circles embraced mesmer-

ism, phrenomagnetism, electricity, odic force, and the like to explain the spirits. The notion of spirit matter itself was not unlike the vaguely formulated concept of the "ether" that pervaded the conventional science of the period. And when the purported spirit raps were first sorted, with spirit cooperation, into alphabetical letters and, thus, verbal communication, the language of the "spiritual telegraph" was immediately born—only four years after the famous Morse wire of 1844. Work with the spiritual telegraph, spiritualists insisted, was repeatable—like a science. Moreover, even as they sought to open the secrets of ancient Hermetic wisdom to the bright light of day, their ambivalence toward the Hermetic past was clear: Overlying their Hermes was a positivism that expressed itself in frequent preoccupation with demonstration and empirical testing. As Ann Braude observes, it was the "interpretations of investigators," rather than séance manifestations by themselves, that "provided the content of the new religion."[7]

Spiritualist positivism became a game of challenge played with anyone bearing proper scientific credentials. And believers did get noticed. Ernest Isaacs wrote that "at first as curious individuals, later in groups and commissions, still later in research societies," scientists paid attention, even if most were "repelled by the purported messages of spirits and the actions of mediums." For the Fox sisters scientific investigation turned into a daytime nightmare. By 1851, after their spectacular sojourn in New York City, Margaret and Leah Fox visited Buffalo and became the subject of an investigation by three faculty members from the School of Medicine at the university there. Writing in the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, the trio announced that it was by skeletal manipulation that the notorious raps were produced. Dislocated knee joints, not dislocated spirits, had caused the noises. When Leah Fox responded with a heated challenge to the professors, the examination grew more serious and extensive. The sisters were intimidated; there were tears and very few raps; and the doctors held publicly to their theory—although they owned that they could not find the "precise mechanism" that triggered the knee-joint dislocations.[8]

If respected scientists disdained the spirits, spiritualists themselves continued to display their own version of scientific positivism. Representative of widespread spiritualist attitudes, for example, was the memorial that Nathaniel Tallmadge persuaded General James Shields to present to the United States Senate on behalf of Tallmadge himself and 13,000 others. With Samuel B. Brittan involved in its composition, according to Tallmadge, the memorial requested that Congress appoint a commission of scientists for the purpose of investigating "Spiritual Manifestations." Invoking evidence of an "occult force" that could disturb "numerous ponderable bodies," of unexplained lights in dark rooms, of ubiquitous rappings and other sounds as from musical instruments, and of the entranced

states of some in the presence of the "mysterious agency," the petitioners sought congressional aid. They believed, they declared, "that the process of Science and the true interests of mankind will be greatly promoted by the proposed investigation."[9] The fact that Congress tabled the memorial suggests that many in high places, like most in the scientific community, remained unconvinced. Spiritualists, however, liked to point to the convicted. Just as Judge Edmonds and Governor and ex-Senator Tallmadge epitomized those involved in public and political life who had been persuaded, the chemist Robert Hare (1781–1858) was regularly exhibited as the converted scientist. From 1819 to 1847 a professor of chemistry at the medical college of the University of Pennsylvania, Hare engaged in important work on salts and produced novel inventions such as an oxyhydrogen blowpipe and an electric furnace. His articles appeared frequently in the *American Journal of Science*, and in 1839 the Rumford Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences had been awarded him. By 1852, however, well after his retirement from the university and his election as a lifetime member of the Smithsonian Institution, Hare turned his investigative skills to spiritualist phenomena.

His interest had begun innocently enough, when he was invited to a séance circle in an affluent Philadelphia home and heard the familiar rappings. Puzzled and intrigued, he tried to find their source in this and other circles, to no avail. He could not accept the conclusion that *all* of the mediums were frauds, but neither could he by conventional means explain the raps. Hence Hare constructed what he would call a "spiritoscope" to pursue his investigation. A disk with a random alphabet inscribed on it, an arrow that could point to one of the alphabet letters, and a rod passing through it and connecting it to the séance table, Hare's instrument had pulleys and weights attached so that it would turn should the table move. A screen separated it from the medium, assuring that it could not be directly seen as Hare questioned her and the disk, correspondingly, revolved and so spelled out answers to the questions asked. Rejecting electrical theories to explain the movement and also similar postulates such as Reichenbach's odic force and an argument regarding mechanical pressure by British scientist Michael Faraday, he became convinced that his device—built to debunk spiritualist explanations—proved them instead. The spirits were real and were visiting.[10]

As he continued his investigative pursuits, Hare built several versions of his spiritoscope. In so doing, he embodied in his rational positivism and empirical meticulousness the requirements for the Baconian scientist so much in vogue during his nineteenth-century time (recall the spirit of Lord Bacon whom John Edmonds and George Dexter hailed as their frequent visitor). It had taken Hare a good three months to arrive at his conclusions, he told readers in his first-person *Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations* (1855). "I did not yield

the ground undisputed, and was vanquished only by the facts and reasons which, when understood or admitted, must produce in others the conviction which they created in me." His publishers were not difficult to persuade. Partridge and Brittan were none other than the well-known spiritualists Charles Partridge and Samuel B. Brittan, whom we have met before. Hare's publication overnight guaranteed his celebrity in the spiritualist community, even as it also accorded him a dubious status among his scientific colleagues then and critics thereafter. For example, historian R. Laurence Moore, reflecting a common opinion, judges that Hare "demonstrated the mental infirmities of advanced age when he turned to spiritualism." Moore observes that even the erstwhile scientist's spiritualist publishers found him "extremely difficult to handle"; they complained that in letters to the periodical *Spiritual Telegraph* Hare failed to address the scientific dimensions of spiritualist phenomena. Still, his procedural rigor needs to be noticed. If—with Edmonds, Dexter, and Tallmadge—he made the leap of faith that rendered criticism obsolete beyond a certain point, he worked to arrive at the point by using methods similar to those that he had employed in his earlier scientific studies.[11]

Hare, despite the chagrin of his former colleagues, continued to see himself as a scientist among scientists. In fact, one of the strongest reasons he was drawn to the spirits was that he believed them to be sources of advanced knowledge—well beyond what he and other earthbound mortals had discovered on their own. In both 1854 and 1855, he brought his spiritualist research to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, permitted to read his paper out of deference to his age and long scientific career in the first case and omitted from the program in the second because of his subject. Significantly, his 1854 paper did not appear in the proceedings of the association. More to the point here, in their elation at the presence of Hare in their midst, the spiritualist community was announcing in the strongest of terms how important scientifically proven spirits remained to spiritualist self-understanding. Samuel B. Brittan began a promotional campaign, drafting Hare himself to lecture and exhibit his spiritoscope in New York City to a crowded, standing audience of more than three thousand. In a lecture that must have been memorable, the Baconian gave way to the believer, and Hare testified to the theology of progress in the seven spheres, six of them beyond the earth—those "*concentric bands surrounding the earth*, commencing sixty miles above this earth and reaching out for one hundred and twenty miles." The positivism was unmitigating, even as the aging scientist confessed the truth of life in the seventh sphere to which all mortals should aspire.[12]

For Hare and other spiritualists, seventh-sphere life represented their horizon of aspiration toward the reformed life, the millennial goal they longingly sought.

Hence the third shibboleth of this spiritualist universe of perpetual improvement was reform. Spiritualist preoccupation with reform came with its roots, both through Andrew Jackson Davis and through the Fox sisters and other séance spiritualists. For Davis, Fourierism had formed the basis for the practical application of his grand spiritualist vision in his *Principles of Nature*, and he continued throughout his professional career to provide a role model of the spiritualist who was also and preeminently a reformer. Campaigning for the reform of marriage and divorce law and for equal rights for women, Davis worked to instantiate his vision of eternal progress here on earth. He also wrote toward the same end, and his five-volume *Great Harmonia* was predicated on a Fourierist scheme.[13] Meanwhile, the Quaker ambience in which early mass spiritualism flourished guaranteed its alliance with reform activism from the first. By 1859, for example, well-known abolitionist Gerrit Smith—who also affirmed the reality of spirit communication—could comment on the dual identity of other reformer-spiritualists, assessing that "in proportion to their numbers, Spiritualists cast tenfold as many votes for the Abolition and Temperance tickets, as did others." Nearly all of the well-known abolitionists believed in the spirit manifestations, and so did a series of other reformers. As R. Laurence Moore has summarized the antebellum situation, those who counted themselves spiritualists "gained their most influential defenders from men and women who managed to support the rappers with the same enthusiasm they supported Fourierism, temperance, antislavery, health reform, and women's rights."[14]

In the specific case of women's rights, Ann Braude has demonstrated that spiritualism provided the training ground for later reform activism. A cadre of well-known female trance speakers learned to deliver messages in public as mouthpieces for purported spirits and then moved on in later years to speak publicly in their own name and for the causes about which they themselves passionately cared. "Woman suffrage benefited more than any other movement from the self-confidence women gained in Spiritualism," Braude writes. When the suffrage campaign took off in the post–Civil War period, spiritualist women were there to support it. In the California of 1870, for example, Braude found that of the nine women identified as holding suffrage meetings only one could not be linked to spiritualism, while six were listed as lecturers in the *Banner of Light*. On the basis of what she discovered in the spiritualist and reform communities, Braude argues for the role of spiritualism in giving voice to a "crucial generation" of American women. By the postbellum time, an earlier millennialism and insistence on instant societal perfection—with the spirits as prophetic messengers of an imminent new age—had given way to a social gradualism influenced by notions derived from the Darwinian concept of evolution. With social improve-

ment coming slowly and not all at once, spiritualists dug in during the 1870s and 1880s, supporting the cause of equal rights for women and other crusades as varied as American Indian rights, prison reform and an end to capital punishment, and the rights of labor.[15]

An intrinsic connection between reform practice and spiritualist cosmology reflected in the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis and other key spiritualists meant that, from the mid-nineteenth century, the alliance of spiritualists and reformers was hardly coincidental. The spiritualism built on a theology of eternal progress could hardly fail to desire the early implementation of unending betterment in the first sphere—the sphere of earth. R. Laurence Moore has, it is true, raised provocative questions about estimating spiritualist reform activism too highly, since by the early twentieth century both practically and substantively the spiritualist connection with social reform was, in effect, dead.[16] Indeed, the evidence for the grand fizzle of spiritualist hopes and dreams for social reform is hard to avoid in the period when the nineteenth century became the twentieth. The flamboyant spiritualism of the 1850s, which had enjoyed a noticeable resurgence in the 1880s, gave way to a spate of fragile organizations and sedate renditions of spiritualism that were themselves so many ghosts of the formerly vibrant movement.

Besides, judgments about a substantive connection between spiritualism and reform need to be probed more. Visions of progress in the heavenly spheres existed side by side with a spiritualist theology of sinlessness. The God that spiritualists honored was not a God of vengeance, nor did he preside over an earth in which evil held out as a concrete reality. "If there exists an Evil principle, would not that principle be an integral element in the constitution of the Divine Mind?" Davis had asked rhetorically. "God is *all-in-all*. . . . There is no principle, antagonistic to God; no empire at war with Heaven!"[17] Instead, the God of love welcomed a prepared people who were already innately good and, with free will and the spirits to guide them, getting better all the time. The moral progress of the human soul was, in such a universe, inevitable—all spirits, remember, would at some point, arrive at the second sphere and then go on to the sixth—which would then implode and be reconstituted as a new universe to be progressed through. What, then, was a reformer to do? How or why was a reformer, after all, necessary? Coupled with social Darwinian ideas of gradual amelioration, spiritualist reform principles possessed, seemingly, little intellectual ballast. Why rush to make the good better when, at its own pace, it would all get better anyway?[18]

Still, the long light of millennialism tempered the determinist implications of the cosmology. Even if the excitement of arriving spirits could not be maintained as the decade of the 1850s gave way to more troubled Civil War times

and then an era of fraud and excess in a vaudeville of the spirits, the literature of the older movement had shaped the minds of leaders. So had a history of reform associations among spiritualists. Hence a linked spiritualist-reform ideology continued to operate even as its foundations began to crumble. The heirs to the reform legacy would become those who, as we shall see, would reform spiritualism itself. In the meantime, for a movement predicated on the widespread individualism of small-time religious entrepreneurs and their informal followings, spiritualism displayed a surprising quest for—not solitary talks with spirits—but encompassing communities. Bret Carroll has pointed to the séance circles as incipient communities, even as he has noticed the communal republican yearnings of spiritualists themselves, epitomized in Andrew Jackson Davis's vision of a republic of spirit.[19] The Fourierist underpinnings of spiritualism, of course, represent a utopian ideal of community writ large in social relations. Likewise, the repeated spiritualist depictions of life in the heavenly spheres always show existence there as social—organized ubiquitously in cities and institutions and social processes. Mary Theresa Shelhamer's Spirit Violet and her accounts of spirit life were not exceptional.

More than that, beyond the *dreams* of Fourierist community—as evinced, for example, in the entire third section of Davis's *Principles of Nature*,[20] intentional community life often encouraged spiritualism, even as spiritualist practice generated community. For the former, George Ripley's Brook Farm and Adin Ballou's Hopedale Community were cases in point. In the era before mass spiritualism, so were the Shaker communities of the Northeast and Midwest. In the spiritualist heyday of the 1850s, communitarians such as Robert Owen, Robert Dale Owen, and—with free-love reputations—Josiah Warren, Mary Gove Nichols, and Stephen Pearl Andrews were all hospitable to spiritualism. And by the 1870s, John Humphrey Noyes's Oneida Community of Perfectionists in upstate New York provided still another instance. Indeed, Noyes himself owned that spiritualist practice was, as Maren Lockwood Carden summarized, "consistent with his lifelong teaching about the possibility of communication with members of the primitive church."[21]

Beyond these, spiritualists formed self-conscious communities in which the theology of spiritualism could take tangible form. The earliest, on the site of the failed Clermont Phalanx in Ohio, began in 1847 through the efforts of John O. Wattles, a Fourierist converted to spiritualism, but lasted only nineteen months. By 1851, Andrew Jackson Davis was at least considering plans for a "Harmonial Brotherhood," while more concretely, the Harmonia near Battle Creek, Michigan, in which Sojourner Truth dwelled for a time from 1857, existed as a spiritualist commune. Meanwhile, in western New York state, near Kiantone Creek on

the border of Pennsylvania, John Murray Spear had established his own Harmonia Community. Located close to a muddy mineral spring that, it was claimed, the spirits had revealed for its healing powers, the community began at Spear's (spirit) direction with a charter for the "City of Harmonia." The government would be one of "love with innocence as its only protector," and it would exalt the sovereignty of each individual member. Crime was a disease that was treatable; marriage was a union easily entered and left, in a sexuality of mutual consent; equality between the sexes was mandatory; and private real estate holdings were to be replaced by octagonal houses as promoted by Lorenzo Fowler, one of the fabled phrenological Fowlers of the period (see the previous chapter). Spear built Harmonia on a site claimed (by the spirits, he said) to be a prehistoric city of utopian proportions. Now it would be the place where his spirit-inspired perpetual motion machine called the New Motive Power—already the subject of a failed experiment—might flourish again because of the "peculiarly favorable electrical emanations" of the site. But fortune did not smile. Spear spent twenty thousand dollars—a gift to him by an area businessman—to dig for the buried city without success, even as his New Motive Power after being brought to New York was trashed by an unfriendly mob. Although Harmonia hosted a National Spiritualist Convention in 1858 and promoted an expedition to New Orleans in 1859 and 1860, the community succumbed in 1863, a victim of financial losses, internal divisiveness, and outward opposition to its sexual permissiveness.[22]

The most noticed spiritualist community, however, flourished for a time at Mountain Cove, in western Virginia (now West Virginia), after beginnings in Auburn, New York, a site of early spiritualist excitement connected with the Fox sisters in 1848 and 1849. The Auburn Circle there, under the mediumship of Ann Benedict, believed itself to be visited by spirit communications from Apostles and Prophets, among them Paul the Apostle, who through Benedict called the minister of the Seventh Day Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York, to Auburn. The Reverend James L. Scott arrived as directed, and then—also called by the Apostle—Thomas Lake Harris (1823–1906) joined him as the so-called Apostolic movement grew. Harris, a follower of Andrew Jackson Davis and his harmonialism, had already been dubbed the "Poet" within the group that edited and promoted the *Univercoelum*, the early spiritualist paper published by Samuel B. Brittan. A former Universalist minister, like so many others within spiritualist ranks, he was speedily outgrowing Davis. By early 1851, Scott and Harris had launched a (spirit) newspaper of their own. The movement grew as Scott continued to hold forth in Auburn and Harris traveled to New York City to evangelize on its behalf. By the summer, Scott claimed to be experiencing visions directing him to seek an earthly center for the "unfolding" of the "heavenly kingdom" and a "refuge" for

God's "obedient people." In due course, the "Holy Mountain" was recognized by Scott and the others at Mountain Cove in the mountains of western Virginia.[23]

The community that formed there lasted from 1851 to 1853, some one hundred or so persons believing themselves to be established on the site of the original garden of Eden and speaking the language of Christian scripture in an illuminist version that stressed the nearness of the endtime. Roots in the Millerite movement of the 1840s, with its expectation of the Second Coming of Jesus in 1843 and then in 1844, gave to Mountain Cove communitarians a premillennial vision of impending catastrophe that only heightened their spiritualist belief. Leaders and members were imbued ever more strongly with a sense that the spirits who were aiding them required obedience and that, without spirit help, in the short time that remained social perfection could not be attained. With or without the spirits, though, Mountain Cove did not prosper. Unwelcome to its Virginia neighbors for its northern doctrines of radical reform and its theological heterodoxies, it experienced persistent internal discord. As early as the close of 1851, sexual allegations against Scott for "licentiousness and adultery" orchestrated the dissension to come, even as Scott's dismissal of Benedict and her mediumship in order to claim himself as "medium absolute" increased it. When Harris joined Scott in the spring of 1852, the two assumed co-leadership in a patriarchalism that manifested first in Scott's suppression of Benedict's authority in favor of his own, and as the Scott-Harris claims escalated, many in the community chafed. The pair announced themselves the two "witnesses" in Revelation 11:3–6, divinely chosen to prophesy—with fire emanating from their mouths, power to turn water into blood, and power, as well, to visit the earth with plagues; with authority, in short, to kill. Amid these threats of blood authority and grossly inflated claims, the community came apart.[24]

For the larger spiritualist community, Mountain Cove had gone beyond the pale. The subject of extended vitriolic narrative by spiritualist historians Emma Hardinge and Eliab W. Capron, it elicited heated condemnations and a rhetoric of thoroughgoing refusal to own it. Hardinge found Mountain Cove to be "notorious"—one of the "follies and fanaticisms" that deformed "the sacred name of Spiritualism, under the pretence of 'reforms.'" She objected strenuously to the apostolic authority and divine insight that Scott claimed, and she noticed negatively his "unquestionable authority" in matters financial. Harris fared no better with his own claims to semi-divine status. "In one of his prayers, uttered about this time [the fall of 1852]," Hardinge decried, "Harris said: '*Oh Lord, thou knowest we do not wish to destroy man with fire from our mouths!*'" Nor did Eliab Capron mince words in his earlier account, commenting on the absolutist leadership of Scott and Harris and the gullibility of their followers. The Mountain Cove

episode, he thought, exposed "spiritual excitement" as a "convenient hobby for men who had graduated through the old forms of theological mysticism, until there was nothing new in that field to feed their love of leadership and pretence to special calls and inspiration."[25]

Yet despite the graduation ceremonies for older forms of mysticism and the embarrassment of many spiritualists at other spiritualists, the Mountain Cove episode exposed a longing for an authoritarian society at least embryonic in the séance circles. With all the talk of individualism and radical overthrow of social constraint among spiritualists, believers who sat in the circles gave over their authority to the direction of spirits. Their form of spiritual surrender was only writ large in the social experiment that was Mountain Cove, not contradicted by it. Still more, the kind of community that Mountain Cove attempted seemed to replicate, to some extent, the visions of utopian harmony and bliss on spirit landscapes that mediums like Mary Theresa Shelhamer gave eager listeners from the Spirit Violets of their trances. Visionary metaphors like these urged toward social enactment; spiritualist communities arose as the result, themselves a "natural byproduct and a legitimate expression of Spiritualist religion," as Bret Carroll has assessed.[26]

Both Spear's Harmonia and the Scott-Harris Mountain Cove, then, uncovered within the structure of spiritualist devotionalism not hardy individualism and American self-made spiritualizers but instead spirit-hungry men and women ready to efface themselves before something bigger and grander than themselves and to do it in community. By two decades later, in the 1870s, however, part of what was bigger and grander was the melodramatic ritual of spirit presentation. Here mediums and séance sitters mutually surrendered in outlaw episodes in which spirits seemingly vied with one another to be bolder, more obstreperous, and more outrageous than their spirit neighbors. The mediums who brought them in were likewise, by this time, skillful adepts in the art of deception. But by this time, too, self-prostrations to spirit were giving way before a discontent that would bring not the end of spiritualism but its revision and reformation in a series of new religious movements. The reconstituted spiritualism of the era brought a mysticizing past together with an inventive present. In its unflagging combinativeness, it inaugurated ever more, and more creative, forms of American metaphysical religion.

THEOSOPHY AND THE REFORM OF SPIRITUALISM

Among the investigations of spiritualism that came from American publishing houses in the 1870s, one appeared in 1875 called simply *People from the*

Other World. Its title page bore what in the rational-believer tradition of Judge Edmonds, Governor Tallmadge, and scientist Hare could only be called a devout inscription, attributed to "Lord Bacon": "*We have set it down as a law to ourselves to examine things to the bottom and not to receive upon credit, or reject upon improbabilities, until there hath passed a due examination.*" In the volume's preface, its author announced himself unconcerned with moral questions but intent on examining spiritualist phenomena "only as involving a scientific question which presses upon us for instant attention." Complaining that twenty-seven years after the Rochester rappings, "we are apparently not much nearer a scientific demonstration of their cause than we were then," he wanted to spur the scientific community to proper attention to spiritualism. Rather than studying tumble-bugs and pitcher-plants in "nonsensical debates," scientists needed to address "the astounding phenomenon of 'materialization.'"[27] If the rhetoric was unexceptional given the tradition of rational inquiry that characterized the Enlightenment side of spiritualism, what followed—in the book and in life—marked a decisive break with séance spiritualism. The author of the lengthy (nearly 500-page) work was Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), who in the same year that the book appeared co-founded the Theosophical Society. Together with Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), he would remodel spiritualism into what the pair regarded as spiritual truth and high teaching from Masters who were inaugurating a new era.

The major occasion for the book was also the occasion that brought the two together—the investigation of the flamboyant spiritual mediumship of two brothers, William and Horatio Eddy (and especially the former), on their family farm and homestead in Chittenden, Vermont. Olcott appeared at the farm with a long and varied background. He had been an agriculturalist, journalist, signals officer in the Union army, civil service reformer in government employ, and lawyer. In his youth he had seen Andrew Jackson Davis demonstrating clairvoyance, and by the time Olcott was twenty he had himself become a spiritualist. He achieved notice, in 1853, as a founding member of the New York Conference of Spiritualists, an organization formed to investigate spiritualism and to give it some intellectual ballast. But now, in his early forties and among the new urban gentry in New York City, Olcott had for years been distant from spiritualism, until one day, with a sudden thought of his neglect, he purchased a copy of the *Banner of Light* and read of "certain incredible phenomena" at the Eddy farm. "I saw at once," he later recalled, "that, if it were true that visitors could see, even touch and converse with, deceased relatives who had found means to reconstruct their bodies and clothing so as to be temporarily solid, visible, and tangible, this was the most important fact in modern physical science. I determined to go and see for myself."[28]

Olcott produced an account of his visit to the farm for the *New York Sun* and was promptly asked to return to Vermont by the *New York Daily Graphic* to investigate more thoroughly, this time accompanied by an artist who would make sketches. One of the readers of the original *Sun* article had been Blavatsky, a decidedly unconventional Russian immigrant, newly arrived from Paris with a mysterious past and a long involvement with certain forms of spiritualism. Born Helena Petrovna von Hahn, at Ekaterinoslav in the Ukraine, the daughter of a Russian army officer who had descended from German petty nobility and his Russian aristocrat wife who was a novelist, she married the forty-year-old Nikifor Blavatsky, the newly appointed vice-governor of Yerivan province in Armenia, just after her seventeenth birthday. She left him after only a short time to live with her grandfather, but when he tried to send her to her father she set out for Constantinople. So began a period of over twenty years for which only conflicting accounts of Blavatsky's whereabouts and activities exist. It seems certain, however, that she traveled extensively in Europe, the Middle East including Egypt, and North America and that she was drawn to matters spiritual and occult, acquiring an extensive experiential knowledge that included spiritualism and psychic phenomena. From childhood, she had believed in the presence of invisible companions, and that belief seems not to have deserted her during this obscure time. In a judicious summary of what may be known about the period, Bruce Campbell underlines the unconventional ("Bohemian") character of her life and points to evidence for her lengthy liaison with the opera singer Agardi Metrovitch and the possibility that she may have given birth to one or two children, fathered respectively by Metrovitch and one other person. Finally, evidence suggests that, already during this period, Blavatsky was imbued with a sense of mission, feeling herself called to a great work to come.[29]

When Olcott appeared at the Eddy homestead for his second visit, he met Blavatsky there on an investigative mission of her own. The two became fast friends, both of them identifying themselves as discontented spiritualists and Blavatsky especially decrying the materialism of American spiritualism. Meanwhile, she gradually led Olcott to believe that she could produce "spirit" manifestations and other occult phenomena far in advance of the ones he was witnessing. From the perspective of the study of American metaphysical religion, Olcott's expressed concerns were even more striking (they would later be argued far more exhaustively by Blavatsky herself). Chafing under the refusal of the spirits to allow as thorough an investigation as he wanted, Olcott in *People from the Other World* noted Horatio Eddy's written admission that he and his family were "the slaves of the powers behind the phenomena." Olcott went on to inveigh against mediumistic slavery. When mediums operated "'under control,'" they lost their free will,

and "their actions, their speech, and their very consciousness" were "directed by that of another." They were as helpless as mesmeric subjects to "do, or say, or think, or see what they desire[d]." Still worse, the materialization medium was even required, it appeared, to "lend from the more ethereal portions of his frame, some of the matter that goes to form the evanescent materialized shapes of the departed."[30]

By contrast, in Blavatsky Olcott believed he had found something different. In the second part of a book that detailed the appearance of Blavatsky at Chittenden and then addressed another mediumistic episode in Philadelphia involving apparent fraud, Olcott was ready to own that Blavatsky was "one of the most remarkable mediums in the world." "Instead of being controlled by spirits to do their will," Olcott enthused, "it is she who seems to control them to do her bidding." What was the secret, and how did she gain mastery? He did not know all the answers. But he told readers that "many years of her life have been passed in Oriental lands." There what Americans called spiritualism had "for years been regarded as the mere rudimental developments of a system." In it, relationships had been set up "between mortals and the immortals as to enable certain of the former to have dominion over many of the latter." Not willing to accept an ancient priestly "knowledge of the natural sciences" as an explanation for Blavatsky's powers, he referred instead to "those higher branches of that so-called White Magic, which has been practised for countless centuries by the initiated."[31] Olcott, in short, was turning for explanation not to science, as practiced in the nineteenth century, but to Hermeticism.

As performed by Blavatsky, the older model represented humans as powerful beings possessing divine or semidivine agency, co-creators with God of the universal order and able to manifest that order at will. "There are hidden powers in man," Olcott testified, "which are capable of making a *god* of him on earth." Meanwhile, the so-called spirits on the Eddy farm and elsewhere in the American spiritualist universe were "humbugging elemental[s]." The elementals, whom or which Blavatsky controlled, were one of "two unlike classes of phenomena-working agents." They were "sub-human nature-spirits," or they were joined at times by "earth-bound ex-human elementaries." As someone with a knowledge of magic, he thought, Blavatsky could work them to her liking. Olcott duly noted that when she appeared at the Eddy farm, the numerous American Indian spirits (and some Europeans) who were materializing out of William Eddy's cabinet gave place before new arrivals of multinational provenance. "There was," he reported, "a Georgian servant boy from the Caucasus; a Mussulman merchant from Tiflis; a Russian peasant girl, . . . a Kourdish cavalier armed with scimitar, pistols and lance; a hideously ugly and devilish-looking

negro sorcerer from Africa . . . and a European gentleman wearing the cross and collar of St. Anne, who was recognised by Madame Blavatsky as her uncle."[32]

At the other end of the theosophical universe that Olcott was coming to accept, however, were the "Masters." "Little by little," he confided, "H. P. B. let me know of the existence of Eastern adepts and their powers." If she controlled "the occult forces of nature," she also served and did the bidding of "these Elder Brothers of humanity." They were "indispensable for the spiritual welfare of mankind," and "their combined divine energy" was "maintained from age to age," forever refreshing "the pilgrim of Earth, who struggles on toward the Divine Reality." Blavatsky, he said, had seen the Masters in visionary episodes from her youth. She was a "faithful servant of theirs," and she had come to New York from Paris at the behest of one of the Masters, receiving a "peremptory order" and the next day dropping everything to board a ship.[33] Apparently, there were some beings before whom Blavatsky was willing to bow. Mastery could still allow taking orders from Elder Brothers.

Situated between the elementals and the Masters, the Theosophical Society in 1875 would invent itself. In effect, Olcott, the rational investigator, had become convinced that the phenomena produced at the Eddy homestead, despite the limited testing that he was allowed to undertake, could not be "accounted for on the hypothesis of fraud." The manifestations were "not trickery," but neither were they "supernatural" nor "miracles." What remained for him was to investigate in a larger theater and still more seriously, not through the continued application of scientific tests (the scientists could and should do that) but in terms of a new vision of power—of Masters and elementals and other occult phenomena—that Blavatsky had opened to him. The Theosophical Society would do just that—expanding its compass to include a host of anomalous occurrences and phenomena that the "scientific" nineteenth century had disallowed. In this context, the new society would function as a restoration movement, gliding back past the collective silence in the mass spiritualist interlude to the Hermetic tradition of the West. At the same time, the restoration would also be a revitalization and a movement forward, because the contemporary science that Olcott and fellow travelers often disdained could also tool them to expand on the past in a new age of occult and, in their view, scientific progress. In this post–Civil War period that Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner dubbed the Gilded Age for its sparkling surfaces of show and financial boom with corruption beneath, members of the Theosophical Society would excavate the secrets of human power and mastery that for them seemed truer and more lasting.[34]

In May of 1875, Olcott formed a secret "Miracle Club" with spiritualist séances as its apparent major activity and Blavatsky a participant, but David Dana, the

medium of choice, proved unsuccessful at summoning spirits, and the New York club fizzled. Still, Blavatsky was in the habit of hosting Sunday evening sessions in her apartment for a small group of people interested in occultism. Among them were Emma Hardinge (in private life, Hardinge-Britten), the well-known spiritualist medium and historian, and her husband Dr. William Britten. Present, too, was a youthful William Quan Judge—Irish immigrant and lawyer—who would later play so large a role in theosophical affairs. In early September of 1875, the group heard the Freemason and Kabbalist George Felt speak on ancient Egyptian lore, finding the key to art and architecture in an occult reading of "The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians." Olcott spontaneously scribbled a note about starting a society for occult research and passed it to Judge, who handed it to Blavatsky. With her nod, Olcott stood up and invited those present to form a society to "diffuse information concerning those secret laws of Nature which were so familiar to the Chaldeans and Egyptians, but are totally unknown by our modern world of science."[35]

By the next evening, sixteen persons joined the group, and by ten days later, on September 18, they decided to call themselves the Theosophical Society. The president was Olcott, with Blavatsky corresponding secretary, and Judge the council to the society. Bruce Campbell has pointed to the fact that the new Theosophists were people of privilege, "solidly" middle class with "a large proportion professionals," and among them "several lawyers, doctors, and journalists, and an industrialist." All seemed to share an interest in religion and spirituality of a nontraditional sort. The society, in fact, was bringing a New York City subculture with European ties into clearer visibility. While Olcott and Blavatsky moved in a generally spiritualist context, it was, clearly, already an expanded one. Indeed, Theosophist Alvin Boyd Kuhn, who concurred in 1930 that the pair had "launched the Society from within the ranks of the [spiritualist] cult," also addressed the issue of in-betweenness. While the general public classified Theosophy with "Spiritualism, New Thought, Unity and Christian Science," it was not "modern," as they were, but instead "a summation and synthesis of many cults of all times."[36]

For all the enthusiasm of its beginnings, the society during its first three years did not continue to fare well. Blavatsky and Olcott together formed the soul of the organization, and it was they who would keep the group going, with some prodding from Judge. Eventually the pair would transform Theosophy into a vehicle for the synthesis of Western and Eastern metaphysical categories (with a strong tilt toward the Eastern) intending to enhance the powers of an elite and spiritually advanced cadre of humans. The Theosophical Society, in other words, would be sophisticated and for sophisticates. Yet from the first it displayed, as Stephen

Prothero argues, the existence of "two theosophies." Blavatsky thrived on spontaneity and upset, Olcott on order. Blavatsky spun convoluted and highly elaborated theoretical works that made her to Theosophy what Andrew Jackson Davis had been to spiritualism (although, to be sure, her enthusiasm for phenomena set her distinctly apart from the spiritualist seer). Olcott, by contrast, brought the moralism of an American Protestant—and specifically Presbyterian and Calvinist—background to bear on his theosophical vision. Blavatsky loved interior spaces and secrets; Olcott carried over from the American democratic ethos and from mass spiritualism an impulse toward public exposition in a Theosophy that was exoteric. Thus Olcott's version of Theosophy favored the *discovery* of occult laws—something in which rational individuals could democratically engage—even as Blavatsky, more hierarchically, would foster their *unveiling*. Meanwhile, Blavatsky, the woman magus who functioned as a shaman-in-civilization, enhanced the role of women; Olcott, with his dismissal of (largely female) mediums as the dupes of elementals and as licentious persons given to free love and similar practices, promoted patriarchy. Ever the aristocrat in the midst of Bohemianism, Blavatsky brought a social consciousness far different from Olcott's with his middle-class gentry past. For him, the reform of spiritualism was part of the universal reform program intimately bound to spiritualism itself and to his own biographical trajectory. For Blavatsky, social reform programs were a matter of indifference.[37]

Together, though, the two brought a sizable legacy with them from séance spiritualism and the harmonial philosophy that was its sometime partner. As Stephen Prothero has summarized:

> Most of the liberal elements in spiritualism—its critique of Calvinist predestination in the name of individual liberty, its anticlericalism and emphasis on vernacular preaching by the laity, its antidogmatism and exaltation of individual conscience, its attempt to improve the role of women in society, and, finally, its hope of fashioning something akin to the kingdom of God on earth—survived in the theosophies of both Olcott and Blavatsky. What did not survive the transmigration were certain supposed spiritualist crudities—the preoccupation with spirits of the dead, tendencies toward communalism and free love, seemingly excessive reliance on female spiritual intermediaries, etc.—that would not appeal to genteel and aristocratic markets.[38]

The communalism would make a comeback later in selected portions of theosophical history, as we will see. Moreover, the sheer combinativeness of theosophical doctrine, "thickly populated," as Robert Ellwood notes, "with hidden Masters and the lore of many ancient cultures," could already be read as a theo-

retical expression of "communitas." In this visionary community of the spirit, however, what drew many to spiritualism and then Theosophy was residence in a middle place between a credulous religious past and an agnostic and positivist present. Olcott hailed "a reasonable and philosophical spiritualistic belief" and thought it "as far removed from the superstition of the Seventeenth; and Eighteenth Centuries, as it is from the degrading materialism of the last quarter of the Nineteenth." The late nineteenth century, he complained, "blots God out of the Universe, strips the soul of its aspirations for a higher existence beyond the grave, and bounds the life of man" by animal limits.[39]

Beyond the riddle of rational religious belief, however, lay the riddle of mind. Tellingly, Olcott acknowledged that "especially Mind, active as WILL, was a great problem for us." Used mutually by "Eastern magus" and "Western mesmerist and psychopath," it could bring acclaim as a "hero" to one who developed it or spiritual mediumship to another who paralyzed it. Close beside mind, for Olcott, came the active imagination and the power of thought to fashion actual things. When, along with mind, "imagination is simultaneously active," he declared, "it *creates*, by giving objectivity to just-formed mind-images."[40] In his series of observations Olcott had stated the terms for the combinative metaphysical religion of the late nineteenth century and beyond. Theosophy, Christian Science, New Thought, and a series of interrelated and entangled movements—even to the New Age and the new spirituality of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century—would agree to the contract.

Meanwhile, the Theosophical Society passed through a Western-oriented era of three years until 1878. At the apex of this earlier, Western period stood Blavatsky's publication, in 1877, of her monumental first book, *Isis Unveiled*.[41] There she claimed direct dictation by the Masters—especially one with whom she most closely identified—and she incorporated virtually all of the occult corpus of the nineteenth century (nearly one hundred volumes) into a huge work of nearly thirteen hundred pages. The text was divided between a first volume devoted to "Science" and a second to "Theology," suggesting the ongoing problematic of Theosophy as it aimed to bring the two together. From the first, however, the Blavatsky synthesis was controversial. Bruce Campbell has detailed how the spiritualist (and former Theosophist) William Emmette Coleman—a member of the American Oriental Society, the Pali Text Society, and similar organizations—claimed to have uncovered some two thousand instances of serious plagiarism. Coleman also declared that he had uncovered a series of other quotations taken not from original sources but from secondary ones without acknowledgment.[42]

If so—and the evidence was there to see—Blavatsky likewise stood in the tradition of spiritualist mediumship, with its own flamboyant fraudulence, and—

with the mediums—in a quasi-shamanic tradition in which sacred tricksterism had consistently been part of the religious game. Now, though, in the Blavatsky innovation, the trickery came not merely through act and gesture but also through words. More than that, a straightforward reading of *Isis Unveiled* and later work by Blavatsky that focuses on the external event of plagiarism may oversimplify. Even if we discount the loose nineteenth-century standards of textual attribution, it may be argued that Blavatsky's tricks counted, essentially, as religious phenomena. Sacred trickery has been predicated on the assumption that unless humans see "sign and wonders" (as in John 4:48), they will not believe—and that believing is good for them. Trickery compensates for the nonproduction of magical events on demand, even in a culture of affirmation in which devotees insist that magic does happen. Trickery, however, acknowledges that it happens only some of the time, not always, and not predictably.

