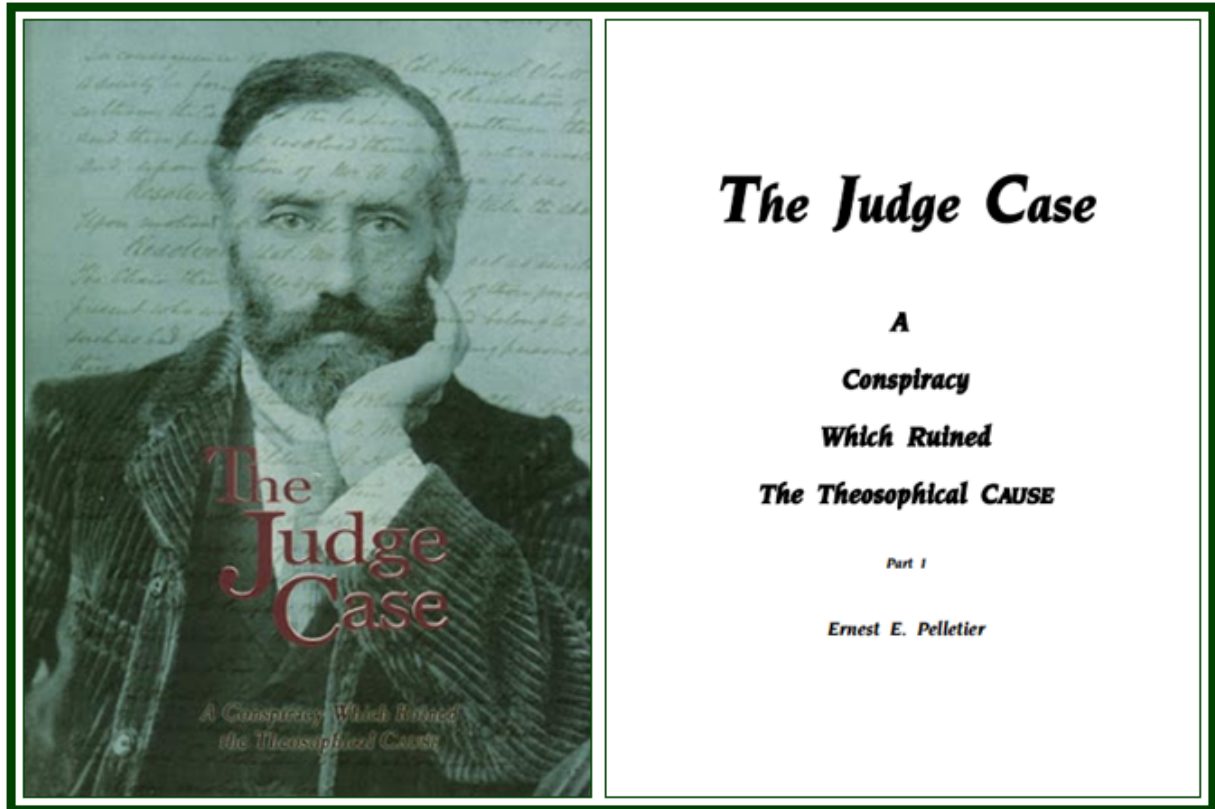


The Wills of Helena P. Blavatsky

A Mystery About HPB and Events in London, 1891

Ernest Pelletier



Front cover and opening page of the 2004 book “The Judge Case – A Conspiracy Which Ruined the Theosophical CAUSE”, by Ernest Pelletier

Shortly after reviewing “The Secret Doctrine” Annie Besant joined the Theosophical Society on March 10th, 1889. Besant had made a name for herself as one of England’s finest orators and her abilities were needed by the growing Society. Besant showed great promise as a student of Theosophy and was soon sitting at H.P.B.’s side acknowledging her as her new guru. She was quickly brought in as a pledged member of the Esoteric Section. Just one month before her death H.P.B. appointed Besant (April 1st, 1891) as the Chief Secretary of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section and Recorder of the Teachings,[1] and arranged for her to go to America to meet William Q. Judge and deliver Blavatsky’s message to the American Convention held April 26th - 27th, 1891, as her special delegate. At the time Besant accepted

that Judge was an Occultist, a view she later discounted. On May 8th Blavatsky died in London while Besant was on her way back from America.

