

# **A History of Some Events Surrounding the Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida, 1993-2000**

By

**Seymour B. (Sy) Ginsburg, President 1993-1996 & 1998-2000**

(Written 2008)

I have been requested by members of the Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida (TSM) to recount some of the recent history of this organization as I remember it. My purposes in writing this are to fulfill this request for a six-fold purpose.

1. I wish to provide some permanent documentation for the archives of the Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida so that historical fact will not be lost for want of it being set down in writing. These recollections are primarily for the years 1993 to 2000, five years of which I was President.

2. During these years some remarkable events occurred, events for which the psychiatrist C. G. Jung, coined the word synchronistic. This is to say that such events are meaningful coincidences that cannot otherwise be explained other than to call them simply coincidences or to infer to them some sort of intentional action by forces of which we are unaware.

3. During these years the relationship between the Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida and the Theosophical Society in America (TSA or TSIA) with which it is affiliated, was attempted to be changed through the adoption of bylaw amendments by TSA in 1996. I would like the current members of the TSM and its officers and Board of Directors to be aware of what happened and why, so that they can act appropriately in the future with full information.

4. Because of my thirty years of experiences in affiliation with TSM, I have often felt that TSM in some sense, has a life of its own. Through good times and not so good times people have always seemed to step forward in support of the work of TSM whenever such support was needed.

5. Notwithstanding whatever difficulties arose between TSM and TSA during the years about which I write, current members will know what I am active both in TSM and in TSA as a financial supporter of and a facilitator of courses within both organizations. To some degree, the policies developed at TSM are being implemented at TSA in conformity with the three declared objects of the worldwide Theosophical Society, and it is my hope that this will continue.

6. Although I no longer take a role as an active officer of TSM, it is my hope and expectation that appropriate members of TSM will continue to step forward as needed to expand and further the work of TSM.

I shall begin this recollection several years earlier, in 1978. It was in May of that year when I first became acquainted with the Theosophical Society. At that time I was 43 years old and was casting about for more meaning in my life. I picked up a “new age” magazine at a bookstore in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where I was a resident. The magazine was called *Alternatives* (since gone out of business) and it contained a variety of articles on various topics related to what were called “new age” philosophies in the 1960s and 1970s. At the back of the magazine were several small ads for various groups with what to me were strange sounding names many of which contained words from oriental languages such as the Hari Krishna Society. What especially caught my eye, and I cannot say why, was the Theosophical Society.

I had never heard the word “theosophical” or the related root “theosophy” so I looked it up in a dictionary. The citation stated: “the teachings of a modern movement originating in the U.S. in 1875 and following chiefly Buddhist and Brahmanic (Hindu) theories especially of pantheistic evolution and reincarnation.” I was interested but I was also cautious because I knew from press reports in the 1960s that there were many phony so-called “new age” religions and spiritual movements that were little more than money spinning cults. I checked further in the Encyclopedia Britannica. There was in the Britannica a more extensive article about theosophy and the Theosophical Society along with a photo of a likeness of H. P. Blavatsky, the principal founder of the Theosophical Society in New York City in 1875. To my way of thinking at the time, a citation in the Britannica lent an air of credibility to the organization.

The advertisement gave the address of the local Theosophical Society which at that time was located in Miami, some twenty-five miles south of where I lived in Fort Lauderdale. I drove there and met several of the members. I liked what I saw, a modest but well maintained 2,000 sq. ft. building with a library and tiny book selling space. I was especially interested in what the organization called the three declared objects of the Theosophical Society. These appeared to avoid a commitment to any one religious teaching and presented the Society as a place for the common investigation of spiritual and related matters. Being in sympathy with these objects was the sole requirement for membership, so I paid the modest membership fee and joined. This was in May of 1978. Members will be familiar with these objects. They are worth restating:

- 1) To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color;
- 2) To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science;

3) To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity.

To be sure, there was a theosophical teaching. The word “theosophy” comes from the Greek, “theos” meaning divine, and “sophia” meaning wisdom. Theosophy meant divine wisdom. Many of the well known philosophers of ancient Greece were known as theosophists. In that respect, theosophy can be said to have started there, but the basis of the ideas long predate the Greek civilization, and the modern movement founded by H. P. Blavatsky in 1875 is more accurately known as neo-theosophy.

There seemed to be no effort to impose these theosophical teachings on anyone, least of all members of the Theosophical Society. By joining the organization I met numerous people who were familiar with various spiritual movements of which I had never heard. The members were kindred spirits with an inner quest for meaning similar to my own search. This led me to investigate many of these movements, and rather quickly in that same year to go to India which is a major fount of spiritual philosophies. I was especially attracted to the teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff (1866-1949?) a Greek-Armenian mystic, about whom I was told on my first visit to India. There were so many synchronistic events that led up to my going to India and all that happened to me as the result of that first visit and of the many subsequent visits. I will not recount these here since they are part of my personal history and not necessarily the history of TSM about which I write.

Though I investigated and in some instances participated in several movements devoted to one or another spiritual philosophy, such as the philosophy of Gurdjieff, I continued my membership in and affiliation with both TSM and TSA during the thirty years between 1978 and 2008. In fact I became a life member of TSA.