Attention needs to be paid, too, to the complex psychological universe in which Blavatsky's "creative" writing occurred. Robert Ellwood has pointed to the "other order" in which Blavatsky apparently spent much of her time, a place where the "universe itself" became simultaneously "subjectivity" and a "cosmic mind animated by other subjectivities, later called the Masters and the Hierarchy." According to Ellwood, evidence suggests that the key to the enigmatic Blavatsky's marginality and liminality may have been "a mild case of dissociation or multiple personality, a condition in which each personality may operate by quite different values and have different goals from the others, and may not even be aware of everything the other does." Moreover the idea of Masters on which she drew had a long history in both East and West. It is easy to point, for example, to Hindu rishis and Buddhist bodhisattvas on Asian soil. For the West, Masters had been evoked both in Neoplatonist and Rosicrucian writings. In the nineteenth century, they were acknowledged by individuals such as Éliphas Lévi [A.-L. Constant], the French magus who named Mesmer's magnetic fluid the "astral light," and the English novelist and member of the occult Golden Dawn Edward Bulwer-Lytton, whom Blavatsky so much admired.[43]

Blavatsky's Masters, however—become Mahatmas after she and Olcott left for India in 1878—brought her over the edge when they ever more plentifully supplied her associates with materialized letters. The Anglo-Indian journalist A. P. Sinnett by 1883 had published both *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism* in touch, he believed, with the Mahatmas, the former volume describing his receipt of a series of letters from them and the latter drawn from the mysteriously materialized letters themselves. Nevertheless, by the following year Emma Cutting Coulomb, a staff member in Blavatsky's household at Adyar, India, with her husband, charged in a series of articles in the local *Christian College Magazine* that

the Mahatma letters had been produced by Blavatsky, with her housekeeper as assistant. Especially damaging was the revelation of sliding back panels in a cabinet in Blavatsky's shrine room adjoining her bedroom (thus enabling letters or other objects to "materialize," as if from nowhere, within the shrine). When Australian Richard Hodgson of the Society for Psychical Research came to Adyar on behalf of a society committee, evidence of fraud mounted. Hodgson concluded that Emma Coulomb's allegations stood up to scrutiny, that all the phenomena that he could unravel were contrived, and that Blavatsky herself had written the large bulk of the Mahatma letters, with a few by someone else. His published report for the society's Committee of Investigation extended to roughly two hundred pages.[44]

In 1877, however, the full mysteries of the Mahatma letters were still waiting to be manifested from what Blavatsky would in *Isis Unveiled* call the "ether" or the "astral light." Moreover, with all of the problems associated with its composition, *Isis* emerged, arguably, as a trance production, a latter-day labor in the tradition of such works among American spiritualists. As Campbell notes, its Western occultism reflects a subculture in which belief in adepts, "white" and "black" magic, "astral light," and "elemental races or nature spirits" all flourished. The Blavatsky who spoke through these pages recounted in a grand synthesis the Hermetic tradition of the West and its nineteenth-century resonances in, for example, spiritualism, mesmerism, and psychic phenomena. Along the way came forays into modern science and ancient Kabbalah, denunciations of official Christianity and expositions of the longtime Christian wisdom tradition, and—in the most Eastern-turning materials—comparisons of Christianity to Hinduism and Buddhism. Even amid the plagiarism—beyond, but perhaps related to, issues of trance production—the extent of Blavatsky's synthesis needs to be noticed. Whatever the sources of its parts and whatever the Herculean efforts (and they were) of Olcott and others to organize the manuscript for her, Blavatsky's product had become a creation in its own right. The work sold a thousand copies in ten days, and by a year later its two reprints had also sold out. Among Theosophists and sympathizers, it continued to achieve impressive sales.[45]

Behind the massive work lay Blavatsky's conviction: "Spiritualism, in the hands of an adept, becomes Magic, for he is learned in the art of blending together the laws of the Universe, without breaking any of them and thereby violating Nature." By contrast, "in the hands of an inexperienced medium," spiritualism became "UNCONSCIOUS SORCERY." Such a medium opened "unknown to himself, a door of communication between the two worlds through which emerge the blind forces of Nature lurking in the astral Light, as well as good and bad spirits." Blavatsky minced no words for readers as she called spiritual-

ism a "strange creed" and assessed the majority of spiritual communications to be "trivial, commonplace, and often vulgar." Moreover, manifestations such as those of the "uneducated Vermont farmer" at the Eddy homestead were "*not* the forms of the persons they appeared to be" and were "simply their portrait statues, constructed, animated and operated by the elementaries" (compare the fabled statues of the *Asclepius*). Yet spiritualism alone offered a "possible last refuge of compromise" between "self-styled revealed religions and materialistic philosophies."[46]

In a work that announced, in its first sentence, "intimate acquaintance with Eastern adepts," what they taught Blavatsky was the "Hermetic philosophy, the anciently universal Wisdom Religion, as the only possible key to the Absolute in science and theology." For those who might understand Hermeticism in Western terms, it was clear that Blavatsky, already in 1877 and before, inflected the received tradition in heavily Asian ways. Spiritualist failures would continue, she stated emphatically, "*until these pretended authorities of the West go to the Brahmans and Lamaists of the far Orient, and respectfully ask them to impart the alphabet of true science.*" As significant, her Eastern adepts had taught her "an absolute and immovable faith in the omnipotence of man's own immortal self." Invoking the "kinship" between the human spirit and the "Universal Soul—God," she affirmed that "Man-spirit" proved "God-spirit, as the one drop of water prove[d] a source from which it must have come."[47] Blavatsky was keeping apparent company with the divine human. She was also, like John Dee and other Hermeticists of old, doing her share of angel-summoning.

Even as Blavatsky exalted a Platonic "middle ground" (which she linked with "the abstruse systems of old India"), she read her Platonism and philosophy in terms of practice. "*Magic was considered a divine science which led to a participation in the attributes of Divinity itself,*" she declared in language that recalled the Hermetic corpus of the Renaissance. Exalting the human will and connecting it to "manifestation," Blavatsky unraveled a tale of the akasa or akasha, the astral light known in ancient times as sacred fire and in the modern era as magnetic fluid, "nerve-aura," Reichenbach's "*od*," electricity, and so forth. For her the light was identified with the nineteenth-century "ether"—the medium and mysterious element that, according to the common theory of light as undulation or wave, transmitted transverse waves and permeated all space. This light was, indeed, an akashic *record*, for it contained all memory and was, in fact, the "MEMORY OF GOD." Humans were light beings, for it was the "astral soul" that, in accord with "Hermetic doctrine," survived the body's death. Moreover, this "energizing principle in matter" possessed magical properties. Here Blavatsky

posited a "regular science of the soul" that taught "how to force the *invisible* to become visible." It taught, too, "the existence of elementary spirits; the nature and magical properties of the astral light; the power of living men to bring themselves into communication with the former through the latter."[48]

Invoking a universal spirit or world soul operative everywhere, Blavatsky turned her attention to matters of sickness and healing. Again, her remarks arose out of the discourse world of spiritualism, its healing practices, and her mission to correct the "abuses of mesmeric and magnetic powers in some healing mediums." In a statement that, with a shift, became the New Thought faith of the late nineteenth century, she declared that "*with expectency* [sic] *supplemented by faith, one can cure himself of almost any morbific condition*." With the "influence of mind over the body . . . so powerful that it has effected miracles at all ages," Blavatsky was now but a short step away from the "mind-cure" metaphysician. If we follow the implicit logic of her exposition, the individual, as a reconstituted magus, would wrest power from the medium to use his or her own (divine) Mind as a magical instrument of healing. Meanwhile, Blavatsky instructed readers at length in the history and structure of the human species. She announced the existence of pre-Adamite races and charted the descent of spirit into matter, emanating ultimately from a "central, spiritual, and *Invisible* sun" (Gnostic and Kabbalistic in her reading but also echoing, in some respects, the occult formulation of Andrew Jackson Davis). Clearly, she testified, Charles Darwin had gotten his directions wrong—"evolution having originally begun from above and proceeded downward." Beyond that, the human task was one of "upward progress," an ascent to the "divine parent" and source from which it had come.[49]

In an anthropology that would be parsed differently in her later *Secret Doctrine* (1888), Blavatsky used the Western Hermetic tradition to articulate a testimony to the existence of subtle bodies. Nature was "triune" (visible, invisible, and spiritually sourced), and so were humans. Each person possessed "his objective, physical body; his vitalizing astral body (or soul), the real man." These two, in turn, were "brooded over and illuminated by the third—the sovereign, the immortal spirit." The success of the "real man" in the task of "merging himself" with spirit rendered him an "immortal entity." In this context, magic meant knowledge concerning all of this, and it also became the means by which control of nature's forces could be gained and applied "by the individual while still in the body." Always, magic existed in the service of mastery. The reform of spiritualism that Olcott had demanded took shape in unmistakable terms in Blavatsky's vision. Just as he had noticed that she, unlike the Chittenden mediums, could not be enslaved by the séance productions, so she proclaimed mediumship to

be "the opposite of adeptship" and announced liberation for the adept who "actively controls himself and all inferior potencies." In this there was "no miracle." All that happened was "the result of law—eternal, immutable, ever active."[50]

Here, in sum, was the Western magus at the height of dominion over the secret powers of nature. Despite all the deference to Asia, despite the attestation that India was the "cradle of the race" and "Mother" to "philosophy, religion, arts and sciences," here lay no easy belief in reincarnation (a later fundamental in Blavatsky's Theosophy). "Not a rule in nature," but an "exception," reincarnation occurred for this earlier Blavatsky only if "preceded by a violation of the laws of harmony of nature." To be sure, the work was hardly friendly to Christianity, a religion that for her bore at best a derivative status. Yet Blavatsky's reading of the Pauline indwelling Christ (see, for example, 2 Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 2:20) as an "embodied idea" and "the abstract ideal of the personal divinity indwelling in man" would be echoed (and from various sources) in a continuing American metaphysical religion.[51]

Already, though, even as *Isis* was being published and read, the personal odysseys and external circumstances of Blavatsky and Olcott were beckoning them and their flagging Theosophical Society in an Asian direction. Olcott had turned over the idea of attaching the society to the Masonic order to give it stability; and, more seriously, there had been work toward a merger with the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement that sought the restoration of the ancient teaching of the scriptural Vedas. But even though the society's council formally resolved to unite with the Indian organization in May 1878, further exploration suggested an Arya Samaj that looked too sectarian for theosophical tastes. It was in this context that the Theosophical Society began to discover its reconstructed self. In *Old Diary Leaves*, Olcott remembered the process and the joint circular that he and Blavatsky drafted. Within the circular's "categorical declaration of principles," he observed, were "three Declared Objects." The first was "the study of occult science"; the second, "the formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood"; the third, "the revival of Oriental literature and philosophy."[52]

Olcott had written expansively on this third purpose in the circular, which committed the organization not only to acquainting the West with "the long-suppressed *facts* about Oriental religious philosophies, their ethics, chronology, esoterism, symbolism," but also and especially to focusing on esotericism. Theosophists thus would spread "a knowledge of the sublime teachings of that pure esoteric system of the archaic period which are mirrored in the oldest Vedas, and in the philosophy of Gautama Buddha, Zoroaster, and Confucius." Meanwhile, internal distinctions were being set up. The New York City circular acknowledged three theosophical sections—new members who still shared "worldly in-

terests," intermediate students "who had withdrawn from the same or were ready to do so," and the Masters, or "adepts . . . who, without being actually members, were at least connected with us and concerned in our work as a potential agency for the doing of spiritual good to the world." It would, however, be a decade later—in the context of a power struggle between Olcott and Blavatsky—before he, as president, formally created the Esoteric Section of the society.[53]

Three months after the appearance of the New York circular, in December 1878, Blavatsky and Olcott set sail for India. In the three years since the inception of their society, themes of spiritualism and its reform gradually faded before a transformed sense of mission. Still, as we will see in the next chapter, spiritualism had set the terms for the new mission, and the reconstructed Theosophy of 1878 and after answered the questions that spiritualism raised. At the edge of the rational material world, who would be in charge? When the myriad landscapes of the mind were visited, who would drive the chariot? Were humans in their day-to-day lives captive specimens to be operated by their own unconscious psyches, by the mental powers of their fellows, or by the high commands of spirits? Or were they, could they be, after all secretly—and then openly and spectacularly—in charge? Was the American spiritualist interlude a heterodox episode in the grand Hermetic scheme of things? Or was it a preparation, designed by masterful adepts, for a higher, better spiritual vision? All of the late-nineteenth-century metaphysicians would find themselves compelled by this series of questions, and all of them would find answers on the side of human mastery and command (even if, at least in the case of Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science, hedged about with testimonies to the transcendent power of God). Metaphysicians, for the most part, would chart a course through a spiritual universe in which humans were meant to dwell as gods.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND THE RECONSTITUTION OF MESMERISM AND MEDIUMSHIP

The same year that Henry Steel Olcott published *People from the Other World*, Mary Baker Glover's crisply titled *Science and Health* appeared in print.[54] A work of over 450 pages, it was the culmination of a decade of metaphysical reflection and writing by a woman in her mid-fifties who counted herself thoroughly Christian. Indeed, she wrote it after she claimed a spiritual discovery that would radically reorient religion and spiritual practice for the Christian churches. Known more familiarly as Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910)—the name she assumed after her marriage to Asa Gilbert Eddy in 1877—the author brought far less cosmopolitanism than did Olcott to a work that would go through a plethora of edi-

tions until the familiar 1906 version became the standard text.[55] *Science and Health* stood beside the Bible for Christian Scientists, and it became the scripture that was canonically read in Christian Science services everywhere. Eddy herself would look back on the work in her later years in ways that hinted of the kind of "channeled" text that numerous spiritualists, as well as Helena P. Blavatsky, claimed to produce. When Eddy wrote it, she declared, she had "consulted no other authors and read no other book but the Bible for three years." Still more, as she said, "it was not myself, but the power of Truth and love, infinitely above me, which dictated 'Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures.'"[56]

If Eddy had begun Christian Science in mid-life, she continued to preside over the fortunes of her religious foundation with a success that could be estimated by the imposing Boston Mother Church dedicated at the end of 1894. These times of abundance and fulfillment, however, had been preceded by a personal life more bleak and compromised. Born in Bow, New Hampshire, Mary Morse Baker had grown up in the shadow of the Congregational church with its Puritan past and was formally admitted to membership at twelve, even though she could not affirm her pastor's old-school doctrine of predestination. She would continue to affirm her connection to this Congregational world, and, in fact, the language of sin was woven in and out of her writings throughout her life. Arguably, she never gave up Calvinism when she embraced metaphysics. As earlier proto-metaphysical and metaphysical practice already demonstrates, commitments to mind and correspondence could encompass Christian categories. Now, in what would become Baker Eddy's Christian Science, we test the limits of such combinativeness.

A youthful Baker married Colonel George Washington Glover of Charleston, South Carolina, in 1843, lived with him in the South for a year, and then, when he succumbed to yellow fever, returned to New England and gave birth to a son. Glover was chronically ill, and her family was, for various reasons, unsupportive in helping to care for the boisterous child. When he was five—after her recently widowed father remarried—the little boy, George Jr., was sent away to live with a now-married former family servant with whom Glover herself had a warm relationship. She apparently agreed to the plan reluctantly. Her second marriage, with the philandering dentist Daniel Patterson, ended in divorce in 1873, but she had gone back to the surname Glover well before that.[57]

Hard times dogged Eddy (to use the familiar surname) as she moved from one shabby boardinghouse to the next, living with people below her social station because of the paucity of her means. Here she experienced the spiritual seeker culture of her age in a readily available world of mesmerism and spiritualism. Meanwhile, she continued to be plagued with ill health—probably mostly what

George Beard would by the 1880s label "American nervousness," or neurasthenia.[58] Eddy's physical complaints brought her to homeopathy, hydropathy (water cure), and mesmerism and eventually to the reformed magnetic medicine of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802–1866), a well-known mental healer practicing in Portland, Maine. The teaching and practice of Quimby, placed beside the authoritative message of Congregational Calvinism, became a major influence that helped to catalyze Eddy's own combinative system in Christian Science after his death in 1866.

Eddy worked with Quimby not merely as a patient—for whom the "medicine" was in large part effective—but also as a student transcribing notes of conversations with him, reading his own notes and sometimes "correcting" them, and acting increasingly as an intellectual colleague to her mentor. Moreover, as a Quimby patient-student, Eddy was hardly alone. Among the others who participated in the loose Quimby community were major early leaders in the New Thought movement. Remembering the well-known mental healer's relationship with the others, his son George Quimby recalled that his father would "talk hours and hours, week in and week out . . . listening and asking questions. After these talks he would put on paper in the shape of an essay or conversation what subject his talk had covered." Eddy, as George Quimby wrote, actively participated, even as she pursued a one-on-one intellectual relationship with the doctor, and her own thinking apparently intermingled with his.[59]

Who was this Portland healer whose thriving practice had attracted Eddy, the ailing neurasthenic patient, and who became a major intellectual and spiritual influence on her life? An autodidact like Eddy herself, Quimby was making clocks in Belfast, Maine, when he attended Charles Poyen's lectures in 1838. Attracted to the medical applications of animal magnetism, he partnered with the youthful Lucius Burkmar in an itinerating stage demonstration of clairvoyance in healing. In performances that took place as the pair traveled the lyceum circuit, Quimby mesmerized Burkmar, Burkmar "read" the disease that afflicted an inquiring audience member, and then Burkmar prescribed the remedy that would heal the illness. As the process worked—even on Quimby himself—he raised critical questions about it and eventually became convinced that the true agent of healing success was the power of suggestion and the belief it fostered within each subject. Quimby had arrived, in an incipient way, at the notion of the power of mind. In the process, he also became confident that he, too, possessed clairvoyant powers. Subsequently parting ways with Burkmar, he began a practice that increasingly departed from its magnetic beginnings. By the time he settled in Portland toward the end of 1859, Quimby was styling himself a mental healer. He was also, despite his Christian heterodoxy, a cosmological seeker

with compelling religious and theological questions. Robert Peel noted that he attended Unitarian and Universalist churches.[60] And Quimby surely knew the Bible, as his writings reveal. Meanwhile, his religious liberalism links him to the harmonial philosophy of Andrew Jackson Davis and other spiritualists, and some of his ideas can also be linked to those of Emanuel Swedenborg and of the American Transcendentalists.

In the American culture of Quimby's era, as we have already seen, mesmerism blended with spiritualism into a viable way to think and act, to make sense of basic problems of human life in a kind of armchair philosophy that was also a pragmatic set of principles for action. Quimby's writings, rough and opaque though they often are, record his perceptions of this nineteenth-century thought world as he constructed his own. Whatever his knowledge of Davis (and there is no evidence, of which I am aware, that he ever directly read the well-known spiritualist), Quimby was intimately acquainted with spiritualism in its phenomenal form. Ervin Seale's complete edition of Quimby's writings, published only as recently as 1988, makes Quimby's familiarity with a spiritualist discourse community abundantly clear. (Seale's work overturned the partial, sanitized 1921 edition by Horatio Dresser—son of New Thought leaders Julius and Annetta Dresser—which left out Quimby's spiritualism and idealized his materialism.)[61]

The man who emerges from the Seale edition attended séances frequently and could influence the phenomena that occurred in the circles. "I profess to be a medium myself and am admitted to be so by the spiritualists themselves," he owned in one essay and, in another, related an account of a séance at which he proved himself to be a "healing medium." He had become a medium, he claimed, but—like the Blavatsky of a decade or more later—he enjoyed a freedom not experienced by others. "I retained my own consciousness and at the same time took the feelings of my patient," he declared.[62] Yet this Quimby—on such close terms with spiritualists and their séances and so thoroughly familiar, too, with the details of mesmeric practice—admitted the phenomena but, again like Blavatsky, thoroughly disputed their cause and conditions. For him, however, what generated mesmeric success and spiritualist manifestation were not "elementals" or "elementaries" but simple human belief and opinion.

Mesmerism and spiritualism were "phenomena without any wisdom," and a spirit was "the shadow of a person's belief or imagination." A person could not "give a fair account of the phenomena of Spiritualism" because the "experiments" were "governed by . . . belief and must be so." Quimby wasted no words in pronouncing "ghosts and spirits" to be "the invention of man's superstition." "So long as people think about the dead," he stated flatly, "so long there will be spirits, for thought is spirit, and that is all the spirits there are." How did the production

of spirits work, and what was the mechanism of spiritualist activity? Quimby's answer lay in the generic "power of creating ideas and making them so dense that they could be seen by a subject that was mesmerized." This was the state that, in his single-source explanation, embraced "all the phenomena of spiritualism, disease, religion and everything that affect[ed] the mind." Nor did mesmerism and spiritualism essentially differ. "The word 'mesmerism,'" Quimby wrote, "embraces all the phenomena that ever were claimed by any intelligent spiritualists." Clearly, the "other world" was "in the mind." "The idea that any physical demonstration" came "from the dead" was to him "totally absurd."[63]

Still, Quimby had bought into the spiritualist universe enough to reiterate the materialist explanation for mesmeric and similar phenomena that had been popularized by Davis and others. "Spirit" was "only matter in a rarefied form, and thought, reason and knowledge" were "the same." "Mind" was "the name of a spiritual substance that can be changed" and was, in fact, "spiritual matter." "Thought" was "also matter, but not the same matter," just as the earth was not "the same matter as the seed which is put into it." Moreover, Quimby echoed the spiritualist seer in further ways. J. Stillson Judah decades ago pointed to parallels between Davis's and Quimby's etiology of disease in the discords of the human spirit and their perception of an "atmosphere" surrounding a human subject that could be affected, for good or ill, by another. He noticed, too, their mutual identification of God with Wisdom and a series of other similar (often Swedenborgian and Hermetic) beliefs regarding divine and human nature and human destiny.[64]

Regarding "spiritual matter," so pervasive was Quimby's identification between cognitive phenomena and the material realm that it is easy to read him as a thoroughgoing materialist, given his immersion in the language world of mesmerism and spiritualism. Yet this conclusion fails to notice the rather bold departure that Quimby made from mesmeric-spiritualist canons and ideas—a departure that his patient-student Mary Baker Eddy was to take and transform in terms of Calvinist Christianity to create Christian Science. In Quimby's reconstruction of the received cosmology, he combined the materialism of his sources with an idealism that at least one mid-twentieth-century scholar linked to Transcendentalism. Quimby's knowledge of the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson and other Transcendentalists was no doubt tenuous and secondhand at best, but major newspapers habitually summarized Emerson's lyceum lectures, and idealist views were clearly there for the taking.[65] Beyond that, a generalized Swedenborgianism could be argued in tandem with these ideas. Judah, for example, pointed to the essentially Swedenborgian views that Quimby held regarding what he termed the "natural" and the "spiritual man," and his preference for an analogical, or allegorical, reading of scripture in the tradition of Swedenborg.[66]

Whatever Quimby's sources (Davis? others?), his writings demonstrate thoroughgoing preoccupation with a wisdom that transcended the material world of mind and mesmeric play. Alternately cast, this wisdom operated as a metaphysical "solid" that suffused the world, like a ghost of the mesmeric fluidic ether but always elusively nonmaterial. Set in this cosmological situation, two kinds of humans inhabited the earth—the "natural man," caught in the error of a materialist mind and its attendant phenomena, and the "scientific man," who saw past the performance into the space of wisdom. Quimby argued for the wisdom world: Calling the power that governed the material mind "spirit," the Portland physician yet recognized "a Wisdom superior to the word mind, for I always apply the word mind to matter but never apply it to the First Cause."[67]

Still more, although Quimby was thoroughly anticlerical and opposed to orthodox Christianity, his familiarity with Christian scripture meant that his writings were filled with metaphysicalized biblical references to contend for his view. Indeed, in his private papers, he betrayed a kind of messianism in which he identified himself with the biblical Christ, at the same time typically separating Christ, as identical to Science, from sole attachment to the historical Jesus. "Jesus never tried to teach anything different from what I am teaching and doing every day," he testified. His statement of his own case is crucial for understanding the new production that became Eddy's Christian Science: "Now I stand as one that has risen from the dead or error into the light of truth, not that the dead or my error has risen with me, but I have shaken off the old man or my religious garment and put on the new man that is Christ or Science, and I fight these errors and show that they are all the makings of our own mind. As I stand outside of all religious belief, how do I stand alongside of my followers? I know that I, this wisdom, can go and impress a person at a distance. The world may not believe it, but to the world it is just such a belief as the belief in spirits; but to me it is a fact and this is what I shall show."[68]

Nor were Quimby's allusions to the higher wisdom, as Robert Peel argued problematically, "recurrent elements of spiritual idealism which contradict the author's basic position."[69] A clear hierarchy of error and truth, in fact, ran through all of Quimby's writings. Mind, with its beliefs and opinions, existed as part of a material order of error; wisdom rose above it; somehow Quimby—despite the morass in which all other mortals seemingly found themselves—lived as a "scientific man" in a realm beyond. Quimby, like Jesus, inhabited the wisdom world, and Eddy had discovered the connection. This was so much so that in late 1862 her enthusiasm for her new healer-teacher embarrassed him publicly, when letters that she wrote to the *Portland Courier* in the first blush of her healing experience appeared in print. Quimby stood "upon the plane of wisdom with his truth,"

she proclaimed in the second of these, and he healed "as never man healed since Christ." "P. P. Quimby," she exulted, "rolls away the stone from the sepulchre of error, and health is the resurrection."[70]

Mary Baker Eddy's relationship with Quimby ended abruptly in January 1866 when the doctor died. Bereft of both doctor and mentor (her father Mark Baker had also died three months before), she poured out her feelings in "Lines on the Death of Dr. P. P. Quimby, who healed with the truth that Christ taught, in contradistinction to all isms." The poem was published in the *Lynn* (Massachusetts) *Weekly Reporter* almost a month later. Meanwhile, less than two weeks after Quimby's death, Eddy fell on ice on her way to a meeting, experienced injuries that caused severe head and neck pain with possible spinal dislocation, and three days later, in the midst of pain that her homeopathic physician could not assuage, read a New Testament passage. An account of one of the healing miracles of Jesus, the narrative, she later claimed, triggered an intense experiential state of awareness. Eddy, according to her own report and denominational tradition, had "discovered" Christian Science.[71]

If so, what she took away cognitively from the experience, at least as she later constructed it, linked the wisdom discourse of Quimby to the orthodoxy of her Congregational Christian past. Now, though, instead of immersion in the world of error that pervaded most of Quimby's writings, a felt sense of God as the only reality became the key to her healing and all healing. Even as Eddy brought the unorthodox Quimby to the orthodoxy of her past, the Calvinism of her religious construction was noticeable. At least part of the attraction of the Quimby theology for Eddy was its predication of wisdom as an unchanging and *transcendent* reality. Whatever Eddy's connections to spiritualism—and, as we shall see, they were many—the theological immanence that spiritualism proclaimed was for her in the end untenable.

Eddy did, to be sure, teach what might be called a Christian version of final union with an Oversoul become God. In the first edition of her textbook *Science and Health*, for example, she wrote that "we are never Spirit until we are God; there are no individual 'spirits.'" She went on to exhort that "until we find Life Soul, and not sense, we are not sinless, harmonious, or undying. We become Spirit only as we reach being in God; not through death or any change of matter, but mind, do we reach Spirit, lose sin and death, and gain man's immortality." But the journey was decidedly one to a transcendental state and order. The published 1876 edition of Eddy's teaching pamphlet *Science of Man*, for example, declared that "Intelligence" was "circumference and not centre" and that "Soul and Spirit" were "neither in man nor matter." Similarly, the standard edition of *Science and Health* from 1906 affirmed "God as not in man but as re-

flected by man" and warned against "false estimates of soul as dwelling in sense and of mind as dwelling in matter." In her "new departure of metaphysics," Eddy elsewhere told followers, God was "regarded more as absolute, supreme," while "God's fatherliness as Life, Truth, and Love" made "His sovereignty glorious." In practical terms, testimonies of healing the sick through Christian Science treatment would be the means to glorify God and scale "the pinnacle of praise."[72] Thus the Eddy who rejected the predestinarian views of her childhood church still exalted the supreme majesty of God in ways that proclaimed the underlying Calvinism of her past.

Christian Science scholar Stephen Gottschalk notes these connections in his theological study of Eddy's place in American religious culture, and he notices as well the essential Calvinism of the metaphysical dualism she propounded. "In Christian Science as in Calvinism," Gottschalk observes, "one is clearly confronted with the Pauline antithesis of the Spirit and the flesh." It is arguable, too, that the warfare model that permeates so much of Eddy's writing reinscribes Calvinism with its traditional narratives of the battle between good and evil, between God and the devil, in the life of the soul. In fact, any sustained contact with the corpus of Eddy's writings reveals the periodic invocation of "sin" as a habitual way to distinguish reprehensible states of mind and life. We have already seen her identifying the loss of "sin" in "Life Soul" in the first edition of *Science and Health*. Later, both in the *Manual of the Mother Church* (1895) and in the standard (1906) edition of *Science and Health*, Scientists and seekers could find among the six "Tenets" of the Mother Church one that acknowledged "God's forgiveness of sin in the destruction of sin and the spiritual understanding that casts out evil as unreal." "Rule out of me all sin," the *Church Manual* asked Scientists to pray daily.[73]

Ostensibly committed to the unreality of sin and evil, Eddy's writings—with their warfare mentality that equaled or amplified Quimby's polemical stance—hid a Calvinist devil lurking beneath the metaphysical surface, an evil that displayed a very tangible presence. Toward the end of Eddy's life, that presence took the form of a heightened personal fear of "malicious animal magnetism" ("M.A.M."), as prayer workers stationed outside her door through the night contended against claimed magnetic onslaughts. But much earlier, it is hard not to detect a palpable sense of evil that preoccupied her. Her contentious relationships with students and former students were cast by Eddy in terms that invited, for her, a felt sense of sin (of others toward her) and the presence of Satan, even if the name itself was banished to the outer darkness of theological incorrectness. On paper, sin was "the lying supposition that life, substance, and intelligence are both material and spiritual, and yet are separate from God." But Eddy herself

allowed that sin was "concrete" as well as "abstract," and in many life situations the concreteness was manifest. Sin was a "delusion" and a "*lie*," but even if she told her followers not to fear it, she acted as though she feared it herself.[74]

More than that, in the consistent Christian Science language of "mortal mind" that Eddy created it is hard not to read a transliterated script for sin and, indeed, for the old Calvinist theology of the total depravity of humankind. Eddy herself was uneasy about the term, calling it a "solecism in language" that involved "an improper use of the word *mind*." However, she was willing to live with the "old and imperfect" in her "new tongue." In this context, mortal mind meant "the flesh opposed to Spirit, the human mind and evil in contradistinction to the divine Mind, or Truth and good." Still further, her "Scientific Translation of Mortal Mind" announced its "first degree" to be "depravity," identifying depravity with the physical realm of "evil beliefs, passions and appetites, fear, depraved will, self-justification, pride, envy, deceit, hatred, revenge, sin, sickness, disease, death." Eddy was adamant in her insistence that, seen from and in the divine Mind, evil itself was unreal and that, therefore, mortal mind was mind existing in a state of error. Still for all that, the language of recrimination that she cast upon it, with its emotional tone of repugnance and rebuke, suggests that she was making *something* out of this nothing in her act of warfare against it. As Ann Braude has stated, Eddy "had no doubt that the mortal, human aspects of each person reflected the total depravity of Adam's legacy," and she was "preoccupied with fighting the dangerous temporal effect of the belief in evil."[75]

Eddy also feared a lifestyle that emphasized ease, relaxation, and pleasure, this expressed in tones that suggest the Calvinist ethos that shaped her. In the spring of 1906, for example, she wrote to the young John Lathrop, who formerly served as household staff, telling him of her sorrow "over the ease of Christian Scientists." She lamented that they were habituated in the "pleasures" of "sense." "Which drives out quickest the tenant you wish to get out of your house, the pleasant hours he enjoys in it or its unpleasantness?" she asked rhetorically. A few years later, toward the very end of her life, her household staff, who had typically observed a Puritan rigor, began to relax in ways that distressed her. Staff Scientists were less vigilant in protecting her against M.A.M., and they read the Boston newspapers, played golf, went for auto rides, and stopped sometimes at libraries in the neighborhood. On one late-summer occasion, recounts Stephen Gottschalk, Eddy looked out of her window as two staff members threw a ball back and forth and another attempted to walk on his hands. She endured, as Gottschalk quotes from Calvin Frye's diary, "a very disturbed night and a fear she could not live!"[76]

The perils of flesh and spirit, however, deferred to the presence of spirits when Mary Glover's first edition of *Science and Health* appeared in print in 1875. Pub-

lished nine years after Quimby's death, the work displayed a woman who now spoke with an authority of her own and a sense of knowledge gained through hard-won experience. The text likewise displayed a woman at pains to separate herself from mesmeric and mediumistic phenomena, so that the new warfare of the spirit that Eddy waged was clearly directed against spiritualism and its magnetic culture. Like her former mentor Phineas Quimby and like the founders of Theosophy, she saw in mesmerism "unmitigated humbug," and her estimate of spiritualism was equally denunciatory. In the three-page preface to her ambitious first edition, Eddy (then Glover) singled out mesmerism for direct rebuke. "Some shockingly false claims" had already been made regarding the work in which she was engaged. "Mesmerism" was one, she stated flatly, and her denial was total. "Hitherto we have never in a single instance of our discovery or practice found the slightest resemblance between mesmerism and the science of Life."[77]

If Eddy seemed defensive, she had reason to be. In her Quimby years, she had surely traveled in mesmeric and spiritualist circles, and even as she took her first steps in Lynn as a practitioner of what became Christian Science many who were close to her thought of her as a medium. Her early advertisement of her new system of healing through "Moral Science" in the spiritualist *Banner of Light* in 1868 no doubt helped to fuel the assumption, and so, no doubt, did her outsider stance toward conventional medical methods.[78] That acknowledged, the vehemence of her condemnation of mesmerism and spiritualism was still startling. Eddy, by virtue of her emotional engagement, ended up affirming what she denied. Matter became real and so did mesmeric influence and spirit contact with it when she fought them so strenuously. From another point of view, Beryl Satter has suggested that Eddy's "healing process bore a family resemblance to mesmeric or hypnotic healing,"[79] and although the divine Mind that healed and mortal minds caught in the morass of error were profoundly different in her system (and so not exactly comparable), still the ghost of resemblance was there.

"Mesmerism," she told students, was "a belief constituting mortal mind," and "error" was "all there is to it, which is the very antipode of science, the immortal mind." "Mesmerism" was "a direct appeal to personal sense . . . predicated on the supposition that Life is in matter, and a nervo-vital fluid at that." It was "error and belief in conflict" and "one error at war with another"; it was "personal sense giving the lie to its own statements, denying the pains but admitting the pleasures of sense." Why was it so dangerous? The answer lay in its proximity to Spirit, its ability to function as a lying proxy for the truth. "Electricity," she wrote, "is the last boundary between personal sense and Soul, and although it stands at the threshold of Spirit it cannot enter into it, but the nearer matter approaches mind the more potent it becomes, to produce supposed good or evil; the lightning is

fierce, and the electric telegram swift." Eddy's argument, in fact, replicated the theoretical model of homeopathy in which infinitesimal doses were more potent than gross ones. Homeopaths believed that the same substance that caused the symptoms of a given disease in a well person would cure the disease in a patient who was suffering from it. The key, however, was the "potentization" of remedies by increasingly radical dilutions to the point that, physically speaking, not even a trace of the original substance remained. Now, in Eddy's warning model, not only homeopathy but also the assorted healing modalities that kept it company achieved heightened power with the increased dilution of their physicality. "The more ethereal matter becomes according to accepted theories, the more powerful it is; *e.g.*, the homoeopathic drugs, steam, and electricity, until possessing less and less materiality, it passes into essence, and is admitted mortal mind; not Intelligence, but belief, not Truth, but error."[80]

Siding with the mentalists and not the fluidic theorists regarding mesmeric and related electrical phenomena, she declared electricity to be "not a vital fluid; but an element of mind, the higher link between the grosser strata of mind, named matter, and the more rarified called mind." Rarefied or gross, the danger in the magnetic world and its environs was ubiquitous. Thus phrenology fared no better in Eddy's estimate, making an individual "a thief or Christian, according to the development of bumps on the cranium." "To measure our capacities by the size or weight of our brains, and limit our strength to the use of a muscle," she admonished, "holds Life at the mercy of organization, and makes matter the status of man." Taking aim at the health reform movement of the era, which bowed "to flesh-brush, flannel, bath, diet, exercise, air, etc.," she declared "physiology" to be "anti-Christian." Meanwhile, not only magnetism but also "mediumship" and "galvanism" were "the right hands of humbug," and mediumship by itself was an "imposition" and a "catch-penny fraud."[81]

In Eddy's reading, mesmerism and mediumship were clearly intertwined, lumped together as, for practical purposes, they had functioned in the spiritualist community in which she had sometimes, if warily, participated. Moreover, she had been called a spirit medium, not a mesmerist, and so she experienced mediumship as an especially potent enemy against which she needed to contend. "We have investigated the phenomenon called mediumship both to convince ourself of its nature and cause, and to be able to explain it," she told the student readers of *Science and Health,* although she expressed some reservations about her ability to do the second. Her critique, though, was undeterred, and it was trenchant. The Rochester rappings "inaugurated a mockery destructive to order and good morals." Likewise, the "mischievous link between mind and matter, called planchette, uttering its many falsehoods," was "a prototype of

the poor work some people make of the passage from their old natures up to a better man." Eddy did not deny the sincerity of many involved in the séances, enjoining readers to "make due distinction between mediumship and the individual" and affirming that there were "undoubtedly noble purposes in the hearts of noble women and men who believe themselves mediums." But like Blavatsky and Olcott at the (ironically named) Eddy farm, she pointed to the loss of mastery that accompanied mediumistic work. Mediumship, she warned, was a "belief of individualized 'spirits,' also that they do much for you, the result of which is you are capable of doing less for yourself."[82]

Eddy bristled angrily at mediumistic claims. Mediumship presupposed that "one man" was "Spirit," and that he controlled "another man" that was "matter." It taught that "bodies which return to dust or new bodies called 'spirits'" were "experiencing the old sensations, and desires material, and mesmerizing earthly mortals." It taught, too, that "shadow" was "tangible to touch" and that it produced "electricity" and similar phenomena. She found these conclusions to be "ridiculous." The spirit manifestations were the "result of tricks or belief, proceeding from the so-called mind of man, and not the mind of God." Mediumship itself overlooked "the impossibility for a sensual mind to become spirit, or to possess a spiritual body after what we term death," something that science revealed as "more inconsistent than for stygian darkness to emit a sun-beam." "To admit the so-called dead and living commune together," Eddy asserted categorically, was "to decide the unfitness of both for their separate positions." "Mediumship assigns to their dead a condition worse than blighted buds or mortal mildew, even a poor purgatory where one's chances for something narrow into nothing, or they must return to the old stand-points of matter." Its foundations lay in "secretiveness, jugglery, credulity, superstition and belief." Because of its mystical ambience, it could "do more harm than drugs."[83]

As warrior of the spirit, Eddy with her pungency equaled or exceeded the contentiousness of Quimby, making a similar case but making it now out of a heterodox Calvinism instead of her mentor's heterodox liberal Christianity. And like the unsystematic short pieces left by Quimby, her more systematic work pointed beyond the language of argument to a *lived* engagement with powerful ideas. The center of Eddy's work was practice, and the center of her healing practice was argument. In the language game that was her metaphysical system, the practitioner argued *against* the error that was matter, against the mortal mind of the patient-client in its mesmerized "Adam-dream"—until the healer broke through to Truth and Principle. The absolutism of Eddy's stance was uncompromising. The false belief in matter condemned people to the scenarios of illness and pain that they experienced. The healing role of the Christian Science practitioner

was meant not so much to provide compassionate care as to demonstrate Truth in an ideal order that reduced the physical to the nothing that it was, an order that, in short, proved the claims of the Christian gospel as Eddy herself understood them. Like the utterly sovereign, utterly transcendent God of Calvinism, like the God out of the whirlwind in the book of Job, Truth brooked no compromise and demonstrated its reality by vanquishing the appearance of disease and disorder. Christian Science healing existed not to enhance matter and materially based humanity. It existed *only* to advance the Truth, the Principle, of God.