Besant had sailed for England on May 6th and, upon receiving word of Blavatsky's death, Judge followed on May 13th, 1891. Olcott would not sail from India until June 15th. Evidentiary facts have been gathered and are presented here for consideration regarding that period between Blavatsky's death on May 8th and the time of Judge's arrival in London on May 21st, 1891.

Blavatsky executed her first Will before she left India in early 1885. According to Olcott she drew up a Will on January 31st, 1885. Olcott stated:

“The witnesses were P. Sreenivasa Row, E.H. Morgan, T. Subba Rao, and C. Ramiah. It contains a clause to the effect that she wishes her ashes to be buried within the compound of the Headquarters at Adyar; and another request that annually, on the anniversary of her death, some of her friends should assemble here and read a chapter of the ‘Light of Asia’ and one of ‘Bhagavad Gita’.” [2]

This is the Will and Testament which is being kept at Adyar to this day, and considered Blavatsky's official Will. But it was not the Last Will and Testament she executed.

A second Will was drawn up in March 1887 while Blavatsky was living in Ostend with Countess Wachtmeister, who looked after her needs. Ten days before leaving Ostend she lost consciousness while sitting in her chair. Sylvia Cranston recounts from Wachtmeister's notes:

“When the lawyer, doctor, and consul arrived, they found a joyous party. The doctor kept repeating, ‘But she should be dead, . . . she should be dead.’ He had never known a case in which a person in such condition recovered. The drawing of the will went smoothly until the lawyer learned HPB had left all her worldly goods to the countess and nothing to her relatives. Fearing the countess had exercised undue influence on her mind, he objected, but HPB vehemently opposed. Madame Gebhard, to avoid a scene, gently informed the lawyer, ‘perhaps when you know the amount which Madame Blavatsky has to will away, you will have no further objections to making the will as she desires, for had Madame Blavatsky died, there would not have been sufficient money to pay for her funeral expenses’.”

“The party broke up several hours later. Departing, the American consul laughingly said: ‘Well, I think this is enough fatigue for a dying woman!’ [3]”

Wachtmeister continued:

“I will add that I never saw that will again. After HPB's death at Avenue Road, London, on May 8, 1891, I went to Ostend to see the lawyer and asked him what had been done with the will. He told me that after my departure he had given the will to HPB. I suppose that she must have destroyed the deed, as it was never found among her papers.” [4]

Blavatsky's second Will, although very different from the first in content, has one element of similarity - both Wills were drawn up at moments of her pending death.

At the end of March 1889, a few months after “The Secret Doctrine” was published, according to Cheiro, a famous palm reader who was in London at the time, Blavatsky invited him to visit her one evening at Avenue Road. Blavatsky had deduced from evaluating her own palm that her life was nearing its end. She apparently contacted Cheiro to verify her conclusions and give her a time frame in which she could expect the inevitable. Again according to Cheiro, Blavatsky thanked him after his reading and said, “Your warning will do me good, for I will now put my papers in order and prepare in earnest for the short time that lies before me.” [5] Although a third Will has never been acknowledged, it can be assumed from Blavatsky’s supposed comments that she was taking this seriously and that she would take the time to draw up another Last Will and Testament.

In her 1887 Will, Blavatsky had apparently left nothing to Olcott and nothing for Adyar either; all was to go to Countess Wachtmeister who was looking after her night and day and receiving no compensation in return. H.P.B.’s circumstances had changed drastically since then and a very different Will was needed to reflect this new status. Judge had become her most trustworthy supporter and the most dedicated to the CAUSE. Blavatsky eventually came to realize that her own Master had initiated him in 1884 and she depended on Judge for the many tasks she needed done. In one of her letters she wrote: “I trust Judge more than anyone in the world. . . .” [6]

Recognizing Blavatsky’s involvement with Judge in all aspects of theosophical work, and the fact that Besant had only recently joined the Society, it would seem reasonable to assume that Blavatsky would not have designated Besant as the main benefactor in her Will. Olcott mentioned that when he had arrived at the London headquarters on September 4th, 1889, he “found Mrs. Annie Besant living in the house, having just come over from the Secularists into our camp, with bag and baggage”. [7] Besant claimed, and declared some months after Blavatsky’s death, that she was “the person who arranged H.P. Blavatsky’s business affairs in England” [8] during that time. It would be reasonable to expect, therefore, that Besant was *the* person in charge of Blavatsky’s Last Will and Testament and would have known where to find it after her death.