By 1983 TSM was beginning to have difficulties as a viable organization. These difficulties continued and worsened for almost ten years until a culmination and change of direction took place in 1993. The President, Nori Rao, decided to move to California in 1993. The first vice-President, Frank Muscarella, took the presidency briefly, but issues of his health and his business situation required that he move out of the Miami area and to North Carolina This was in early 1993. By that time I was the organization’s treasurer and a member of the seven person board of directors. We were casting about for a new President.

Conditions had gotten very bad in the neighborhood where the TSM was located, and no one wanted the job of President. But I decided I would take that job provided that the other board members would commit to the idea that we either move the Branch to a different location or close it altogether. We had little choice as we were running out of funds and membership and participation had drastically declined. The other board members so committed themselves, and along with this commitment the fortunes of the Branch began to change significantly.

So much happened to TSM in such a short time beginning with the commitment to move or close in 1993, that in 1994 I wrote an article about it for *The American Theosophist*, the journal of the Theosophical Society in America (since restyled as *The Quest*). I will here take the liberty of reproducing that article which appeared in the *Early Spring 1994 issue of The American Theosophist*, Volume 82, Number 2. It describes the events of 1993 and 1994 to which I refer. Please note that brackets in the article represent additional comments by me that are not in the article as it was published.

**Article begins here**

**The Miami Branch Revivified**

**A Case Study Proposing an Answer to the Question of Theosophy 2000**

**By Seymour (Sy) Ginsburg**

(Theosophy 2000 was a symposium conducted through the pages of *The American Theosophist* during 1993 and 1994 addressing the question of what the nature of the Theosophical Society should be as it prepared to enter the coming new millennium).

This year 1994 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Miami [Florida] Branch of the Theosophical Society. It is an anniversary that almost did not occur because 1993 almost marked the end of the Branch's existence. Yet by the end of the year [1993] the Branch had been completely revivified. Our Branch has remade itself in preparation for Theosophy 2000. To understand what happened, let's take a brief look at the history of the Miami Branch.

Annie Besant [the second International President of the Theosophical Society] issued the charter in February 1919, and while no one remains to recount those early days, we know that the Branch grew and flourished, moving from location to location as its needs dictated. The Branch was incorporated in 1938 [as an independent Florida not-for-profit corporation separate from but affiliated with the Theosophical Society in America through common membership]. In 1962 it occupied permanent quarters in a two-story building on N.E. 62<sup>nd</sup> Street near the center of Miami, which would house it for the next thirty-one years. Moving to this new location was a high point in the Branch's history, but the location also later sowed the seeds of its decline. No one foresaw that decline in those exciting days when the Branch was acquiring a permanent home.

We are told that the [original two story] building was a bequest to the Branch and, through fund raising, the members added a handsome [one story] addition [that served as a good sized meeting room], with the help of mortgage financing from national headquarters [TSA]. The mortgage loan was duly paid off and by the seventies the Branch owned its property free and clear. [This was the first instance where the Branch

actually owned its meeting place, whereas in all the earlier years premises were rented. At one time during several of the years of World War II, the Branch suspended its activities].

Meetings [in the newly acquired premises on N.E. 62<sup>nd</sup> Street] were held both evenings and weekends, potluck dinners were common, and a steady stream of visitors purchased books, used the library, and attended public programs. Membership at one time exceeded sixty.

But the urban landscape was changing. Demographic change, almost unnoticeable in the fifties, had become explosive by the eighties. The core of Miami, like many other cities, was racked by urban violence. One by one the great department stores closed their doors, moving to suburban shopping centers. The predominant culture and language of Dade county shifted from English to Spanish. The English-speaking constituency began to shrink in size and to move further away from the Branch.

[It should be noted that the Theosophical Society had at that time another Branch in Miami, the Jinarajadasa Branch, located variously on S.W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street and other nearby locations, which conducted its meetings in Spanish. That Branch continues in Miami as of this writing].

### **The Last Gasp of the Branch in Miami**

During the eighties, evening meetings became impossible as people feared to venture into the area at night. [Some of us will remember the Liberty City riots that broke out in 1980, largely due to police brutality against the mainly African-American and Haitian populations of Liberty City, a Miami neighborhood within two miles of the Branch]. Book sales and library use diminished. Membership fell off. We thought about moving and organized a committee to look into possibilities, but sufficient energy was not there. Then there was the unresolved question of which direction to move.

Some believed the neighborhood would turn and begin to get better, as in central sections of certain other cities. We decided to refurbish the Branch with funds that had accumulated over the years. It was the easy way, but in retrospect we see it was doomed to failure. We bought an adjacent lot for parking, refurnished and redecorated the Branch, and hired a bookstore manager. But people still didn't come, and the neighborhood got worse.

During this time, the Jinarajadasa (Spanish-speaking) Branch of the Theosophical Society continued to grow. But they would not use our Branch facilities for their meetings. Their members were also afraid to come to that neighborhood at night.