There was, of course, a cutting irony in Eddy's adamant antimaterialism—an antimaterialism that Stephen Gottschalk in recent work has noticed so clearly—when juxtaposed to the early wealth of the Christian Science Mother Church and the rising status of its mostly female practitioners.[84] But a facile coupling of the material success of the movement to the basic Eddy theology does not stand up to scrutiny when the founder's essentially Calvinist heterodoxy is understood. Still more, the easy identification of Christian Science as a species of what Sydney Ahlstrom called "harmonial religion" is problematic. Although the term has obscured more than it reveals even for New Thought, in the case of Christian Science it misreads the evidence on almost all counts. For Ahlstrom, "harmonial" religion signified "those forms of piety and belief in which spiritual composure, physical health, and even economic well-being" were "understood to flow from a person's rapport with the cosmos." But with human lives mired in sickness, sin, and death—the triadic legacy of mortal mind—Eddy's system taught no harmony at all for the material realm but instead total and uncompromising war. Moreover, when a "saved" Christian Scientist lived out of Truth and Principle, seeing evil for the nothing that it was, there was quite literally nothing with which to harmonize. One lived in Truth, or one did not. One could simply *not* harmonize nonexistence with Principle. Eddy's antimaterialist "scientific statement of being," in the familiar 1906 edition, brought home the point: "There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore, man is not material; he is spiritual."[85]

Christian Scientists did, of course, at times speak colloquially, as other Christians did, about getting into harmony with God. Eddy herself had taught that sickness, sin, and death were "inharmonies" and had pronounced all past, present, and future existence to be "God, and the idea of God, harmonious and eternal." "Harmonious action," she wrote, "proceeds from Principle; that is, from Soul; inharmony has no Principle." She had suggested in *Science and Health*,

too, that the discovery of "Life Soul" would make one harmonious. Moreover, at the very core of a formulaic healing event lay an intense realization on the part of a Science practitioner of the unreality of the patient's particular plight or illness and the divine perfection that instead was and had been ever present. Such realizations *could* be couched in the language of harmony. But perusal of Christian Science literature reveals no preference for the term or the discourse of harmony, and, still more, Christian Science healers were accustomed to describing their healing work not only as "treatment" but also, and quite typically, as "argument." When they healed, they spoke of "demonstrating over" illness—in a metaphor that evokes science and contest at once. As Stephen Gottschalk notes, "the aims and theological standpoint of Christian Science and of harmonialism differ so markedly that the two cannot be assumed to represent the same tendency." Pointing as well to the pain and suffering that characterized Eddy's personal life, he found the harmonial ascription especially inappropriate. Eddy needed to be saved, to be born again; and she felt in her "discovery" of Christian Science that her new birth in the spirit had happened.[86]

Yet if Eddy was a decided antimaterialist, and if she fought fiercely against the lingering shadows of mesmerism and spiritualism, the connections between her new "Truth" and these former partners would not go away. In the case of mesmerism, we know that early Christian Science practice included some rubbing or touching of the afflicted area of a patient's body in the style of mesmerists (and, imitating them, spiritualist healers). This essentially followed Quimby's practice growing out of his earlier healing technique in animal magnetism, and he had typically employed water as a medium for the work. Eddy herself acknowledged that when she started teaching she had "permitted students to manipulate the head, ignorant that it could do harm, or hinder the power of mind." According to report, she at first actively instructed students to rub and touch—not for the patent efficacy of these gestures but, as Quimby did, because of the belief that they fostered in the patient: "As we believe and others believe we get nearer to them by contact and now you would rub out a belief, and this belief is located in the brain." Like a doctor's poultice applied for pain, so the healer should place her "hands where the belief is to rub it out forever."[87] Added to this, we have already seen Eddy's demonstrated fear, stronger as she aged, of malicious animal magnetism.

In the case of spiritualism, Ann Braude has pointedly noticed the overlap between Eddy's theologically driven healing method and the discursive world of the spiritualist community. Aside from the shared social context in which both flourished and the similarity of the needs that drew converts to both spiritualism and Science, the denial of evil in Christian Science from one perspective made

the movement look like spiritualism because of its overt rejection of this major Calvinist category. Likewise, both spiritualism and Christian Science exalted science to deific proportions; both opposed orthodoxies in medicine as well as religion; and both encouraged egalitarianism by promoting women as leaders and by supporting lay ability to function as healers. In other words, in both systems the patient could easily take charge, and each system thus operated on a more or less level playing field. Moreover, as Braude argues, the "most significant" agreement came with the belief that there was "no change at death." True the lack of change existed, for spiritualists, as a function of the continuing material existence of spirit bodies after the change called death and, for Scientists, in the fact that there were never any real material bodies anyway. Even so, an underlying model of permanence and denial of death's edge characterized both movements.[88]

The language of the "Father-Mother God," the "Christ Principle," and God as Principle was, as we have already seen, part of the rhetorical world of spiritualism. Beyond that, Eddy's early Christian Science followers seemed to move easily in and out of the spiritualist community. Were the new practitioners—mostly women (in the ranks as well as leaders, as we will see)—former spirit mediums? Did they transpose their performances from spirits to Spirit in the same manner that the women whom Ann Braude has studied left trance mediumship on public stages for feminist speeches in their own names? Except for a few cases, no clear answers can be given. But the questions hang there for the asking. Braude has, for example, identified the combinative thrust of the Boston periodical *The Soul* in the 1880s, a periodical at home in both spiritualist and Christian Science circles. At least one medium and her husband—the later well-known Swartses—attended a Christian Science course taught by Eddy, even as the husband tried to teach what he learned from Eddy in spiritualist contexts. Beyond this, there was the over-protest of Eddy's relentless attack on spiritualism—"mesmerism, manipulation, or mediumship" as "the right hand of humbug, either a delusion or a fraud." As Braude observes, Eddy's preoccupation with separating Science from spiritualism suggests "that she viewed Spiritualism as the religion with which her own faith could be most easily confused."[89]

Still, like Blavatsky and Olcott—from whom she strenuously separated herself as well—Eddy recognized clairvoyance as fact and thought that spiritual manifestations involved mind reading on the medium's part. However, unlike Theosophists, who looked to elementals for the production of phenomena, she thought that materializations were the products of the mediumistic mind. Yet she did not think that, in theory, spirit communication was impossible. Rather, the reality of spirit communication needed to be demonstrated outside of matter since, by definition, matter was irrevocably yoked to appearance and *un*reality. Spirits, in

the plural, were "supposed mixtures of Intelligence and matter" that, "science" revealed, could not "affinitize or dwell together." But Spirit itself, in the singular, was a thoroughly different case: there was "no Intelligence, no Life, no Substance, no Truth, no Love but the Spiritual." Eddy recognized, too, the existence of trance states and the power they gave to otherwise reticent speakers.[90] Finally, like the spiritualists, in her own way she supported and promoted feminism even if she had difficulties yielding authority to talented individual women who came to her.

Given all of this, the Christian Science that Eddy shaped in her mature years reconstituted spiritualism, turning it inside out to craft a monistic system based on *non*material spirit and inverting its liberalism in her lingering Calvinism. Her reconstitution achieved manifest success, shaping its metaphysics to a new and Christian organization that demonstrates the extent to which metaphysical combinativeness could reach. The formerly self-effacing Eddy spoke and acted with decisive authority as a new religious leader, and she made and unmade institutions in the service of her cause. The roster of her doings and *un*doings quickly tells the story. She established the Christian Scientists' Association in 1876 and restructured it into the Church of Christ, Scientist in 1879. By 1882, she founded the state-chartered Massachusetts Medical College in Boston and, by 1886, the National Christian Science Association. In these years of rapid growth and development, she encouraged graduates of the college to create regional institutes that would spread Christian Science throughout the nation. In the states of Iowa and Illinois alone, according to Rennie Schoepflin, sixteen institutes arose on the Eddy model in the 1880s and the 1890s. But in 1889, with divisiveness in church governance and increasing independence among former students, she dissolved the Christian Science Association, closed her college, and disbanded the Church of Christ, Scientist, all in moves to centralize and to regain control. Several months later, in 1890, she requested that the National Christian Scientist Association adjourn for a three-year period. Then, in 1892, she reorganized the Boston church, founding the "Mother Church" so that Scientists from all across the country would need to apply for membership therein to remain within the institution.[91]

Organization proceeded apace with Eddy's publication, in 1895, of the *Manual of the Mother Church*, legislating governance matters in detail, and with the creation, in 1898, of the main administrative units that would promote her teaching. So tightly did she organize governance that Stephen Gottschalk could remark, "Perhaps the most amazing thing about Mrs. Eddy's death was the fact that it had so little apparent effect on the movement."[92] At the same time, Eddy had

committed her faith to the printed word as a major means to disseminate her new reading of the Christian gospels. From early on, practitioners and patients alike were urged to read *Science and Health*. Less than a decade later (in 1884), the first number of the *Journal of Christian Science* appeared (called the *Christian Science Journal* from 1885), with Eddy herself as editor until she turned the journal over to other promising women, like Emma Curtis Hopkins, who was soon fired and went on to become a prominent New Thought leader. In addition, Eddy created, in 1898, the *Christian Science Weekly*, subsequently renamed the *Christian Science Sentinel*, and the same year, too, established the Christian Science Publishing Society. When the well-known *Christian Science Monitor* was founded in 1908 to provide a Christian Science perspective on national and international news, it came under the aegis of the publishing society, as did numerous other promotional materials for the church and for Christian Science theology.

Eddy left Boston, where she had lived at the center of her movement for seven years, and in 1882 took up residence more reclusively near Concord, New Hampshire. Later, in 1908, she moved to Chestnut Hill, not far from Boston, where she ended her days. During her senior years, she oversaw a thriving movement that attracted increasing numbers of followers and received considerable notice in the press and public mind, some favorable and some decidedly less so. In Lynn, where Eddy had gathered her earliest class of students, they came mostly from the working class. But as the movement took off, this profile began to change. Stephen Gottschalk, who has pointed to occupation as an indicator of class status, notes—summarizing a Harvard doctoral dissertation—that by the year of Eddy's death Christian Scientists largely came from the middle class, a situation that Gottschalk sees as mostly "consistent" from 1900 to 1950.[93] Most had come, too, as believing Protestant Christians, although they had their quarrels with orthodoxy. Meanwhile, as the prominence of female leadership already suggests, many more women than men joined the movement. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, five times as many woman practitioners could be counted as men. By the next decade, in 1906, Christian Science membership was 72.4 percent female, at a time when all denominations together averaged 56.9 percent women in their ranks. The pattern apparently continued through the twentieth century, since in the 1970s the ratio of women to men within the denomination was eight to one.[94] Arguably, a new form of mediumship had arisen in their midst, as women mediated no longer the spirits from the second or further spheres but instead what Scientists claimed was Spirit itself—Principle, Truth, God, and (when gender references were made) Eddy's Father-Mother God. Without their "realization" as practitioners of each patient's "true" state, the Truth—and heal-

ing—would not be manifested in particular human lives. So the women put up shingles, placed advertisements, and collected set fees—professionalizing their healing work as the séance mediums had earlier professionalized their services.[95]

Nor did the women shun the mission field. They roamed widely as itinerant teachers, bridging the gap between domestic and public spaces and garnering a swiftly building membership for Christian Science. Rennie Schoepflin has cited statistics, for example, showing a net gain of an astounding 2,500 percent in Christian Science membership between 1890 and 1906, when 40,011 Scientists were claimed. Although Eddy banned the publication of membership figures after 1908, the number of practitioners continued to grow in the early twentieth century, with 5,394 globally in 1913 and 10,775 in 1934.[96] Like the earlier mediums who spoke in public when the spirits prompted, Christian Science women apparently felt compelled by their sense of Truth to spread a public gospel. The complex motivations of their missionary impulse point, once again, to the combinative milieu in which American metaphysical religion arose and flourished. In that milieu, too, despite all of Eddy's efforts to build an ecclesial edifice unmoved by religious change and reconstruction, the religious work that was Christian Science repeatedly exhibited the combinations and recombinations that were continually remaking metaphysics.

NEW THOUGHT AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND THEOSOPHY

To some extent, Eddy's very claims to uniqueness (even if partially correct), and to permanence and impermeability, brought change to her door. As the standard narrative of the discovery of Christian Science took shape in her remembered past and its public reconstruction, the gradualism of her early healing practice gave way before Eddy's testimony to a startling single moment of Truth. The mentorship of Quimby dissolved before the direct visitation of Spirit. Others, however, did not forget. Quimby's former patient-students Warren Felt Evans, Julius Dresser, and Annetta Seabury Dresser either indirectly (Evans) or directly (the Dressers) challenged Eddy's erasure of the Quimby legacy, even as the legacy continued to function in a rising "mind-cure" movement. At the same time, disenchanted Christian Scientists left Eddy when their views conflicted with her vision or their persons with her personality. They believed that they found in the growing mental healing movement a kinder, gentler, and more expansive version of what they had learned in Eddy's world. Healers shared their skills and news with clients who, in turn, became other healers, other sharers. The term "Christian Science" was invoked freely, used in a generic sense as a de-

scription of the new vision and healing practice. Numerous periodicals showed what was happening (Gary Ward Materra discovered some 117 in existence by 1905), and so did popular books and monographs (Materra found 744 book-length works for the same period). A networking movement had begun and was spreading fast.[97]

It was not until the 1890s that a clear New Thought identity would be posited, and that would occur in the context of Eddy's copyright on the term "Christian Science" in the early part of the decade and at least partially because of it.[98] But the rift between Eddy's Christian Science and this developing "mental science" or generic Christian Science movement existed already in the tensile structure of Quimby's thought, held together, as it was, by his ability to contain paradox and anomaly in a persuasive metaphorical quasi system. Certainly his "wisdom" transcending the error-ridden minds of his patients and their sickness affirmed the ideal order that Eddy later promoted as Spirit, Substance, Intelligence, Truth, and the like. But, as we have also seen, Quimby saw wisdom not only as transcendent but also as a solid or even fluidic substance pervading all reality, much in the manner of the old magnetic fluid. He was facile enough mostly to avoid the terms *fluid* and *ether*, but nonetheless their presence remained in the characteristics that he attributed to wisdom.[99] Even as Eddy became an absolutist of the ideal, Quimby straddled both worlds—affirming a wisdom beyond sense and matter and yet introducing sensate concepts as palpable, lived metaphors for the experience of wisdom. Nowhere can this be seen more than in Quimby's homegrown speculations on smell and its relationship to a wisdom transcending the senses yet within them. Quimby *smelled* wisdom, and he *smelled* sickness. He thought of the odors that he absorbed as so many particles of the divine in a kind of etheric atmosphere surrounding a subject.[100] And he linked their diffusion as mediumistic bearers of knowledge, or wisdom, to words and language, which also functioned as mediumistic bearers of the same.

In so doing, Quimby hinted once more of his debt to spiritualism and, especially, to Andrew Jackson Davis. In his speculations on magnetism, Davis had taught that each human soul was encircled by an "atmosphere" that was "an emanation from the individual, just as flowers exhale their fragrance." Moreover, he had posited, because of the emanation, "a favorable or unfavorable influence" that one person could have over another (this last a source, perhaps, of Eddy's later notion of M.A.M.). In his turn, Quimby pushed the metaphor and materialized it further. He likened the "brain or intellect" to a rose, and he thought that intelligence came through its smells as they emanated. Again, each belief, for Quimby, contained "matter or ideas which throw off an odor like a rose." In fact, humans typically threw off "two odors: one matter and the other wisdom." Mat-

ter, identified with the human mind (not wisdom), produced an odor that was like a "polished mirror," with fear reflected in it as "the image of the belief." Wisdom was wise because it could "see the image in the mirror, held there by its fear." Quimby was the case in point, for it was his "wisdom" that disturbed his patient's reflected "opinion," deadening the mirror "till the image or disease" had disappeared. Mostly, in the terms of the analogy, Quimby focused on the smell of matter and its manifestation as illness in the life of a patient. "The mind is under the direction of a power independent of itself," he explained, "and when the mind or thought is formed into an idea, the idea throws off an odor that contains the cause and effect." The odor was "the trouble called disease," and—unlike the doctors who knew nothing about it—Quimby himself smelled the "spiritual life of the idea" that was error. From there he could launch his healing work to banish it.[101]

This was because Quimby could also smell wisdom—a different odor—which his ailing patients were unable to detect, even though the smell of wisdom could, at least theoretically, come to them. "As a rose imparts to every living creature its odor, so man become impregnated with wisdom, assumes an identity and sets up for himself," he argued. This wisdom might be called the "first cause" and might be construed, too, to exude an "essence" that pervaded "all space." Yet, in a distinction that was crucial for Quimby, the sense of smell and the other senses belonged not to the "natural man" but to his "scientific" counterpart. Such a "scientific man"—Quimby himself—knew odor to be the most potent of the senses, conveying knowledge of good (as in savory food) and of danger, for smell was an "atmosphere" that surrounded an object or subject. Thus—and this was where he was headed—the common atmosphere of humans in similar states of fear (in the presence of danger) led to "a sort of language, so that language was invented for the safety of the race." Quimby, in short, had arrived at the idea that "the sense of smell was the foundation of language" and at the overarching conviction that from the material process came the higher wisdom. "Forming thought into things or ideas became a sense," and the process was "spiritual."[102]

Moreover, if the sense of smell was, indeed, the "foundation of language," it was also itself a language. Humans, like roses, threw off odors; odors enabled Quimby to diagnose erroneous states of mind being manifested as diseases; odors also conveyed character. Still further, distance was no factor in intuiting smells and odors. Situated in wisdom, he claimed, "my senses could be affected . . . when my body was at a distance of many miles from the patient. This led me to a new discovery, and I found my senses were not in my body but that my body was in my senses, and my knowledge located my senses just according to my wisdom."[103] Quimby's thinking on these matters was often circular, muddled, and less than clear. But through his sometimes strained efforts to explain he was lay-

ing the groundwork for later New Thought theologies of immanence and panentheism. Profoundly different from the hauntingly Calvinist transcendent God of Eddy, with an ultimate divine alterity, the New Thought deity would beckon as the God within and the God who, like a superconscious etheric fluid, permeated all things.

It was Warren Felt Evans (1817–1889), Quimby's other major theological student alongside Eddy, who would articulate—much further and more clearly than Quimby—the possibilities and powers of the resident God. At the same time, like his doctor-teacher, Evans protected the twofold nature of divinity, Mind transcendent and Mind within. Son of a Vermont farming family, Evans attended Chester Academy, spent a year at Middlebury College, and then transferred, in 1838, to Dartmouth in New Hampshire. He never graduated, since midway through his junior year he felt a calling to the Methodist ministry. According to Charles Braden, he held, at various times, eleven different positions for the denomination. Then, in 1864, he joined the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem, and the profound and abiding influence of Swedenborg became apparent in his subsequent writings. The break from his Methodist past and his move in an unorthodox spiritual direction were probably at some level stressful, for he experienced both serious and chronic "nervous" disease. Close to the time he officially became a Swedenborgian, his physical condition brought him to Quimby's Portland door. Like Eddy, Evans was healed, became a Quimby student, and also felt a calling to be a healer himself. He began a mental healing practice in Claremont, New Hampshire, but by 1867 had moved to the Boston area, where, with his wife M. Charlotte Tinker, he spent over twenty years practicing and teaching. Unlike Eddy and other mental healing professionals, he charged no fees and accepted only free will offerings. He also apparently read copiously and wrote a series of widely influential books on mental healing in a religious context.[104] If we track the changes from the earliest to the latest of these works, we gain a sense of the shifting discourse community of American metaphysics as it transitioned from high-century phrenomagnetic and Swedenborgian séance spiritualism to the theosophizing world of the late 1870s and 1880s.

The earliest of Evans's six mental healing books (he had previously written four short works on aspects of Swedenborgian theology) appeared in 1869 and the latest in 1886, together revealing a disciplined, ordering mind and a facility in argument and exposition. Evans was bibliographically responsible in ways that signal a professionalism and attention to detail not found in earlier, and especially vernacular, authors. Often, but not always, he parenthetically cited sources of quotations, giving an author's surname, a short title, and the page or pages. Aside

from the general sophistication of these works and their at-homeness in both religious and scientific worlds of contemporary discourse, they were cast in a decidedly different tone from the work of either Quimby or Eddy. Instead of polemicism and battle, in Evans readers could find affirmation and a kind of irenic catholicity that consciously combined sources in an almost theosophical style.

The first of the mental healing books, *The Mental-Cure*, disclosed an Evans who was a thorough Swedenborgian and also comfortable in a spiritualist milieu that resonated with the harmonial theology of Davis. Mind was an "immaterial substance," but matter was also a substance, one associated with the sense experience of resistance and force. All humans were "incarnations of the Divinity," love was supreme, and the good lay within, with "great futurities . . . hidden in the mysterious depths of our inner being."[105] A combined Swedenborgian-spiritualist millennialism pervaded the text with its noticeable allusions to a coming (uppercase) "New Age" (of the Holy Spirit), which was "now in the order of Providence dawning upon the world." Meanwhile, its easy assumptions regarding the real existence of spirits, its familiar references to the "Seeress of Prevorst," its citation of the ubiquitous spiritualist Samuel B. Brittan, and its doctrine of spiritual spheres pointed in the same Swedenborgian-spiritualist direction. So did its understanding of death as a "transition to a higher life" and "normal process in development." References to Gall and to phrenology as well as magnetic allusions indicated Evans's familiarity with spiritualist discourse, and there was the by now well-recognized caveat regarding magnetic power and peril ("a power that can be turned to good account, or perverted to evil"). Still more, in the Swedenborgian reading that Evans gave to "modern spiritualism," we can see the easy conflation that he and so many others were making between the sources out of which they built their world. Expounding on the "Swedish philosopher" and his doctrine of spiritual influx, Evans saw inspiration and "the commerce of our spirits with the heavens above" as "the normal state of the human mind." In that context, what was "called modern spiritualism" was "only an instinctive reaction of the general mind against the unnatural condition it has been in for centuries."[106] The plan of Evan's work was generally speaking Swedenborgian, and he was hardly bashful about acknowledging his debt, for he quoted Swedenborg frequently and in admiring terms (Braden, in fact, found seventeen references).[107] Always though, Evans focused his account on the phenomenon of illness. Bodily dysfunction signaled spiritual dysfunction, and the way to correct the body lay in correction of the spirit.

Nor was there a conceptual gap between the two in the Swedenborgian universe that Evans inhabited. Citing the authority of his Swedish mentor as well as the New Testament Paul, Evans declared for the existence of a "spiritual body"

bridging the gap between the "curious and wonderful" external body and the mind. The spiritual body functioned as one among innumerable "intermediates, through which influx descend[ed] from the higher to the lower"—part of a pattern in all creation. Compounded of "a substance intermediate between pure spirit and matter," it was for Evans "a sort of *tertium quid*," literally, a "third thing" that, for many in the developing New Thought movement, would seriously alter the orthodox anthropology of human body and soul. Here the (inner or interior) spiritual body became the harbinger of a series of multiplying bodily spheres that traced a path from gross matter to highest spirit. The spiritual body became, too, the harbinger of the energy pathways that traced the same route; and, already in Evans, the roadmap was ready. "*This inner form*," he reported, "*is the prior seat of all diseased disturbances in the body*." For Blavatsky and the theosophical movement, the spiritual body (significantly, close to her "astral" body of less than a decade after Evans's book) would later be subsumed into a series of clairvoyantly visible bodies manifested with each human frame. For many in the New Thought movement, more abstractly, it would—in a transformed version—become part of the triad of body, soul, and spirit.[108]

Where was Phineas Quimby in *The Mental-Cure*? He was there as a kind of ghost among the spirits: Evans could apparently find no methodologically viable way to acknowledge his debt. (In *Mental Medicine*, Evans's second book on mental healing—published in 1872—he did acknowledge Quimby briefly.) Yet between the lines, as it were, Evans had surely inscribed his former mentor. In the magnetic-spiritualist and, specifically, Davis harmonial tradition, he had affirmed that "every material body" was "surrounded by an atmosphere generated by a subtle emanation of its own substance." He had gone on to declare that "the air enveloping the globe we inhabit" was "charged with the minute particles proceeding from the various objects of nature." But Evans's explanation of the emanation in terms of the olfactory sense, his specific use of a rose as an example, and his identification of a spiritual cause for smells and of something analogous "in the world of the mind" all smacked of Quimby—a Quimby easily conflated with Swedenborg as Evans's text progressed. Evans emulated Quimby also (and no doubt without direct control) in the quasi-shamanic quality of his sometime relationships with patients. Reflecting on his experiences with absent healing (a familiar Quimby technique), he owned that he had on occasion "been sensibly affected with their diseased state both of mind and body." "Once," he divulged, "where the patient was troubled with almost perpetual nausea, it occasioned vomiting in us." Still, as Braden noted, citing *Mental Medicine* of 1872, Evans thought that the effects of client illness on the healer were fleeting and easily dismissed—a "few minutes of tranquil sleep" would do it.[109]

For all his intellectual expansiveness, with Swedenborg and like Quimby, Evans always returned to Christian moorings to explain and affirm what was happening. According to John Teahan, well before Evans met Quimby—and fifteen years before the inaugural publication of the Glover (Eddy) book *Science and Health*—Evans had used the term "Christian Science" in print in his short work *The Happy Islands.* But more than Quimby, the early Evans evinced a clear orthodoxy regarding the person of Jesus—he was the "one and only God made flesh, and dwelling among us." Jesus healed by moving from cause to effect, in a model that Evans and other mental healers should copy, discarding the glib Baconianism of their culture for a compelling (Christian) alternative. In a particularly cogent statement that drew a line between scientific and general cultural orthodoxy, on the one hand, and the new metaphysical faith, on the other, Evans declared for principle (read "Cause," "Truth," "Mind," "Intelligence," and so forth). "We hold to the heresy," he announced, "that principles come before facts in the true order of mental growth, and the knowledge of things in their causes, is of more worth than a recognition of effects. This we acknowledge is not the Baconian method of philosophizing."[110]

Yet just as the spiritual body bridged the world of pure spirit and the material realm of the body, Evans—with a strong pragmatism—saw a bridge between principles and facts, between causes of illness and their unpleasant effects. The bridge, as a chapter title announced, was the "sanative power of words." Words functioned as "one of the principal mediums through which mind acts upon mind." They could be written or spoken, but either way they potentially could contain "the vital force of the soul." Evans went on for pages celebrating the blessings and wonders of words, proclaiming within them "a greater power . . . than men are aware of" and telling of their creative power even as he cited German Romantic philosopher Friedrich von Schlegel's *Philosophy of History* (translated in 1835) to support his views. For Evans, the case par excellence was Jesus, who "employed certain formulas or expressive sentences into which he concentrated and converged his whole mental force, and made them the means of transmitting spiritual life to the disordered mind." The moral of his story was clear; a physician's words "oftentimes" accomplished more than "his medical prescriptions." Evans had arrived at the doorstep of New Thought affirmation and affirmative prayer.[111]

By the time he published his third healing book, *Soul and Body*, in 1876, Evans was familiarly evoking his goals for the "restoration of the phrenopathic method of healing practised by Jesus, the Christ, and his primitive disciples." If the neologism *phrenopathy* hints of former Methodist minister and latter-day spiritualist La Roy Sunderland's "pathetism," it signals, too, a continuing comfort in

the older spiritualist discourse community. In a work that aimed to be "*scientifically religious*, without being offensively theological," Evans had already raised his Swedenborgian banner on the title page of the volume, quoting from Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia* (on correspondences) to set the tone. Still, the easy allusions of the volume suggest that Evans was immersing himself increasingly in the Hermetic tradition that supported, if mostly covertly, "modern" spiritualism. He acclaimed "John Baptist Van [Jan Baptista van] Helmont," the seventeenth-century Flemish physician and scientist who was also a speculative mystic. He knew Jacob Boehme, and he linked his notion of the "spiritual body" to the "*perisprit*" of the French spiritualist theorist and mystic Allan Kardec (Hippolyte Leon Denizard Rivail), whose *Book of the Spirits* (1858) he had apparently read. He linked his "spiritual body" as well to the "*nerve-projected form*" of Justinus Kerner, whose work had brought the Seeress of Prevorst to public notice.[112] Yet arguably, there was nothing here that a widely read spiritualist would not cite or invoke, and the discourse world of Evans was yet conjoined to the older spiritualist community.

It was Evans's next book, *The Divine Law of Cure* (1881), that marked his entry into an expanded theoretical discourse to ground his metaphysical healing practice—at this juncture, however, solely in terms of the West. Now Evans was reading the Hermetic legacy in idealist terms more absolute and encompassing, grounding his increasingly philosophical idealism in the philosophy of the Continent and of England. Evans's new cast of characters included Bishop George Berkeley, whose subjective idealism taught that matter did not exist independent of perception and that the apparent existence of matter was a function of the divine Mind. The new cast likewise included the German idealist philosophers Georg W. F. Hegel, Friedrich von Schelling, Johann Fichte, and Friedrich Jacobi, as well as the French eclectic philosopher Victor Cousin and the English Romantic poet and synthetic theorist of language Samuel Taylor Coleridge—all, significantly, beloved of the New England Transcendentalists.[113] Still, though, the idealism that Evans taught was a fudging idealism, one that could yet speak to the spiritual materialism of Davis and his sympathizers. Unlike the categorical denial of matter that had been spread abroad by Eddy, Evans's statement did not deny the actuality of bodily existence but instead asserted its contingency: It always and ever lived from the mind. Idealists, he told readers, did not deny "the *reality* of external things" but only that they had "any reality independent of mind." "The world of matter with all it contains," he attested, was "bound up in an indissoluble unity with the world of mind, and in fact exists in it." It followed that bodily properties were "only modifications of our minds." They were "reducible to feelings or sensations in the soul."[114] Enter Evans's phrenopathic

mental healing method to reap the pragmatic benefits of the philosophic situation. Unthought pain was unfelt pain; and disease, without wrong thought, was as nothing. Banish the thought, and you banished the disease. Here was the "grand remedy, the long sought panacea . . . the fundamental principle in the phrenopathic cure."[115]

The grand remedy, however, by 1885 and *The Primitive Mind-Cure* had moved into a new theosophical world that flamboyantly blended Western philosophy and Hermeticism with Asian texts and ideas in a dramatic recasting of Evans's earlier gospel. Theosophy was apparently good for idealism, too, because now the idealism had been ratcheted up a notch or two to become more uncompromising. In a facile comparative frame that pointed toward the New Thought world to come, Evans brought together Berkeleyan idealism, Kabbalistic lore, and a general Hermeticism that was informed by Neoplatonic, Swedenborgian, and explicitly Emersonian references. Even, in his catalog of names dropped and texts quoted, he cited Blavatsky, whose *Isis Unveiled* had appeared in 1877. Evans, for example, claimed her as his authority on Pythagoras and quoted her on the "universal life-principle" (Blavatsky's "ether"). But there was also very much more. Evans joined to his expanded Western sources a series of allusions to the Indian Vedas and Vedanta as well as to Buddhism and even to the Muslim statement of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Persian mystical philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazali.[116]

Isis Unveiled, although oriented to Western Hermeticism, provided relatively generous material on Hinduism and Buddhism, and clearly Evans had been drawn to Asia in pursuit of the evanescent substance-energy alternately styled, in this post-spiritualist culture, as the ether, the astral light, the Hindu akasa, or the Kabbalistic "occult air." Blavatsky's authors were Evans's authors. He cited and quoted the English occultist "Lord Lytton" (Edward Bulwer-Lytton) and his utopian novel *The Coming Race* (1871) with admiration, probably lifting his own quotation from Blavatsky's work. (It was the same line that she quoted regarding the akasa or "*vril*," and he tellingly provided no page citation.) He also quoted Éliphas Lévi on the "'universal substance'" (that is, the akasa) as the "'great arcanum of being.'"[117] Hermes Trismegistus, in Blavatskian mode, uncritically joined the truth of Asia, even as Evan's citations from the Kabbalah were ubiquitous. Always, for him, however, came the pragmatic bottom line. Change the akasa/ether, and you change the person and, so, the outcome of the illness.

Evans's preoccupation with the ether was patent. Like Blavatsky, he sought to blend science and Hermeticism, evoking his era's Newtonian and scientific concept of the ether and invoking the Hermetic testimony to go beyond it. The Hermeticists gave this universal "*aether*" "certain occult metaphysical proper-

ties" that modern science knew nothing of; they viewed it as "a divine, luminous principle or substance" permeating and also containing all things. Moreover, they called it the "*astral light*," which, Evans told readers, signified the "feminine wisdom-principle." The fire that the New Testament John the Baptist foretold (Luke 3:16) was both "identical with the Holy Spirit" and "the universal aether of occult philosophy." Citing "the Book of Hermes, called Pimander, which signifies the Divine Thought," Evans quoted, "'The light is I.'" Why did he think this important? The answer lay in Evans's conviction that a "thought impulse" could "affect and set in motion the universal *aether*, the life-principle." It could "create a current in the *astral light*," thus giving it "quality" and directing it "as a sanative influence." Few people knew of the "marvellous power" that was "latent and slumbering in human nature."[118]

Evans went on to express caution about the power of thoughts and feelings that marked the spirit of an age. He warned that the "prevailing mode of thinking and predominant feelings of an age or community" could bear people on against their will, and he linked the observation to the teachings of Jesus on the dangers of the "world." But unlike Eddy, he did not seem drawn particularly to the dangers of magnetism, and he turned instead to the "universal life-principle" as the "mother principle, the feminine creative potency, the passive power in nature" that was "co-eternal with spirit" and its "correlative opposite." He identified the mother principle with matter, found it to be reactive, and declared to readers that it could be impressed by thought. At the same time, in apparent contradiction, he called this "primal matter" an "immaterial substance," linked not only to his already-trinity of the Kabbalah, Hinduism, and the Holy Spirit but also to the Shekinah of the Hebrew Bible, the "sacred fire of the Persians," "the Astral light of the Rosicrucians," the Egyptian Isis, and the Roman Catholic Mary.[119]

It is at this point, in his vacillation between the materiality and immateriality of the cosmic ether, that Evans, like Emerson in *Nature*, struggled with the tension between pure idealism and a material model of the world. The tension was mediated, in Evans's case, by the magnetic universe he had inherited and also by the ambivalences of the Hermetic texts themselves (see chapter 1). But the idealism was softer and less absolute than Eddy's, and it resembled Quimby's in its ability to affirm and deny at once. Beyond either of them, too, lay the high Western tradition of idealism that Evans had introduced and the theosophical discourse out of which he was now reading recent Western idealist philosophers. Ideas were "the causes of the existence of all material entities"; they united "pure intellect"—the "masculine" of "Hermetic philosophy"—with "that spiritual and feminine principle" that could be designated as "feeling." Natural things were "but representations of things in the realm of ideas," and this view was "the old

Hermetic doctrine of correspondence" that had been "reproduced by Swedenborg." The resemblance between "macrocosm" and "microcosm" was the "key note" of Evans's own "theosophical system." All things in the microcosm preexisted "in the *unseen and real world of light*, the world of ideas," and "after their dissolution they return[ed] to that world." Evans's "transcendental medical science and practical metaphysics" were grounded on these assumptions.[120]

The shamanic quality of Evans's earlier healing experience took on new dimensions in this theosophical representation. "Silent suggestion" to cure disease was the "inner or occult word"; it was the "'lost word' which modern Masonry laments, and for which they try to find a substitute." But the "inward Word" worked as part of a process in which the healer absorbed "the morbid condition of the patient" and assumed "the psychic embryo of the disease." "We take up into ourself his [the patient's] condition," declared Evans, "in order that we may form a clear idea of it, and this idea of it is the real disease, the *ding an sich*, or thing in itself. Thus we are able to remit it or put it away from him." In the end, the healing work Evans recommended was a species of prayer, "the most intense form of the action, or influence, of one mind upon another."[121]

The reference to prayer with which Evans ended *The Primitive Mind-Cure* suggests the overriding Christian vision that informed his theosophy—unlike that of Blavatsky or Olcott. By now the historical person Jesus had become separable from the cosmic Christ, a separation that, as we saw, was adumbrated in midcentury magnetic literature of a popular nature and also in the writings of Quimby. Identical with "the Adam Kadmon of the Kabala," "the Archetypal Man of Plato," and "man as he exists in the divine Idea," this was "the Divine Man, the Christ of Paul, at the same time a divine personage and a universal *humanized principle* of life and light." All humans were included in his being, as "weak and imperfect" selves were "merged in the grand unity of the divine-human principle, the divine humanity of the Lord, which is the Christ." Still further, if all existed as part of this Christic whole, the Christ Idea aimed "to realize itself in every human being." The "Christ within" purposed to "save even the body."[122] It was no surprise, then, that hard on the heels of this book on "transcendental medicine and practical metaphysics" Evans produced, as his final work, *Esoteric Christianity and Mental Therapeutics* (1886). Here the idealism seems still more encompassing, yet ambiguous. "What we call matter, including the gross material body," he announced, "has existence only as a false seeming. The supreme reality in the universe is spirit." What would become familiar New Thought maxims abounded: "All that *is* is God, and hence is good," and "all that which *is* is included in God." "Disease, when viewed as an evil," had "no existence except as an illusion or deceptive sensuous appearance." It was "a nihility,

or nothingness," and, indeed, "an empty show." "To emancipate the inward and real man from his imprisonment in matter and an illusory body" was "to cure disease."[123]

At first glance, the language of the Evans manifesto suggests a near resemblance to the absolute idealism of Eddy. From Christian Science quarters, however, the response was vitriolic. An unnamed "Christian Scientist," who may have been Eddy herself, used the lead article of one issue of *The Christian Science Journal* to inveigh against a book that looked suspiciously like "a twin of Theosophy." Evans's work was "a mad attempt to force Christianity . . . into the farcical groves of Occultism," to make the "doctrine" of Jesus "synonymous with Hindoo occultism." The reviewer was horrified to discover that, in Evans's pages, "each individual" was "a spirit,—not God, but a god" and that matter was a "divine substance." Eddy and other Christian Scientists of her school had good reason to be upset. Evans had declared that—even if what was called matter was "not matter" but "unreal and an illusion"—matter "in itself" was "not evil." He had told readers that "in its reality and inmost essence," matter was "divine—the second emanative principle from God." It was only when matter took "dominion over spirit" that it became evil, because it had usurped God's place and had thus become "idolatrous." Evans took care to underline his point: "Matter as it is in itself, and in its place, is *an invisible, divine, and immortal substance.* It is the correlative of spirit—a manifestation of spirit."[124]

Still more, Evans's affirmation of the goodness of matter was eclipsed by his emphasis on divine goodness, bringing a marked rhetorical departure to his work when compared to that of Eddy. Certainly, Eddy testified to the goodness of God, and it would be difficult to argue otherwise. That acknowledged, however, it is significant that as early as 1876, in her first published version of the "scientific statement of being," Eddy's catalog of Truth had included no reference to the goodness of God—nor did the standard 1906 statement in *Science and Health.* By contrast, Evans—with the Arminianized Christianity of his Methodist background and his Swedenborgian-spiritualist engraftment upon it—had put a large premium on the divine goodness, and he did not let readers forget. The preference would likewise come to characterize the discourse community of New Thought in ways that identify it clearly as different from Christian Science.[125] For Evans, the "manifested God" was the same as the Platonic Idea of the Good, as "the supreme and eternal Goodness," and as the "Christ of Paul." Still more, the place of this Christ was twofold—first, as "the Universal Christ" and "God of the macrocosm," and, second, as "the Christ within" and "God of the microcosmic man." Evans aimed to assist "the student of Christian Theosophy" in exploring "the inner realm of truth." Here the "unchanging I AM" dwelled as "the Christ

within us, whose divine name is Ehejah, or I Am, that is the One and the Same." "So as soon as we get the true idea of our real Self, the unchanging and undying *I Am*, and that the real man is not sick," Evans exhorted, "we cannot avoid the consciousness of an impulse to act out the idea and play the part of health." Told in the language of the Hermetic tradition, the assertion of divine humanity was as striking. "It has ever been a doctrine of the esoteric philosophy and a religion of all ages and nations," wrote Evans, "that each immortal spirit is a direct emanation from the 'Unknown God.' . . . Each individual spirit is [as *The Christian Science Journal* had been dismayed to note] not God, but *a* god, and is possessed of all the attributes of its parent source, among which are omniscience and omnipotence." The human spirit possessed "deific powers."[126]

With humans as gods, Evans had biblicized the Hermetic teaching as he articulated the "I Am" consciousness. The formula would continue in New Thought throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, even as it also functioned in theosophical culture in, for example, the early-twentieth-century Guy Ballard movement and, later, in the work of Elizabeth Clare Prophet.[127] Beyond that, in his proclamation of the divine humanity, Evans had arguably undercut his idealism once more and brought to it a further degree of conceptual ambiguity. New Thought would continue to live with the conceptual crack as its language community and its practice affirmed and dissolved idealism at once, teaching illusion and the divine goodness of creation at the same time. There was an ironic symmetry in the eagerness with which the New Thought community embraced Emerson as a founder and way-shower since he, too, had been caught in the conceptual crack between idealism and a wholehearted affirmation of the natural order.