It is reasonable to deduce that Blavatsky drafted a new Will sometime after Cheiro’s visit and also to assume that Blavatsky drew up her Last Will and Testament circa August 1890 when a Deed of Trust was executed in which Annie Besant’s property at 19 Avenue Road was officially vested into the hands of trustees as a headquarters for the British Section. [9] It was agreed at the time that -

“On the one hand, it was not right to have left the house in Mrs. Besant’s name, and on the other, Madame Blavatsky’s health precluded it being in her own name.” [10]

Once again Blavatsky’s health was a major concern.

Following are several reasons why a third Will is a possibility:

- 1) On July 27th, 1886, Blavatsky had offered Judge her royalties from “The Secret Doctrine” and “Isis Unveiled”.
- 2) In August 1886 Blavatsky asked Judge to help her get her royalties from J.W. Bouton for her “Isis Unveiled”. She protested that the money was being sent to Olcott at Adyar while she

needed the funds to survive (See “The Judge Case”, E. Pelletier, Chronology, Aug. 22, 1886 entry for more details).

3) Olcott mentioned years later in “Old Diary Leaves” that “she also offered to turn over her share of the *Theosophist* to Judge and make him her successor.” [11]

4) When Blavatsky wrote her second Will she wanted Wachtmeister to have all, but her “Secret Doctrine” had not been published yet, nor had the Esoteric Section been formed.

5) When Olcott, a lawyer, finally declared six months after Blavatsky’s death that there was a Will, he carefully worded his speech at the Sixteenth Convention and Anniversary of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. He stated: “*In the will that she executed here*, she left me everything and offered her sister the copyrights to her books. . . .” [12] [Italics added] He not only omitted any reference to the 1887 (second) Will, he carefully avoided mentioning the words “Last Will and Testament” when proclaiming Blavatsky’s Will. (Years later in “Old Diary Leaves” he did write that “she executed what proved to be her Last Will and Testament. . . . 31st January 1885.” [13]). Also, in the published transcript of this Will there is no mention of copyrights being offered to her sister.

6) Blavatsky had subsequently made arrangements regarding her share of the net profits from the sale of her books (in 1888 and 1890) and they did not include monies going to Adyar. [14]

7) In the interview by William Mulliss in October 1926, Besant claimed that she had been appointed H.P.B.’s literary executor. [See “The Judge Case”, E. Pelletier, Appendix H for full text.] In “Rebirth of the Occult Tradition”, Boris de Zirkoff wrote: “As far as English Law is concerned, a Literary Executor can be appointed only in a Will.” [15] It is possible that Besant *was* in fact appointed Literary Executor - in a Will that would have been executed *after* she became associated with Blavatsky.

8) It would have been out of character and imprudent for Blavatsky not to have had a new Will executed to reflect changed circumstances.

9) If Blavatsky did destroy the second Will, as Wachtmeister speculates, she would not have done so without another Will to replace it, as it is obvious after reading “Why I Do Not Return To India” that she would not leave *everything* to Olcott and Adyar as stipulated in her first Will.

The interesting question which arises is, what was Judge so concerned about that he would send a telegram from New York, on May 9th, to 19 Avenue Road telling the members there to “*Do nothing till I come*”? [16] This was done shortly upon receiving word of Blavatsky’s death and only a few days after Besant’s departure from New York on May 6th, 1891.

Blavatsky had appointed Judge as “my only representative for [the Esoteric] section in America” on December 14th, 1888. On December 25th, 1889, she appointed Olcott as her “Sole official representative for the Esoteric Section in Asiatic countries”, although Olcott’s position appeared to be mostly in an administrative capacity. Neither was in England at the time of Blavatsky’s death. Judge, who H.P.B. claimed “had been a part of herself and of the

Great Lodge ‘for aeons past’ ” [17], felt very responsible for preserving the integrity of the E.S. materials. H.P.B. had reinforced this in her circular “Notice” of August 9th, 1890, in which she stated that all orders in E.S. Instructions issued in the U.S. would only be through Judge or directly by herself. This would have been reason enough to spring Judge into action and immediately send that telegram. Edmund Garrett, Editor of the “Westminster Gazette” and a friend of Besant, reported that “Avenue-road was at first inclined to resent this ukase”, [18] that is, an official order, having the force of law. Interestingly, this telegram of Judge’s is mentioned by various authors [19] but it never appeared in any official theosophical periodicals of the time. The telegram appears to have been expurgated.

By the time Judge arrived in London on May 21st, Besant was already wearing Blavatsky’s ring and Blavatsky’s body had been cremated. Was Judge the one who was supposed to receive H.P.B.’s ring after her death? There is sufficient information included in the Chronology and Appendix A to cover the details surrounding this ring. It will not, therefore, be repeated here.