The worsening sickness of the Miami Branch continued for nine years, until events forced our hand in the spring of 1993. Our President, who had tried with all she had, decided to move to California. Our first vice-President, who briefly took the presidency, also announced his intention to leave the area, [moving to North Carolina]. The cash balance in our treasury had fallen to less than \$5,000, from a high at one time in the eighties of \$45,000. The remaining officers and directors were discouraged and several wanted to resign. It was almost the end of the Miami Branch.

Somehow we decided to try once more, this time agreeing that we would under no circumstances reopen the Branch at its present location in the autumn of 1993. [In those years it was a tradition that the Branch closed during the hot Florida summers]. Those officers and directors who had wanted to resign agreed to carry on. Since four of the six active directors lived in Broward County north of the Miami city center and since it appeared that the English-speaking population was moving in that direction, we decided to look north for a new location. We also hoped to organize study groups for members who lived in other directions. [As of this writing there are two such English-speaking study centers serving the Miami-Dade County area, in addition to one Spanish-speaking study center and two Spanish-speaking Branches in Miami-Dade County].

We recognized that our present building would be difficult to sell given its location in a deteriorated neighborhood, and we did not know how we would pay rent on a new location and manage the cost of moving.

Almost as soon as the decision to move was made, however, things began to change. Some of us are convinced that we received help from the hierarchy working on the inner planes. Others, more skeptical, think it was just plain hard work or dumb luck. The fact is that within nine months we had moved the Branch, opened a bookstore, bought one building, sold another building, and developed a core of fifteen study groups as well as guest speaker programs, all with a balance in our treasury of less than \$5,000.

In June a friend of the Branch [and a close friend of mine, Jim Mackay] located a small store building in an old shopping center. It was half the size of the present building, only 1,000 square feet. Some of us, accustomed to the ample space in the old building were taken aback at how small the new premises were. But the shopping center is located on U.S. Highway 1, the most heavily traveled arterial road in the metropolitan area, and in Deerfield Beach, a nice suburb adjacent to Boca Raton, the fast growing and most affluent community in the area.

Jim, who located the building, agreed to purchase it in six months from the seller, if the Branch could not. Meanwhile, under the contract he negotiated with the seller, we could rent it for those months [July-December, 1993] while we tried to sell our building. Three of our members agreed to underwrite the monthly rent [\$600 per month] for six months.

Two other members agreed to operate a bookstore there five days each week as volunteers. [This new location in a shopping center in Deerfield Beach lent itself much more appropriately to operating a bookstore than did the old free standing location in Miami.]

Why did this friend who contracted to buy the building, though not a member of the T.S., extend himself for the Branch? Why did some members agree to underwrite the rent? Why did others agree to run the bookstore? These things happened.

[Jim Mackay had his own agenda. It coincided with the interests and plans of our Branch, and he made us an offer that we could not refuse. Jim lived in Boca Raton, where he had developed real estate, and he knew the Boca Raton commercial real estate market. He also had a strong inner search and his interests led him to explore numerous paths of inquiry. For example, he and I met and became good friends because we studied Gurdjieff's teaching together. Jim had visited the Branch in Miami at my request, and was much impressed with the occult library. It was and probably still is among the best of such libraries in the Miami metropolitan area. But Jim was not a joiner of organizations nor did he want the responsibility of accumulating a personal occult or metaphysical library. So, he was especially interested in having the Branch library located close to where he lived. He also knew the real estate market and he knew that the prospective purchase price of the building he located, at \$60,000, was a good value. He was, therefore, willing to put up \$10,000 as a down payment with the seller, and was in a position to close on the purchase for a remaining \$50,000, in the event that the Branch could not sell its existing building in a time sufficient for the Branch to close on the purchase of this new building. In that event Jim would likely have resold the building and the Branch would have likely disbanded.

In July, 1993, the Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida officially moved into the new premises at 831 S.E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Deerfield Beach, in the Palm Plaza Shopping Center. Although our corporate name remained "The Theosophical Society in Miami" we restyled the Branch as "The Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida" to more accurately reflect the regional nature of the organization and its new location in Deerfield Beach, Florida. The three members who had agreed to underwrite the \$600 monthly rental, had each put up \$200 per month for six months, for this purpose. Their expectation was that the old building on 62<sup>nd</sup> Street in Miami would soon be sold and the Branch would be able to close the transaction to buy this new building, paying back the \$10,000 put up by Jim MacKay and paying the additional \$50,000 that was needed.

A lot of work needed to be done, but there was a new enthusiasm amongst the members. For example, the people who participated in a Gurdjieff Study group that had been meeting at night in my condominium in Fort Lauderdale, undertook to clean and paint the new premises. This is the sort of manual work often undertaken by people in

the Gurdjieff study. They would be one of the study groups at this new location, whereas they had not been willing to meet at night at the old location in Miami.

Then there was a certain amount of equipment that needed to be purchased. Since we were going to be running a bookstore, we had to buy a cash register, and we would need a counter on which to place it. We had sufficient book shelving from the old location. These things fell into place rather quickly through additional donations of time and money by several of the members. We needed carpeting and one of the very new members whose son owned a retail carpet business supplied this at a very low cost. A used store fixture company near the new location was the source of a very nice counter and several other items of store fixturing.