Meanwhile, Evans had also articulated what became the New Thought language of "the silence." Recommending "tranquil and silent trust in the Christ," he countenanced silence for the sick as he invoked the "ancient wisdom, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'" The healer, too, "should wait in the silence that lies at the heart of things." Evans recommended deep breathing, evoking the Holy Spirit as the "breath of God" and likewise pointing to the Hermetic "Universal Aether" and the Kabbalah. Almost he seemed a yogi as he encouraged following the breath calmly, as close as possible to "the passive attitude of sleep." And if his mentalism did not preclude attention to the physiological process of breathing, in still another stance he signaled New Thought practice to come and separated it from Eddy's Christian Science. Evans found a place, if auxiliary, for the regular physician. "No *intelligent* practitioner of the mind-cure will ignore wholly all medical science," he admonished. "Mind is the only active principle in the

universe. The mind of a skillful surgeon performs marvels in saving the lives of people."[128]

How influential were Evans's books? How did they affect the New Thought community that, by the mid-1880s, when Evans published his last two, was just beginning to take shape? We get some, if indirect, answers in the little we know of their publishing history. Charles Braden found a seventh edition of Evans's first book, *The Mental-Cure* of 1869, published in 1885, and also reference to a ninth edition without a publication date. And according to Beryl Satter, this work was translated into several foreign languages. Braden noted, too, that the copy of *Mental Medicine* (1872), Evans's second book, held by the Library of Congress was the fifteenth edition, also issued in 1885. There was at least one other edition of *The Divine Law of Cure* (1881) available in 1884. The copy of *The Primitive Mind-Cure* (1885) that I have used announces itself to be a fifth edition published in 1886—just one year after the first edition. Although we do not know the size of any of these editions, the reprintings (for they apparently were that) are remarkable for a man who built no organization and, from reports of meetings and activities of the era, kept a low public profile. As Braden observed, Eddy's *Science and Health* of 1875 reached its thirteenth edition a decade later in 1885—with "the advantage of a rapidly expanding organization to aid in its circulation during a part of this period, while Evans had at most only a small sanitarium where he carried on his healing work." Advertisements for Evans's books appeared in New Thought periodicals from the late 1880s (when the periodicals themselves began to appear) until at least the close of the nineteenth century. Major public libraries acquired the titles, and they could be found as well in the libraries of most New Thought centers and leaders. As one example of their role, H. Emilie Cady—whose own works were later to achieve an authoritative status in the Unity School of Christianity founded by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore—was converted to New Thought by reading Evans's books. Meanwhile, evidence of the reliance of Emma Curtis Hopkins on Evans is compelling, and Fillmore himself called Evans's works "the most complete of all metaphysical compilations."[129]

At the very least, Evans modeled the transformation of the thought world of parts of an aging spiritualist community as it entered a new era under the joint impress of Christian Science and Theosophy. His emphases and ideas—divine goodness, the ambiguous maternity of God, the "I Am" presence and the Christ (who was separable from Jesus) within, the silence, affirmative prayer and mental suggestion, the spiritual body—all of these presaged a coming New Thought universe and discourse community. Evans's ambivalent idealism, with its real and yet illusory natural order, sought to embrace both science and spirit, both the

Hermetic tradition of the West and Hindu, Buddhist, and even Muslim sources in ways that would mark a new metaphysical discourse in the waning nineteenth century and beyond.

Others, however, were advancing the conversation through more organized healing work. Quimby's students Julius Dresser and Annetta Seabury Dresser made their way to Boston and began to teach and practice there, even as Eddy's star was rising in the East Coast city. For Julius Dresser, at least, the mental healing ministry he now took up represented a decided about-face. Not two weeks after Eddy's catalytic fall on the ice in Lynn, she had written to Dresser for mental healing support, but—in Yarmouth, Maine, working as a journalist—he had expressed a remoteness from Quimby and a disregard for his work. Sixteen years later, however, and living in California, Julius Dresser changed his mind. He came back east and took Christian Science lessons with his wife, Annetta, from Edward J. Arens, Eddy's former student and now strong enemy. For whatever reasons (Eddy's recent biographer Gillian Gill suggests greed; the New Thought account, anger and upset that Eddy was no longer acknowledging Quimby), the Dressers immersed themselves in the work. They did so in a Boston that, by the 1880s, was rife with metaphysical healers, numbers of them former Eddy students. It was this mix of independent mental healers and former Eddyites, often now assuming the generic Christian Science name, that coalesced as New Thought in the decade that followed.[130]

Exchanges between the Eddy group and the looser mental healing community were generally conflictual, with controversy over Quimby dominating much of the public discourse. (At least this is the story as it was later reconstructed in the nonprofessional first history of New Thought by the philosopher son of the Dressers, Horatio Dresser.) But the healing work went on—lessons, practice, and wider public lectures. So did the work of an emerging New Thought press, with books and periodicals that underlined the cognizing instincts of the mental science confraternity. The Dressers produced a circular in 1884, and by 1887 Julius Dresser saw the publication of his book *The True History of Mental Science*. The comprehensive nature of the movement's purview was indicated by some of these early works. For example, Mathilda J. Barnett's *Practical Metaphysics* (1887), according to J. Stillson Judah, reflected theosophical principles in its exposition of metaphysics; William J. Colville's *Spiritual Science of Health and Healing* the same year expressed his own background in spiritualism with the "inspirational" suggestion of its extended title.[131]

The Church of the Divine Unity (where Dresser—himself once a candidate for the Calvinist Baptist ministry—had delivered the lectures later incorporated into his mental-science book) became one of the first of the quasi–New Thought

churches. It had been founded in 1886 by Jonathan W. Winkley, once a Unitarian minister and also an Eddy follower, who would later, in 1900, inaugurate the journal *Practical Ideals*. A year earlier, from 1885, Elizabeth Stuart—an Arens student (after he had broken with Eddy) who went on to take a Christian Science course from Eddy in 1881—became the catalyst for the formation of "Light, Love, Truth" in Massachusetts and New York. A Connecticut group was brought under the aegis of the organization in 1888, and in each of its locations, according to Gary Ward Materra, all of the known officers were women.[132]

From its early beginnings, however, the emerging New Thought movement was national in scope—a reality obscured by the East Coast orientation of Horatio Dresser's pioneering history (with its preoccupation with the Quimby-Eddy controversy) and its shaping influence on subsequent scholarship. Newer work, though, has told a different story of widespread New Thought foundations, beginning in the 1880s in the Midwest and Far West and spreading to numerous locations. "The movement's heart and soul lay in the western states," Beryl Satter has observed. In a networking pattern that imitated séance spiritualism and, on a smaller scale, Theosophy and that augured the future of metaphysics, New Thought women and men fanned out as independent healer-teachers in places large and small. By 1902, an article in the *American Monthly Review of Reviews* claimed over a million followers. If any one figure could be identified as a major influence on the early phases of this growth, that person was Emma Curtis Hopkins (1849–1925). Indeed, both J. Gordon Melton and Gail M. Harley have read her as the "founder" of New Thought, and although that assessment arguably oversimplifies the complexity of an act of foundation, it does point to the abiding importance of Hopkins's role. Even in the 1960s, Charles Braden acknowledged her reputation in New Thought circles as "the teacher's teacher."[133]

Who was Emma Curtis Hopkins? What did she do for New Thought theology and practice to suggest the titles that scholars have conferred on her, and how did she do it? Born in a Connecticut farming family as Josephine Emma Curtis, she acquired some education and married George Irving Hopkins, a high-school English teacher, in 1874. Their son John Carver Hopkins lived until 1905, but by that time his parents had long been separated, and his father had divorced his mother for "abandonment." What Hopkins had abandoned her husband for was the Christian Science teaching of Mary Baker Eddy. She had met Eddy in Manchester, New Hampshire, where Hopkins was living, had listened to Eddy testify to Christian Science, and had experienced a healing that she attributed to the work of the local Christian Science practitioner. After an exchange of letters, Hopkins traveled to Boston, enrolled in an Eddy class at the end of 1883, and by 1884 was listed as a practitioner in *The Journal of Christian Science*. The same

year she resigned from the Congregational church of her childhood to become a member of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston. A few months later she was working without pay as editor of Eddy's journal.[134]

But the honeymoon period in Hopkins's relationship with Eddy was soon over. For reasons that are shrouded and unclear but that suggest, most persuasively, her 1885 editorial "Teachers of Metaphysics," Hopkins was dismissed after some thirteen months and ordered out of her (Christian Science) lodging. Satter has noted Hopkins's mystical language in the piece, with the editor—after contact with Eddy's teaching on "Spiritual Being"—claiming to know God "face to face" and thus implying, at least for Eddy, that Hopkins was her peer. Hopkins wrote that she had "realized the reward 'to him that overcometh' for an interval brief but long enough to fix forever in my mind the sweet consummation of faithful endeavor." Others have pointed to Hopkins's friendship with another student, Mary Plunkett, who for a variety of reasons was troubling Eddy.[135] At any rate, Hopkins was never given any explanation, and she never publicly repudiated Eddy; in fact she wrote her letters, even after the firing, to express her regard for her former teacher. Still, from the first, Hopkins had been moving to a drumbeat different from the one that Eddy heard. Her earliest article for Eddy's Christian Science journal already signaled her theosophical interests, and her theology would develop in the immanentist and mystical directions that marked New Thought. Hopkins was also decidedly feminist, interested in social-action causes, intimate—especially in her later New York years—with a literary and artistic community, and considerably tolerant of views other than her own. Publicly, she continued to maintain the low profile that made her barely visible in earlier histories of New Thought.

Hopkins moved to Chicago after leaving Eddy, first editing Andrew J. Swarts's *Mind Cure Journal* and then, with Mary Plunkett, establishing the Emma Curtis Hopkins College of Christian Science in 1886. One report from the 1920s claimed that some six hundred students participated in Hopkins's classes within a year. Meanwhile, the students formed the Hopkins Metaphysical Association, which spawned branches in numerous other places. Even with her teaching responsibilities, Hopkins did not stay home but traveled around the country to offer classes and form further outposts for her organization. For example, in 1887 she was in San Francisco, where she met Malinda Cramer, who later went on to found, with Nona Brooks, the Church of Divine Science. Later in the year Hopkins taught in Milwaukee and then in New York City, where her class included H. Emilie Cady. Hopkins and Plunkett together created *Truth* magazine as the official voice of the local Hopkins Metaphysical Associations, the national convention of which they held in Boston toward the end of 1887. By the end of

that year, according to Materra, the Hopkins groups numbered twenty-one, extending from Maine to California and functioning as the earliest national New Thought organization.[136]

Plunkett (and her husband) subsequently moved to New York City, taking *Truth* with them and changing its name to *The International Magazine of Christian Science*. There followed a period of some cooperation and also the birth of a new Chicago journal called *Christian Science*, edited by Ida Nichols with much support from Hopkins. But Mary Plunkett's "spiritual marriage" to A. Bentley Worthington (later exposed as a bigamist with at least eight wives)—while she was legally married to John Plunkett—heaped scandal on the New Thought effort in New York. Plunkett and Worthington found it opportune to resettle in Christchurch, New Zealand, and to carry on their New Thought work there. In Chicago, however, Hopkins and her teaching remained relatively unscathed. More important, it had become independent, and, in the context of the upheaval, Hopkins converted her college into a seminary and ordained its graduates, overwhelmingly women. "Christian Science is not a business or profession," she was reported to have said. "It is a ministry."[137] Her Christian Science Theological Seminary functioned successfully until 1894, when—fatigued by her efforts on many fronts and by infighting at the seminary—she moved to New York City. She conducted classes and did healing work there, traveling on the East Coast and also to England and Italy. During her Chicago time, Hopkins taught Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, who founded Unity, and during her New York years, she taught Ernest Holmes, who founded Religious Science. Nona Brooks, who studied with Hopkins, co-founded Divine Science with Cramer; still another student, Annie Rix Militz, founded the Homes of Truth; and yet another, Frances Lord, carried New Thought to England. Hopkins's student Helen (Nellie) Van Anderson in 1894 began the self-consciously New Thought group in Boston called the "Church of the Higher Life." A series of other Hopkins students, well known in movement circles, spread out across the nation, bringing the Hopkins brand of metaphysics to numerous local communities.

We get a rare vignette of the Hopkins teaching style during the Chicago years in one news report from the Kansas City *Christian Science Thought* for 1890. There Hopkins, who was teaching a class at the Kansas City College of Christian Science, is portrayed as a charismatic woman with extraordinary powers. The unnamed author (was it Charles Fillmore, who edited the journal?) told readers: "After an eloquent burst of oratory, the teacher said with a peculiar quiet vehemence, '*God is Life, Love and Truth,*' long tongues of flame shot out from her vicinity and filled the room with a rosy light that continued throughout the remainder of the lecture to roll over the class in waves and ripples of what seemed

golden sunlight." The writer apparently had checked with others. "Many saw it plainly while others sensed its uplifting presence in the room. We felt that we had almost experienced a modern day of Pentacost [*sic*]."[138]

Gail Harley, however, has distinguished between Hopkins's Chicago years and her New York period, and the distinction is a useful one.[139] The Chicago Hopkins followed the Eddy gospel more faithfully, although, to be sure, she departed from it in marked and consistent ways. In the New York years, by contrast, Hopkins barely reiterated the basic Christian Science formula regarding the nonexistence of matter and mostly soared into a mystical stratosphere that seemed to reflect direct experience as well as—most likely—Evans, Blavatsky, and similar sources. In both periods, though, Hopkins's material was mostly derivative—one reason why the "founder" attribution seems strained at best—although, as we will see, in at least two ways she did introduce new material or emphases into the theological mix that became New Thought. Beryl Satter has argued that Hopkins attracted people with quite different perspectives because she brought together both Eddy and Evans, and Hopkins certainly did that. Even here, however, she had probably been preceded in uniting Eddy with Evans by the former Methodist minister and spiritualist Andrew J. Swarts and his mediumistic wife, Katie L. Swarts, in their Mental Science school in Chicago. More than that, in Hopkins's work the alliance of Eddy and Evans was far more uneasy than the Satter analysis allows.[140] The tensions in the theological constructions of Quimby and Evans emerge from their work as somewhat soft and malleable—cracks in the structure on the order of the now-classic crack in Emerson's *Nature*. By contrast, Eddy opted for greater consistency and greater absolutism. It remained for Hopkins to attempt a union of the absolutism of the Eddy Christian Science message with the plasticity of the Evans construction. In brief, Evans was theosophical; Eddy was not. Hopkins did not unify their teaching but rather juxtaposed it. If there was a resolution at all, it came only in the New York period when Hopkins's *High Mysticism* paid lip service to Eddy but mostly spent its energies (and readers') in an impassioned declaration of what, by the mid-twentieth century and after Aldous Huxley, would become known as the perennial philosophy.[141]

Hopkins's publishing habits made it difficult for later admirers to gather her corpus effectively. Often, she produced pamphlets that constitute brief monograph lessons—almost sermons—on selected themes. Her Bible lessons appeared in the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* (newspaper) from 1890 through 1898. Other publications include class lessons that she had used in her teachings and her ordination addresses. Thus her publishing history is hard at best to reconstruct. For all that, enough material is available to provide snapshots of the Hopkins theology at key points in her metaphysical career, and these snapshots tell us that through

the teaching of Hopkins, gradually Mary Baker Eddy quietly shifted backstage in the New Thought community and a more globally inclusive Evans style moved to the center. This is true even if in later New Thought, as we will see, only one of two major wings of the movement could trace its instincts to the Hopkins theology—a situation that, again, makes the attribution of New Thought foundation to Hopkins problematic.

Hopkins's first article in Eddy's *Journal of Christian Science* (April 1884) provides already an important clue to the different (from Eddy) cultural world in which she lived. In a piece of eleven brief paragraphs, Hopkins managed to cite "Buddhist Nirvana," "Algazel, a Mohammedan philosopher of the twelfth century," Spinoza, Confucius, the Persian "Zend-Avest," the Chandogya Upanishad, the "Persian Desatir," and the Hebrews. She sometimes quoted from these sources, no doubt as they were quoted in other works—Evans?—she had been reading. Her point was God's omnipresence and the "blessed evidence" she found of "universal goodness" and divine "impartiality" in the manifestation of God "to every people and nation of the earth." By November of the same year, for all God's universality, she was hailing the special manifestation of the divine in the Christian Science founder. Eddy's direct predecessor in giving the world a "system of ethics" with health as its "practical application" was "Jesus, the Christ." And in an apparent allusion to the Quimby controversy, Hopkins defended Eddy in remarkably feminist terms. From "many quarters" came "the bold denial of her right to her own work." Why was this so? "Because it is a woman whom God hath chosen, this time, to be His messenger, and not Jesus or Saul." Hopkins pushed on to the general conclusion: "But Woman's hour has struck. Who can doubt it? The motherhood of God beats in the bosom of time, with waking energy, today."[142]

As Gail Harley has shown, the Mother God—more noticeably than the Father-Mother God of Eddy—was a distinct (and new) Hopkins emphasis. In a millennialist division of history that echoed the twelfth-century Joachim of Fiore or the later Emanuel Swedenborg with his announcement, reiterated in Evans, of a New Age, Hopkins proclaimed a coming third age of the Holy Ghost. This Holy Ghost, however, was distinctly feminine—identified with the Shekinah of the Hebrew Bible as well as with the New Testament Spirit—and was also a sign of a feminist future to be. The coming age would be a better era than before, and Hopkins—far more than Eddy—avidly supported social reform causes. Meanwhile, her pamphlet essay *The Ministry of the Holy Mother* appeared during her Chicago years. In it the divine Mother was conjoined to both the Spirit and ministry of God in a mystical statement that was also a declaration about service and about Hopkins's conviction that any adequate idea of God required the feminine.[143] Likewise, her ordination addresses during these years regularly invoked

the motherhood of God in the Holy Spirit. The Father-Mother God was still in charge, for Hopkins, and was never eclipsed by a sole reliance on the Mother. Still, the Mother received her due in Hopkins's thinking more than the divine feminine ever would later in New Thought. After the leadership of women in the initiating years of the movement, by the early decades of the twentieth century a new generation of men would rise to prominence as leaders, and the Mother would recede.

A second new emphasis in Hopkins survived—indeed blatantly—in the New Thought movement. This was Hopkins's evolving gospel of prosperity, a teaching that may have been related to her own struggle with poverty in the early years of her failed marriage with George Irving Hopkins. In fact, when Hopkins first negotiated with Eddy to become part of a Christian Science class in Boston, she had to explain her husband's indebtedness and her inability to come up with funding to support her educational goals. She worked out a special arrangement with Eddy.[144] Hence, as early as Hopkins's "Ordination Address" to her first graduating class of seminarians published in 1889, she was subtly noticing more than divine healing activity. She saw her graduates among those who were "ministers of the gospel of The Good," and she pointed to the work of Jesus in which "the poor were helped and fed." She linked her class with those who proclaimed a "New Dispensation of the Holy Spirit," a new order "wherein the poor may be taught and befriended, women walk fearless and glad, and childhood be safe and free." Christian Scientists, for her, declared "the omnipresence of God the Good and deny the presence or working power of any other Principle but the Good." More than that, it was women, linked to the "Mother God" in "the Holy Spirit of Scripture," who especially pointed toward the emphatic reading of God as good. "Woman's voice—the mother heart of the world," Hopkins told her graduates, was now proclaiming "the omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience of The Good."[145]

These suggestions grew less subtle in Hopkins's formal lecture from the Chicago period "How to Attain Your Good." Cast in a markedly different frame from Eddy's Christian Science, Hopkins's work began with a theosophical and Evans-style "fine etheric Substance pervading all the worlds of the universe." Hopkins called it "Cosmic Substance" and supplied as synonyms for it "Mother" or "Mother-Principle" as well as "God-Substance." The human mind was "made out of this omnipresent Mother," and the "etheric substance" that "the common thought and word use" was "only a rough shadowing forth of the truly omnipresent Substance." The ancient Egyptians (not the Hebrews) called it "the *I Am* of the world," and Jesus called it "Spirit" and a series of other titles including "God," "Father," and "Love." Hopkins herself said it was the "Good-Substance."

She went on to invoke, like a mantra, a repeated affirmation: *"There is good for me, and I ought to have it."* What did the good mean for the aspiring Truth student? Among the series of explanations, many of them generic and noetic, Hopkins found her way to tangibility and profit. "Everything is really full of love for you. You love the good that is for you," she told students. "You can make the connection between yourself and prosperity by saying that the good that is for you is love." With God equated with "Love" and "Good," "all things poured down blessings into the lap of Jesus Christ because he knew everything loved him."[146] So, apparently, would it happen for Truth students. If the New Thought Statement of Being posited Good at its center, it followed that abundance on earth was one result.

In *Scientific Christian Mental Practice*, also a product of the Chicago years, Hopkins continued to weave a gospel of prosperity quietly into her teaching. Here was none of the flamboyance that would come to characterize the later New Thought pursuit of the prosperous, nor any of the mechanical formulas that would by then accompany the prosperity message. In a work structured—like Eddy's own work—on denials, first, and then affirmations, Hopkins announced to readers a series of five "universal affirmations." Here the first began "my Good is my God," and the others moved in increasingly mystical directions, invoking identity with Spirit, with the "I AM" presence, and with an absence of the ability to sin. With the use of the "right word" and the proclamation of one's freedom, she told readers, each of them would "soon be more prosperous." Scientists should experience neither poverty nor grief, and one of the things they should do was to "talk for prosperity," using the affirmation *"I believe in prosperity and success."* They should "covenant with Spirit" for support and do nothing for it, because support was "the providence of the Spirit." In a negative example, Hopkins held up one pastor of an English mission who "was very much pleased that he got his expenses paid by praying for them, and had about $14.00 left over." Her unflattering conclusion: "As all the wealth of the earth was offered him you can see that he was not especially honoring God by having such a little bit at his disposal." By contrast, Hopkins's good news of prosperity was predictive. "Men may gather all the gold into a lump, and say you cannot have any, but by some way of the Spirit you will come out with more abundant riches than all the rest put together."[147]

By the time Hopkins wrote the material in *High Mysticism*, healing, prosperity, and similar concerns receded before a unitive consciousness that dominates the studies that formed the book. Evoking "John the Revelator" in a series of twelve visionary explorations probably first published separately, Hopkins's work illustrates why the harmonial label is problematic not only for Christian Science but also for a major lineage of New Thought. If the word *harmony* appears from

time to time in Hopkins's discourse, her message is hardly one of "rapport with the cosmos." Instead, a radical immanence prevails in these studies, in which the language of Self-recognition and the God-Self translates the theosophized religiosity of a dizzying catalog of traditions into an American New Thought argot. These were surely traditions imbibed at second hand—from Evans and perhaps Blavatsky (Hopkins at least once referred to the "secret doctrine," the title of Blavatsky's seminal work to be examined in the next chapter) and similar authors. What is important here, however, is how Hopkins shaped them into American metaphysics. "When half gods go the gods arrive," announced Hopkins, and she staked out the required denials (no evil, matter, loss or lack or deprivation, fearful thing, sin or sickness or death). But they cleared the way for affirmations that—while they certainly reproduce the health and blessing of New Thought expectation—are something more: mystical statements of divine identity that mince no words and leave no space for human failure. "Highest God and inmost God is One God," Hopkins declared. "Our own Soul, our own free Spirit forever says, in bold faith, 'I am Truth, I am God—Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience.'"[148]

Hopkins was evoking what I am calling the enlightened body-self, a construction of human personality and life that had been presaged in a vernacular American context as far back as the early Mormonism of Joseph Smith with its message of a divine future for humans. For Hopkins and the new American metaphysics, however, the future was now, and the future was here on earth. If the transcendent had become immanent in this Christian world gone theosophical, where the mystical language of many traditions pointed toward a secret Self that moved the world, somehow the ego—ennobled, transfigured, and exalted, but still the ego—had tiptoed behind the Self. What resulted was not quite the crass and glib formula that has been applied dismissively to New Thought—"health and wealth and metaphysics." What followed, still, was something more tangible, more practical and concrete, than the already-pragmatism of the Hermetic past—and this because it more boldly championed the garden of delight on an earth properly viewed and employed. Beryl Satter's reading of a debate and then a shift from an anti-desire rhetoric in New Thought to a clear language of desire in the early twentieth century surely speaks to the point here.[149] The secret and this-worldly history of the Self would be a leading reason why, by the twentieth century, as we shall see, some Americans became interested in South Asian tantrism. And this was why, too, in their unitive consciousness many metaphysicians turned—like earlier spiritualists and Theosophists—to concerns about social reform. As New Thought read the script, the soul's journey in the hereafter paled before the significance of a mystical present that could be paradise.

The New Thought Hermeticists were mostly white and middle class, and they linked their vision of paradise to the progressivism of their era. Interest in woman suffrage and a general feminist agenda ran high, as it had for Hopkins, but metaphysicians branched out to embrace other issues and causes as well. In fact, Gary Ward Materra has argued that the Hopkins brand of New Thought represented one of two divergent styles in the early movement. Materra identifies it as "affective" in orientation, characterized by "emphasis on the Bible, healing, and the needs of families and communities." Hopkins and those who imitated her understood their enterprise as religion through and through. They held to a vision of unity among all things and people, thought about relational ethics, and were concerned, for example, about their children as well as about church building and networking. Predominantly women, they were often feminists and social activists, unabashed in their criticism of prevailing social and economic mores and willing to entertain ideas of social reconstruction that extended, sometimes, even to socialism. A number of New Thought women found fault with capitalism in its unrelieved pursuit of profit for its own sake, even as they worked to improve the conditions of the poor.[150]

Examples abound within the Hopkins Metaphysical Association and outside it. Helen van Anderson, in Boston, used the church she formed to encourage a Young People's Club as a service organization for "hospitals, reformatories, or private homes," while a different committee brought New Thought teachings to poor and sick people in their own communities. The Circle of Divine Ministry in New York City in 1897 decided to open a room "in the lower part of the city," so that "some much-neglected classes of its inhabitants, boys and so-called criminals" could be reached. The Denver-based Church of Divine Science staffed a day nursery for the children of working-class mothers, and the church also aided a group that worked with tuberculosis-ridden men without means. Nona Brooks, its co-founder, spent seven years as the secretary of the Colorado Prison Association. In San Francisco, the earliest Home of Truth offered free meals and clothing to the poor through a branch office. The San Francisco Home of Truth also for a time created a shelter for homeless men.[151]

New Thought people threw themselves into the settlement house movement of the end of the century, beginning a metaphysical version of a settlement house in 1895 in the Roxbury District of Boston. They also moved to riskier public stances, as, for instance, in the outspoken antiwar rhetoric of Catherine Barton and Elizabeth Towne. Nor were analyses of social problems simplistic and naive. Barton, for example, commented on crime and criminals with the observation of shared guilt on the part of all: "We have so constructed our social, ethical, and religious fabric that crime is a natural outcome." Anita True-

man did not think that New Thought, with its prosperity thinking, would by itself cure the condition of a man out of a job because of economic depression. Rather, New Thought believers needed to "readjust those conditions which enrich the monopolist while he robs the people of even the opportunity to work."[152] Meanwhile, as Beryl Satter notes, individuals with New Thought ties, such as Abby Morton Diaz and Mary Livermore, embraced the form of socialism advocated by Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward* (1888), which brought in its train a series of Bellamy Clubs across the nation. Former Episcopalian pastor R. Heber Newton in 1885 had joined Richard Ely's American Economic Association with its advocacy of government intervention on behalf of the disadvantaged but by 1899 found in New Thought a religion that buttressed his politics better than Episcopalianism had. He presided over the International Metaphysical League in 1900, 1902, and 1906, and he served as an officer in the New Thought Federation in 1904. Congregationalist minister Benjamin Fay Mills, with a history of attacking monopolies and praising socialism, likewise became a New Thought fellow traveler by 1905, founding a Los Angeles "Fellowship," which Satter describes as "indistinguishable" in its beliefs and goals from New Thought. Other reforming clergy among Protestants also moved into New Thought—among them Hugh O. Pentecost, Henry Frank, J. Stitt Wilson, and George Herron. They sought, as Satter recounts, the victory of "'altruism over selfism'" as well as the pursuit of human perfection.[153]

Ralph Waldo Trine, author of the classic *In Tune with the Infinite* (1897), was an out-and-out New Thought socialist. But he was hardly alone, and much of his company was female. Indeed, Materra concludes on the basis of his study that "women forged the primary links between New Thought and socialism." Thus Malinda Cramer, who co-founded Divine Science, castigated the "competitive system" as the "offspring of brute evolution" that bore "no relation to the divine methods of 'each for all, and all for each.'" Josephine Conger, who spent two years at radical Ruskin College in Trenton, Missouri, and there converted to socialism, later threw herself into the socialist women's movement. She functioned as its leading editor and at the same time acknowledged her New Thought commitments in the socialist print periodical world. "All the great men and women of the world have believed in what we call New Thought," she told readers of a 1903 issue of *Appeal to Reason*. Moreover, if a socialist organ such as *Appeal to Reason* could missionize for New Thought, at least one New Thought paper, *Social Ethics*, was also the official mouthpiece of the Socialist party in the state of Kansas. Similarly, *The New Life* of Lewiston, Idaho, straddled the line between its New Thought origins and its later socialist testimonies.[154]

What was it about New Thought that fostered socialism and a social action

agenda, in general? Part of the answer lies in the vernacular environment in which early New Thought flourished—with its historic roots in midcentury spiritualism and the reform commitments that came as part of spiritualist social culture. When the cultural turn of the 1870s occurred and a generalized theosophical perspective was born, reform commitments continued to run high, as the official Theosophical Society rhetoric of the "brotherhood of man" suggests. The midwestern and western spread of New Thought—to areas less immured in tradition than the bastions of East Coast conservatism—also brought with it a populace more likely to turn in liberal, and radical, social directions. Kansas, after all, had not acquired a reputation as a radical state for nothing. However, beyond these social reasons for a New Thought–socialist and social-reform alliance, the theological vision of the New Thought movement needs to be noticed. A message of divine immanence and unity, of all as children of the one God the Good, from one perspective sat well with social reform for a more even distribution of goods. Put another way, socialism provided a better conceptual fit for New Thought than did laissez-faire or capitalist pursuit of individual aggrandizement, pace Donald Meyer's well-known reading of the "mind-cure" gospel of success.[155]

For all this social-action agenda within New Thought, however, a second style—one that made Meyer at least partly right—came to dominate New Thought after the new century began. Materra calls it "noetic." In some sense, even this style could be laid, technically, at the feet of Hopkins, because its early representative—with whom Materra associates the noetic wing initially—was Helen Wilmans (1832?–1907), who had begun her New Thought career as a Hopkins student. Wilmans, however, struck out on her own and never acknowledged a debt to her Chicago teacher. For her, New Thought counted as a business and a science of self-mastery—she called it Mental Science—and Wilmans used the mails so ostentatiously for her absent-healing business that she spent years in court fighting mail fraud charges (she was acquitted, but her work never recovered).[156]

We gain some purchase on what this noetic New Thought signaled and how it sat with Hopkins devotees in a revelatory editorial by Charles Fillmore, cofounder of Unity, in one number of his periodical *Thought*. "Helen Wilmans," he confessed to readers, "objects to my use of the words God, Father, etc. . . . She says 'Why not credit the power spoken of to *man's* creativeness and the source of supply to nature instead of God?'" He went on, after the gentlemanly courtesies, to tell readers that a "great deal" hinged "on *Words*," with their use "worthy our careful consideration." Fillmore voted for a theistic language and told readers why. By contrast, the noetic style of Wilmans and a series of others, including New Thought women Julia Seton Sears and Elizabeth Towne, points

toward more secular concerns, emphasizing entry into a "privileged male world as full participants." This style encouraged prosperity thinking much more than Hopkins and the affective wing of New Thought did, and it saw the new ideas as supports for greater self-reliance and business success. Here the individualism of adults in worlds of their own making took the place of a spiritual community at prayer and in service. A social agenda fell away, and so did the Bible and traditional religious discourse, including a felt concern over sin or evil.[157] The last chapter will take a closer look at this style of New Thought, especially prominent in the twentieth century.

As the New Thought movement grew and expanded, according to Materra, the majority of the men embraced its noetic version, while the majority of the women identified with the affective style. This division meant that—with so many women in the overall movement—the noetic organizations generally attracted equal or near-equal numbers of men and women, while affective networks were strongly populated by women. Periodicals and monographs advanced the case for each in almost a feeding frenzy of press activity as new literature came and went, and new statements appeared, vanished, and were re-created in slightly different guises. If New Thought put its premium on the word and its power, divinely guided, to change earthly conditions and situations, it made good on its commitment in the written, as well as the spoken, word. Periodicals enhanced the national presence for groups like Mental Science and Unity, even as the travels of Hopkins and her disciples on a burgeoning and efficient rail system added to the nationwide spread of New Thought ideas and structures. By 1905 and the beginning of the middle years of the movement, New Thought could be found in twenty-three states as well as in England, Mexico, and Australia. The states with the greatest presence were New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, California, and Colorado.[158]

As the movement grew into these middle years, too, New Thought denominations came to flourish—some like Unity, Religious Science, and Divine Science, to stay; and others, like Annie Rix Militz's West Coast Homes of Truth and Wilmans's scattered Mental Science Temples, to disappear. Ordinations were easy to come by, and—with the movement celebrating diversity—decentralization was a major feature of organizational life. In fact, the idea of establishing separate churches and denominations was quite foreign to this late century–early century New Thought and, as in the case of the Unity movement, was resisted throughout the twentieth century and on, even when all the evidence belied the nondenominational declaration. The children of the one God preferred, despite their obvious communitarian practices, to preserve ideologies of seeking only the God within. Thus, as this sketch already suggests, attempts to organize were

fraught with difficulty. Finally, though, by 1914, the International New Thought Alliance was formed. It had been preceded by a series of meetings and organizational attempts, with the earliest meeting that announced itself explicitly as a "New Thought Convention" held in 1899 in Hartford, Connecticut. Thereafter, in Boston, the International Metaphysical League called a convention, and organization—and name changes—proceeded apace. Always, New Thought people aimed for comprehensiveness, reaching out to embrace sympathizers in an erasure of difference that was theological as well as social. Malinda Cramer's early periodical *Harmony* spoke for all. Its cover page announced it to be "a monthly magazine of philosophy, devoted to TRUTH, Science of Spirit, Theosophy, Metaphysics, and to the Christ method of healing." But always, with the individualism, New Thought ecumenical organizing was tenuous at best. Charles and Myrtle Fillmore's Unity School of Christianity, for example, had only a brief and tense time of inclusion in the International New Thought Alliance, from 1919 until 1922, with Charles Fillmore for many years considering the Unity movement "practical Christianity" and different from New Thought.[159]

The Reverend Solon Lauer made the case for resemblance and inclusivity at a convention as early as 1889, explicitly naming spiritualism, Theosophy, and Christian Science and declaring that there were "no very distinct lines of demarcation between them." All of them, he thought, shared "certain things in common," and he thought, too, that "perhaps a broad and generous interpretation of each would remove most of the points of seeming antagonism." What he said next was even more telling: "Certain it is that there are thousands of persons who read the literature and attend the public meetings of all of these movements, and who find much to love and admire in them."[160] We catch a glimpse of how this process worked in the personal spiritual odyssey of Charles Fillmore (1854–1948). Even with his difficulties with the International New Thought Alliance (suggesting more narrowness on his part?), Fillmore's case is, in fact, representative. His years of religious exploration illustrate how, in an expansive time and nation, the habit of combination nudged Americans to forge out of the Hermetic and related legacies of past and present the metaphysical synthesis of New Thought.