No Will was ever presented to Judge while he was in England. He may not have known at that time that there was a Will but likely expected there would be. Judge had represented Blavatsky in other legal matters before and would therefore have found it strange that he was not presented with her Will while in London. Some years later, Besant admitted that she destroyed *very important documentary evidence* in her possession related to the “Judge Case” stating, “I destroyed all the letters I had received from Mr. Judge, as I could not carry them with me round the world. . . .” [20] Could it be that Blavatsky *did* have a third Last Will and Testament and that it suffered the same fate?

The Mystery Will

Olcott did not arrive in London until nearly two months after Blavatsky’s death. Upon word of her death Bertram Keightley went to Colombo on May 21st, 1891, where he was to meet Olcott on the 28th. [21] However, Olcott only arrived in Colombo on June 10th, from Adelaide, met Bertram and sailed on to Bombay. They left Bombay on a French steamer on June 15th and reached Marseilles on July 2nd. When they arrived in London, on July 4th, they were greeted by Judge who took them to headquarters at 19 Avenue Road “where [Olcott] had an affectionate greeting from Mrs. Besant and other residents of the house.” [22]

Olcott described what happened shortly after he arrived:

“Mrs. B. and I visited the bedroom of H.P.B., and, after a time of solemn meditation, pledged ourselves to be true to the Cause and to each other. The death of my co-Founder had left me as the recognized sole centre of the movement, and it seemed as if the hearts of all our best workers warmed towards me more than they had ever done before.” [23]

There are no reasons to not take Olcott’s description of events at face value, although the incident does seem rather strange. A few days later he stated:

“I passed some time alone in her room, and I received there what was necessary for my guidance in the future; I may simply say, in one word, the gist of it was that I should continue the work as though nothing whatever had happened. . . .” [24]

One does wonder if Olcott gave all the details of the event or did he purposely leave out some very important information - information that would have undermined Olcott's authority and the whole Adyar organization that he had built. Apart from the loss of his "chum", could the contents of a possible third Will have contributed to Olcott's melancholy after her death while he was in London? Judge realized a few months later, when the two of them were in California, that something was troubling Olcott. He included in a cable to Besant on October 26th, 1891: "There is something wrong with H.S. Olcott." [25]

Serious questions arise concerning what occurred in H.P.B.'s bedroom. Why wasn't Judge included in this little private parley? Why were none of the other residents at headquarters invited into Blavatsky's room with Olcott and Besant? Why Blavatsky's room at all?

Olcott first met Besant the night of his arrival in London, September 5th, 1889, when he came to settle his differences with H.P.B. regarding the E.S. and other matters. Besant, a Secularist at the time, had just joined the ranks of the Movement. Olcott immediately took to her and thought she was "a natural Theosophist". Ten years later he recalled an incident that transpired that evening:

"She had not, I believe, made one public discourse in support of Theosophy, nor had she said one word of the sort during the conversation between her and H.P.B. and myself. . . . I recollect taking her then by the hand and saying, just at parting: 'I think you will find yourself happier than you have ever been in your life before, for I see you are a mystic and have been frozen into your brain by your environment'." [26]

Olcott quickly became an admirer of Besant's lecturing abilities after listening to her on a number of occasions.

Now, after having met barely two years prior, they forged an alliance that was only jeopardized once, shortly after Blavatsky's death. What kind of *tête-à-tête* did they have to suddenly come out from Blavatsky's bedroom pledging allegiance to each other and to be true to the Cause? *Which* Cause? Based on the premise that there was a third Will, this would have been the most opportune time for Besant to hand it over to Olcott. Besant, living in the same house as Blavatsky and looking after her business affairs, may well have been the only person who knew of the existence of Blavatsky's Will. Perhaps when she arrived in London from New York she immediately read the Will, pondered upon its contents, and wondered what to do with it.

Again presuming the third Will existed, in all probability after reading it Besant was determined to show it to Olcott first, since he was the President of the Society, and let him decide what to do. Besant must have felt it her duty to personally hand over Blavatsky's Will to him. She appeared to believe at the time that the Esoteric Section was part of the whole Society and that Olcott as its President was, therefore, "the only one who represents the mission from the Masters themselves". [27] This belief becomes even more evident when reading her statement and resolution at the Annual Convention at Adyar in 1894. [28]

Supposing that in Blavatsky's Will there was nothing bequeathed to Olcott or to Adyar, would that not have been of concern enough to Besant for her to wait until Olcott's arrival to determine what to do next? And she was not about to question her perception - *her* truth.