We wanted authorization from the Theosophical Society in America to use the "Quest Books" name for our bookstore, and this was granted. A letter to this effect was sent us by the Theosophical Publishing House of TSA and is in our files. Being a bookstore that also conducted discussion meetings was of significant practical advantage in our shopping center location as it fitted in quite properly with the local zoning and building codes. Whether a different sort of organization, one that was primarily a lecture hall, would have met the local requirements was problematic. But this matter became moot since we were granted bookstore designation].

More than sixty people turned out for Enrique Renard's talk at our grand opening in September, vastly overflowing the quarters. We began a series of study groups, a different one each night of the week, and several more on weekdays and weekends. [We recognized that when we were to have especially prominent speakers for our regular weekly Sunday afternoon "Speakers Forum", and which we arranged on numerous occasions over the next several years, we would need a larger auditorium. For this purpose we were able to secure the American Legion Hall located at the rear of our shopping center].

As the autumn of 1993 began to turn toward winter, however, nothing had happened to the old quarters. What would happen if we did not sell it by the end of 1993? An undercurrent of anxiety was palpable as the weeks rolled by.

[Early that summer we had approached several organizations near the old 62<sup>nd</sup> Street location to see if they would have any interest in buying our building. We especially approached churches and similar organizations that we thought would appropriately be interested. This included the Roman Catholic Church which operated Notre Dame High School immediately across N.E. 62<sup>nd</sup> Street from our building. By that time 1993, it had become known as Notre Dame d'Haiti in acknowledgement of the changed neighborhood in which the high school and our building were located. I recall personally showing the building to Father Wensky who headed the high school and another priest



who was in charge of the real estate department of the Miami Catholic Archdiocese. They were polite and expressed some interest but were non committal.

In October I made what had become my annual visit to India, as I had by that time become the pupil of an Englishman turned Hindu monk who resided there at an ashram in the Himalayas. I was gone for about three weeks. Upon returning I could feel the gloom amongst the members who, while on the one hand were very excited by all the activity at our new premises, but on the other hand realized that we had an unstable situation and might even have to close down the whole operation at the end of December since, not having sold the old building, we would not have the money to close the real estate purchase of the new building.

Then an amazing thing happened. Just on chance I decided to call the Archdiocese real estate office to see if they might have any further interest in our building. Since their high school was located directly across the street, I thought they would be the most likely prospective purchaser, even though we had heard nothing further from them since they looked at the property in August. The phone call went something like this:

Sy calling the Archdiocese: "Please connect me to the real estate department."

Sy: "Hello, may I speak to Father (I don't remember his name)?"

Woman: "Well, he's not here but I am his secretary. Can I help you?"

Sy: "I am the President of the Theosophical Society in Miami. He looked at our building a few months ago with the idea of buying it, but we've heard nothing from you since."

Woman: "You mean you didn't get our offer?"

Sy: "What offer?"

Woman: "Just a moment. Please hang on. I'll be right back." (A minute goes by). "Oh, I'm terribly sorry. I just looked in our file and the offer is still here. I was pregnant at the time and had to leave. Someone else took my place, but apparently she never mailed our offer to you. I'll send it right out."

Sy: (Pausing with the shock of surprise and almost falling off his chair): "That will be great."

The offer was a clean purchase offer in the amount of \$75,000 cash. The Catholic Church almost always pays cash.]

Suddenly, the Roman Catholic Church had offered to buy the building for a fair price and in cash. That transaction was completed on December 22, 1993, and the Deerfield Beach building purchase was then completed on January 4, 1994, also in cash. The

Branch was financially secure again with a building fully paid for. We even had some excess cash [of approximately \$15,000], resulting from the two real estate transactions that allowed us to largely liquidate the consignment invoices for books that the Theosophical Publishing house had been so kind to ship us.

As I speculated earlier, some of our members were convinced that we received help from the hierarchy working on the inner planes. Others, more skeptical, think it was just plain hard work or dumb luck.

### **The Present and the Future**

What are our prospects for the future?

We have added more than twenty new members since the move, and are now back to fifty, and climbing. There is an air of excitement and optimism. Our Branch now boasts many people versed not only in theosophy, but in many disciplines akin to it.

[During the five years of my presidency, the membership reached a high of 125, but then leveled off at about 100. This made the Branch one of just 3 Branches affiliated with the Theosophical Society in America, with membership approaching anywhere near triple digits, the other two being the New York Theosophical Society and the Theosophical Society in Ojai, California. I am told that the Branch membership as of January, 2008 was approximately 75.]

This first winter [1993-1994] at the new location we offered weekly study groups in fifteen different metaphysical disciplines. These include astrology, basic metaphysics, Bhagavad Gita, Fairy Tales, Food and Health, Gurdjieff, Kabbalah, Meditation, the Secret Doctrine, the Seth Material, Star Trek's spiritual aspects, Tarot, and the Voice of the Silence.

Some may question what some of these study groups have to do with theosophy. We take our guidance from the three declared objects of the Theosophical Society, which encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science, and the investigation of unexplained laws of nature and powers latent in man. We see our role in maintaining and growing the Branch as dedication to the declared objects.