Born on a Chippewa Indian reservation in northern Minnesota, Fillmore grew up in an Indian territory in conflict, with Chippewa, Sioux, and whites all contesting for the land. Besides being a farmer, his father worked as an Indian agent, and from early on that fact must have translated into as much intimacy with Indian culture as a white in a frontier locale could normally expect to acquire. Still more, according to Fillmore's report, when he was six and alone with his mother at the trading post his family operated, a roaming band of Sioux came and spirited him away. The kidnapping did not last a day, for a few hours later the child

was returned unharmed. According to James Gaither, Fillmore later said that he thought the Indians had used him for some sort of religious ceremony.[161] How much the Indian haunting affected his later life is difficult to determine, but the early contact with difference would be replicated in the religious quest of his mature years, functioning perhaps as a kind of horizon of spiritual possibility. At any rate, by 1889 and the beginning years of the Unity movement, Fillmore could confide to readers of his new journal *Modern Thought* that he had spent twenty years in the ranks of "*progressive* Spiritualists." He thought that spiritualism had "done a noble work in bringing light to the world," even as he deplored the practice of the majority of contemporary adherents. "This majority," he complained, were "phenomenalists." Their "tendency" was "to materialize the spirit world, instead of spiritualizing the material world." Half of the mediums were "unconscious subjects of some other mind." By contrast, metaphysics was "the panacea for all such," because it taught the "soul" how it might become a "spiritual center."[162]

Fillmore had gone beyond spiritualism, but clearly he regarded spiritualists as metaphysical cousins who had gotten things at least half right. Rather open in his autobiographical reminiscences, by 1894 he was telling *Thought* readers that he had been "born and raised in the wilderness of the west" and had obtained only a "quite limited" religious education, with God an "unknown factor" in his "conscious mind" until his last few years. He added significantly, "I was always drawn to the mysterious and occult, however, and in youth took great interest in Spiritualism and afterward, in branches of the Hermetic philosophy." If so, Fillmore was still trying to bring others to the Hermetic fold. As summarized by Braden, advertisements for the first issue of *Modern Thought* included books and periodicals displaying interest in "the occult, Spiritualism, theosophy, Rosicrucianism, Hermeticism, and other subjects as well as in [generic] Christian Science." Hermeticism likewise continued to influence Fillmore, for his distinctive teaching on the "twelve powers of man"—based on the notion that twelve seats of (spiritual) power exist throughout the human body—was shaped by Rosicrucian ideas. In another example, the winged globe that became Unity's symbol grew out of a Rosicrucian ambience, when Fillmore responded to Freeman Benjamin Dowd's book *The Temple of the Rosy Cross*.[163]

Fillmore never officially joined the Theosophical Society, and the names of neither he nor his wife, Myrtle Fillmore, can be found on its membership rolls. Still, he observed in one article that he had been "a very earnest student of Theosophy for several years," describing himself as "quite familiar with its literature" within which he had found "much truth." He was also, he said, "personally acquainted with several who are considered in the inner circle of the Theosophical

Society in America." He had "studied them carefully, both from the exoteric and esoteric standpoints," and he boasted, especially, of his "near friend," who was among "the first members of the society in America" and "now right in the front of the work." This man had studied Sanskrit for years, had the "sacred writings of the Hindus" "at his tongue's end," and had "developed quite remarkable occult powers." As in the case of the spiritualists, Fillmore found the Theosophists half right. They were "so loaded up with head learning" and they had so made "of Karma a great Moloch" that they did not realize that by "mental application" one could "wipe out . . . present conditions and make *now* a new environment." Fillmore's theosophical enthusiasm was apparent, as Neal Vahle has noted, in the large number of reviews of books on Theosophy in the first (1889) issue of *Modern Thought*—thirteen, among them Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*—all of them recommended reading. Meanwhile, Fillmore, with Theosophists, continued to embrace reincarnation beliefs (he once told Charles Braden that he had been St. Paul in a previous life). Likewise, his connections to Christian Science and its thought world were obvious, since he had been an Emma Curtis Hopkins student and had brought her to Kansas City to teach several classes.[164] The largest difference between the Christian Science world of Eddy and the New Thought one of Fillmore was the direction of their combinations. Eddy combined Platonized Hermeticism and spiritualist-magnetic lingerings with Calvinism; Fillmore combined similar materials with Christian liberalism and Theosophy instead of Calvinism.

Fillmore's comfort in this blended and reconstructed world of differing metaphysical possibilities was hardly remarkable. His articulateness and his outreach suggest what numerous others in the metaphysical culture of the time were thinking, experiencing, and doing. Especially to be noticed in all of this is how much the comfort zone had extended to Asia. As Fillmore and so many Americans looked eastward for spiritual inspiration and solace, however, what they found was scarcely the unadulterated Asia of their (Romantic) vision. What they found, instead, was the metaphysical Asia (mind, correspondences, energy, and healing all there) that they had molded out of a Hermetic and vernacular magical past and the pluralism of an American present. Meanwhile, as we will see, the Asia of their discovery had also been mediated to them by the European West and an East itself undergoing selective westernization.

6

Metaphysical Asia

Writing in the up-and-coming *Metaphysical Magazine* (founded and edited by former Eddy Christian Scientist Leander Edmund Whipple in 1895), Detroit lawyer Hamilton Gay Howard addressed the theme of personal attraction and repulsion. With familiar nods to magnetism and electricity, Howard sententiously looked east, cloaking his argument with the authority of ancient and modern adepts. "This theory of electric or psychic wave currents pervading our atmosphere" had been "accepted by all Oriental philosophers," he informed readers, and it had also been "taught for hundreds of years in the School of Adepts, at Thebes, which Lord Bulwer Lytton is said to have attended for three and a half years—half the course." "The whole course, requiring great self-denial and continued physical trials was taken," he believed, "by the late Madame Blavatsky, and by Colonel Olcott, of Massachusetts, the advanced free-thinker and theosophist." Howard especially wanted to underscore his conviction that the "wisdom of the East" needed to be noticed, and so he excerpted a piece from a newspaper that he identified only as the *Pittsburg Dispatch*. Inviting readers into a new—and for them exotic—world, its unnamed author boasted of having before him "an English translation of a very old tantric work from the original Sanscrit, by the Hindu pandit, Rama Prasad," a work that contained "the ancient Hindu philosophy as regards the finer forces of nature." In its pages the author found, with evident enthusiasm, references and explanations for "such things as the interstellar ether; its general properties and subdivisions; the laws of vibration; the circulation of the blood and of the nervous fluid; the nervous centres and the general anatomy of the body; *the rationale of psychometry and of occult phenomena*, and a good many other things of which modern science as yet knows little or nothing."[1]

What neither Howard nor the *Dispatch* writer apparently knew was that Rama

Prasad's book had originally appeared as a series of articles in the Indian-based periodical *The Theosophist*, which had been launched in Bombay by none other than Helena Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in 1879. Prasad himself was a decidedly Westernized Hindu and a Theosophist, a man who moved in a discourse community that had heavily invested in reinscribing the traditional lore of India in the scientific terms of the modern, British-inspired West. For Prasad and those who followed him, yogic pranayama had become the "science of breath." In the lengthy exposition that preceded Prasad's translation of the short text from the Sanskrit, he in fact took on the famed German scholar Max Müller for reading the Chandogya Upanishad as in places "more or less fanciful." By contrast, in Prasad's account, none of the Upanishads could be "very intelligible" without knowing something of "the ancient Science of Breath," which was "said to be the secret doctrine of all secret doctrines" and "the key of all that is taught in the Upanishads." Prasad's allusion was a double entendre. First, the Indian Theosophist had affirmed that traditional Indian religious thought was scientific, and he had rendered the Sanskrit title of the work he had translated as "The *Science* of Breath and the Philosophy of the Tattvas." The "Tattvas" of his title—literally "thatnesses"—were, in the classical dualistic Samkyha philosophy of India, the twenty-five principles constitutive of the material universe. In Prasad's usage, however—influenced probably by Helena Blavatsky's invocation of the "Great Breath" in her enormous 1888 book *The Secret Doctrine* (see below)—they referred specifically to the "five modifications of the Great Breath."[2] Thus Prasad's allusion to the "secret doctrine of all secret doctrines" pointed to Blavatsky's book and, so, to Theosophy.

Both the Howard article and the *Dispatch* excerpt that was part of it provide windows into a late-nineteenth-century American world in which the imagined otherness of Asia was redirected and rechanneled into culturally available templates for making sense of difference. Arguably, these templates were supplied by a borderlands discourse that arose on the fringes of liberal Protestantism as it existed in constant commerce with a revived and reconstructed Hermeticism—this available in theosophical, New Thought, and similar versions, and often in combinations of these. If there was any one public event that signaled the process and its continuing reinventions of the East, that event was the World's Parliament of Religions of 1893, held in conjunction with the huge Columbian Exposition in Chicago. A world's fair staged to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the European arrival in the Americas, the exposition, with its displays and attendant events, celebrated, too, American economic and cultural "progress" in a triumphalist spirit that masked an unexamined racism and imperialism.[3] The parliament did not and could not disentangle itself from the cultural climate of

its era, even if, with liberal Protestant leadership, its site was physically removed from that of the larger event. In the downtown Chicago Loop during the month of September, representatives of the world's religious traditions came together under the sign of progress, aiming to assess the religious status of the century and to plan for the future.

Viewed with an eye toward American metaphysical religion, the group that assembled under the liberal auspices of the parliament was decidedly congenial to the new spirituality. The combinative instinct of parliament organizers and presenters reproduced a central trope of American metaphysics. At the same time, the canons that governed the selection process brought speakers who promised to function in keeping with the conference's theosophizing agenda—that is, an agenda that promoted perennialism under the rubric of comparative religions. True enough, Roman Catholic James Cardinal Gibbons led the assembled representatives in an Our Father prayer at the Parliament's opening session, and Dionysios Latas, Greek Orthodox archbishop of Zante, had come from Athens. But the unitive theme of the parliament did not go unnoticed by some traditionalists. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church refused to sanction the event, this despite the fact that John Henry Barrows, who headed the parliament's organizing committee, was pastor of Chicago's First Presbyterian Church. The Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury and the Muslim sultan of Turkey also refused endorsement. At the other end of the spectrum, among Asian representatives a clear theosophical presence could be found. G. N. Chakravarti, an Indian scholar there to defend Hinduism, was a convert to Theosophy. So was the Buddhist Anagarika Dharmapala from Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), who had been encouraged by Blavatsky herself to become a scholar of Buddhist Pali-language texts. Kinza Hirai, a lay Buddhist from Japan, similarly had been a Theosophist. Swami Vivekananda, a Neo-Vedantin from Bengal (transformed overnight by the media and popular acclaim into a celebrity), thought along lines congenial to Theosophy. Among non-Asians, the American Alexander Russell Webb (or Mohammed Webb), who had converted to Islam, still told Henry Steel Olcott that he "had not ceased to be an ardent Theosophist." Other theosophical names also could be found among the delegates—Americans William Q. Judge and J. D. Buck and, from England, Annie Besant and Isabel Cooper-Oakley.[4]

Meanwhile, the Theosophical Society, along with Christian Science, had been accorded a separate "denominational congress" in conjunction with the parliament, a recognition given only to some three dozen separate groups. Both Theosophists and Christian Scientists were elated by attendance at their meetings. Theosophists glowed their way through two special sessions held on weekends to accommodate public interest, reporting that at the final one, with seats

for four thousand, hundreds more were standing in the aisles and along the walls. An anecdote recounted how a Presbyterian minister and parliament manager interrupted William Q. Judge's speech on reincarnation to tell stray Presbyterians that their own meeting was empty and that perhaps they were confused regarding its location and should leave immediately. Supposedly, no one followed his advice. In their turn, Christian Scientists filled the hall of four thousand to hear an address by "Rev. Mary Baker G. Eddy, discoverer and founder of Christian Science," read to them in absentia, and to listen, too, to other Christian Science speakers. The next day they basked in the publicity that the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* provided them: "One of the best congresses yet held in connection with the Parliament of Religions, judged by number and interest, was that of the Christian Scientists. . . . For two hours before the hall opened crowds besieged the doors eager to gain admission. At two o'clock, the time set for opening the proceedings, the house was filled to the roof, no seats being available for love or money."[5]

The parliament was the brainchild of Charles Carroll Bonney (1831–1903), a Chicago lawyer interested in comparative religions who was also, significantly, a Swedenborgian. Bonney's faith in the theology of divine influx shaped his idea and subsequent participation in parliament proceedings in which he functioned as president. He told Christian Scientists, for example, that "no more striking manifestation of the interposition of Divine Providence in human affairs has come in recent years than that shown in the raising up of the body of people known as Christian Scientists." They, indeed, were "called to declare the real harmony between religion and science, and to restore the waning faith of many in the verities of the sacred Scriptures."[6] Nor was Bonney alone in his ecumenism and his belief in the all-pervading presence of Spirit. Something akin to the immanential theology of Swedenborg and most of the metaphysicians ran through the organizing ideology of the entire World's Parliament event.

As John Henry Barrows, chair of the parliament, introduced his massive, two-volume edition recounting its background and transcribing its speeches, he sounded the theme that appeared repeatedly in the messages of the various delegates. "Faith in a Divine Power to whom men believe they owe service and worship" had been "like the sun, a life-giving and fructifying potency in man's intellectual and moral development." But Barrows followed up the good news of divine immanence with the bad that delegates were aiming to correct. "Religion, like the white light of Heaven," had been "broken into many-colored fragments by the prisms of men." So the parliament aimed, as one of its objects, "to change this many-colored radiance back into the white light of heavenly truth." Its promoters, like closet Theosophists, were "striking the noble chord of universal human brotherhood" and evoking a "starry music which will yet drown the

miserable discords of earth." To be sure, a Christian ethos surrounded the universal brotherhood, since it was "embodied in an Asiatic Peasant who was the Son of God." Still, the aims of the parliament stretched the liberal fabric of the Protestant umbrella in directions that, at least potentially, wore thin the Christian certitude of possessing the unique—and most highly evolved—religious truth. The parliament intended "to show to men, in the most impressive way, what and how many important truths the various Religions hold and teach in common."[7]

To that end, organizers imported "leading scholars, representing the Brahman, Buddhist, Confucian, Parsee, Mohammedan, Jewish and other Faiths," placed them alongside representatives of the Christian churches, and allowed these others time and a platform. The results, as Richard Seager argues, were not quite what the Chicago leaders intended. Instead, non-Christian representatives upended the liberal Christian project and exposed its tenuousness in a discourse intended to display the wisdom and integrity of the East.[8] In so doing, the Asians flattened Christian peaks not only for themselves but also, potentially, for Americans. And in so doing, they also underlined a way of talking, thinking, and being in the world that promoted the project of metaphysical religion. Now, though, metaphysics appeared under the banner of an intercepted Asia, caught in complex thickets between separate Asian pasts, Westernized Asian presents, and American polysemous perceptions. By this time, too, American metaphysics had already reached a watershed in its appropriation of global faiths to advance its homegrown spirituality. Theosophical prominence at the World's Parliament of Religions was theologically and poetically appropriate. It was the Asian turn of the Theosophical Society that had brought the universalizing discourse of the 1870s and 1880s to the authoritative statement of the 1890s. In this 1890s statement, the power of mind took on new proportions, correspondence ruled religious perceptions, and healing energies came from new (to non-Asian Americans) Asian wisdoms. This chapter looks first to the Asia mediated to the West by Theosophy and then to metaphysical American versions of yoga and Buddhism, with the presence of Theosophy—and its partner New Thought—never far away.

THEOSOPHICAL ASIA

Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott traveled to India in late 1878, and they never returned to this country to stay. The Asian years of Theosophy and its increasingly close ties with England, the growing rift of the founders with each other, Blavatsky's European and English sojourn, her trials and tribulations over fraud charges, and her death in England in 1891—these do not concern my narrative directly. Important here, instead, are the literary products of these years

and their effects on an evolving metaphysical religion in the United States. *Isis Unveiled* had played a significant role in shifting an older spiritualist language into new and more expansive vocabularies and grammars, and now the continuing work of the theosophical leaders received an eager reception in America. These writings model a reading of Asia that colonized it to suit American metaphysical requirements. In so doing, as Stephen Prothero argues in the specific case of Olcott, they "creolized" Asian cultural worlds with already combinative American discourses.[9]

Olcott's literary creolization project was apparent as early as 1881 when he first produced his *Buddhist Catechism*, a work to be considered later. Blavatsky herself provided the more far-reaching metaphysical scripture in her monumental (nearly fifteen hundred pages in two volumes exclusive of front matter and index) *Secret Doctrine* of 1888.[10] Bruce Campbell—who calls it "a, perhaps *the*, major work of occultism" in the nineteenth century—has recounted its publication history, with the new book—a reconsideration and elaboration of *Isis Unveiled*—announced as early as 1884. Blavatsky first planned to use *The Theosophist* to issue the book, publishing it in monthly installments of the same length. But by 1885 she left India for Europe, and so that specific project folded. But Blavatsky reportedly wrote—prodigiously—as she traveled and remained for a time in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium. Her handwritten material was transferred for her into typescript, but when he saw it, Subba Row, the Indian Theosophist who had promised to edit it, withdrew before what he regarded an impossible task. Eventually, after Blavatsky moved to London in 1887, Archibald and Bertram Keightley—the two Theosophists most responsible for her presence there—created an outline for a manuscript that by then purportedly stood over a yard high. Of the four volumes that the Keightleys suggested, only two were eventually published as *The Secret Doctrine*—a first subtitled *Cosmogenesis* and dealing with the evolution of the cosmos, and a second called *Anthropogenesis* and addressing the theme of human evolution. Two others, Ed Fawcett and Richard Harte, supplied help for aspects of the project.[11]

As in the case of *Isis Unveiled* (see the previous chapter), William Emmette Coleman charged Blavatsky with plagiarism—a charge that was old news, given her previous publishing history. She claimed that her volumes—and "the Secret Doctrine of the Archaic ages"—were built around stanzas from the "Book of Dzyan," a work that Blavatsky introduced as a fragment from a Tibetan Buddhist text called the *Mani Koumboum*, the sacred writing of the Dzungarians, in the northern part of the country. While she was in Tibet, she explained, she was allowed to memorize the stanzas. But the text was "not in the possession of European Libraries" and was "utterly unknown to our Philologists, or at any rate was

never heard of by them under its present name." On these points, Coleman and Blavatsky agreed, and he added that the language of Senzar, the professed original language of the work, was completely unknown. As in the case of her first huge work, he accused her of unacknowledged reliance on nineteenth-century sources from which she had compiled her work. Chief among them were H. H. Wilson's *Vishnu Purána* (1840), Alexander Winchell's *World-Life; or, Comparative Geology* (1883), and John Dowson's Hindu *Classical Dictionary* (1879). Nor was he alone in speculating on her big book's composition. René Guénon believed it was based on Tibetan fragments, but different from the ones Blavatsky herself claimed. Jewish mystical scholar Gershom Scholem thought its origins lay in the Jewish Kabbalah. And according to Alvin Boyd Kuhn, Max Müller sardonically observed that Blavatsky was either a "remarkable forger" or the contributor of "the most valuable gift to archaeological research in the Orient."[12]

Yet, granted evidence for the charge of plagiarism, Blavatsky's facility in joining the South Asian discourse to a series of other cultural conversations—Hermetic, Western scientific, and even Christian—marks her work with a synthetic originality that needs to be noticed.[13] Indeed, gun-shy perhaps from her experience with *Isis Unveiled*, she herself indirectly acknowledged the extent of her dependence (and also her estimate of what she had done) in her upper-case quotation from the French essayist Michel de Montaigne in her introduction: "'I HAVE HERE MADE ONLY A NOSEGAY OF CULLED FLOWERS, AND HAVE BROUGHT NOTHING OF MY OWN BUT THE STRING THAT TIES THEM.'" "Pull the 'string' to pieces and cut it up in shreds, if you will," she added. "As for the nosegay of FACTS—you will never be able to make away with these."[14] Still further, for all the scholarly dismissal, Blavatsky's work would shape language not only in theosophical circles but also—as Campbell's assessment of it has already suggested—well beyond them. Its statement of the "secret doctrine" of Asia would provide the vocabulary and grammar for a generic metaphysical discourse. In it Asian historical particularity was effaced, and the universalizing potential of concepts like reincarnation, karma, and subtle bodies was amplified many times over. Arguably, the general American metaphysical project of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries would continue to sound themes and enact Asias that originated in the Blavatsky opus.

Beyond that, in the elaborate sacred tale of origins that *The Secret Doctrine* constructed, Blavatsky provided a story of cosmic and human origins that, whatever it told about Asia, surely imitated the West. In its overall modeling, her narrative resembled ancient Gnostic mythic material or Kabbalistic lore from the Middle Ages. Like Gnostic and Kabbalistic mythologies, Blavatsky's ambitious theodicy explained the predicament of humans by elaborating a series of events

and entities that, in effect, harmfully separated things human from their divine or originating source. As in older Gnostic and Kabbalistic forays, the Blavatskian version of the order of the universe complicated human origins—as if interlarding an explanation with numerous layers could prove the intrinsic sacrality of humans and account for evil without alleging a flaw in the source of all. Hermes Trismegistus stayed present in this account. Blavatsky thought the "Divine Pymander" and the "hermetic Fragments" to be echoes of the "Esoteric philosophy and the Hindu Purânas," an order historians might well want to reverse and a connection they might want to challenge on other grounds.[15] In the context of the late nineteenth century's preoccupation with Darwinian evolution (and Blavatsky's own engagement with it), *The Secret Doctrine*—worlds away from what by the early twentieth century would become Protestant fundamentalism—posited a human devolution from the divine that represented also an evolution.

"Kosmos" existed in eternity "before the re-awakening of still slumbering Energy," which became "the emanation of the Word in later systems." The cosmic system was characterized by a perpetual periodicity, a latency and activity by turns. Always, there had been the "ONE LIFE, eternal, invisible, yet Omnipresent, without beginning or end, yet periodical in its regular manifestations, between which periods reigns the dark mystery of non-Being; unconscious, yet absolute Consciousness; unrealisable, yet the one self-existing reality; truly, 'a chaos to the sense, a Kosmos to the reason.' Its one absolute attribute, which is ITSELF, eternal, ceaseless Motion, is called in esoteric parlance the 'Great Breath,' which is the perpetual motion of the universe, in the sense of limitless, ever-present SPACE. That which is motionless cannot be Divine."[16]

If the divine was motion and energy, the divine was also Mind or Thought, the "Word" from which all things emanated and in which lay concealed the "plan of every future Cosmogony and Theogony." Moreover, in the Blavatskian synthesis—as throughout American metaphysical religion—the third abiding feature became the correspondence that ran through the layers of reality, so that spiritual anthropology replicated the eternal patterning of the universe. God was, in one way, neither close nor intimate; in another, the divine was alive and resonant in every cell. The "Great Breath" kept on breathing, and what it breathed was people. If this sounds like an overture in the direction of the contemplative mind, Blavatsky's own etymology suggests the same. She thought that "Dzyan" (also spelled "Dzyn" or "Dzen") was a corrupt form of Sanskrit *Dhyana*, which means meditation. Beyond that, with all the preoccupation with science (both Books I and II include a Part III titled "Science and the Secret Doctrine Contrasted") that Blavatsky displayed, she was demonstrably as concerned about aesthetics. The secret wisdom of Dzyan came packaged in "stanzas." She titled the

prelude to her first volume "Proem." And her preoccupations with correspondence took the form, often, of attention to numerical symmetries akin to those in mathematics or music. Alluding to her doctrine of seven human races and also to the dangerous power hidden within the symmetries, she told readers that "doctrines such as the planetary chain, or the seven races, at once give a clue to the seven-fold nature of man." "Each principle," she continued, was "correlated to a plane, a planet, and a race; and the human principles are, on every plane, correlated to seven-fold occult forces—those of the higher planes being of tremendous power."[17]

Blavatsky's statement of a mind-energy-correspondence triad is instructive. Carl Jackson identifies it with "traditional Hindu philosophy" and suggests that concepts of "*Brahman*, *maya*, *atman*, and karma" had been "reformulated in Theosophical terminology," with connections especially to Vedanta. But if this was the case, it is also true that Blavatsky announced the message in ways that—intended or not—were congenial to American metaphysicians schooled in the moralism and work ethic of their culture's Protestant moorings. A confirmed perennialist, Blavatsky proclaimed her "Secret Doctrine" as "the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world," and she quickly elaborated its propositions. First came the "metaphysical ONE ABSOLUTE—BE-NESS," the "rootless root" that could only be known by negation, "beyond all thought or speculation" and symbolized both as "absolute abstract Space" and "absolute Abstract Motion." Second came an affirmation of the eternity of the universe as a "boundless plane," a "playground" for countless appearing and disappearing universes, so that the "law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow" ruled absolutely. Third—and the existential concern that drove the first two—came the "fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul," which was "an aspect of the Unknown Root." There was, therefore, an "obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul—a spark of the former—through the Cycle of Incarnation (or 'Necessity') in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law." Blavatsky's world emerged as a hard-work universe in which there were "no privileges or special gifts in man" except for "those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations."[18] This multiplication of incarnations (beyond the Asian sources)—the cycle of seemingly endless returns for still more growth (for the soul on a "spiritual" path)—became a hallmark of later theosophical discourse into the twenty-first century. Souls on earth went to school and learned metaphysical lessons as they journeyed.

Blavatsky's "slanderers" would generate "bad Karma," but for those on the path the aesthetics of contemplation opened out into vast expanses. Here space, "THE ETERNAL PARENT WRAPPED IN HER EVER INVISIBLE ROBES HAD SLUM-

BERED ONCE AGAIN FOR SEVEN ETERNITIES." Eventually, though, the spatial "MOTHER" swelled and expanded "LIKE THE BUD OF THE LOTUS." Her vibration touched the light in the midst of darkness; a single ray entered the "MOTHER-DEEP"; and the egg therein became the "WORLD-EGG." So it went, as already the number seven began to be manifested both inside and outside the egg. The "GREAT MOTHER," who was at least once called the "FATHER-MOTHER," was the eternal cosmic source from which the divine, the spiritual, and all of the "MIND-BORN" emanated. We need not follow Blavatsky's narrative further to glimpse behind its overproduction what Alvin Kuhn called "a recital of the scheme according to which the primal unity of unmanifest Being breaks up into differentiation and multiformity and so fills space with conscious evolving beings."[19]

It is, however, worth marking the points in the narrative that reinforce the Hermeticism of the past and reconstitute it as a new statement for the times—a statement that, for Americans, domesticated Asia as a function of vernacularized Western mystical categories. Indian sacred lore in the *Vishnu Purana* told of a vast egg that floated on cosmic waters. Vishnu entered the egg as the creator Brahma—to produce the three worlds of earth, atmosphere, and heaven; he, in turn, preserved them through countless ages and finally destroyed them with flames as Rudra. Then rain fell to form one vast ocean, and, like a coiled snake, Vishnu slept on the waters. The time from Brahma's initial act of creation to the time of destruction was called a day of Brahma, or a Kalpa. Within each Kalpa, a thousand cycles passed. These were known as Maha Yugas (literally, "great years"), with each extending for 4,320,000 human years or 12,000 years of the gods (a year of the gods being 360 human years, and a day of the gods being a single human year). Every Maha Yuga was in turn subdivided into four lesser Yugas, with each shorter than the previous one. During these increasingly shorter Yugas observance of law declined and humankind grew ever more corrupt, with the shortest and most devolved of them being the Kali Yuga of 1,800 years. After the thousand Maha Yugas, Vishnu's sleep upon the ocean lasted as long. Finally, at the end of this protracted night, Vishnu woke up and re-created the worlds as Brahma; and so a distinct day of Brahma began anew. But that was not all. Brahma had a life span, and thus there were 100 years of 360 days and nights of Brahma respectively, whereupon the original evolution of life and worlds reversed itself and Vishnu returned to the contemplation of his Supreme Self, alone with eternal Time (Kala), Spirit (Purusha), and Primary Matter (Prakriti). When Vishnu decided that he wanted to play once more, the vast drama of creation again unfolded.[20]

In the midst of this cosmic theater of epic proportions, the *Vishnu Purana* warned that humans were living in the Kali Yuga, the most devolved state of its

current Maha Yuga. Blavatsky, at least manifestly, followed its narrative. The Kali Yuga that the West had reached was "an age BLACK WITH HORRORS." "Man" was "his own destroyer" in a Kali Yuga that reigned "supreme" not only in India but also there. Yet more than the *Vishnu Purana*, Blavatsky historicized freely and pointedly. She predicted that "about nine years" from the time she was writing, "the first cycle of the first five millenniums, that began with the great cycle of the Kali-Yuga" would end. More apocalyptically, she declared that humans stood "at the very close of the cycle of 5,000 years of the present Aryan Kaliyuga; and between this time and 1897" there would be "a large rent made in the Veil of Nature," with "materialistic science" receiving a "death-blow." Still further, in Blavatsky's opus the language of the Yugas receded, and, in fact, at least one extended reference to the Kali Yuga read it decidedly more positively. At the Kali Yuga's close, Blavatsky announced, quoting one source at length, the minds of the living would be awakened, becoming clear as crystal. They would give birth to a new race who would be truly human beings, following the laws of the age of purity. Blavatsky thought that the *"blessings"* of the Kali Yuga were "well described" and that they "fit in admirably even with that which one sees and hears in Europe and other civilized and Christian lands in full XIXth, and at the dawn of the XXth century of our great era of ENLIGHTENMENT." As important here, working between what she claimed were esoteric Buddhist and Vedantic (Raja Yoga) sources as interpreted already in theosophical writings, she regarded the Kalpas as "Rounds." Indeed, what preoccupied her—more than Kalpas and Yugas—were "Rounds," with each "Round" in the human saga "composed of the Yugas of the seven periods of Humanity."[21]

Since all things traveled in sevens in Blavatsky's universe, every star or planet was linked to six "companion globes." Life proceeded on the seven globes in seven rounds or cycles, with rest periods or times of "obscuration" between, and in a complex rebirthing process each globe had to "transfer its life and energy to another planet." Into this cosmic scenario of action and rest, Blavatsky inserted the earth, and in so doing she historicized her narrative in ways that hinted more of Western occultism than Eastern puranas. The earth, as the "visible representative of its invisible superior fellow globes," was required to live through seven rounds. For the first three, it formed and consolidated; for the fourth, it settled and hardened; and in the final three, it returned "to its first ethereal form . . . spiritualised, so to say." Significantly, in the fourth round humanity came to be, and in the later rounds the human race would be "ever tending to reassume its primeval form." "Man" would become "*a* God and then—GOD, like every other atom in the Universe."[22]

Here, in the fourth round, a series of "root-races" had sprung up in succession, each of them dwelling on a particular continent. As Blavatsky plotted their his-

tory, in what Bruce Campbell has called a "process of involution and evolution," she invoked "Ethereal" beginnings and a "spiritual" end. The earliest (prehistoric) root-race, the "Self-born," arose on a continent called "The Imperishable Sacred Land." Thereafter came a second race on the "Hyperborean" continent, a third on Lemuria, and a fourth on Atlantis. After that, the fifth root-race, the Aryan, appeared, and it was this race that flourished in most of recorded history, including Blavatsky's nineteenth century. She had first identified its continent as "America" but went on to explain that, as it was "situated at the Antipodes," it was "Europe and Asia Minor, almost coeval with it" and then simply Europe as the "fifth great Continent."[23]

From whence had Blavatsky synthesized this material that took shape as a dissident history of the human species? If a reconstructed (which to a degree she acknowledged) metaphysical Asia supplied a part and Western Hermeticism contributed another part, a third came from a mix of novelistic sources with popular science accounts of the period. Plato, of course, had been the ancient literary source for Atlantean speculation in his *Timaeus* and his unfinished *Critias*. But by Blavatsky's time Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (with an English translation in 1873) and Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (with, in its publication year, 1871, five editions) brought Atlantean themes—and the notion of hidden, forgotten human history—to the fore. By 1882, however, these science fiction sources were eclipsed by Ignatius Donnelly's *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*, the work of a former Republican lieutenant governor of Minnesota, United States congressman, and continuing civil servant and politician. With seven editions in the year of its publication and accolades from William Gladstone, prime minister of England, the work was translated into Swedish the year after it appeared and by 1890 had been printed in twenty-three American and twenty-six English editions. Donnelly had immersed himself in the latest findings of his era's science and had summarized the material. Here Plato's description of the island-continent of Atlantis could be read historically, with the natural catastrophe that destroyed it obliterating a spectacular human civilization. Still more, some of the Atlanteans had managed to escape and survive. England's civilization was Atlantean in its origins and that of the United States thus derivatively so.[24]

Blavatsky's third root-race of Lemurians looked even more credible in terms of the science of the time. The Pacific "land of lemurs" had first been proposed by Philip Lutley Sclater, former secretary of the London Zoological Society, fellow of the Royal Society, and friend of Thomas Huxley and Charles Darwin. Interested in ornithology and the fauna of Central and South America, he theorized species distribution in evolutionary terms, invoking a land bridge that began in Madagascar, moved through southern India, and ended in the Malay Peninsula,

and calling it Lemuria. Later, the well-known German evolutionary biologist Ernst Heinrich Haeckel argued for Sclater's Lemuria as the original home of humankind, even if he later changed his mind. Like Atlantis, Lemuria had sunk into the sea, well below the surface of the Indian Ocean. Its former existence, however, helped Haeckel in explaining the way that migration assisted the geographical distribution of humans.[25]

Blavatsky absorbed it all—Vishnu, Hermes, popularized science, and even the Christian narrative of the original sin and fall of humanity—in the comprehensive unity of her account. The Atlanteans of her telling had fallen into sin and begotten monsters. In the racialism characteristic of her time, she reported that they had started out being brown-colored but later became "black with sin," degenerating into "magical practices and gross animality." They were "the first 'Sacrificers' to the *gods of matter*," and their worship devolved into "*self-worship*" and "phallicism." "Marked with a character of SORCERY," they had lost the ability to use their "third eye." Still, the shadow of Atlantean evil was swept away for Blavatsky in the ebb and flow of the law of periodicity. The Atlanteans, in effect, had died because their time had come, not—she stated specifically—because of their depravity or because they had become "black with sin." And in yet another apparent contradiction, their development as "giants whose physical beauty and strength reached their climax" followed evolutionary law.[26]

Read another—Asian and Hermetic—way, however, the fall that began human history meant the "descent" onto earth of the gods who became incarnate in human beings. Every avatar (or, Blavatsky said, "incarnation") meant "the fall of a God into generation," and she went on to cite the Upanishads for support. There was a loss of purity here, a compromise with perfection rather than a moral decision by a weak and disobedient human pair. But the "Fall of Spirit into generation" was necessary for self-consciousness, for Atman by itself would pass into "'NON-BEING, which is absolute Being.'" At the same time, the universe of humans was an illusory affair; it was Maya, with everything "temporary therein." Evil came with thought, which introduced a principle of finitude and separation, and it was related, too, to karmic law in which over countless eons of time humans worked out their destiny. Blavatsky orchestrated a complex choreography between this destiny and human freedom, rejecting notions of fatalism and invoking free agency for humans in their earthly sojourn. No individual could escape what she called a "*ruling* Destiny," but always a choice of paths to it existed. Karma neither created nor designed. Rather, each human planned and created "causes," and the law of karma adjusted "the effects." "Those who believe in *Karma* have to believe in *destiny*," she declared, "which, from birth to death, every man is weaving thread by thread around himself, as a spider does his

cobweb."[27] According to *The Secret Doctrine*'s report, Atlanteans and Lemurians had done so, and likewise members of the Aryan race were presently so engaged.