Shortly after joining the Society Annie Besant gave two lectures at the Hall of Science, August 4th and 11th, 1889, on “Why I Became A Theosophist.” There she described *her loyalty to truth as she saw it*.

“An imperious necessity forces me to speak the Truth, *as I see it*, whether the speech please or displease, whether it bring praise or blame. That one loyalty to Truth I must keep stainless, whatever friendships fail me or human ties be broken. She may lead me into the wilderness yet must I follow her; she may strip me of all I love, yet I must pursue her; though she slay me yet I trust in her; and I ask no other epitaph on my tomb but ‘She tried to Follow Truth’.” [29] [Italics added]

Following up on the possibility that there was a third Will, could the Cause that Olcott and Besant both adopted following their *tête-à-tête* have been to maintain the status quo of the Theosophical Society as she envisioned it was and to which Olcott had dedicated his life’s work? The premise that in this probable third Will Blavatsky made Judge one of her benefactors, but not Adyar, would have been reason enough for Besant and Olcott to have pledged allegiance to each other. This Will was their little secret. If Besant did hide the supposed Will until Olcott saw it, would Olcott not have felt a deep sense of gratitude toward her? How could Olcott ever repay her for having *saved* the Society - Adyar, which he considered to be the center of the Theosophical Movement. Olcott’s actions certainly lend credence to this probability and he certainly supported Besant as much as anyone could thereafter. As mentioned earlier, Olcott would likely have found some very disturbing information in Blavatsky’s Will - *information he decided would never be revealed* and it never was, but there is sufficient evidence to establish the probability that a third Will existed and that Olcott chose to withhold it.

Judge might have suspected that Blavatsky had another Will when he sent that telegram on May 9th, but he apparently never made a fuss about it. Judge may not have cared much about a Will; his main concern was the CAUSE.

Like H.P.B., Judge was fully aware that Olcott’s Executive responsibility was centered from the first on being the President and that his authority was mainly exoteric. Judge, on the other hand, although closely involved with exoteric matters, was mainly concerned with the Esoteric and was loyal to the Theosophical CAUSE and to its great Teachers. Olcott was always concerned with promoting and sustaining the headquarters as *the* center of the organization. He seemed to lose track of the original CAUSE and of the main objectives while still believing that he was following orders from the Masters and was loyal to H.P.B. In a letter to Olcott in April 1885 she paraphrased K.H. as saying that Olcott had managed to save the Society’s body but had lost its soul.

NOTES:

[1] The title conferred on Besant by H.P.B. was nothing more than that of “Chief” Secretary to take notes just as one would for any other meeting. There was no occult status to this position other than that her notes would have been the ones kept on record. This position would be the first step taken for training in her role as pupil. Besant never actually recorded a meeting of the Inner Group. She missed meetings, and then H.P.B. died.

[2] “Old Diary Leaves”, Fourth Series (1910), p. 418; “The Theosophist”, Vol. 60, February

1939, pp. 355-360; “The Theosophist”, May 1892, Supp. p. lix.

[3] “H.P.B.”, by Sylvia Cranston, p. v321.

[4] “Reminiscences of H.P.B.”, p. 64 (Quest, 1976) or pp. 77-78 (1893).

[5] “Mysteries and Romances of the World’s Greatest Occultists”, by Cheiro (Count Louis Hamon), London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1935; p. 178. Also see **Fohat** magazine, Vol. 5, Spring 2001, p. 6.

[6] “Irish Theosophist”, Vol. 3, June 1895, p. 156.

[7] “Old Diary Leaves”, Fourth Series (1910), p. 171.

[8] “The Theosophist”, Vol. 13, March 1892, Supp. p. xlv.

[9] “The lease of 19, Avenue Road, purchased for 1,600 pounds in 1883, was given to H.P.B. in 1890 by the then owner, and by H.P.B.’s wish was at once vested in the hands of trustees. . . . The lease was burdened with a mortgage . . . the responsibility for this remaining with the donor of the lease. A cheque for [405 pounds, 16s, 11d.] was given to Annie Besant [by a theosophist who requested anonymity] last month, and paid by her to the mortgagees, thus releasing the property.” (“The Vahan”, Second Series, No. 2, September 1, 1891, p. 7.) In December 1896 Olcott named some of the prominent financial supporters: “The Blavatsky Lodge acquired permanent premises in Avenue Road, through the abundant generosity of Mrs. Besant, the Countess Wachtmeister, the Messrs. Keightley and others. . . .”. See “General Report of the 21st Anniversary of the T.S.”, 1896, p. 15, and “A Historical Restropect - 1875-1896 - of the Theosophical Society”, p. 14.