The many programs bring traffic to the bookstore, and although we offer all presentations without charge, it is our theory that the \$2 and \$3 donations people put in the basket and the profit from bookstore sales will sustain the Branch. We hope eventually to expand the already inadequate new quarters.

We have tentative plans to add study groups in several other disciplines as the Branch acquires new members expert in these areas. Two are already planned in healing.

Our Sunday programs of guest speakers on various metaphysical topics continue. These programs serve as a testing and proving ground for the more serious discipline that a study group entails.

We have not forgotten our basic theosophical roots as evidenced by study groups in basic metaphysics and the Secret Doctrine and the Voice of the Silence. But we also recognize the importance of related disciplines and the need to express theosophical concepts in contemporary modes, such as the study of Star Trek as a series of morality plays. As our Star Trek study group facilitator, a third generation Theosophist, says: "It is the first legend or myth that has been plucked out of the future instead of the past. Like all other legends or myths, it contains jewels of spiritual truth that mankind can absorb at many levels."

In reaching out to the metaphysical community with our wide array of offerings, we are reclaiming for the Theosophical Society the high ground of spiritual inquiry in conformity with the three declared objects, from the crass commercialization that has frequently come to characterize "the New Age" approach to metaphysics.

### **Conclusion**

Thus our response to the questions posed by Theosophy 2000 includes the following:

1. The Branch must have a permanent quarters, including a bookstore. The bookstore not only serves to disseminate theosophical teachings, but is the main engine of sound Branch finances when there are sufficient volunteers to staff it. Branch quarters should be in a commercial area with adequate parking and lighting. Usually that means a shopping center on a major arterial road.

[It should be noted that as of this writing in 2008, some 14 years later, the retail landscape has changed. While the Branch still maintains its bookstore which provides a convenient way for members to order books at a 25% discount, there is little outside consumer traffic. Like other small bookstores, book marketing has largely been taken over by very large "big box" bookstores such as Borders and Barnes & Noble, and by the sales of books on the Internet through firms like Amazon.com, and BN.com. Thus, the bookstore, while useful both from a convenience stand point and from a commercial legitimacy standpoint, is no longer the main engine of sound Branch finances. The shortfall in income from book sales has had to be made up during the past several years by increased contributions from members and visitors.]

2. Regular study groups and classes facilitated by qualified people should be the primary vehicle for gaining an understanding of metaphysical ideas. The greater the number and variety of these groups within the scope of the three declared objects, the more people are drawn to the Branch. Study groups should be facilitated by members.

This encourages growth of membership, and insures that the Branch remains a vehicle of theosophical outreach and not merely a hired hall for the use of various people with their private agendas.

3. A weekly forum of programs – both member led and with guest speakers – as has been a tradition in our Branch should be encouraged. This provides a testing ground for the desirability and potential to organize a study group around a particular discipline.

4. Numerous other activities come about naturally as the result of an active Branch with active members. These include a social program, with potluck dinners and the like, which promotes a spirit of comraderie in conformity with the declared objects of the Theosophical Society.

The verdict is not yet in on whether we have it right but we think we are on to something important in Branch work. We already wish the new building were three times as big. We feel that our approach makes sense in today's America as we approach the year 2000.

[The intervening fourteen years since the writing of this article has proven that the approach to Branch work take by the Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida is a sound one. Membership in the Theosophical Society in America and in the International Theosophical Society has declined during these years, and to some extent so has the membership of the Branch, while the overall interest in non-traditional spiritual studies has appeared to have increased. Some have suggested that the reason for membership decline is that there are so many more non-traditional spiritual groups existing today as compared to when the Theosophical Society commenced in 1875 or even as compared to when the Miami Branch commenced operation in 1919. Nevertheless, the Branch remains large and vital and continues as one of the three largest Branches affiliated with the Theosophical Society in America.]

We at the Miami Branch extend an open invitation to our brothers and sisters in the Theosophical Society across America and elsewhere to visit us in southern Florida. We are just a mile from the ocean in a really nice area. When you come here, you will find a bright cheerful place that we hope will feel like home to you, and where you can participate almost any day or night of the week in our variety of theosophical activities. It's easy to get to, easy to park, and inviting to use. Could this be a prototype for Theosophical Branches heading toward the years 2000? Come have a look.

February 1994 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Theosophical Society in Miami. We have every reason now to look forward to the next seventy-five years.

The Miami Branch of the Theosophical Society is now located at 831 S.E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street (in the Palm Plaza Shopping Center, on U.S. Highway 1, two miles east of the I-95 S.W. 10<sup>th</sup> Street exit), Deerfield Beach, Florida 33441; telephone (954) 420-0908.

**Article ends here**

**1995 and the Tragedy of the Theosophical Society in America Bylaws Revision**

The foregoing article published in early 1994 recounts what happened to TSM with the momentous upheaval and move that took place in 1993. Members looked forward to an ever more significant role for the Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida in future years. But there was lurking on the horizon and unbeknownst to the membership, moves afoot in both the international and national Theosophical Societies that would, in my view, abrogate the principles of openness and freedom of thought upon which the Society had been founded.