Given all of this—and the exotic call of lost worlds and ancient, unknown peoples—the metaphysical afterlife of Blavatsky's Atlantis and Lemuria proved as extensive as her reinscription of the law of karma and reincarnation. Meanwhile, Asia beckoned again in her doctrine of the subtle bodies. Newly impressed (since *Isis Unveiled*) with the all-encompassing "sevenfold principle," which she found everywhere in nature, she discovered the seven once more. Whereas previously in *Isis* she had found nature and humanity to be triune—each human had a physical, astral, and spiritual body (or body, soul, and spirit)—now a grand multiplication of subtle bodies took place. Just as the visible planets and their rulers (the planetary gods) numbered the fabled seven, "principles in Man" corresponded. Seven bodies existed on "three material planes and one spiritual plane," and they boasted Asian-sounding names that had already been divulged to A. P. Sinnett in *Esoteric Buddhism* (by the Mahatmas, he claimed). The highest body was the "atma" (Hindu Atman, or "Universal Spirit"); the lowest, the "gross Matter" of the physical body. On an ascending scale in between came the "life" body, or the "Prana" (literally, "breath" as the "active power producing all vital phenomena"); the astral body, or Linga-Sarira (an "inert vehicle or form on which the body [was] moulded"); the animal soul, or "Kama-rupa" (the "principle of animal desire"); the "Manas" (Mind, or human soul); and the "Buddhi" (spiritual soul). In this ambitious and overarching schema, Blavatsky had provided a tour de force on the "Septenary Element in the Vedas," but she was also backtracking toward the West. She told readers that, in the ancient world, "so-called Christian Gnostics had adopted this time-honoured system" and that she had found Kabbalistic borrowings, too.[28]

Not all the parts of the septenary human were fully developed, however, and this, too, supported Blavatsky's earlier threefold designation. As Kuhn summarized, for her humans were "sevenfold potentially, threefold actually," and this meant that of the "seven principles only the lower three have been brought from latency to activity." Blavatsky employed the term *Monad* to describe the Atma-Buddhi, the last two—and highest—"principles" within the septenary human, and she called the Monad the "dual soul." She also called the human Monad, in its "informing principle," the "HIGHER SELF," and saw it as "one and the same" with an "animal Monad," even if the first was "endowed with *divine* intelligence" and the second "with *instinctual* faculty alone." Human Monads participated in a far vaster monadic universe, since individual Monads were "*spontaneously self-active*" units characteristic of nature. In an echo of the mid-nineteenth-century spiritualist cosmology, all "Matter" was "Spirit, and *vice versâ*"; and "the Uni-

verse and the Deity which informs it" were "unthinkable apart from each other." Monads evolved through succeeding incarnations to become human, but Blavatsky distinguished the process from Darwinian biological evolution or even metaphysical descriptions of external evolution of the Monad through many forms. Instead, the "evolution of the internal or real MAN" was "purely spiritual"; it represented a "journey of the 'pilgrim-soul' through various *states* of *not only matter* but Self-consciousness and self-perception." It stopped being human only when it became "*absolutely divine*."[29]

Absoluteness, however, was the far goal. As in Andrew Jackson Davis's mid-century cosmology of eternal progress and imploding worlds, Blavatsky's human-made-god was, indeed, a "pilgrim-soul." Theosophist Alvin Kuhn, commenting on *The Secret Doctrine*, pointed to "the far-off summit" of human life "in the seventh Round," when all seven human principles would exist in "full flower" and each human would be "the divine man he was before—only now conscious of his divinity." But on the way, there was much to be done and achieved. He especially noted how, in the Blavatskian schema, when all that was evolving attained the seventh globe of a round, a return to the originating condition followed—yet with wisdom gained through experience and, so, a superior state of consciousness.[30] Here, in effect, was a Western gloss on the materials from which Blavatsky constructed her metaphysical universe. Asia had been read and, at least historically speaking, misread many times over. But the misreadings themselves constituted the creative aspect of Blavatsky's work, and the theosophical misreadings continued. The Asia of historical essentialism arguably never existed, and historical revisionism, at least in the West, re-created Asia again and again. The theosophical Asia molded by Americans and Anglophiles in general bent South Asian history and traditional lore—however much it was already bent by Asians to their own needs—into a new metaphysical version with a shape distinctly Victorian and moralistic.[31]

By 1890, for example, the children of American Theosophists in New York and elsewhere could discover from a theosophical "catechism" in William Q. Judge's periodical *The Path* that the "Secret Doctrine" was most like "the Buddhist religion and the religion of the Brahmans," which included "more than two-thirds of all mankind." They could discover, too, that Jesus Christ had also taught the same truths esoterically but that the "Secret Doctrine" contained "more theosophical knowledge than any other body of teaching." It was "the Science-Religion," in that it searched "for facts or laws in nature," and it rested on the three principles of "Being or Life," the "law of periodicity," and the "identity of all souls with the Oversoul." Learning by rote or by teacher's paraphrase, theosophical children could absorb a theology in which all nature was "ensouled," with the

"world soul" entering "into the elements, such as air, fire, water, and then into the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human worlds." Each "soul spark," they would learn, went "through all things thus" and slowly reached "perfection," with "soul-union with the all" as the "only real state." Meanwhile, they were assured that the "Life Principle" that flowed through all could be called "the living Breath of the unknown Eternal One" and that its "great Law" was "Karma." Matter, or "Substance," said the catechism, was that into which the "Great Breath" breathed, and they could identify it as the "World Mother or the Oversoul." When they asked what next, the stock children's answers explained that "after a long period, The Great Breath" was "drawn in again" and that then the world "all dissolved back again into The Breath." The "Breath," however, moved "to and fro," and young readers were brought back to the law of Karma, with its "strict justice" as "the eternal nature of all being" and "Universal Brotherhood" as the moral of the tale. Where could "an example of this in human life" be found? The answer came swift and sure. "If I speak an angry word to any one at the beginning of the day, it makes both him and me feel differently for some time. This affects what we say to others, changes them to us, and so all are injured by the one selfish deed."[32]

The practical simplicity of the teaching was inescapable, suited more to the urbanized American Northeast with its Anglo-Protestant culture of moralism than a putative South Asian ashram. The progress of the soul-spark through the forms—the return of the Monad to the One—not only performed itself as agency but, ever and especially, as *moral* agency. Several readings away from Blavatsky's Hindu and Hermetic sources, Judge's Theosophy functioned as a distinct species of American metaphysical religion. Meanwhile, the American lodges flourished. The same year that the children of would-be adepts were learning their theosophical catechism, *The Path* was reporting some thirty-four American branches of the Theosophical Society, with lodges not only in obvious places like New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Boston but also in medium-sized cities such as Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and St. Louis and smaller ones like Grand Island (Nebraska), Bridgeport (Connecticut), Decorah (Iowa), Santa Cruz (California), and Muskegon (Michigan). A year later, the magazine counted fifty-four lodges in North America, including one in Toronto, Canada, a sizable number of the 258 lodges worldwide. By the next year (1892), there were sixty North American lodges, including the single Canadian lodge. The pattern was similar for the next two years. There were seventy-seven North American lodges in 1893 and eighty-four the following year, including three in Canada for both years.[33]

By this time, Judge was heavily embroiled in the conflict with Henry Steel Olcott that would lead to rupture and independence for what became the Theo-

sophical Society in America. Beginning after Blavatsky's death in 1891, Judge claimed esoteric privileges and declared his personal contact with the Masters or Mahatmas of theosophical lore (see the previous chapter). In a bitter feud between the two men continents apart (Olcott, the president of the Theosophical Society, was in India), judicial proceedings were launched against Judge, who was vice president. Accused of deception on a series of matters, of falsely claiming communication with Masters, and of also falsely sending personal messages and orders as if authorized by Masters, Judge faced a council and committee of the Theosophical Society that first found grounds not to act against him. However, when evidence contained in the private papers of the Englishwoman Annie Besant—who would later head the society—was made public without her consent, matters came to a head. A convention of the society in 1894 resolved, after Olcott's urging, that Judge should resign as vice president and go through a reelection process. The American section responded quickly. Meeting in a Boston convention the following year, members voted to secede, declaring their autonomy and changing the name of the American section to "The Theosophical Society in America." Then they elected Judge president for life—a role he held only for a year until his death in 1896. In his turn, Olcott expelled Judge from the parent Theosophical Society. No winner took all. Most of the American lodges followed Judge, but later—with lecturing and organizing efforts on the part of Besant and Countess Constance Wachtmeister, the widow of a former Swedish ambassador to London—some of the American work of the parent body was recouped.[34]

For both branches of the society in the United States, American readings of Asia continued to mold it to metaphysical categories already abroad in the nation. Here could be found roots both in the Hermetic tradition of the West and in the polyglot and combinative culture of the land, in which Native American and African American memory and practice functioned as the repressed knowledge of white Americans. And here, too, could be found a spirituality that, however much and however vociferously it protested, was engrafted on the Anglo-Protestant base that had shaped public culture. We need not subscribe to an essentialism that posits a one true reading of Asia to notice that Americans were creating an Asia to their own visionary requirements, an Asia of their dreams that would facilitate the shaping of their waking selves and Selves.

THE METAPHYSICS OF AMERICAN YOGA

Metaphysical Self-fashioning, strongly influenced by theosophical representations of Asia, grew apace as the nineteenth century wound down and the new

century dawned. It spilled out of self-conscious metaphysical categories and became more general ways of talking and acting. Nowhere was this more the case than in the national appropriation of the "Brahmanism" Blavatsky loved in the American experience of yoga. The process of appropriation and the shift in public language and perception over time were remarkable. Americans moved from a thorough revulsion, in the early to mid years of the nineteenth century, toward anything remotely yogic (this among the most liberal elites) to a cautious acceptance of certain aspects of meditation yoga (again among the most liberal and now, usually, Theosophists). But in all of this, disdain for hatha, or physical, yoga continued. In the twentieth century, the theosophical legacy combined with aspects of New Thought, with already Westernized South Asian discourses, and with growing interest in South Asian tantra to create a new and American yogic product. This American yoga increasingly came to value the physical as a route to the transcendent. Along the way, it began to pay attention to the all but overlooked language of the Self in earlier American transcriptions of the Atman-Brahman equation until, by the early and middle twentieth century, American yoga gave fuller—though still limited—acknowledgment to the Self. In the midst of this, what I have already called the enlightened body-self became, more and more, the approved cultural transcription of metaphysical "mind."

The most useful place to begin following this story of American transformation is with the Transcendentalists. Nineteenth-century statements that figured this Self had spoken in terms of the Oversoul; and, as we have already seen, American language of the Oversoul preceded Blavatsky and needs to be laid at Transcendental doors. In his well-known essay on the theme in 1841, Ralph Waldo Emerson had announced that "man" was a "stream whose source is hidden" and had pointed to the soul that declared "I am born into the great, the universal mind." He had also affirmed that the person so lived by the Oversoul would "cease from what is base and frivolous in his life, and be content with all places and with any service he can render." As Frederic Ives Carpenter long ago showed, this forthright declaration of American mysticism originated not in Asian sources but in Western Neoplatonism with its idea of a World Soul in which all discrete and individual souls were joined. It was Souls, not Selves, that Emerson affirmed, and—even though he already knew that Atman equaled Brahman—his rhetorical choices were Western. It could be said that a grand enlargement of the individual soul ran through Emerson's statement, and that is certainly true. But the call was one to asceticism (cease from the "base and frivolous"), to nonattachment (be content wherever you are), and to nonpreferential service (give any service you can). Peace and tranquility, more than radical transformation, characterized Emerson's vision of the soul in union with the Oversoul: "He will calmly

front the morrow in the negligency of that trust which carries God with it, and so hath already the whole future in the bottom of the heart," Emerson concluded.[35]

Emerson's younger friend, the second-generation Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, at first glance seems more forthcoming in making explicit yogic connections. There is at least one tantalizing letter, written in 1849, in which Thoreau invoked yoga, quoting passages from his South Asian reading and affirming that he "would fain practice the yoga faithfully." "To some extent, and at rare intervals," he confided, "even I am a yogin." By the time he lived at Walden Pond and then wrote about his sojourn there, Thoreau had immersed himself in Asian classics. His language in Walden was a veritable catalog of his reading, and he knew all about the "conscious penance" of the Brahmins of India, "sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended with their heads downward, over flames." More affirmatively, later in the text he was quoting a "Hindoo philosopher" on how the soul, with the help of a "'holy teacher,'" finally "'knows itself to be *Brahme.*'" Nor is it difficult to find an evocation of meditation yoga in Thoreau's well-known account of how he spent his days at the pond: "In the morning," he wrote, he bathed his "intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta." After he put his book down, he went to his well for water. What followed next was reverie, or meditation, or mysticism. "There," he remembered, he would "meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges." For Thoreau, the message was clear. The old Puritan covenant of works and the "conscious penance" of the Brahmins had both disappeared in a new and more persuasive vision. "I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works."[36]

For all that, the complex texture of Thoreau's literary work and his thinking in general make it overambitious to call him fully a yogi.[37] In the specific case of *Walden*, for example, the Hindu references interspersed through the substantial text exist side by side with a plethora of literary allusions to Western, Islamic, and East Asian texts. Thoreau read voraciously and apparently forgot little. His work was an encyclopedic record of his intellectual and spiritual project, and to elevate one set of references above the others hints of misreading and does not make good critical sense. Like all complex thinkers, Thoreau expressed considerable ambivalence about religious and philosophical wisdom and where it lay: There was a tensile quality to his Asia. Still more, if Thoreau celebrated Asia, in the end he pruned it for planting in the domestic soil of Concord, Massachusetts,

grafting it to Puritan-Calvinist roots. If Asia knew the bliss of the contemplative life, and if it was "infinitely wise," it was also "infinitely stagnant." The breakthrough had come, for him, not in India but in the "western part" of Asia, where there "appeared a youth, wholly unforetold by them,—not being absorbed into Brahm, but bringing Brahm down to earth and to mankind." As Arthur Versluis has argued, Thoreau's views were "essentially Unitarian," and the Harvard moral philosophy had shaped his spirituality in abiding ways.[38]

Walden first appeared in 1854, and by a year later Lydia Maria Child, the sister of Transcendentalist minister Convers Francis and a notable author in her own right, was publishing her huge three-volume *Progress of Religious Ideas, through Successive Ages*. The first comprehensive American account of comparative religions (outside of Hannah Adams's more limited 1817 *Dictionary of All Religions*; see below), Child's work was intended, as she wrote in the preface, to treat "all religions with reverence." Its index was innocent of references to the Atman or to yoga, and the most germane references, in its opening chapter on "Hindostan, or India," were to "Brahm." "Brahm" was for Child the "one invisible God," the "invisible Supreme Being," one with Nature, and evidence of "Hindoo" pantheism. "They believe that all life, whether in essence or form, proceeds constantly from Brahm," she explained. In this context, Child told of the union of the soul with the divine, at least in the case of the Brahmin who turned his back to society to become the classic forest dweller. "He must renounce his family," she told readers, "give up every species of property, sleep on the ground, and annihilate his body by such self-torments as ingenuity can devise. By this process he may finally attain absorption into the Divine Soul, which is the great object of devotional efforts among the Hindoos."[39] The message for Child was clear, and it was a works righteousness of asceticism—not the sensual delight of the self finding its Self—that ruled her Hindu mystic.

There was neither Atman nor yoga, either, in the index references of Transcendentalist (Unitarian) minister James Freeman Clarke, who published *Ten Great Religions* some sixteen years later, in 1871. Nor was his message uncritical: "An ultra, one-sided idealism is the central tendency of the Hindoo mind. The God of Brahmanism is an intelligence, absorbed in the rest of profound contemplation. The good man of this religion is he who withdraws from an evil world into abstract thought." Thus the first problem of Hindu spirituality was the lack of a service orientation on the part of the yogi (or, for Clarke, simply the "Hindoo" contemplative). The second—and from the rhetoric, worse—problem was the extreme asceticism and denigration of this world that accompanied the Hindu seeker. Clarke's existential horror was consummate: "They torture themselves with self-inflicted torments; for the body is the great enemy of the soul's salva-

tion, and they must beat it down by ascetic mortifications. . . . In one part of India, therefore, devotees are swinging on hooks in honor of Siva, hanging themselves by the feet, head downwards over a fire, rolling on a bed of prickly thorns, jumping on a couch filled with sharp knives, boring holes in their tongues, and sticking their bodies full of pins and needles, or perhaps holding the arms over the head till they stiffen in that position." While some beat their flesh into submission (with evocations of the Catholic Middle Ages), perhaps worst of all for Clarke was the third problem. "Meantime in other places whole regions are given over to sensual indulgences, and companies of abandoned women are connected with different temples and consecrate their gains to the support of their worship."[40] Tantra on stage, we may surmise.

Members of the Transcendental circle had thus brought Asia to American notice—or at least to the notice of the Americans who read their texts and, especially in Emerson's case, heard them speak. But it was an Asia that, for all the metaphysical admiration that Emerson and Thoreau in particular evinced, got mixed marks and was ultimately found wanting. Significantly, Child had titled her work *The Progress of Religious Ideas*. Over the accounts of Asia hovered Romantic notions of progress toward the Good and the Better and hovered, too, an incipient form of the doctrine of evolution. This was hardly Darwinism yet, except perhaps in the case of Clarke: *The Origin of Species* did not appear until 1858. But Emerson, already in the first (1836) edition of his little book *Nature*, prefaced his introduction with an epigraph declaring that "striving to be man, the worm / Mounts through all the spires of form."[41] Here was Lamarckian evolution, with its insistence that all life forms were continuous, that they had arisen gradually over ages, and that characteristics acquired because of need were passed on to progeny. As for humans, so for their religions. The Christian faith stood at the pinnacle of the world's spiritual traditions, and the Transcendentalists, for all their Asiatic tours, knew that home ground was best ground. Failures of servanthood, extreme asceticism, and—at least for Clarke—an equally extreme libertinism marred South Asian spirituality. In the horrified descriptions of yogis hanging head downwards over fires and in other excruciating postures, we can read, perhaps, early-warning reports on the dangerous asanas of hatha yoga. The Brahm who spent his existence contemplating his own navel was not the Brahm in whose company mid-nineteenth-century Americans felt particularly comfortable.

If there were few full-time yogis in Transcendental forests, the Theosophical Society has already introduced us to a different reading of Asia. Blavatsky had clearly used South Asian classics as a major part of a complex theological synthesis that provided, for Theosophists, an intricate roadmap to mark their spiritual

path. As we will see for Olcott, especially concerning Buddhism, he was enthusiastic about these classics, too. Even in *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky knew the Atman and knew it in Indian terms as the Self. More than that, she displayed considerable admiration for yogis, whom she portrayed as spiritual athletes who readily performed miracles and generally evidenced awesome physical and psychological prowess. In the face of typical criticism of yogis as "obscene ascetics" who shocked Western sensibilities by going naked, she warmly defended them. By the time she wrote *The Secret Doctrine*, she was calling yoga itself "mystic meditation" and the source of "Supreme Wisdom," preferring Raja Yoga—which she identified with the classical system ascribed to Patanjali as well as with two other schools—as the "best and simplest." She continued to be fascinated by the so-called siddhi powers, the esoteric abilities that conferred supernormal control of physical and psychological reality. Quoting a Hindu text, she saw the ultimate wisdom of "Yogism" in perceiving "'by means of the SELF the seat abiding in the SELF' where dwells the Brahman free from all." Yet the world of hatha yoga—the physical yoga to ready the body for meditative practice—remained an alien and uninviting realm. Blavatsky saw it as a "lower" form and linked it to "torture and self-maceration"—language that echoed the earlier reports of yogis hanging downwards over fires. Moreover, even pranayama, or control of the breath, belonged, for Blavatsky, to the "lower Yoga." "The *Hatha* so called," she warned, "was and still is discountenanced by the Arhats. It is injurious to the health and alone can never develop into Raj Yoga."[42]

Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy* (1889) offered readers the clearest explication of her distinctive reading of the Atman, now transposed from South Asia to function as part of an eclectic and synthetic theological edifice. In her schema of seven bodies in which only the first was fully physical, she had identified the "Atma" as the seventh and highest metaphysical body, "one with the Absolute, as its radiation." She thought that the "Atma-Buddhi" was not to be identified with the Universal World Soul of ancient Greek mystical philosophy. Yet she clearly—if provisionally—saw the Atma(n) as the Higher Self, "inseparable from its one and absolute *Meta*-Spirit as the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight." And significantly, she declared the Atma, "the inseparable ray of the Universal and ONE SELF," to be the "God *above*, more than within, us."[43]

The same year that Blavatsky published her *Key to Theosophy*, William Judge produced his reading of the *Yoga Sutras* traditionally attributed to Patanjali. Using an English translation produced in Bombay in 1885 by Tookeram Tatya, an Indian member of the Theosophical Society, Judge emphasized a distinction between hatha and raja yoga already suggested by Blavatsky. His preface clearly explained the difference he saw between the two and warned readers of the dan-

gers of hatha yoga, quoting from the words of Henry Steel Olcott in the earlier Bombay edition. Hatha yoga worked to establish health and train the will, wrote Olcott, but "the processes prescribed to arrive at this end are so difficult that only a few resolute souls go through all the stages of its practice, while many have failed and died in the attempt. It is therefore strongly denounced by all the philosophers." Minimizing allusions to "postures" (the asanas) in the *Yoga Sutras*, Judge went on to laud raja yoga, which, he said, was "certainly spiritual." Hatha was distinctly not. Instead, it resulted in "psychic development at the delay or expense of the spiritual nature." When the Patanjali text announced, in translation, "A posture assumed by a Yogee must be steady and pleasant," Judge was quick to explain that the "postures" of the various yogic systems were "not absolutely essential to the successful pursuit of the practice of concentration and attainment of its ultimate fruits." More than that, he found them "only possible for Hindus," who had practiced them from childhood and who knew their physiological effects. Still, Judge was fairly complacent about the dangers: "These last named practices and results may allure the Western student, but from our knowledge of inherent racial difficulties there is not much fear that many will persist in them."[44]

What appealed to a late-nineteenth-century Anglo-American about the *Yoga Sutras*, we can guess, was the moral inscription that the text—and Judge's presentation of it—wrote over yogic practice. As in the theosophical children's catechism that he had published in *The Path*, Judge insisted on virtue. The Patanjali yogi developed such qualities as "harmlessness and kindness," "veracity," "abstinence from theft," "continence," the elimination of "covetousness," and similar virtues along the way to the proverbial flight of the Alone to the Alone. There was no discourse of the Self in this rendering, no prevailing language that Atman *was* Brahman, but instead a translation that hailed the "Isolation" of the soul. Judge was quick to explain that the translated text did not mean "that a man is isolated from his fellows, becoming cold and dead, but only that the Soul is isolated or freed from the bondage of matter and desire." His anti-isolationist reading accorded well with readings by later translators, but the reasons for Judge's caveat were neither textual nor linguistic. For him, instead, theosophical (and Christian) brotherhood had become Hindu righteousness. Beyond that, in the original *Yoga Sutras* there were the tantalizing allusions to the siddhi powers. The accomplished yogi, for example, could "move his body from one place to another with the quickness of thought, to extend the operations of his senses beyond the trammels of place or the obstructions of matter, and to alter any natural object from one form to another." Judge remained ambivalent about what he understood as these exploits of "Will." He was clearly fascinated, but he worried

over the inextricable bond, for most, between will and desire, and he seemed grateful, or at least relieved, at the circumspection of the Patanjali text. "Patanjali and his school well knew that the secret of directing the will with ten times the ordinary force might be discovered if they outlined the method, and then bad men whose desires were strong and conscience wanting, would use it with impunity against their fellows."[45] Malicious animal magnetism, or its near relative, apparently inhabited the East as well as the West.

Judge's work elicited at least one (fairly negative) review in the *New York Times*, suggesting some awareness of yoga, however minimal, among American readers ("those who love to be muddled may be safely recommended this little book"). Even further, by the 1890s Theosophists were exempting pranayama (yogic breathing) from their strictures against hatha yoga—different from Blavatsky who had found both to be "lower." Prasad's *Nature's Finer Forces* was making its mark—in what may have been, as J. Gordon Melton has suggested, "the first book to explain and advocate the practice of yoga." Significantly, in Prasad's work along with the much-vaunted "Science of Breath" came chapters on "Evolution," "The Mind," and "The Manifestations of Psychic Force." These are themes that at once evoke the preoccupations of the theosophical world and point the way toward a later American history of yoga as a transformed metaphysic.[46]

Theosophical interest in meditation yoga, however, would continue under the rubric of raja yoga—a term that became current in American metaphysical circles after 1896 when Swami Vivekananda's *Raja-Yoga* first appeared (see below). Raja yoga, in general, had already made its appeal, if vaguely, among Theosophists, since—as we saw—Blavatsky had invoked the term. After Vivekananda's pathbreaking work, though, Theosophists learned more clearly that the "aphorisms" of Patanjali they so admired were, in fact, an exposition of raja yoga, containing techniques for stilling the fluctuations of the mind and promoting mental concentration in order to attain *samadhi*, participation in the bliss of the divine consciousness. What they did not realize in this new learning was that they were being encouraged to read the dualistic Patanjali work in ways that were monistic. They were learning, in effect, no longer the isolation of the soul from matter and desire but the presence of a divine source of bliss within an embodied individual consciousness.

Judge's successor as the head of the Theosophical Society in America (the American branch of the Theosophical Society that had broken away from the international organization) was Katherine Tingley (1847–1929), whose colony at Point Loma, California, with its "applied Theosophy," became a showcase for the raja. But it was a raja decidedly changed, even from the moral transformation already part of the Judge reading. Tingley used raja yoga as a new descrip-

tive term for the work of socializing children in her experimental school. Her Raja Yoga School opened in 1900, including American and Cuban children, and from the first it aimed at creating a "pure moral atmosphere" for its (resident) students. Reading, especially of newspapers and magazines, was censored, daily silence was observed, sexual activity (that is, masturbation) was severely proscribed, and physical activities—but not hatha yoga—were encouraged. Since the body housed the "spiritual Ego," hygiene and physical health became preoccupations. As W. Michael Ashcraft has summarized, Point Loma raja yoga meant "a lifestyle of faculty coordination, uniting all of the faculties to achieve spiritual and moral maturity."[47] Under this regime, in effect, to be metaphysical meant, first and primarily, to be moral.

Meanwhile, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), the now-famed South Asian "other" who had helped Theosophists think more, and more precisely, about raja yoga, was broadcasting his views to a wider audience. After participating in the World's Parliament of Religions, he stayed to tour and lecture, visiting major cities not only in the East but also in the Midwest and the South. Even Christian Scientists welcomed him; in 1894 he offered a lecture series in Maine under their sponsorship. (He called them "Vedantins" in a letter to other monastics back in India, telling them that the Scientists had grafted the teaching of the nondualist Advaita onto the Bible.) By 1895, he had founded the Vedanta Society in New York and subsequently, in 1897, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Order in India. In the midst of this activity, Vivekananda produced four books on yoga—essentially stenographed transcriptions of his lectures. The first three accorded with the classical tradition—karma (the yoga of works), bhakti (the yoga of devotion), and jnana (the yoga of knowledge). The last concerned raja yoga (the meditation yoga that Theosophists had already identified with the Patanjali *Yoga Sutras*, although it was not explicitly named there). The book that Vivekananda produced under the title *Raja-Yoga* sold out in a matter of months in 1896 and was ready for a new edition by November.[48]

There was no separate work from Vivekananda on hatha yoga, but as Elizabeth De Michelis has argued, his reconfiguration of the *Yoga Sutras* in *Raja-Yoga* both reflected and augmented an emerging spirituality significantly different from Indian classical spiritual teaching. De Michelis links the spirituality to individualism and, following Dutch scholar Wouter Hanegraaff, to a "New Age religion" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and then to the New Age movement of the later century and continuing.[49] The designation "New Age religion" is somewhat misleading here, with a presentism that minimizes connections to an earlier America. Instead, what should be clear in this

context are the patent lines of connection to American metaphysical religion—to its lengthy history and its evolving reinvention of discourse and practice.

Vivekananda, in his late-nineteenth-century moment, became a major conversation partner in the discourse, epitomizing the revolving doors that were already connecting East with West with East again in British India. De Michelis has noted that his relationship with the fabled Indian mystic Ramakrishna (1836–1886) was far more ambiguous than it has been read to be in the devotional literature of India and the American Vedanta movement. She has also pointed to his connections with the Hindu reformist body the Brahmo Samaj. A religious and social movement of elite Bengalis, from 1828 it had moved through a series of phases, influenced by Western contacts with Unitarian Christianity, with ideas about science, and eventually with Theosophy (when Blavatsky and Olcott settled in Bombay). Vivekananda's debt to the Brahmo Samaj, De Michelis estimates, cannot "be overstated." Meanwhile, Bengal itself welcomed Romantic, Transcendental, occult, and theosophical ideas that were spread by literature, public lectures, and personal contacts. None other than William Judge, for example, lectured there in a tour during the summer of 1884.[50]

Making his way in the metaphysical culture of the United States, which lionized him after 1893, Vivekananda quickly learned the American metaphysical dialect, and he creolized his presentation of an already combinative Indian-Western spirituality to please American ears and tastes. His highly influential *Raja-Yoga* exhibited the skill with which he blended his own message with the discourse of his American hosts. In semantic choices already familiar to his Indian milieu *and* also true to metaphysical form, he hailed the "science" of raja-yoga, which—unlike the "unpardonable manner of some modern scientists"—did not "deny the existence of facts" that were "difficult to explain." This meant "miracles, and answers to prayers, and powers of faith." Instead of the "superstitious explanation of attributing them to the agency of a being, or beings, above the clouds," he posited an explanation that could be read with familiarity and recognition by metaphysically inclined Americans. Raja-yoga (like Theosophy and New Thought) taught that "each man is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind." If "desires and wants" were "in man," likewise the "power of supply" (a metaphysical term that marked the presence of divine abundance) was also there. "Wherever and whenever a desire, a want, a prayer has been fulfilled," Vivekananda emphasized, "it was out of this infinite magazine that the supply came, and not from any supernatural being."[51]

Nor did Vivekananda confine himself to using jargon and code, dropping buzzwords into metaphysical ears or minds. Success in meditation began with

establishing a strong physiological foundation, and he countenanced this for American listeners and readers by specifically citing metaphysical practitioners. "Always use a mental effort, what is usually called 'Christian Science,' to keep the body strong," he enjoined. When he approached the subject of pranayama, he linked the discipline of the breath to various species of metaphysical practice, all of them suggesting that he read them in terms congenial to "noetic" New Thought. "Sects in every country" had attempted "control of Prana." In America, he reminded readers, there were "Mind-healers, Faith-healers, Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, Hypnotists, etc.," and, whether they were aware or not, "at the back of each" lay "this control of the Prana." De Michelis has pointed both to a "prana model" (breath) and a "samadhi model" (bliss) in the text, each of them a significant reinterpretation of traditional Indian teaching in terms congenial to Vivekananda's audience. In her reading, his text linked the energy of prana to mesmeric belief and practice—and, it can be added, to notions of subtle electricity and Blavatsky's language of ether and Great Breath already abroad in the metaphysical community. Likewise, samadhi became transformed from the Patanjali radical flight of liberation in isolation from the world, with which Judge had struggled. Instead, De Michelis argues, the samadhi theme should be read in terms of "God-realization" become "Self-realization" and likewise "realization of human potential."[52] In other words, American yoga was making the choice—congenial to Theosophy and New Thought and surely influenced by them—for a philosophy of monism and a theology of immanence.

We can add, too, a bliss consciousness that already hinted of the tantric reading to come. Indeed, Vivekananda explicitly cited the kundalini, in tantrism the powerful but latent spiritual energy "asleep" at the base of the spine that, when awakened, traveled upward and brought transformative meditation states. He called it "psychic prana" and the "'Lotus of the Kundalini,'" telling how on its journey to the "thousand-petalled lotus in the brain" the Yogi would experience "layer after layer of the mind" opening and "all the different visions and wonderful powers." It was significant, too, that he likened the energy and "vibration" of pranayama to electric current, with its aim "to rouse the coiled-up power . . . called the Kundalini." On arrival in the brain, the result became "the full blaze of illumination, the perception of the Self." The aroused kundalini brought "all knowledge" and represented "the one and only way to attaining Divine Wisdom, superconscious perception, the realization of the spirit." Here all prayers were answered, for when a person received a positive response the "fulfilment" came "from his own nature." The individual had "succeeded by the mental attitude of prayer in waking up a bit of this infinite power which is coiled up within himself."

Raja-yoga was "the science of religion, the rationale of all worship, all prayers, forms, ceremonies, and miracles."[53]

In the psychologized context of his meditation yoga, Vivekananda had few things to say about the hatha. Pranayama and the transformed consciousness it evoked did require attention to posture (as did the cultivation of the kundalini)—sitting with spine erect and in a straight line with the neck and head. "Let the whole weight of the body be supported by the ribs," Vivekananda advised, "and then you will have an easy natural posture, with the spine straight. You will easily see that you cannot think very high thoughts with the chest in." But like Blavatsky and Judge, he skirted away from an embrace of the purely physical. Hatha yoga, he thought, aimed entirely at making the body "very strong." "We have nothing to do with it here," he explained both pragmatically and condescendingly, "because its practices are very difficult, and cannot be learned in a day, and, after all, do not lead to much spiritual growth." For all that, De Michelis has argued his seminal role as "creator" of what she terms "fully-fledged Modern Yoga," which for her includes, but is not limited to, "Modern Postural Yoga." In a designation that encompasses not only the United States but all of the West in interaction with the Indian Subcontinent, she credits Vivekananda's *Raja-Yoga* with "immediately" starting "something of a 'yoga renaissance' both in India and in the West."[54] Yet as important as Vivekananda was, it needs to be noticed that among American metaphysicians and the public at large the yogic turn was more complex, beginning gradually and growing because of a series of players and performances yet to be staged.

By the time *Raja-Yoga* appeared, public awareness, even of hatha, had already begun. In 1893, for example, at least one spoof on "A Western Yoga" had appeared in the columns of the *New York Times*, complete with theosophical allusions to the astral body, progress, and "Yoga" as the "science of the soul" and "holy sorcery" (an apparent allusion to siddhis). "The power comes from meditation and concentration of the mind. One must posture in silence and abstraction. And this can be best attained . . . by standing on one leg and looking at the tip of the nose."[55] Still, as the tone of the *Times* piece suggests, after the World's Parliament and even after the 1896 appearance of Vivekananda's *Raja-Yoga*, the American experience of yoga remained guarded. Meditation yoga signaled exoticism and the promise of something that was spiritually more. It also fed into evolving discourses of the mind and its powers—a point to which I shall return—and it suggested a "scientific" perspective that could address religiophilosophical themes rationally and pragmatically. At the cutting edge of this discourse, the yogic *practice* of pranayama had begun to bring some idealizing American

devotees of religious liberalism back to their senses and their bodies. The mind had a home, and the house itself would need to be dusted and swept, even by metaphysicians. More than that, a clean house could bring the body—and the mind—to a state of delight.

Given this nineteenth-century history and its ambivalences, however—given the tortured bodies of its yogis hanging upside down—how did hatha yoga (and the body and mind of delight) come to prevail as preferred American yogic practice? If Vivekananda alone was not enough, how else did Americans incorporate into their discourse and practice the translated language of the Self in union with the universe—and, in the American context, the (lower-case) self and selves? Against the backdrop of hatha yoga's ascendancy, what, in general, happened to the metaphysical mind and to forms of meditation yoga? Any satisfactory answer to these questions must begin with the recognition, already suggested, that the route to the enlightened body-self and its American metaphysical entourage was circuitous. Yet the *American* teachers pointing toward an American yogic future were there, and they supplied important hints of what was to come. J. Gordon Melton has identified two such early twentieth-century figures in William Walker Atkinson and Pierre Bernard, both of them teachers of hatha who located it in a larger yogic context.[56] What is intriguing about the pair is that between them they introduced the major themes that have come to characterize American yoga with its covert metaphysical content.

William Walker Atkinson (1862–1932), who had a business background, was drawn to the American metaphysical tradition and became a leading New Thought author. He apparently moved to Chicago around the beginning of the twentieth century and from there produced a prodigious set of titles, one after another, book after book. As they are reproduced in the on-line library catalog of the University of California, they clearly display Atkinson's preoccupation with a series of themes. They speak of subconscious and superconscious planes of the mind, of the powers of mind and thought, of the attainability of health and success, of the exercise of will and its effects in the American pragmatic version of psychic forces. Here was New Thought in its brashest, least Christianized and God-dependent version; here was the rationalist—the noetic—tradition that Gary Ward Materra distinguishes from the more affective and socially concerned version taught by Emma Curtis Hopkins and her students. Titles such as these, for example, carry the argument in unambiguous witness: *The Law of the New Thought* (1902); *Thought-Force in Business and Everyday Life* (18th ed., 1903); *Dynamic Thought; or, The Law of Vibrant Energy* (1906); *Self-Healing by Thought Force* (1907); *The Inner Consciousness* (1908); *The Secret of Success* (1908); *The Will: Its Nature, Power, and Development* (1909);

Mind and Body; or, Mental States and Physical Conditions (1910); *Mind-Power: The Secret of Mental Magic* (1912).[57]

Readers of these books, however, likely did not know that Atkinson was also the author of another series of works on yoga under a pseudonym designed to suggest their South Asian provenance. From 1902, as Yogi Ramacharaka, Atkinson published a different set of titles. Significantly, along with books on "Yogi philosophy and Oriental mysticism," by 1904 his *Hatha Yoga; or, The Yoga Philosophy of Physical Well-Being* appeared, and by a year later the related *Science of Breath*, with again the next year *A Series of Lessons in Raja Yoga* and *The Science of Psychic Healing*. Apparently, Atkinson wrote from experience. Gordon Melton remarks that he "became an accomplished student of yoga, so much so that his books circulated and were well received in India." Whatever his personal yogic success, Ramacharaka's titles already suggest the influence of Theosophy (and likely Vivekananda) in their evocation of raja yoga, siddhi powers, and pranayama. Linked to Atkinson's New Thought themes—with, in his case, their theosophical tilt toward ideas of magical and occult powers of mind—the conceptual frame is not hard to read. Ramacharaka cited and quoted from Mabel Collins's theosophical devotional classic *Light on the Path* in his work on raja yoga, and his general teaching throughout was theosophical.[58]

Each human being was composed of a series of five hierarchical planes from the lowest, which was vegetative, through to the instinctive, the intellectual, the intuitive, and finally the plane of Cosmic Knowing. "Man is a Centre of Consciousness in the great One Life of the Universe," Ramacharaka wrote. He continued in an evolutionary declaration: "His soul has climbed a great many steps before it reached its present position and stage of unfoldment. And it will pass through many more steps until it is entirely free and delivered from the necessity of its swaddling clothes." According to the "Yogi philosophy," even the "atoms of matter" had "life and an elementary manifestation of mind," while at the highest level "the higher regions of the mind, while belonging to the individual, and a part of himself, are so far above his ordinary consciousness that to all intents and purposes messages from them are as orders from another and higher soul." Still, there were the "confining sheaths"—in an evocation of the lower bodies of which Blavatsky had written—and the "Higher Self" had to do the best that it could. If one could reach the cosmic plane, the fortunate individual would be "able to see fully, plainly and completely that there is One Great Life underlying all the countless forms and shapes of manifestation." Separateness was "'the working fiction of the universe.'" In this context, mental healing was but the restoration of "normal conditions" on the vegetative plane, so that this level of consciousness could "do its work without the hindrance of adverse conscious thought."[59]

With this anthropology as backdrop, Yogi Ramacharaka conceived the work of yogic adepts to be awakening their consciousness of the "Real Self," a process that, he explained, the Yogi Masters taught in two steps. The first was the "Consciousness of the I," with a life not dependent on the body; and the second—familiar in a New Thought context—was the "Consciousness of the 'I AM,'" identified with the "Universal Life." Thus, before one sought mastery of the secrets of the universe outside, one "should master the Universe within—the Kingdom of the Self." In the world within could be found "that wonderful thing, the Will," which was "but faintly understood by those ignorant of the Yogi Philosophy—the Power of the Ego—its birthright from the Absolute." Emersonian echoes could be heard in the allusion to Will (Emerson's Transcendental gospel *Nature* in 1836 had announced its power) and also in Ramacharaka's instructions about distinguishing between the "I" and the "Not I." But the "Real Self of Man" was "the Divine Spark sent forth from the Sacred Flame." It was the "Child of the Divine Parent. . . . Immortal—Eternal—Indestructible—Invincible." For Ramacharaka, in the progression that was raja yoga, the Real Self, "setting aside first this, and then that . . . finally discards all of the 'Not I' leaving the Real Self free and delivered from its bondage to its appendages." Pragmatically (and tellingly), however: "Then it returns to the discarded appendages, and makes use of them."[60]

The Ramacharaka-Atkinson synthesis was smooth and seamless. Here was Theosophy yoked to the ancient texts of India in their Westernized Neo-Vedantin transmission and yoked as well to an American celebration of will and control. Higher Self and ego self played in not-too-distant fields, ready to join to enhance the waking, everyday existence of the body in which they dwelled. For what was decidedly new about Ramacharaka's American yoga was the body. His works on hatha, on the breath, and on psychic healing were companion books that pointed toward the enhancement of the high self through enhancement of its earthly residence. Given all of this, the results were meager. The claims that Yogi Ramacharaka made for hatha yoga seem strikingly spare, and his description of the asanas suggests instead their continuity with simple calisthenics. If his books went to India, as Melton reports, we have to wonder who was reading them.

