

emerging liberal, and broadly Platonic, strand in Christian theology — Schleiermacher, Coleridge, Channing, Kingsley and many others — that in her own nineteenth century was giving Christianity a far different face from that of the naive dogmatism she so hated. Yet her assault on church Christianity can be viewed as a preliminary necessary to her particular task, and that of the Theosophical Society: the establishment of a new spirituality based on an immanentist universalism which stood at an opposite pole from the exclusivist, hidebound but aggressive faith she saw all around, whether in European bishops or in missionaries abroad. Other writers of the first Theosophical generation were generally of the Blavatsky stamp on the issue of Christianity. The tone is generally more sympathetic — and the discussion more extensive — when the subject is HINDUISM or BUDDHISM than the great faith of the West, but Jesus and Paul are seen as initiates whose support can be summoned on behalf of certain basic tenets of the ancient wisdom. Alfred P. SINNETT, in *Esoteric Buddhism* and elsewhere, is quite reticent on Christianity. William Q. JUDGE, though he also had relatively little to say about the subject, points out in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that the sometimes cryptic language of Jesus must be understood in light of the fact that his mission was to the Jews and so was couched in the terminology of their tradition; he was in fact an avatar for the Jews. In *Echoes of the Orient II*, we find a passage in which Judge says that “the religion which Jesus taught is not what the world understands by Christianity,” and states that Jesus actually taught reincarnation (p. 435). Henry Steel Olcott, in his inaugural address as President of the Theosophical Society, very nicely positioned Theosophy between the conflicting dogmas of science and religion (here obviously meaning Christian religion), making its reversion to an ancient heritage underlying them both the solution to that great Victorian battle: “If I rightly apprehend our work, it is to aid in freeing the public mind of theological superstition and a tame subservience to the arrogance of science.” According to Stephen Prothero in his study of Olcott and Buddhism, *The White Buddhist*, after further interaction with Blavatsky and his own labors on behalf of Asian Buddhists, Olcott developed more and more antipathy to the Christian faith.

Another side, however, was beginning to emerge elsewhere in the Theosophical world, particularly in a circle related to the London Lodge in the early 1880s centering on Anna KINGSFORD and her companion Edward MAITLAND, and supported by their great Parisian friend and patron, Marie,