In July, 1995, I attended the annual meeting of the Theosophical Society in America (TSA) at Wheaton, Illinois. It was there that I first learned of proposed changes to the bylaws of that organization which would change the nature of the relationship between that organization and the many Branches affiliated with it such as our independently incorporated Theosophical Society in Miami. These changes were designed to unilaterally give this national organization ownership and control of the assets of these Branches including their real estate, their libraries and whatever other assets that were held in the name of the Branches.

As President of a Branch I was naturally concerned so I made inquiries to see what was going on and why such changes were proposed. The affair of the expulsion of the Theosophical Society in Boston from affiliation with the Theosophical Society in America came to my attention and I investigated this matter, actually visiting that Branch in November, 1995.

Earlier that year in August, when I returned from the national meeting in Wheaton, I informed our board members and other interested members about what the bylaw changes proposed at Wheaton were and explained the ramifications to TSM. TSM then passed resolutions in August and September to the effect of rejecting any intention to incorporate these national bylaw changes into our own bylaws or corporate charter as was being requested by TSA, and reasserting our independence. I felt, as did our board and most of our members that we had a fiduciary obligation to those members who had gone before and who had accumulated many of the Branch assets, to maintain the independent corporate status of TSM that had been set up as early as 1938.

Here is that motion as I have it in my files:

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### **MOTION FOR THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN MIAMI**

Be it so moved:

That The Theosophical Society in Miami (TSM) is opposed to changes #15, #16 and #17 to the bylaws adopted by the Board of Directors of The Theosophical Society in America (TSA) at the July 1995 Board meeting held at Wheaton, Illinois, for submission to the membership of TSA by referendum.

That in the event any of the above changes are adopted by TSA, TSM will not acquiesce to them and will not incorporate them into its bylaws and/or corporate charter.

That TSM will, nevertheless, endeavor to remain affiliated with TSA, unless or until TSA takes action to disenfranchise TSM from Branch status. In such an event, TSM including its members, corporate status and assets will remain a separate and independent Theosophical Society.

ADDENDUM:

That this motion, passed at the Board and members meeting of TSM on August 27, 1995, will be brought up again for final vote at the next Board and members meeting scheduled for September 17, 1995 and that only in the event this motion passes at both meetings will it be adopted by TSM. (The motion also including opposition to proposed bylaws change #9 as well as opposition to #15, #16 and #17, was passed again in September, 1995.)

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In November 1995, I wrote to the Board of Directors of TSA expressing to them the position that we had taken and explaining the difference, as looked upon legally, between Episcopal and Congregational spiritual organizations. There were a whole series of court cases which I researched, going into this matter and which resulted from one or another church separating itself from its parent organization. These cases were directly applicable to the relationship between our Branch and the national organization. Briefly, in Episcopal organizations, the parent owns and controls all the assets of the member churches, whereas in Congregational organizations, the assets of individual churches are owned by those individual churches. Historically, the Theosophical Society had always been Congregational both at the national level in the United States and at the international level.

With control of assets goes control of what is taught, and I was particularly concerned with this given the primary reason for expulsion of the Boston Branch from TSA. The national board of directors of TSA and especially the director representing the northeastern states were opposed to the teachings of Alice A. Bailey being presented at Theosophical Society Branches generally, and in particular at the Boston Branch where the membership was especially interested in those teachings. Why, I wondered was there such hostility to the Alice Bailey teachings, not only at the national level, but also at the international level, where the Theosophical Society in the country of Denmark was expelled from the international organization for the same reason?

To investigate this hostility, one needs to become a bit familiar with Alice Bailey and also with the idea of Masters both incarnated and dis-incarnated, who H.P. Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, claimed instructed her as to her role in promulgating to others their teachings to her. Alice Bailey, as a teenager, if one can believe her autobiographical book *The Unfinished Autobiography: Thirty Years Work*, was contacted by one of the Theosophical Society's supposed Masters, the Tibetan, Dhwal Kuhl, and asked to write down a series of teachings which he would transmit to her telepathically. This resulted in many years of work and the publication of these teachings in book form by a separate organization The Lucis Trust, set up for her by her husband, Foster Bailey, to promulgate these teachings.

The rub for the directors of both the national and international theosophical organizations was the distasteful idea that this young girl Alice Bailey, a theosophical novice with no standing in the organizational hierarchy, should have direct contact with the Masters of H.P. Blavatsky, thereby bypassing the whole lot of these officials of the Theosophical Society who claimed, in their Esoteric School, to have direct contact themselves with these Masters.

Personally, I consider the whole matter of people's claims to be in touch with and supported by an inner spiritual hierarchy to be largely ego driven bunk. History has proven the danger in accepting such claims of divine support, whether it was the "divine right of Kings" asserted by much of European royalty as justification for their ruling positions, or whether asserted by contemporary politicians who claim God or Jesus to be on their side. This same danger is apparent when any clergy or members of any spiritual organization such as the Esoteric School of Theosophy or Alice Bailey assert such claims. While there might be some truth in such claims, who amongst us has the wisdom to separate fact from egotism and make a public pronouncement. And who amongst us can claim personal evidence and insist that it must be accepted by others. It is a personal matter and, in my view, should be kept so.