Meanwhile, in the United States, in the context of late-century and new-century worry regarding "overcivilization" and of Theodore Roosevelt's widely influential celebration of "the strenuous life" (as he titled his 1901 book), a new moral crusade was championing bodily vigor, direct action, and experience over the learning that could be gleaned from books. The natural environment, far from the corruption and debilitating ethos of cities, became an object of cultus. By 1903 *Outlook* magazine was describing nature as the "middle ground between God and man" and the "playground of the soul." Camping and scouting would

institutionalize these sentiments, as physical training assumed new ascendancy as part of moral education. At the same time, natural hygiene and physical culture—older nineteenth-century currents in the health reform movement—had joined forces to lead to the gymnasium. Calisthenics were in, and they beckoned with the promise of glowing health for those who would be zealous. Will power became equated with muscle power and, in a culture characterized by the language of "muscular Christianity," became a force for public and private good order. "The identification of morality with muscularity was to grow as an article of hygienic faith through the final third of the [nineteenth] century and the Progressive years," explains James C. Whorton in his landmark *Crusaders for Fitness*. "The arena would become congested with competing programs of health building."[61]

Ramacharaka was a thorough child of his times. "Hatha yoga," he wrote, "is that branch of the Yoga philosophy which deals with the physical body—its care—its well being—its health—its strengths—and all that tends to keep it in its natural and normal state of health." It could appeal to American denizens of the "strenuous life" because it was "first, nature; second, *nature*, and last NATURE." "By all means," Ramacharaka encouraged readers, "apply the nature test to all theories of this kind—our own included—and if they do not square with nature, discard them." Not a "doctor book," his work was instead concerned with "the Healthy Man—its main purpose to help people conform to the standard of the normal man." The asanas that followed were listed as "yogi physical exercises," and, to be sure, they were generally active and aerobic. They did not resemble the classical postures that have been identified with hatha yoga. "Swing back the hands until the arms stand out straight. . . . The arms should be swung with a rapid movement, and with animation and life. Do not go to sleep over the work, or rather play."[62]

What did this yogic workout have to do with the meditative and mystical pursuit that characterized raja yoga? Ramacharaka's answer was fairly trite and perfunctory. The body was "necessary" for human "manifestation and growth"; it was the "Temple of the Spirit"; its care and development constituted a "worthy task" since an "unhealthy and imperfectly developed physical body" would obstruct the proper functioning of the mind. The "instrument" could not be "used to the best advantage by its master, the Spirit." The closest Ramacharaka came to later and standard explanations of quieting the body to prepare it for meditation or altering consciousness through certain yogic asanas—inversions, forward bends, for example—was his appeal to instrumentalism. The body was the instrument for the "real part" of a person "in the work of Soul growth." The yogic devotee would "feel as proud [of his body] as does the master violinist of the

Stradivarius which responds almost with intelligence to the touch of his bow." More than that, Ramacharaka was at pains to separate his teaching from the American knowledge of yoga that we have already met in Transcendentalist and theosophical circles. "In India," explained Ramacharaka, "there exists a horde of ignorant mendicants of the lower fakir class, who pose as Hatha Yogis, but who have not the slightest conception of the underlying principles of that branch of Yoga." They engaged in "tricks," such as reversing the peristaltic action of their intestines to eject items introduced into the colon from "the gullet." "Rank frauds or self-deluded fanatics," these people were "akin to the class of fanatics in India . . . who refuse to wash the body, for religious reasons; or who sit with up-lifted arm until it is withered; or who allow their finger nails to grow until they pierce their hands; or who sit so still that their birds build nests in their hair; or who perform other ridiculous feats, in order to pose as 'holy men.'"[63]

Yogi Ramacharaka did tell readers that they needed to "throw some mind" into their hatha yoga. He also offered a tantalizing discussion, surrounded by late-Victorian caveats and veiled allusions, of "transmuting reproductive energy" through pranayama (raising energy from the sexual organs at the base of the spine to the crown of the head to be used in meditation, as in the discourse of kundalini). "Keep the mind fixed on the idea of Energy, and away from ordinary sexual thoughts and imaginings," cautioned Ramacharaka. In essence, however, Ramacharaka/Atkinson had communicated a yoga of Will and self-efforting, a self-construction that called on a Higher (divine) Self to achieve enhanced ego goals. In so doing, he had effectively linked the language and intent of New Thought to that of Theosophy. He had also succeeded in joining hatha yoga—at least in his hatha yoga book—to raja and other forms of yoga as a venerable and respected branch. But the enlightened body-self was more a devotee of the strenuous life than of the bliss of yogic connection. A brisk "yogi bath" and body rub were partners to the active asanas of Ramacharaka's yogic world. The chapters in his text point toward natural hygiene and physical culture and toward the mantra that characterized the devotees of the health building movement—a sound mind in a sound body.[64]

Six years after Ramacharaka was urging devotees to the yogi bath and body rub, however, New York City could boast its own tantric master. Pierre Bernard (1875–1955), or Perry Arnold Baker as he was born, came from a middle-class family in Leon, Iowa (although he went by several assumed names, probably partly for protection from the law). When he met Sylvais Hamati, a Syrian-Indian man who taught yoga in Lincoln, Nebraska, in the 1880s and 1890s, his new teacher changed his life. With Hamati and others, he moved to California, where his attraction to metaphysical themes led him to conduct an academy in San

Francisco dedicated to hypnosis until, probably because of legal hassles, he left the area. Around 1905, Bernard founded his "Tantrik" order and published the first and only issue of his *International Journal of the Tantrik Order in America: Vira Sadhana* in New York City. There, with the name Pierre Arnold Bernard (used already in his San Francisco days and to which he at some point prefixed a "Dr."), he opened the New York Sanskrit College. According to reports, hatha yoga was taught on the first floor, while upstairs tantric initiates were ushered into deeper secrets. Dogged by sex scandals and hounded by the press as Oom the Omnipotent, he was apparently as flamboyant as the name suggests, reportedly sitting enthroned in the upstairs room before his wealthy initiates and receiving their worshipful adulation. His wife, Blanche deVries, was also a student, an "Oriental" dancer, and a teacher of hatha yoga. She taught, too, it was said, a softer form of tantrism than her husband's more provocative version.[65]

Yet there was telling evidence that Bernard was still a serious student of South Asian yogic themes. By 1924, he had purchased a seventy-acre estate in Nyack, New York, which became a colony for his elite and socially well-placed devotees. Here he located his impressive library, described by a website devoted to him as the "finest collection of Sanskrit works (original texts, manuscripts and translations) in the United States at the time." Indeed, the library contained "approximately 7000 volumes on the subjects of philosophy, ethics, psychology, education and metaphysics as well as much collateral material on physiology, medicine and related sciences." Students flocked to Nyack, and Asian teachers visited. Eventually, Bernard purchased more property in the area, and he also opened a series of tantric centers in Cleveland, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York City as well as a men's camp for tantra on Long Island. Unlike Atkinson-Ramacharaka, who seemed rarely to have an unpublished thought, Bernard left little in writing. Nevertheless, as Gordon Melton has estimated, his work in shaping American yoga was "immense." This work looked to the human body as aesthetic and pleasurable in ways that went beyond the more muscular approach of the natural hygiene movement and the traditional tantrism of India. As Bernard announced in the lone issue of his journal, "The trained imagination no longer worships before the shrines of churches, pagodas and mosques or there would be blaspheming the greatest, grandest and most sublime temple in the universe, the miracle of miracles, the human body." In the specific case of hatha yoga, we gain a few clues to the substance and direction of Bernard's work through his journal's stylized illustration of an "American tantrik in the practice of his yoga." Here the American yogi sits in padmasana (lotus posture), spine erect, with hands held in special mudras or hand gestures. Evidently, too, Bernard knew about inversions and was practicing headstands, at least, at Nyack, invoking the "Art of Reversion"

and enjoining students to "reverse your circulation, not once but several times a day."[66]

If we move beyond the early-twentieth-century teachers that Melton cites, we find that Bernard's legacy continued thematically in part in the doctoral dissertation completed by his nephew Theos Bernard (d. 1947) in 1943 at Columbia University. Published as *Hatha Yoga: The Report of a Personal Experience* (1950), this work boasted thirty-seven full-page glossy black and white plates, including a frontispiece—photographs of Bernard in classical hatha yoga postures. In the first American work to include such representations, here were, among others, padmasana (lotus), sarvangasana (shoulderstand), halasana (the plough—a shoulderstand variation), pascimotanasana (seated forward bend), bhujangasana (cobra), sirsasana (headstand), and other asanas familiar to twenty-first-century students of hatha yoga. Bernard's published bibliography, divided with scholarly correctness into primary and secondary sources, was instructive. In addition to primary sources such as the Patanjali *Yoga Sutras*, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the *Gheranda Samhita*, and the *Siva Samhita*, the bibliography tellingly listed among secondary works a number ascribed to the popular and controversial pseudonymous Arthur Avalon. These included the well-known *Serpent Power*—a major conduit for Western knowledge of tantrism and kundalini, identifying—with more precision and elaboration than Vivekananda—the energy coiled at the base of the spine as sexually charged and emphasizing its power to bring samadhi. Here samadhi, true to form, was understood as the bliss-inducing ecstasy of the self contemplating its Self. Secondary sources also listed works by the mysticizing scholar of Tibetan lore W. Y. Evans-Wentz and by Sir John Woodroffe (as distinct from Arthur Avalon). One work, by V. G. Rele, was titled provocatively enough *The Mysterious Kundalini*, and several—S. Sundaram's *Yoga Physical Culture*, Yogi Vithaldas's *The Yoga System of Health*, and Shri Yogendra's *Yoga Personal Hygiene*—pointed unmistakably toward hatha.[67] There will be more to say about Shri Yogendra, who would make his way to the United States and exert significant influence in the nation.

What is of concern here, however, is the substance and tenor of the Bernard text. Theos Bernard did not offer distanced learning acquired from his reading and family influence. On the contrary, he went to India, and he went native. "When I went to India, I did not present myself as an academic research student, trying to probe into the intimacies of ancient cultural patterns; instead, I became a disciple." Beyond that, he understood the hatha yoga he was presenting to readers as thoroughly tantric. Hatha yoga, he explained, was predicated centrally on the control of the breath, and he went on to link the term *hatha* itself to "the flowing of breath in the right nostril, called the 'sun breath,' and the flowing of

breath in the left nostril, called the 'moon breath.'" Hatha yoga meant the union of these two breaths to "induce a mental condition called samadhi." "This," he went on to assure readers, "is not an imaginary or mythical state, though it is explained by myths, but is an actual condition that can be subjectively experienced and objectively observed." How did yogis reach this condition? The answer lay in the purification of the body and the physical techniques of yoga—intended "to make dynamic a latent force in the body called Kundalini." Kundalini yoga led in turn to laya yoga, in which the "single aim" was "stilling the mind," while finally the mind's complete subjection, understood as the "Royal Road," was raja yoga. This, not surprisingly, was the scheme laid out by the formidable Arthur Avalon, whom Bernard identified, according to the era's conventional wisdom, with Sir John Woodroffe. Thus, following Avalon, he told readers that "all these forms are often classified under the general heading Tantrik Yoga, since they represent the practical discipline based on tantrik philosophy."[68]

What Bernard described thereafter in this very personal account was surely startling—seeming almost to confirm long-ago Transcendentalist descriptions of yogic excess but inverting them to celebrate the physical feats he could eventually perform. He claimed that he held three-hour headstands and that he practiced a series of kriyas ("actions" or, as he called them, "duties") recommended in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, including the purificatory dhauti karma in which he swallowed a three-foot length of cloth to cleanse his digestive tract.

> Begin with a small piece of cloth about three feet long. I found that an ordinary four-inch surgeon's gauze met every requirement. First put the cloth in a basin of water, and after it is thoroughly saturated insert one end of it as far back in the throat as possible and go through the motions of eating and swallowing. This will encourage the throat to take hold. There may be some spasms, but they will soon pass, as will all soreness that is experienced. It will take only a few days for the throat and stomach to accommodate themselves. Do not try to accomplish the feat on the first day. I began with a few inches and increased the length a little each day until I had swallowed the required twenty-two and one-half feet. With a little patience, anyone can master the technique in about three weeks.[69]

Bernard's text progressed through detailed instructions for pranayama and body locks (mudras, bandhas), disclosing purported yogic secrets and quoting (translated) texts generously along the way. There were practices of listening to internal sound and seeing inner light; there was a candle exercise—staring into its light to create a retinal afterimage. Thereafter came a series of other rigorous purifications, pranayamas, and hatha yoga exercises. As he introduced these, Bernard embellished his account with the claim of a three-month retreat to gain

samadhi, although Paul G. Hackett has concluded from "substantial evidence" that the retreat never happened. The "retreat," however, functioned as a useful teaching tool. Complete with an initiatory ceremony to induce the awakening of kundalini and a warning by Bernard's teacher that no ceremony could actually achieve that goal, the narrative could at once discipline and mystify a generation of seeker-readers. Bernard would confess to them that, indeed, the ceremony had brought him a foretaste of samadhi—but not the experience itself. What was the lesson? "During my studies of the science of Yoga I found that it holds no magic, performs no miracles, and reveals nothing supernatural. I was directed at every stage to practice if I wanted to know its secrets." It was practice alone that could bring the "Knowledge of the True," and the nature of that knowledge remained for him and his readers a "mystery."[70]

If Theos Bernard had, in fact, discovered tantra, it was a tantra that in practice operated far differently from all reports of the elder Bernard's tantrism. It also contrasted strikingly with the "tantric" practice that would emerge in the New Age movement and new spirituality, in general, by the late twentieth century. Bernard's "Tantrik philosophy" and practice meant rigorous asceticism, flight from the world, totalitarian dedication, and various inscriptions on the body that looked remarkably similar to those that had been written off with disgust and revulsion in nineteenth-century accounts. The Self that Bernard could find through the awakened kundalini and samadhi seemed a far cry from the softer, kinder, ego-friendlier Self that later flourished as the enlightened body-self in the American practice of yoga. At the same time, Pierre Bernard and Theos Bernard, along with William Walker Atkinson/Yogi Ramacharaka had set important directions for an American yogic future, and they had underlined its connections to American metaphysical religion. Here siddhi powers had become Will Power; the world was Will and (health-building and/or ascetic) Desire; Will could succeed, and Desire could find fulfillment. The body could be liberated into a state of never-dreamed-of health and well-being. Even if attained through harshness and asceticism, there was a (disciplined and discipline-producing) pleasure that surpassed all knowledge in this body's pleasure, and Will, Desire, Health, and Pleasure could all lead into the highest spiritual realities that humans might experience and receive. Best of all, in the American mode, humans could achieve all of this for and in themselves. In the noetic style of one side of the New Thought movement and in echoes of an inherited Hermeticism and earlier nineteenth-century reinventions of the theme, they could be as gods.

That acknowledged, just as in the earlier heyday of Vivekananda, Americans did not always need to work alone, with only books as teachers. Nor did they need to travel, like Theos Bernard, to South Asia (although, to be sure, they some-

times did and in increasing numbers as the twentieth century progressed). Well before the 1965 change in the immigration law—which brought more Asians and more elite Asians to the nation—the East kept coming to the West. Yogic teachers were announcing that they possessed healing knowledge for American disciples. Shri Yogendra was a major case in point. During his research stay in India in 1937, the younger Bernard had made his way to the Yoga Institute of Bombay, where the already metaphysical Yogendra taught his "scientific" yoga—the man whom Melton credits with being "largely responsible for the revival and spread of hatha yoga in the twentieth century." Now Yogendra came to other American seekers. A disciple of Paramahansa Madhavadasaji of Malsar, Shri Yogendra (born in 1897 as Manibhai Haribhai Desai) after a several-year sojourn with his guru returned to the householder life, marrying instead of becoming a renunciant and swami. He had learned from his teacher, especially, the study and practice of hatha yoga, and he would thereafter work to put it on an academic footing and to establish its "scientific" basis. In this context, according to his biographer, Yogendra came to America at the end of 1919 with the aim of "popularizing yoga." He was already a man with a mission. One anecdote had it that just before Madhavadasaji's death in 1922 the aged teacher wrote Yogendra saying that his American task was akin to Vivekananda's in spreading the fame of Ramakrishna. Yogendra went back to India less than five years after he came, however, intending to return to the United States but thwarted by the restrictive immigration legislation of 1924. Still, he had managed to found his Yoga Institute at Santa Cruz, California, and he had written four works on yoga.[71]

We glean some sense of Yogendra's teaching from these works, and in general they resonate more with the natural hygiene/physical culture orientation of Yogi Ramacharaka than with the tantric ambience of the Bernards. For Yogendra, hatha was the "primal yoga effort" and "the methodical approach to the attainment of the highest in Yoga." It recognized "the concept of the wholeness of Man," and it proposed "to achieve psychosomatic sublimation through a system of physical culture." This included "physical education, hygiene, therapy, and biologic control of the autonomous nervous system affecting the hygiene of the mind and moral behaviour." Allusions to what Avalon and Bernard had called the kundalini were careful and restrained: "The hathayogins have laid down various practices for the methodical sublimation not only of sex but also of all baser instincts." Seemingly more important than samadhi was the basic biological goal of survival and longevity. "If yoga succeeds with the yogins in the present as it did in the past, it can hardly be doubted *why any man* following the yoga code of controlled biological living *should not live more than a hundred years*." (His teacher purportedly died at the age of 122, so Yogendra no doubt wrote confidently.)[72]

Yogendra's yoga was based on the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, and that text's concern for purification, which we have already seen in the yogic experiment of Theos Bernard, became for Yogendra a question of health and hygiene. "Even the civilized society has been sick, to a more or less extent, *throughout history*," he would later write in *Why Yoga*, "because human civilization and culture did not fully succeed in weeding out the grass roots of savage inherited potentials." He was thoroughly committed to the science that grounded the health-building enterprise; he worked with medical professionals in New York; and he knew such natural health celebrities as Bernarr Macfadden, Benedict Lust, and John Harvey Kellogg. Still, the science he preached was a science of the spiritual. Hatha yoga would put its students "in the direct touch with the Reality (of objects on which they contemplate)." Moreover, the physical body that demanded the rigorous discipline of natural hygiene was but one of a series of bodies. In the textual tradition of South Asia and in the language that Theosophists were continuing to invoke, he could insist that "yoga recognizes more subtle bodies or sheaths . . . than one."[73]

Clearly, Yogendra belonged to a new and nontraditional cadre of Asian teachers. Neither an ancient chanter of texts nor a renunciant hidden away for years in Himalayan hills, like Vivekananda he was already partially a Westerner before he ever came to the United States. Growing up in British India, matriculating—before he met his guru—at St. Xavier's College in Bombay, translating the yogic message into a scientific argot, linking his religiophilosophical views to those of Plotinus and Henri Bergson, Yogendra was a blended product of East and West. He was a transnational before the term and the concept became current.[74] As with Vivekananda, it is too simple to say that East (Yogendra) met West (Americans) in the United States in the 1920s. More complexly, East-West met West, and, as we have seen, the West that got met was already textually in touch with Asian sources and some of its seekers had traveled to sit at the feet of South Asian masters.

The combinative habit was, if anything, even more prominent in the celebrated Bengali Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), who came to America in 1920 to attend, as India's delegate, the International Congress of Religious Liberals in Boston. He remained to lecture and teach on the East Coast and then to establish the headquarters of the Self-Realization Fellowship, which he founded in 1920, in Los Angeles. As the name he chose for his American organization already suggests, it is in Yogananda that we get a thoroughly conscious language of the Self to refer to the Atman and its long-hailed union with Brahman. But Yogananda's language of the Self was hardly incessant, and, indeed, he spoke as much, or more, of the Christ within. Born as Mukunda Lal Ghosh in Gorakhpur

in northeastern India, close to the Himalayas, Yogananda—like his guru Sri Yukteswar Giri and his guru's guru (who was also his father's guru) Lahiri Mahasaya—was a Westernized Hindu long before he made his way to the West Coast of the United States. His father had been a railroad official, and the younger Ghosh's attempts to run away to the Himalayas were thwarted and disdained. When, in 1910, Mukunda Ghosh met and came under the tutelage of Sri Yukteswar, he was urged by his guru to attend Calcutta University. He graduated in 1915. It was only thereafter that he took formal vows as a swami and renunciant.

Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946) is an important document in constructing any account of what happened to Yogananda, to yoga, and to its metaphysical American form. A complex and enormously skillful hybrid of traditional Indic elements, combinative Hindu-Western culture in India, and self-fashioning and posturing, Yogananda's work appealed to American readers even as it drew them into an alternate world. Thus the autobiography provides clues to an important transition time for American yoga. On the one side stood the fascination of marvel and miracle, of the siddhi powers that the yogic tradition encompassed. Here was the mysterious Mahavatar Babaji, hailed by Yogananda as the founding guru from which his lineage descended. This Babaji was hundreds of years old, materialized and dematerialized at will (and in so doing supplied indirect insight into the possible sources of Madame Blavatsky's Mahatmas), and had appeared to Yogananda to commission him to spread his kriya yoga to the West. On the other side came the running barrage of footnotes with its Christian gospel references and theological points regarding Christ, its copious supply of quotations from Emerson, and its steady commentary on what Yogananda considered cutting-edge science (to establish yoga's scientific credentials).[75]

Indeed, what Paramahansa Yogananda stressed about kriya yoga was its unequaled utility as a "scientific" path to the attainment of samadhi—with practical details revealed only after an initiatory period in the Self-Realization Fellowship.[76] His Boston address to the conference of religious liberals, as revised and expanded in 1924, is instructive. Ambitiously titled "The Science of Religion" and so evoking Christian Science, Religious Science, Divine Science, and a modest army of self-conscious metaphysicians, Yogananda's address pronounced the universality and oneness of religion. It hailed the nature of God as bliss and declared the existence of four fundamental religious methods to reach God. Three of them—intellectual, devotional, meditative—were less good. The fourth—the "scientific method" or "yoga"—would lead to "bliss-consciousness." This method would separate the "Self" from the body without death and smacked of the mysterious kundalini power already admired by Theosophists. "The scientific method teaches a process enabling us to draw to our *central part*

—spine and brain—the life current distributed throughout the organs and other parts of our body. The process consists of magnetizing the spinal column and the brain, which contain the seven main centers, with the result that the distributed life electricity is drawn back to the original centers of discharge and is experienced in the form of light. In this state the spiritual Self can consciously free itself from its bodily and mental distractions."[77]

The combinative habit was unmistakable. Here was Vivekananda's raja yoga transmuted, with the metaphysical assistance of Arthur Avalon and company, into a new, more tantric version. And here, too, were echoes of animal magnetism and phrenomagnetic electricity imported from the nineteenth century along with Blavatsky's astral light and ether. Nor had physical culture left the equation. Kriya yoga flourished, for Yogananda, in a context in which the physical body became active and energized. In 1918, he had opened a school for boys in Ranchi, a town in Bihar, some two hundred miles from Calcutta. Students there not only learned yoga meditation but also what Yogananda called "a unique system of health and physical development, *Yogoda*," the principles of which he believed he had discovered two years earlier. "Realizing that man's body is like an electric battery," he wrote, "I reasoned that it could be recharged with energy through the direct agency of the human will." He went on to describe the effects at Ranchi. The boys "responded well to Yogoda training, developing extraordinary ability to shift the life force from one part of the body to another part and to sit in perfect poise in difficult *asanas* (postures). They performed feats of strength and endurance that many powerful adults could not equal." If the language of energy and electricity, even for the boys, hinted of tantrism—perhaps disguised for an American audience and surely already reinvented in India in a Westernized Hindu milieu—Yogananda was a sign of evolving times.[78] He had brought tantric themes in touch with an American language of science that circled New Thought and theosophical themes and that coexisted comfortably with liberal versions of Christianity. The kundalini had met the Self, and the Self was discovered to be the living Christ presence within.

After Yogendra and Yogananda a series of yogic teachers—of hatha and meditation yoga and both of them combined—came and went in the American yogic world. Kriya yoga itself fractured into a series of competing forms and teachers. As for others, there is not space here to tarry even on leading names, although some do come to mind—Indra Devi (Eugenie Petersen), who was healed in India by the famed Krishnamacharya and studied with him; Yogi Grupta, who followed Swami Sivananda Saraswati, founder of the Divine Life Society; Swami Satchidananda, also a popularizer of Sivananda's "integral yoga"; Richard Hittleman, who authored numerous popular books and introduced hatha yoga to television

in the 1960s. Meanwhile, with the publication of B. K. S. Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* (1966), which became a Bible to the hatha yoga world, with his visits to America, and with the ambitious worldwide certification process for Iyengar teachers, a canonicity was emerging.[79] Along the way, yoga got feminized, and women became the major producers and consumers of yogic asanas. In meditation yoga, likewise, divine mothers and female spiritual teachers proliferated—and kundalini prevailed as their general message. Against the backdrop of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, second-wave feminism, and rising ethnic consciousness, more and more non-Asian Americans were turning east and refashioning what they found there. New forms of spirituality were abounding, in the New Age movement and beyond.

Among meditation yoga teachers, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi achieved celebrity during the 1960s when, discovered by the Beatles, he taught the simple silent mantra practice that he called Transcendental Meditation. Tellingly, it brought with it promises not of samadhi but of lowered blood pressure, increased intelligence, relief from stress, and reduction of crime in locales inhabited by a critical mass of meditators. By the 1970s, Swami Muktananda visited the United States, preaching a "meditation revolution." His American disciples in Siddha Yoga practiced and, under his successor Swami Chidvilasananda (Gurumayi), rationalized and domesticated a form of tantric yoga. Important here, Muktananda's message told of interior consciousness and bliss, of the divinity of the Self that echoed, in stronger, more insistent language, the earlier teaching of the Self-Realization Fellowship. "Honor your Self, worship your Self, meditate on your Self," Muktananda enjoined. "God dwells within you as you." Still further, at South Fallsburg, New York, in Muktananda's American ashram, hatha yoga was in. Between them, the Maharishi and Muktananda spelled out for devotees the new Americanized version of ancient India—a world bathed in spiritual consciousness and bliss that also had become a pleasure-dome and abode of this-worldly good health, good fortune, and thorough enjoyment.[80]

On the other side of the continent, at Esalen in Big Sur country along the California coast, the message was theorized and practiced with new self-consciousness at the height of the human potential movement of the 1960s and beyond. Esalen's co-founder Michael Murphy as a young man had traveled to India in 1956 and spent sixteen months at the Pondicherry ashram of the decidedly Westernized and metaphysically inclined guru Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950). Even though Aurobindo by then was dead, Murphy—who had devoured his philosophy at Stanford—never forgot. His Esalen Institute acted as an important culture broker, a model of certain metaphysical themes, and a broadcaster of the new-enlightenment message of the Self/self and its embodied blissfulness. It was

Esalen that gave the word to many Americans who otherwise might not have heard the news—or, at least, not heard it so clearly and authoritatively. Esalen understood the human potential to reside in the enlightened body-self. Its body-work brigade, its lush beachside ceremonies of nudity and hot tub, its elusively present marijuana, its evolving humanistic and transpersonal psychologies for the self-in-relation, its social vision of one interconnected, interracial, and interethnic world—all of these beg for a metaphysical reading. From Murphy's side, they selectively re-present American metaphysical religion as it encountered, in Aurobindo, a metaphysical Asia. Esalen Self-fashioning taught a cross-section of Americans, and it led them to sacrality in a secular world, to their realization as new American gods who walked a pleasurable earth, and to yogic regimes that subverted religion-as-usual.[81]

If in surveying this late-twentieth-century spiritual landscape we pronounce this transformed American yoga simply a reinscribed version of Vivekananda or a transliterated form of Indian tantrism, arguably we obscure more than we inform. It is true that if we single out hatha yoga, scholars of yogic India have pointed unmistakably to its tantric origins, and likewise, in another context, De Michelis has pointed to the influence of Vivekananda.[82] As practiced in twentieth- and twenty-first-century America, however, it would be glib to call hatha yoga a tantric practice or to invoke Vivekananda too strenuously as its ideological buttress. Nor, despite the popularity of kundalini in numerous contexts, can meditation forms of yoga prevalent in New Age, or simply new, spirituality be described, in uncontested ways, as tantric. Rather, the enlightened body-self has functioned at the center of both hatha and meditation yogas. In so doing, it has re-presented the home-grown metaphysical and practice-oriented religiosity of Theosophy and New Thought as they met new, more expansive times—in touch with an already combinative metaphysical Asia. If Americans inherited Transcendentalist idealism with its Oversoul gone Indic and if unawares they also absorbed a revised Hermeticism and spiritualism, more concretely they had at hand pragmatic schemes for transformation in Theosophy and New Thought. They might never name the movements nor know their sources, but they had learned techniques that promised access to their own hidden mental powers and their body-selves in Will and Desire, health and positive thinking, wealth and metaphysics. They could imprint their new yogic practice—their strategy for sacred success—with their own made-in-America history. They could also, it turned out, look to another form of metaphysical Asia in the exoticized re-presentations of Buddhism that Americans had been encountering, beginning from the early nineteenth century.

METAPHYSICAL RELIGION AND BUDDHIST MYSTERY

Still earlier than this, in 1784, Massachusetts resident Hannah Adams (1755–1831) published what must be counted the first attempt at a comparative religions survey in the United States. The work went through second and third editions in 1791 and 1801 respectively, and in 1817 the fourth and most inclusive version appeared as *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations.* Along the way, the work had twice changed its title, and it had also seen publication in two British editions.[83] Adams's book really *was* a dictionary, and entries appeared in uninflected alphabetical order, with no separate article on Buddhism at all. Instead, "Birmans"—in Burma—worshiped the "Boodh," while in Japan a religion called "Budso" had been introduced from China and Siam, begun by "Budha," who represented the ninth appearance of the Hindu Vishnu. Among the "Chinese," people worshiped "Foe" (the Buddha). Among the "Thibetians," however, Adams lingered with the "Grand Lama," in what was by far the longest Buddhist entry, captivated apparently by the doctrinal and ritual embroidery that her sources provided. She dwelled on divine claims for the Lama, confiding that he was "their Sovereign Pontiff," and she remarked on the mysticizing practices that surrounded the choice of successor. She reported, too, that, among others, the inhabitants of "Thibet," especially, accepted the near-universal Eastern doctrine of metempsychosis or "transmigration of the soul." And she closed still more emphatically on the "Thibetians" as the Roman Catholics of Asia, quoting sources regarding holy water, song, alms, prayers, sacrifices for the dead, convents of monks and friars, the use of beads, and the wearing of mitres and caps.[84] There seemed little in this catalog of wide-eyed wonder to create a metaphysical American future for Buddhism—even if, reading the past from a later perspective, a gloss on practical mysticism might be deciphered in the account of Tibet.

By the mid-nineteenth century, matters had not much changed. Whereas the Transcendentalists had discovered South Asian classics like the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Laws of Manu*, no comparable Buddhist text stirred non-Asian Americans so strongly. True, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody had translated a short part of Eugène Burnouf's French translation of the Lotus Sutra for the Transcendental periodical *The Dial* in 1844. But confusion reigned among the Transcendental elite regarding Buddhism, and they apparently conflated it with the traditional South Asian religious culture known to Westerners as Hinduism. In a letter to Elizabeth Hoar, for example, Emerson hailed the arrival in Concord of the "Bhagvat-Geeta," which he identified as "the much renowned book of Buddhism, extracts of which I have often admired."[85] Later, even as Chinese

immigrants brought Buddhism to the nation, and especially to the West Coast, between the 1850s and 1880s, their religious practice did not attract significant non-Asian notice. When the Japanese arrived in California at the end of the 1890s, the pattern was similar. Immigrant presence, clearly, did not signal religious transfer.

It should not be surprising, then, that at midcentury Buddhism seemed the quintessential religion of the unknown and exotic other. Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* for 1849, for example, acknowledged that "one third of the human race" followed the religion of "Boodhism." It went on to explain—in what seemed a muddled account of the yugas and the sleep of Vishnu—that at far intervals "a *Boodh*, or deity" appeared "to restore the world from a state of ignorance and decay" and then sank "into a state of entire non-existence, or rather, perhaps, of bare existence without attributes, action, or consciousness." The entry called nirvana "the ultimate supreme good" and explained that there had been four "Boodhs," with the last "Gaudama." By 1864, however, Webster's Buddhism had changed its American stripes, now emerging as the doctrine taught by "the Hindu sage, Gautama, surnamed Buddha, 'the awakened or enlightened.'" It was "at first atheistic" and aimed at "release from existence" (nirvana), but it also exhibited "admirable humanity and morality," even if it involved "idolatrous worship of its founder and of other supposed kindred beings." Still, there was not much here, even in the 1864 definition, to entice a metaphysician. Nor was there seven years later, when James Freeman Clarke published his theologically driven comparative religions survey *Ten Great Religions.* There he read Buddhism as the "Protestantism of the East," with "forms" that resembled "Romanism" but a "spirit" that, in its revolt and protest against Brahmanism and in its affirmation of law and humanity, looked to him decidedly Protestant. Buddhism was rational and humane, he thought, but in the end he found it wanting. It represented a "doctrine of works" in contrast to the Christian teaching of "grace."[86]

Did a metaphysical Buddhism ever emerge on American shores? Did anything similar to the process of the reinvention of South Asian yoga among non-Asian Americans occur? And if so, what and how? The questions are particularly timely for the narrative here because scholars have pointed to the late nineteenth century as the era when Buddhism at last began to attract significant attention among non-Asians. Historian Carl Jackson, for instance, characterizes the last two decades of the century in terms of its "Buddhist vogue," when the tradition became "almost fashionable." He also alludes, for 1900, to contemporary skeptical aspersions on what some perceived as a "'Neo-Buddhist' craze." Meanwhile, American religious historian Thomas Tweed identifies the years from 1879 to

1912 as an age of "significant interest" in Buddhism.[87] Given this acknowledgment, the vogue and the interest may be charted in two ways. Together the two serve to illumine a non-Asian attraction to Buddhism that was mediated in large measure by American metaphysical religion and that subsumed Asian discourses and practices into familiar metaphysical categories. The first approach—the one explored more extensively here—looks to a literary history of American engagement with Buddhism as the tradition was reshaped to Western and metaphysical liking. The second tracks non-Asian American Buddhist sympathizers or converts through the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth according to the same or similar canons of interpretation.

For the literary history, Carl Jackson has pointed to Charles D. B. Mills's *The Indian Saint* of 1876 as the first full-length treatment of the life of the Buddha by an American. The work boasted a Transcendentalist link, since Bronson Alcott had functioned as an intellectual and spiritual mentor for Mills and had also contacted publishers to help him get his manuscript into print. Mills openly advocated Buddhism in the work, and his critics were none too friendly. And although he lectured and published short pieces thereafter, suggesting perhaps some following, his book could not be characterized as a galvanizing text for American spiritual seekers nor as particularly metaphysical. It was in 1879, however, in a book published first in England, that the American public encountered a life of the Buddha that successfully captured a significant number of them. Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* became the first of a trilogy of overseas works that offered complexly combinative and metaphysical readings of the Buddha and the Buddhist tradition. Arnold's *Light* provided a free-verse rendering that softened Asian rough edges and refashioned the Buddha along lines that were ideologically congenial to Westerners. According to Jackson, estimates suggest that Arnold's poem appeared in sixty English and eighty American editions, with sales of between 500,000 and 1 million copies in Britain and the United States. Arnold had been helped in promoting his book by his Transcendental connections in the states. A widower, he had married again, and his second wife was the daughter of Transcendentalist William Henry Channing, who enthusiastically worked to publicize the volume and enlisted the aid of friends. Bronson Alcott himself saw the initial American edition through to print and worked to get early reviews of it by George Ripley and other friendly critics. Beyond that, the first American edition boasted a letter from Channing and reviews that read as endorsements. But much more than Transcendentalism was at work. "Enthusiastically reviewed and widely quoted, hotly attacked and passionately defended," says Jackson, "perhaps no work on Buddhism has ever approached its popular success." Suddenly, after years of almost invisibility, Buddhism was achieving marked American notice.[88]

The Siddhartha (Gautama) of Arnold's poem was inserted into a Christian template in the narrative of his beginnings. However, as the narrative unfolded Arnold subtly shaped it in metaphysical directions. For the Christian template, there was, to begin, his mother Queen Maya's "strange dream" of impregnation by a heavenly star. Then came the "dream-readers" who predicted a child of "wondrous wisdom," "Devas singing songs" at his birth, and the "grey-haired saint, Asita," confessing "Thou art Buddh, / And thou wilt preach the Law and save all flesh / Who learn the Law." Merchants arrived, "bringing, on tidings of this birth, rich gifts." When the young prince was eight, he astounded the teachers who asked him to transcribe the sacred Gayatri (Light) mantra by writing in many languages and then engaging in equally dazzling numerical feats "beyond their learning taught." Siddhartha already knew that his mission was to "teach compassion unto men." Despite his aging royal father's attempts to keep him in a state of "forgetting," with no mention made at court "of death or age, / Sorrow, or pain, or sickness," he took the steps that led to his encounter with all of them. So the prince renounced his heritage and left his young wife, Yasodhara, and child yet unborn, announcing to her that his chariot would not "roll with bloody wheels / From victory to victory." Instead he would be a wanderer "clad in no prouder garb than outcasts wear, / Fed with no meats save what the charitable / Give of their will, sheltered with no more pomp / Than the dim cave lends or the jungle-bush." He would give "all, laying it down for love of men." And—significant for the metaphysically inclined—he would spend himself "to search for truth, / Wringing the secret of deliverance forth, / Whether it lurk in hells or hide in heavens." Searching thus, "Death might find him conqueror of death," since he would seek "for all men's sake" until the truth was found.[89]

In the lavishness of his origins as well as in his marriage and his announced need to search for truth, Siddhartha parted company with the man from Nazareth. He also confessed a different gospel as he left palace precincts, instructing that his father, the king, be told "there is hope for man only in man" and that therefore he would "cast away" his "world" in order to "save" it. Still, he shunned the yogis in their forest austerities (which Arnold described according to the familiar conventions of horror that were part of earlier nineteenth-century discourse) and instead operated as a veritable Asian Jesus. When he saw a lamb that was lame, "our Lord . . . full tenderly / . . . took the limping lamb upon his neck," exhorting that "'twere all as good to ease one beast of grief / As sit and watch the sorrows of the world / In yonder caverns with the priests who pray." He also ignored caste law, seeking "that light which somewhere shines / To lighten all men's darkness."[90]

Finally, under the Bodhi-tree, the "Tree of Wisdom," tempted (like Jesus)—

but by "the fiends who war with Wisdom and the Light"—he withstood the "ten chief Sins." Then, in the "third watch," surprising things happened:

> Our Lord . . . saw
> By light which shines beyond our mortal ken
> The line of all his lives in all the worlds,
> Far back and farther back and farthest yet,
> Five hundred lives and fifty.

He saw "how new life reaps what the old life did sow," and

> in the middle watch
> Our Lord attained *Abhidjna*—insight vast
> Ranging beyond this sphere to spheres unnamed,
> System on system, countless worlds and suns
> Moving in splendid measures, band by band.

With "unsealed vision," he "saw those Lords of Light who hold their worlds / By bonds invisible, how they themselves / Circle obedient round mightier orbs." At the "fourth watch," the "secret came," and he learned the "noble truth" of sorrow, broke through delusion, and saw past "the aching craze to live" until he reached

> nameless quiet, nameless joy,
> Blessed NIRVANA—sinless, stirless rest—
> That change which never changes!