[10] “General Report of the 15th Convention and Anniversary of the TS”, 1890, p. 59. In “A Short History of the T.S.”, p. 257, Ransom writes this as having taken effect in August 1889. The “General Report”, however, states that “in the early part of this year [1890] . . . the Theosophical Society had become possessed, through Mrs. Annie Besant’s generosity, of the lease of her house as its Head-Quarters . . .”, p. 58. Alterations were undertaken and additions built. The headquarters were inaugurated July 3rd, 1890. “The Theosophist”, Vol. 11, August 1890, pp. 661-662.

[11] “Old Diary Leaves”, Third Series (1904), p. 379.

[12] “General Report of the 16th Convention and Anniversary of the TS”, 1891, p. 49.

[13] “Old Diary Leaves”, Fourth Series (1910), p. 418.

[14] See “The Judge Case”, Ernest Pelletier, Chronology, Apr. 4, 1888 and March 9, 1890 entries.

[15] “Rebirth of the Occult Tradition”, pp. 65-66.

[16] See “The Judge Case”, E. Pelletier, Chronology, May 9, 1891(est.) entry.

[17] “Irish Theosophist”, Vol. 4, March 1896, p. 115.

[18] “Isis Very Much Unveiled”, 2nd ed., p. 28.

[19] For example: Arthur H. Nethercot mentions this telegram on p. 357 in “The First Five Lives of Annie Besant”. His references are “The Theosophist”, July 1891; “Bright”, pp. 20-21; Williams, “The Passionate Pilgrim”, p. 204. We do not have the reference for Bright and the latter is mentioned on p. 205 not 204; the first reference does not exist in “The Theosophist”.

[20] “The Case Against W.Q. Judge”, p. 82.

[21] “The Theosophist”, Vol. 12, June 1891, Insert in Supp. at p. lxxi.

[22] “Old Diary Leaves”, Fourth Series (1910), pp. 301-303.

[23] “Old Diary Leaves”, Fourth Series (1910), p. 303.

[24] “The Theosophist”, Vol. 12, September 1891, p. 707.

[25] “The Case Against W.Q. Judge”, p. 42.

[26] “Old Diary Leaves”, Fourth Series (1910), p. 172.

[27] Annie Besant’s “Address of Welcome to the President-Founder” at the First Annual Convention of the T.S. in Europe, held in London, July 9th and 10th. 1891. “The Theosophist”, Vol. 12, September 1891, pp. 705-706.

[28] “General Report of the 19th Anniversary of the TS”, 1894, pp. 39-46.

[29] “A Short History of the T.S.”, p. 257.

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The above text is an excerpt from the book “**The Judge Case, A Conspiracy Which Ruined The Theosophical CAUSE**” by Ernest E. Pelletier (Edmonton Theosophical Society, Edmonton, Canada, 2004). See pp. 351-353 of “Supplement”. The text has been published also by FOHAT magazine, Canada, Winter 2008 edition.

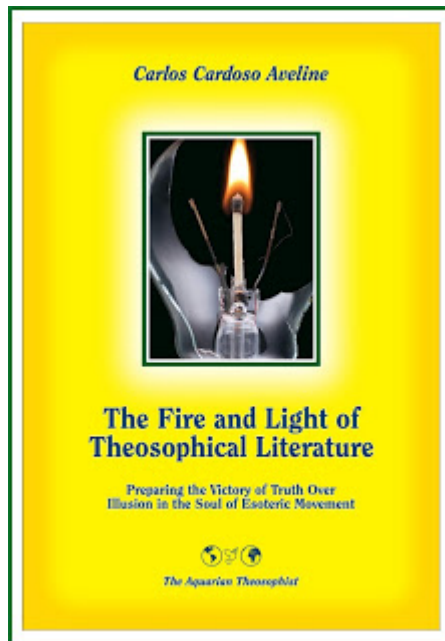
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On the role of the esoteric movement in the ethical awakening of mankind during the 21st century, see the book “**The Fire and Light of Theosophical Literature**”, by Carlos Cardoso Aveline.



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