Personally also, I have reason to think based upon numerous synchronistic evidences personal to me, two of which are mentioned in this document: 1) The synchronicities that happened to me in 1978 and which put me in touch with the Theosophical Society, theosophy, and related teachings, and 2) The curious affair of how the Roman Catholic Church in offering to buy the old building of TSM in 1993, an offer that might never have seen the light of day, likely saved TSM from dissolution.

But whether or not any such spiritual claims based upon personal evidence are true, the Boston Branch affair and the affair of the Theosophical Society in Denmark, was concrete evidence of the intention of some senior Theosophical Society officials to meddle in what was being taught at the Branches, or in National Sections, in contravention of the objects of the Theosophical Society.

I was not the only Branch President to recognize this problem, and an ad hoc committee consisting of myself and five other Branch Presidents was set up to oppose these bylaw changes and to reassert the independence of these Branches.

There is appended to this history, four letters from my files giving the details of this whole seamy affair. These are:

1) My October 31, 1995 letter to the President of the Boston Branch.

2) My November 2, 1995 letter to the Board of Directors of the Theosophical Society in America, informing them that our Branch had voted to reject their attempted imposition of their bylaw changes on our Branch, and reminding them that the relationship between TSM and TSA is Congregational, not Episcopal.

3) The December 1, 1995 letter from the ad hoc committee of Branch Presidents to the membership of the Theosophical Society in America, asking them not to vote to implement these proposed bylaw changes. This was to no avail, as the changes were subsequently approved as we suspected they would be. So the position of these



Branches including TSM then was and still is, as far as I know, to simply not accept such unilaterally imposed changes.

4) My January 10, 1996 letter to our Branch membership informing the members of the results of my investigation of the Boston Branch affair, and my recommendation of what the TSM position should be going forward.

### **A Final Word**

To the best of my knowledge, the position of TSM has not changed, and we see ourselves in a Congregational, not an Episcopal relationship, with the national and international theosophical organizations. In fairness to those organizations, I do not know of any instances where they have subsequently attempted to meddle in, or to oppose the offering of any of the courses or other presentations at TSM. In fact, I have found the current TSA administration to be especially courteous.

However, administrations do change, and I believe it is important for the officers and directors of TSM to be aware of what was attempted by TSA in 1995-1996, and to vigilantly maintain the independence of TSM from any future attempt to impose an Episcopal structure onto it, or otherwise attempt to interfere with control of local theosophical assets or to interfere with what is taught.

I hope the reader will find the details of this historical account including these letters referred to and the article from *The American Theosophist*, to be instructive. I will end this historical narrative with the information in these letters that follow, since they along with the historical article that is included, give the highlights of my recollection of memorable incidents in the history of TSM while I was active as an officer and director.

Sy Ginsburg, Delray Beach, Florida, 2008.

# QUEST BOOKS

## *The Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida*

831 S.E. 9TH STREET, DEERFIELD BEACH, FLORIDA 33441

TELEPHONE (305) 420-0908

October 31, 1995

Peter Kubaska

21 Chauncy Street, #26

Cambridge, MA. 02138

Tel: 617-876-8416

Dear Peter:

I am glad that we were able to make contact and am writing, as I said, to give you a little more detail about our Branch. It is an old Branch, founded in 1919, and in 1993 we moved from an inner city Miami location to the suburb of Deerfield Beach where we are located in a small building, owned by the Branch, which is part of a shopping center. The front part is a small Quest Bookstore and the back is a meeting room and library. We have lots of parking, in a well lighted upscale location, and with that the Branch has grown both in membership (over 100) and activity. I have enclosed a brochure about our Branch along with our bi-monthly calendar (November-December) and this will give you an idea of what we are doing.

The national Board of Directors of The Theosophical Society in America has approved substantial changes in the national Bylaws and these will be put to a membership referendum sometime in December. I first found out about this at the national convention in July, and although our Branch is the third largest in the country, we were never told of nor consulted about these proposed changes which substantially affect the relationship between TSA and its Branches. These proposed changes, I am told, are largely the result of the difficulties between TSA and the Boston Branch. Our Branch is opposed to several of the proposed changes and has voted to oppose them and not to incorporate them into our own Bylaws and Corporate Charter should they be adopted. To give you a fuller picture, I am also enclosing the proposed Bylaw changes along with our comment on them which has been sent to The American Theosophist that is to include member comments in the next issue. I am doubtful about whether ours will be published and we have been denied access to the national mailing list to make our views known. In spite of that, we are trying to make our views as widely known as possible through various means, so if you have any way to spread this to TSA members in your area or

elsewhere, we would appreciate all the help we can get. We believe that TSA is making a serious mistake that will fundamentally change the organization from Congregational to Episcopal, in subversion of the three declared objects. I use these terms in the legal sense and this is explained in the enclosed comment.