So it was that the "Dawn" came "with Buddh's Victory." He was "glorified with the Conquest gained for all / And lightened by a Light greater than Day's." Disciples came, and they acknowledged "a Buddh / Who doth deliver men and save all flesh." But this savior, unlike the one from Nazareth, taught "how man hath no fate except past deeds, / No Hell but what he makes, no Heaven too high." "Pray not!" he enjoined, "the Darkness will not brighten." "Within yourselves deliverance must be sought; / Each man his prison makes." Yet, in a theistic moment, he could proclaim that there was "fixed a Power divine which moves to good, / Only its laws endure." And he could confess that the Dharma Law, "the Law which moves to righteousness, / which none at last can turn aside or stay; / The heart of it is Love."[91]

Arguably, Arnold had deftly conducted readers into a territory into which they might not otherwise have walked, assuring them with unmistakable analogical references that the Buddha was actually a lot like Jesus. This was true in the major outlines of Siddhartha's life, in his teachings of compassion and love, and in the moralism of the "eightfold path" to which his teachings led. Moreover, the spec-

tacular narrative of his enlightenment let out all stops in its mysticizing narrative that revealed the earnest heart and soul of a true devotee. However, it also cast the devotee—the Buddha—into a speculative metaphysical context that morphed the East into Western notions of the grandiose. Still further, it read the Buddha's enlightenment in humanizing terms that, as in the Hermetic tradition of the West, proclaimed a subtle message of individual mastery and control. If Arnold's Buddha was a savior, he saved people by teaching them to save themselves. Tellingly, Theosophists loved Arnold, and he obligingly returned the favor. Asked once in an interview if he had ever met Blavatsky, he replied that he knew her "very well" and was "acquainted with Col. Olcott and A. P. Sinnett [the theosophical author of *Esoteric Buddhism*]." Arnold believed there was "no doubt that the theosophical movement . . . had an excellent effect upon humanity." It had, he said, "made a large number of people understand what all India always understood, . . . the importance of invisible things." Blavatsky, though, had the final word. According to the terms of her will, Theosophists were to gather annually on her death day and read from *The Light of Asia* along with any edition of the *Bhagavad Gita*.[92]

Olcott had met Arnold at a dinner in 1884, calling the event "one of the notable incidents of that London summer." Afterwards Arnold invited him to lunch at his house, where the poet presented him with pages from the original manuscript of *The Light of Asia*. Two years later, in Ceylon where Arnold, his wife, and daughter were visiting, Olcott "set to work to organise a fitting public reception to one who had laid the whole Buddhist world under deep obligations by the writing of his *Light of Asia*." By this time, Olcott had published his own short and metaphysical work on Buddhism. His deceptively simple *Buddhist Catechism* of 1881, in traditional question-and-answer format, was already moving through its numerous editions, some forty in Olcott's lifetime and, by 1970, forty-five. Still more, by 1888 Olcott could declare in his historical diary that the catechism had been printed in "English, French, German, Sinhalese, Japanese, Arabic, and Burmese," and by 1895 he could express satisfaction that it was "circulating in nearly twenty languages."[93] Olcott's catechism had clearly *not* been written for an American audience. He produced it for use in the schools that he had created to foster educational reform in Ceylon; at first appearance it was available in both Sinhalese and English. At the heart of the "Buddhist revival" on the island, the catechism's "Protestant Buddhism" of the middle class continued as part of the curriculum of Sri Lankan schools through the twentieth century. Meanwhile, many of the subsequent editions and translations of Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* were created for use in Asia, and a series of London editions and at least two French editions appeared as well during Olcott's lifetime. The first

American edition (from the Sinhalese) came in 1885, edited with notes by the Theosophist Elliott Coues, a professor and scientist attached to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., who also wrote in New Thought journals. By 1887, Coues's version had become available in a third edition. From what can be determined, a New York edition appeared, too, in 1897, and another in Talent, Oregon, in 1915. Later American editions continued to be produced.[94]

All of this limns out a large international, and especially Asian, following (with print runs in the tens of thousands and more) for Olcott's small volume. It suggests as well a substantial American audience that created enough demand to keep the book in print. But what was it that Olcott was telling the world about Buddhism? How was he reading the tradition, and what did that reading have to do with metaphysics? For this last, there was already reason to suspect a connection. The year before he produced the catechism, Olcott and Blavatsky had gone through a public ceremony in Ceylon as an Asian acknowledgment of their Buddhism. The pair had, even while still in America, both publicly and privately declared themselves Buddhists, and as Olcott explained in *Old Diary Leaves* the pansil ceremony was "but a formal confirmation of our previous professions." He hastened, however, to define the kind of Buddhism that he and Blavatsky had embraced. Not that of "a debased modern Buddhist sectarian," he declared, but rather "our Buddhism was that of the Master-Adept Gautama Buddha, which was identically the Wisdom Religion of the Aryan Upanishads, and the soul of all the ancient world-faiths. Our Buddhism was, in a word, a philosophy, not a creed." Moreover, even as Olcott called it a philosophy and a *moral* philosophy (see below), it was also, as his allusions reveal, an emphatically mysticizing philosophy. Years later, in 1893, he would receive a letter from Max Müller thoroughly debunking an "esoteric" reading of Buddhism, and Olcott would as thoroughly repudiate the missive, regretting that Müller had never been able to visit India and talk for himself to Indian pandits.[95]

If metaphysics structured the subtext of Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism*, the metaphysical construction was already decidedly complex and manifestly combinative. Stephen Prothero has recounted the circumstances that surrounded the catechism's initial publication, complete with a prepublication wrangle with Hikkaduve Sumangala, an influential Sinhalese scholar monk, over Olcott's treatment of nirvana. Olcott was forced to yield on the matter of publicly acknowledging Theravada and Mahayana disagreements over nirvana (which Olcott wanted to air) in order to gain Sulmangala's stamp of approval. However, as Prothero has argued, that was a superficial matter in terms of the overall creolization that the project represented. "If the lexicon of this creole catechism was Buddhist," Prothero maintains, "its grammar or deep structure was Christian, and

its accent, clearly theosophical." Indeed, although not overtly, the catechism was *anti*-Christian. The questions it posed to Sinhalese Buddhist children arose out of a polemic meant to demean Christianity by exalting Buddhism in a subtly comparative context directed by Christian concerns and categories. It purported to understand Buddhism within that (Christian) frame, citing, for example, themes of salvation and missionization dear to the hearts of American Protestant Christians. However, the Buddhism it taught was a religion of the texts, and with post-Reformation and anti-Catholic dudgeon, it valorized beliefs and minimized rituals, employing American Protestant primitivist categories that read the "real" Buddhism as its earliest manifestations and forms. Of the five chapters in the thirty-third edition that Olcott was working on in 1897, one was devoted to a history of Buddhism as chronicled by the scholarly Orientalists of the period and another to "Buddhism and Science."[96]

From its first official page, the catechism's revisionary intent was apparent. Later editions carried a subtext of notes hardly suited to the children who were its purported audience, with the first of them announcing that Olcott had been brought "under protest" to employ the term *religion* for Buddhism, which was actually a (noble) "moral philosophy." Buddhism really meant "'an approach or coming to enlightenment'" or, possibly, "a following of the Doctrine of Sakyamuni" (the Buddha). It was the Christian missionaries (read "bad") who conferred the inept title of "religion" on Buddhism. Religion was out; philosophy was in. But in Olcott's version of the latter, philosophy took a quintessentially American Christian twist. It was, as Olcott said, "moral," and a great part of the doctrinal exposition thereafter preoccupied itself with rules of morality and right living. Thus it revised the practiced Buddhism, the "lived religion" of Ceylon, to meet primitivist, textualist, and morally righteous requirements as demanded by Olcott's own conceptual frame. Buddhist dates were computed on a Christian grid (so many years "before the Christian era"), and Sakyamuni himself, like a Horatio Alger hero, had earned his title as the Buddha by good, hard work. The title described a mental state after the mind had "reached the culmination of development," and it signaled enlightenment, or "all-perfect wisdom." Knowledge must be gained not by asceticism but by the "opening of the mind." In the midst of the moralism and the loving concern of the Buddha for suffering and spiritually hungry people, it brought the potential for control of the "Iddhi" (that is, siddhi), the "exceptional spiritual powers" not unlike those conferred by Western adeptship. These, Olcott assured the children, were "natural to all men and capable of being developed by a certain course of training."[97]

He also told them that the whole spirit of Buddhism could be expressed in the word *justice*, and that the "*other good words*" that expressed "*the essence of Bud-*

dhism" were "self-culture and universal love." This, manifestly, did not include conventional worship experience. "External worship" was "a fetter that one has to break if he is to advance higher." "From the beginning," declared Olcott, the Buddha "condemned the observance of ceremonies and other external practices, which only tend to increase our spiritual blindness and our clinging to mere lifeless forms." By contrast, instead of a "creating God" and "vicarious Savior" to be attended to, instead of "rites, prayers, penances, priests or intercessory saints," one redeemed oneself. Here, in the hinterland of the spirit, one perceived the highest truths not by reason but by intuition—"a mental state in which any desired truth" was "instantaneously grasped." But in the final state of jnana ("knowledge") and samadhi, was the mind "*a blank*" and thought "*arrested*"? Resoundingly not, for—like a practiced Hermetic adept with American cultural instincts—it was "then that one's consciousness" was "most intensely active, and one's power to gain knowledge correspondingly vast."[98]

Meanwhile, the Buddha himself, with his attained knowledge of the highest states, was a light being, with "a divine radiance sent forth from within by the power of his holiness." This light, however, was hardly his sole possession. Rather, all Arhats (the finally enlightened) emitted shining light, "stronger and brighter in proportion to the spiritual development of the person." Europeans called it "the human aura," and the "*great scientist*" Baron Von Reichenbach had "fully described" it "in his *Researches*, published in 1844–5." The light, in Olcott's mantric refrain, was "natural," possessed not only by "all human beings but [also] animals, trees, plants and even stones." In the case of the Buddha or an Arhat, it was simply "immensely brighter and more extended" as "evidence of their superior development in the power of *Iddhi*."[99]

Arhats—like theosophical Mahatmas or the elementals who created spiritualist manifestations—could impress "pictures" by their "thought and trained will-power" on the minds of others. Olcott did not make the theosophical or spiritualist connections in print, but he was hardly shy about noticing "hypnotic suggestion" and adding that the power to create illusion was "familiar to all students of mesmerism and hypnotism." Did Buddhism "*admit that man has in his nature any latent powers for the production of phenomena commonly called 'miracles'*"? Yes, and they were, of course, "natural, not supernatural," able to be "developed by a certain system" laid down in Buddhist sacred writings. Always, for Olcott, matters of spirit led to matters of will and mastery. Thus, for obtaining iddhi, four things were necessary: "The will, its exertion, mental development, and [in a bow to Protestant Christian moralism] discrimination between right and wrong." And, in a not-so-obscure reference (for the initiated) to spiritualist elementals, Buddhist children learned that "*elemental invisible beings*" could be brought to

their feet. The "Buddhist doctrine" was "that, by interior self-development and conquest over his baser nature, the Arhat becomes superior to even the most formidable of the Devas, and may subject and control the lower orders."[100]

Amidst this opening of Buddhist mystery for the luminous gaze of the enlightened body-self (to be sure, a troubled construct for traditional Buddhism), the abiding theosophical message of tolerance and universal brotherhood could be found intact. Buddhism was (unlike Christianity?) "a religion of noble tolerance, of universal brotherhood, of righteousness and justice." It possessed "no taint of selfishness, sectarianism or intolerance." Still further (and unastonishing in light of continued theosophical teaching), its "*two leading ideas*" that were "*chiefly taking hold upon the western mind*" were "those of Karma and Reincarnation," with "the rapidity of their acceptance . . . very surprising."[101] Olcott, in short, had refashioned Buddhism to his own American Protestant *and* metaphysical needs. Whatever Sinhalese children may have thought of their revised tradition as a result, on the American side of the waters his Buddhist reinvention would instruct a cohort of spiritual seekers in ways that corroborated their developed and developing metaphysical instincts. Moral they would be (at least that was the ideal), but also masters—in a mastery that echoed their own Hermetic heritage now combined many times over with the impress of newer times and peoples.

Olcott, however, was not alone as a theosophical insider with a reconstruction of Buddhism that reached American readers. In fact, before his *Buddhist Catechism* saw its first American edition in 1885, A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* had already been available in Boston for two years. The book had been published the same year (1883) in London by Trübner. In the United States, Houghton, Mifflin took it on and apparently did well with the title, since it was reprinted annually through at least 1888 and appeared at least four times more through the 1890s. The 1885 and 1886 editions both called themselves the fifth edition; an 1895 printing styled itself the sixth; and by 1898 Houghton, Mifflin told readers it was presenting them with a "New American Edition."[102] Anglo-Indian Sinnett, editor of the British Indian newspaper *The Pioneer,* openly acknowledged what he considered his true sources in the preface to the original edition. The "secret doctrine" that he was "now enabled to expound" had been "given out to the world at last by the free grace of those in whose keeping" it had "hitherto lain." It had come from "esoteric teachers" who had "chosen to work" through him, and especially from one of them, as he confided later. In short, his material had come through Blavatsky's Mahatmas. Some of it had also come, as his exposition and appended bibliography made clear, from Orientalists T. W. Rhys Davids, Arthur Lillie, Hermann Oldenberg, and Robert Spence Hardy, as well as from the French magus Éliphas Lévi, among others. Moreover, Sinnett explained that

part of the material had been published earlier in the theosophical monthly the *Theosophist*. There and in its later book form in *Esoteric Buddhism*, it functioned as what Charles J. Ryan has called a "harbinger" of Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*. In fact, it might almost be assessed as a rough draft for some sections of Blavatsky's huge work—a rough draft that she freely criticized and corrected in her later exposition and about which she seemed flustered even at its initial publication.[103]

The reflecting hall of mirrors within the theosophical community meant, in effect, that American readers were eagerly—and in much briefer and more manageable compass—imbibing the metaphysical theology that would shape *The Secret Doctrine*. As they did so, after Sinnett's initial (and tendentious) discussion of "Esoteric Teachers," they were introduced to three separate discourses. The first and framing one rehearsed the future Blavatskian cosmology of rounds and root races, complete with an exposition of the septenary "constitution of man," with the seven "bodies"—or "principles," as Sinnett termed them—listed as "The Body," "Vitality," "Astral Body," "Animal Soul," "Human Soul," "Spiritual Soul," and "Spirit." Still more, as Sinnett explored the terrain that Blavatsky would later visit more exhaustively, he probed a perceived distinction between "personality" and "individuality" that would weave its way into later New Thought discourse. Linking his work with Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism*, in which a lengthy note explained to readers that when humans were reborn they came with a succession of personalities, Sinnett followed the logic of difference even further. Olcott had declared that "though personalities ever shift, the one line of life along which they are strung like beads, runs unbroken," and he had called the line an "individual vital undulation." Now Sinnett pursued the theme especially in terms of issues of personal immortality, quoting Blavatsky's earlier *Isis Unveiled*, in which she was already trying to sort out terms. To gain a sense of how well the Asian theosophical inoculation took in the American metaphysical world, we need only cast a glance at Charles Fillmore as he duly observed the theosophical distinction. "God has but one Son, the Christ, the one ideal man. This divine conjunction was accomplished by Jesus, and the Christ shone out through His mortal self and illumined it, until it lost its personality and disappeared into divine individuality."[104]

As for Sinnett, he knew about Atlantis and Lemuria, about "periodic cataclysm" and "cyclic law," and he saw it all in the familiar Blavatskian mode that at once disdained and affirmed Darwinian evolution. The scientific spin was "simply an independent discovery of a portion—unhappily but a small portion—of the vast natural truth." This planet's evolution was "linked with the life and evolutionary processes of several other planets"; there was more, far more, than Darwin dreamed. Rather than the limited Darwinian narrative, announced

Sinnett, evolution happened "by a *spiral progress* through the worlds." He was expounding Blavatskian globes and chains—and a process of mastery and god-making that body-selves on the path to enlightenment could internalize imaginatively and with apparent ease.[105] This, however, was the far side of Blavatsky.

On her near side, in the early 1880s, she was still rehashing old preoccupations with spiritualism, and the Mahatma guidance of Sinnett obligingly fed him portions of the conversation. Sinnett's second discourse in *Esoteric Buddhism*, inserted in the fifth and sixth chapters on "Devachan" and "Kama Loca," revisited the Blavatskian adjustments to the reconstituted spiritualist universe. Devachan —which Sinnett had encountered in the Mahatma letter known among Theosophists as the "Devachan Letter"—became Buddhist heaven in theosophical lore, although Sinnett and other Theosophists were quick to point to differences. What survived in Devachan, according to Sinnett, was "man's own self-conscious personality, under some restrictions" but still "the same personality as regards its higher feelings, aspirations, affections, and even tastes, as it was on earth." The spirits there were so absorbed in their bliss world that they were mostly impervious to earthly overtures, and so they offered very little to spiritualist interaction. They did not themselves visit the earth, and the only viable way to get in touch was for a medium to get "odylized" in contact with "the aura of the spirit in the Devachan" and thus become, however briefly, "that departed personality." How did it happen? The answer lay in the "*rapport*" that was plainly "an identity of molecular vibration between the astral part of the incarnate medium and the astral part of the disincarnate personality." Devachan functioned as a rest home for the recently dead, but a rest home to which they repaired for a very long time. Sinnett reported that "re-birth in less than fifteen hundred years" was "spoken of as almost impossible."[106]

By contrast, Kama loca was the "region of desire." Linked, in Buddhist lore, to domains in which desire and attachment ruled, it there extended to humans and animals as well as to the devas (the gods of Vedic and later India) and the asuras (their demonic younger brothers and inexorable enemies), and it included hell. Sinnett's Blavatskian gloss expanded on Buddhist tradition to provide readers with an extended polemic against the spiritualism of his nineteenth-century time. He associated Kama loca with the animal soul, a principle (the fourth) of will and desire in the human constitution that was deactivated by death. "This fact" explained "many, though by no means all, of the phenomena of spiritualistic mediumship." Indeed, the "astral shell" could be "galvanized for a time in the mediumistic current into a state of consciousness and life." Hence the spirits in Kama loca in some sense fed on mediums, taking energy out instead of putting it in. Sinnett went on to explore the behavior of these spirits, their difference from

the "semi-intelligent creatures of the astral light" called "elementals," and the limits of their power in using mediums. (They could not be guaranteed recovery of their earthly personalities but instead were "just as likely to reflect some quite different personality, caught from the suggestions of the medium's mind.") The animal soul, or fourth principle, that inhabited Kama loca characteristically drew to itself the fifth principle in the human constitution—the human soul—dragging it down and separating it from the two higher elements of the self (the sixth and seventh) that dwelled instead in Devachan. The "Kama loca entity" thus was "not truly master of his own acts" but "rather the sport of his own already established affinities." Still, lamentable as this was, such a one was "on his way to Devachan." All of this meant that, from the point of view of spiritual progress, spiritualist engagement with mediums was a hindrance and a distraction, "at war" with the spirit's "higher impulses." The more frequent the spirit's visits to the séances, the more it would be drawn back to "physical life," even as "the more serious the retardation of its spiritual progress." Meanwhile, since the Kama loca sojourner was anyway preoccupied with what was happening in this new abode, spiritualism offered only dull-edged contact with the former earthbound person.[107]

Sinnett expanded on the anti-spiritualist theme, warning effusively of the harm done to the Kama loca spirit. His rhetoric, in fact, was more than a clue and provided an unambiguous announcement: "Esoteric Buddhism" was a synonym for Theosophy. When Sinnett finally devoted his third discourse, in the ninth and tenth chapters, to more immediately recognizable Buddhist themes—"Buddha" and "Nirvana"—they read almost as interpolations, abrupt departures from the cosmic and anti-spiritualist discourses of the Blavatsky synthesis. Buddha, however, manifestly belonged in this theosophical universe, even as his historical existence as Siddhartha Gautama was downplayed by being cast against a Hinduized cosmic scheme. A Buddha visited earth "for each of the seven races of the great planetary period," and Gautama was "the fourth of the series." Here and elsewhere, Sinnett turned to the work of Rhys Davids to buttress his assertions, but the historical Buddha of Sinnett emerged not according to Orientalist canons but instead as a Theosophist. Gautama was an adept, and his lived experience on earth dissolved in Sinnett's speculation on his initiatory prowess. Serious exposition of the life of Siddhartha was manifestly out. "To know when Gautama Buddha was born, what is recorded of his teaching, and what popular legends have gathered round his biography, is to know next to nothing of the real Buddha, so much greater than either the historical moral teacher, or the fantastic demi-god of tradition."[108]

As for nirvana—the ultimate spiritual goal in Buddhist systems—the "sublimely blessed state" required a finessed reading from Sinnett. In the "no-self"

teaching of early Buddhism, nirvana of necessity meant a state of selflessness, in which there was no subject (no self) to be the enjoyer. In later Buddhism of the Mahayana school, nirvana was emphasized less than the idea of postponing one's final enlightenment in order to help to enlighten others. Either way—and in variations—nirvana could best be described in Western terms through notions of negative theology (not this, not that); etymologically, it meant the "blowing out" or "expiration" (as of a flame). By contrast, Sinnett had been telling readers that the "supreme development of individuality" was the "great reward" reserved not only for adepts but also for those who demonstrated more good than evil in their incarnations. Thus his nirvana, if it reflected South Asia at all, reflected Hindu, and perhaps Neo-Vedantin, notions of the realization of the essential oneness of Atman with Brahman, Self with universe. "All that words can convey is that Nirvana is a sublime state of conscious rest in omniscience," Sinnett wrote.[109]

The question of whether nirvana was "held by Buddhism to be equivalent to annihilation" was extravagant. Rather, the Buddha had experienced "the passing of his own Ego-spirit into the ineffable condition of Nirvana." Although Sinnett owned that he only had "stray hints" about the experience, he thought that it exacted "a total suspension of animation in the body for periods of time compared to which the longest cataleptic trances known to ordinary science" were "insignificant." It was a state that tempted one to stay and not return. By contrast, the Buddha had returned: he had come back "for duty's sake" in order to finish his earthly life. Thereafter he had kept coming back in "a supererogatory series of incarnations for the sake of humanity at large." Still, nirvana was a state to which all of humankind should ultimately progress. Nirvana was "truly the key-note of esoteric Buddhism, as of the hitherto rather misdirected studies of external scholars." It was "the great end of the whole stupendous evolution of humanity." And it had to do, finally, with mind—with a state of all-knowing, of "that which we ordinarily describe as omniscience." Goodness without wisdom was not enough. It was by "a steady pursuit of, and desire for, real spiritual truth, not by an idle, however well-meaning acquiescence in the fashionable dogmas of the nearest church, that men launch their souls into the subjective state."[110] Somehow, Sinnett had glossed nirvana inside out, or better, had engrafted it onto a Western-style progressivism. His call to progress through mind had transformed nirvana into the goal of a modern religious seeker who, in the American context, could blend its identity fluidly with New Thought categories and a generalized spirituality of the enlightened body-self.

In that American context, it needs to be asked how many Buddhists or Buddhist sympathizers there actually were and what sort of Buddhism they embraced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If the "Buddhist" texts that

Americans were reading came with Theosophy and metaphysics embedded, what did that condition signal for Buddhism itself? Thomas Tweed's study of early American Buddhists and Buddhism has pointed toward some general answers to these questions. Using the subscription list of the San Francisco–based *Light of Dharma*, published from 1901 to 1907 by the Japanese Pure Land Buddhist Mission (with prominent Asian Buddhists as well as noted Western Buddhist scholars such as T. W. Rhys Davids contributing articles), Tweed could demonstrate the presence of Buddhists or Buddhist sympathizers in twenty-four states and two U. S. possessions. He was also willing to estimate the number of Euro-American Buddhists or Buddhist sympathizers in the United States during what he regarded as the peak years of American interest, 1893 to 1907. He thought that for each of these years "probably two or three thousand" Americans with European roots considered themselves "primarily or secondarily" Buddhist and "tens of thousands more" sympathized to some degree with the tradition. Much earlier, in 1889, Henry Steel Olcott had more expansively recorded that "there must be at least 50,000" *professed* Buddhists in the United States.[111]

Tweed, however, was not content with judging numbers. He went on to distinguish among types of American Buddhist sympathizers and adherents during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and on until 1912. Extrapolating from what he encountered, he identified those he termed esoterics, rationalists, and romantics, although he found most of his advocates to be mixed types in their lived experience. Buddhist esoterics, for Tweed, were "occult" and were "characterized, in part, by an emphasis on hidden sources of religious truth and meaning and by belief in a spiritual or nonmaterial realm that [was] populated by a plurality of nonhuman or suprahuman realities." These could be contacted through various sacralizing practices or altered states of mind. By contrast, Buddhist rationalists had roots in the Enlightenment and its deism, in Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, and later in the Free Religious Association and Ethical Culture Society. These individuals, he said, "focused on rational-discursive means of attaining religious truth and meaning as opposed to revelational or experiential means," and they found in the self the source of authority. Finally, Buddhist romantics signaled a more cultural approach to Buddhism. They were, as Tweed described them, "the exotic-culture type." Their attraction to Buddhism came as "part of an immersion in, and attachment to, a Buddhist culture as a whole—its art, architecture, music, drama, customs, language, and literature as well as its religion." Often, it happened, their focus was on a specific Buddhist nation. Perhaps surprisingly, too, among the types that he found, Tweed was willing to argue that, whatever might be assumed about the prevalence of Buddhist romantics, "the majority were not romantics but esoterics."[112]

Still more, when we look for a metaphysical Asia in the neo-Buddhist minds of the Americans that Tweed has studied, we can find it in *both* the esoteric and rational types. If metaphysical religion found expression in America in both material and mental versions of magic—if transformation of mind involved alternately miracle or positivist reconstruction of the self—then the enlightened body-selves of Americans could enact their owners' differing choices. As in the earlier heyday of spiritualism, they could move toward the more flamboyant phenomenal manifestations of mind (as in Blavatsky's esoteric version of Theosophy). Or they could move toward the more philosophical and speculative perspectives advanced especially by the noetic side of New Thought. In the blended world in which students of Theosophy, New Thought, and new American Asia dwelled, boundary lines were effaced or fuzzed over, and appropriation was a habitual, unremarkable, and even unconscious strategy.

In Olcott and Sinnett, the theosophical and esoteric Buddhist connections were, as we have seen, unambiguous (although, to be sure, something might be said as well for Olcott's tilt toward rationalism in his abiding interest in moral philosophy). If an example of the metaphysical inclinations of Tweed's Buddhist rationalists—his second type—be sought, Paul Carus offers a striking case. A Buddhist sympathizer (he never converted), Carus (1852–1919) was German-born and German-educated, with a doctorate from Tübingen. As an American philosopher, he edited the magazine *Open Court*, founded to succeed *The Index*, which had been the periodical voice of the Free Religious Association. Carus became identified with the Open Court Publishing Company in rural LaSalle, Illinois, outside Chicago, where—as head—he promoted a metaphysical Asian connection. His philosophical monism was reflected in the title of a second periodical he edited for many years, *The Monist*. Carus had been drawn especially to Buddhism at the World's Parliament of Religions, where he formed a personal connection with Anagarika Dharmapala of Ceylon and with Zen Master Soyen Shaku of Japan. Later, the connection extended to Soyen's well-known disciple Daisetz T. Suzuki, who worked for Open Court, even as Carus's ties to Japanese Buddhism would continue throughout his life. At the parliament itself, however, he was already addressing his audience in a speech significantly titled "Science: A Religious Revelation."[113]

There Carus disputed the notion that religion would eventually disappear, averring instead that it had "so penetrated our life that we have ceased to notice it as an independent power." Linking religion to morality, he called God not personal but "superpersonal," and he named science "a revelation of God," as the printed title of his address already suggests. But Carus's focus quickly shifted to "truth," in his view the foundation for both science and legitimate religion,

and he thought that religion had "often, in former ages, by instinct, as it were, found truths, and boldly stated their practical applications, while the science of the time was not sufficiently advanced to prove them." Similarly, religion had taught moral truths before humans could rationally argue their way to them. "Almost all religions" had "drawn upon that wondrous resource of human insight, inspiration, which reveals a truth, not in a systematic and scientific way, but at a glance, as it were, and by divination." Now, however, science was on the scene, and antipathy toward it was a "grievous fault" and "moral error," indeed, an "irreligious attitude." Both religion and science, Carus concluded, were "indestructible." "Science," he declared, was "the method of searching for the truth," and religion was "the enthusiasm and good will to live a life of truth."[114]

Within the brief compass of Carus's address, he had expressed the same concerns for science and truth that preoccupied New Thought practitioners and shaped their language. But there was more. The year after the parliament, Carus published the work that would guarantee him an abiding American reputation and seal his connection to the discourse community of New Thought. He was talking the talk that these other sorts of believers did, and his Buddhist rationalism would find congenial resonances with their conversations. Carus's *The Gospel of Buddha*, produced by his own press, made its mark on American publishing, going through thirteen editions by 1910 and already, in 1894, at least fifteen printings. It offered not a Buddhism emancipated from dogma and "superstition," as its author thought, but a Buddhism that reinvented Edwin Arnold in American terms and—in the midst of doing so—introduced Americans to a Christianized Buddha who sounded remarkably like a New Thought pundit. "Truth" was Carus's mantra. And "truth," in his rendering, transformed Buddhism's Four Noble Truths into the preamble to an identity discourse speaking more of Carus's metaphysical context than of an uninflected Buddhist Asia.[115]

Like Arnold's *Light of Asia*, Carus's work presented itself as a free-verse narrative. In physical format, it obligingly went further to call attention to its poetic genre, with marginal numbers added to the verses in each of its one hundred chapters, even if most of the chapters read more like prose than Arnold's did. Beyond that, if the text told Americans in more emphatic terms "I am a poem," it also told them more emphatically "I am a poem for Christians." Its title invocation of the "Gospel" was hardly subtle. Still more, Carus conveniently supplied readers with a three-column "Table of Reference," the first column citing chapter and verse in *The Gospel of Buddha*, the second—in much abbreviated form—his sources, and the third, "Parallelisms," mostly to New Testament gospels and other biblical sources. Carus had worked hard, and he gave readers seventy-five Gospel citations, some of them double and triple references to Synoptic Gos-

pel narratives. His smattering of other references—to New Testament epistles, to the Old Testament book of Exodus, to the theory of evolution and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, to an occasional contemporary work—likewise revealed his concerns and sense of audience.[116] Yet Carus's table of Gospels was, in fact, a work of supererogation. Any nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century reader plunging into the text would have needed to be totally innocent of New Testament narrative to ignore his message that the Buddha strikingly resembled Jesus.

For all the Christian dress in which the Buddha made his appearance, however, this Buddha acted as a subversive agent, undercutting the Christianity of mainstream America in favor of something that hinted strongly of New Thought. Here was a pointed kinship to the "truth" teaching of the latest American version of metaphysical religion—just at the time when it was coming fully into its American identity. Carus began by acknowledging the no-atman teaching of Buddhism as a denial of a "mysterious ego-entity" sometimes linked to "a kind of soul-monad." However, this meant, for Carus, that Buddhist teaching was "monistic" and that "the thoughts of a man" constituted his "soul" and were "if anything . . . his self." The Buddha's nirvana was an "ideal state" in which the human soul, "cleansed of all selfishness and sin," became "a habitation of the truth." Already oriented by these remarks before they ever got to the life of the Buddha, Carus's readers encountered a three-chapter introduction that formed an effusive paean to truth (not coldly "rational," but instead with emotional registers turned on and turned high). Truth was "wealth," and a "life of truth" was "happiness." Truth knew "neither birth nor death" and, indestructible, it had "no beginning and no end." "Hail the truth," Carus enjoined. "The Truth is the immortal part of the mind," and, conversely, "you attain to immortality by filling your minds with truth." Still more, wary of the self, like a dutiful Buddhist sympathizer, Carus was yet a good enough American metaphysician to distinguish between the "false self and the true self." The ego constituted the false; the soul, the true; and Carus had Buddhism and metaphysics as well. As his third chapter clearly announced, truth was the "saviour from sin and misery."[117]

Nor were preface and introduction sufficient for Carus to make his point. As the narrative life of the Buddha unfolded, readers learned that Queen Maya, his mother, became impregnated when "the spirit of truth descended upon her." Later, Prince Siddhartha as a young man still in his palace but troubled by the problem of evil "beheld with his mind's eye" a "celestial visitor" who told him that "'only the truth abideth forever.'" Urged to follow the path of this truth, Siddhartha—after the vision disappeared—told himself that he had "'awakened to the truth'" and was "'resolved'" to accomplish his purpose. Intent already (in Carus's reading) on becoming a Buddha, Siddhartha affirmed that there was "'no

departure from truth'" in the speech of the Buddhas. Later, after he attained Buddhahood, in the renowned Benares sermon of traditional lore, Carus's Buddha preached the message of truth with a metaphysical vengeance:

> "Happy is he who has found the truth.
>
> The truth is noble and sweet; the truth can deliver you from evil. There is no saviour in the world except the truth.
>
> Have confidence in the truth, although you may not be able to comprehend it, although you may suppose its sweetness to be bitter, although you may shrink from it at first. Trust in the truth.
>
> The truth is best as it is. No one can alter it; neither can any one improve it. Have faith in the truth and live it."[118]

Like Jesus, Buddha gave his disciples his Great Commission, but this commission was distinctly metaphysical. After the "devas and saints and all the good spirits of the departed generations" had shouted their joy that "'the kingdom of Truth will be preached upon earth,'" he directed his followers to "'spread the truth and preach the doctrine in all quarters of the world.'" When he visited his aged father in the midst of his preaching career, Buddha told the old king that his son was gone and in his place was "'the teacher of truth'" and "'preacher of righteousness.'" He taught his disciple Ananda "'the mirror of truth'" that was "'the straightest way to enlightenment,'" and in his farewell sermon Carus's Buddha declared significantly (to Ananda again) that he had "'preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine.'" After his death, or passage to nirvana, as disciples told one another what the Buddha meant, one of them called him the "'visible appearance'" and "'bodily incarnation'" of truth, remembering that the Buddha had said that he himself was the truth.[119]

In the midst of this unremitting truth in the world of Carus's Buddha, what of self—which some Americans had learned to rely on and enjoy for its inmost divinity? In a semantic exercise that took away and simultaneously gave back, this Buddha taught that the truth was "'large enough to receive the yearnings and aspirations of all selfs.'" When the selves broke apart "'like soap-bubbles,'" their future was yet intact, with the Buddha telling his disciples that "'their contents will be preserved and in the truth they will lead a life everlasting.'" There was no self, to be sure, if the soul was the self, but "'on the other hand,'" said this Buddha, there was "'mind.'" The person who understood the soul to be the mind and acknowledged the existence of mind taught "'the truth which leads to clearness and enlightenment.'" With the body subject to dissolution, incapable of being saved by any sacrifice, Buddha enjoined his followers to seek "'the life that is of the mind.'" Carus, however, had still not had enough of truth. As he

summarized for readers the meaning of his constructed Buddha and testified effusively to his own admiration for him, he closed by reiterating his truth claims once again. The truth had "appeared upon earth," and the "kingdom of truth" had been "founded." There was "no room for truth in space," even though it was "infinite." Nor was there room for truth "in sentiency." Surprisingly, there was no room for truth either in "rationality." "Rationality," wrote Carus, was a "two-edged sword" that could serve both love and hatred. It was the "platform" on which the truth stood, with no truth "attainable" without it. "Nevertheless," he warned, "in mere rationality there is no room for truth, though it be the instrument that masters the things of the world."[120]

The Buddhist rationalist had perhaps clipped his own wings. In the process, he had done very much more—proclaiming a Buddha and a Buddhist teaching that resonated with the metaphysical vocabulary of New Thought. The point is not that Asian Buddhism was not metaphysically inclined already—even if Americans chose selectively from their Asian mentors, largely discarding the ritual and ceremonial life of practical religion as so much superstition. The point is, rather, that Carus had executed a tour de force for truth teaching, in the process translating the Christian gospel itself, in its neo-Buddhist guise, into a metaphysical version that corroborated the major theological confession of New Thought. "Truth teaching" was in; evangelical religion-as-usual was out. For Carus, there was nothing esoteric about any of this, whatever the testimonials of Theosophists and run-of-the-mill occultists of any stripe. He was wary of mystical overdrive, but his more sedate and controlled metaphysic still led him to a territory that neighbored the theosophical world.

The success of Carus's work lingered into the twentieth century. Yet with the new century Buddhism itself began to shift, following a path that, as Victorian culture waned, departed significantly from that of American yoga. Only after the quota reforms initiated by the immigration law of 1965 did large numbers of South Asians begin to enter the country, juxtaposing their reality to the constructed images of non-South-Asian Americans. Earlier, the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 had limited immigration to 2 percent of the nationals from any country who lived in the United States at the time of the 1890 Census. By contrast, the late nineteenth century and early twentieth had seen a significant immigration of East Asians from Japan and China. Asian contact limited the American imaginary, as did contact with Asians in the nation's wars. Meanwhile, different from the American yogic world—in which fluidity and guru-like followings begot networks of practitioners—American Buddhism saw a significant institutional presence as the twentieth century progressed. By its second half, as Thomas Tweed has noted, non-Asian Americans could find Buddhist organizations and authori-

tative Asian teachers.[121] Teachers, institutions, and supports for a sustained practice all added up to a self-conscious identity that distinguished this American Buddhism and marked its separation from the more diffuse world of American metaphysical religion. A fellow traveler this conversionist, export Buddhism certainly became, and in a series of versions—Zen, Tibetan, Vipassana—a close and intimate fellow traveler, too. However, institutions, teachers, and rubrics of practice all worked to shift discourse and to imprint it with a life of its own, distinct from the larger world of American metaphysics. At the very least, Buddhism—with its no-self doctrine—raised compelling questions and fostered pragmatic compromises for those inclined to pursue private quests for the enlightenment of body-*selves*. Nineteenth-century Buddhist best sellers in the United States had largely fudged the problem. But denial could not dissolve it. The construction of an American Buddhist religious universe distinct from a more diffuse metaphysical religion went a long way toward positioning Buddhism in spaces that kept the enlightened body-self within talking distance without full embrace.

Meanwhile, the larger world of American metaphysics would grow incrementally in the new times dawning. From a series of perspectives and operational directions, Americans would converge on the received discourse and practice that Theosophy and New Thought had broadcast widely. Not bound by the sectarian strictures that controlled Christian Science, Theosophy and New Thought seemed happiest shaping language at large and inserting themselves as the secret doctrine that fed the religious rationales of people who never joined or even perhaps knew them. Mind and correspondence, energy and healing—they could come in many guises. Metaphysical religion flourished, took new forms, in its dominant variant appropriated the ethnic versions of Indians, blacks, Latinos, and others, and reemerged before century's end as the religion of the New Age, continuing on after. Actually, though, the term—and the movement—deceived. There were, in truth, new ages for all, and to single out one New Age is decidedly to miss the point. Americans, who had always loved newness, celebrated it yet again, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in multiple incarnations.