Of the 4200 TSA members about 2500 are members at large and about 1700 are in Branches and study centers. This makes it especially difficult for the Branches to protect themselves from the proposed changes, and should the changes be adopted which is likely, we shall find ourselves not in harmony with the parent organization. Although we intend to continue to remain a member Branch of TSA, and we think it unlikely that the national board will boot us out, we believe it is useful for us to develop relationships with like minded Branches whether part of the TSA or independent as is your Society. If you can send us any information about your Society and what you are doing, I would like to share it with our members. I have tentative plans to be in Boston the weekend of Nov. 18-19, 1995 for a family occasion, but will not know for sure if I am coming until about Nov. 11th. If I come to Boston, I will have some time on Sunday, Nov. 19th before my return flight and if we can meet at your Society about 11:00am, I would look forward to meeting you and some of your fellow members. This is the picture. I hope to hear from you and that we can get together.

Sincerely

Sy Ginsburg, Branch Pr., 340 Sunset Dr. #1811, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. 33301 Tel: 954-463-8900.

Peter Kubaska

21 Chauncy St. #26

Cambridge, MA. 02138

Tel: 617-876-8416

E-mail: kuba@athena.mit.edu

The Theosophical Society

21 Maple Street, Arlington, MA. 02174-4903

Tel: 617-648-0101

## QUEST BOOKS

### *The Theosophical Society in Miami & South Florida*

831 S.E. 9TH STREET, DEERFIELD BEACH, FLORIDA 33441

TELEPHONE (305) 420-0908

Nov. 2, 1995

Members of the Board of Directors of The Theosophical Society in America

Dear Board Members:

I am writing as a long time member of the TSA and also as President of the Miami, Florida Branch. I want to call to your attention proposed bylaw changes #15, #16, #17 and #9 which bears on these others, because their ratification in the forthcoming referendum will change the fundamental nature of The Theosophical Society in America.

When I first became aware of these proposed changes during the national convention in July, I was immediately opposed to them. My reaction, I thought, was natural as a Branch President not wanting to cede control of our Branch assets away from our local Board of Directors. Although I have been trained in the law, I did not realize the far more serious ramifications to the TSA, if these proposed changes are adopted until I began to examine court cases on the issue. Courts generally look at spiritual organizations either as Episcopal or as Congregational. From a legal perspective, an Episcopal organization is seen as one in which control of both assets and teaching emanates from the highest level and is, in turn, disseminated through a hierarchy. The Roman Catholic Church with its hierarchy of pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests is an example of an Episcopal organization. In Congregational organizations, on the other hand, control over assets and teaching rests in the assembly of each local congregation. Many protestant denominations are Congregational.

From this perspective, I have always regarded the Theosophical Society as Congregational and believe that the vast majority of members hold this same view. The proposed bylaw changes if adopted, will fundamentally alter the TSA from a Congregational to an Episcopal organization, controlled from the top. With control of assets and membership goes control of the teachings. The door will then be open to the danger of the dogmatism, about which HPB specifically warned. When this issue was examined at several meetings of our Miami Branch and when the members fully understood the ramifications, they voted unanimously to oppose these changes and unanimously not to change the Miami Branch corporate charter nor its bylaws should the national bylaw changes be adopted. In my opinion, this very serious issue

will not be understood by most members unless adequately explained. I question whether the national board members have fully understood the fundamental change they have approved, because even as a lawyer I did not understand this until I began to examine the court cases.

I am appealing to you to critically look at these proposed changes. Consult with your own legal counsel on the matter. If these changes have been approved too uncritically in the Board's understandable concern over loss of the Boston Branch, I ask you who are Board members to convene a special meeting to rescind your approval rather than putting these 4 proposed changes to the membership for ratification. It is likely that they will be ratified, having been given the Board stamp of approval, even if members do not fully understand what is happening. The enclosed comment submitted to The American Theosophist deals with this matter at greater length, and we hope it will be published. We plan to circulate our views to other Branches, Centers and members, although we believe we were unfairly denied mailing labels by headquarters for this purpose. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely

Sy Ginsburg, J.D., Miami Branch President

If you would like to discuss this with me, please call. My home telephone is: 305-463-8900.

## *Theosophical Ad Hoc Committee*

The Theosophical Society in Akron, 693 Kenmore Blvd., Akron, OH 44314

The Theosophical Society in Miami, 831 S.E. 9th Street, Deerfield Beach, FL 33441

The Theosophical Society in Minneapolis, 900 Mount Curve Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55403

The Theosophical Society in Ravalli County, P.O. Box 4763, Missoula, MT 59806

Theosophical Society of Saint Louis, 8124 Big Bend Blvd., Webster Groves, MO 63119

The Theosophical Society in St. Petersburg, 723 17th Street, North, St. Petersburg, FL 33713

Proposed bylaw changes #15, #16, #17 and #9 pose a real threat to the T.S.I.A.

Please vote against them when you receive your referendum ballot!

December 1, 1995

Dear Fellow Members of Lodges & Centers affiliated with The Theosophical Society in America:

We, the undersigned officers of our respective Lodges, and representing our Lodge members, are opposed to proposed national bylaw changes #15, #16, & #17, which give control of Lodge assets to national headquarters and #9 which gives control of Lodge membership to national headquarters. These changes will fundamentally alter the nature of The Theosophical Society in America (TSIA). We have reviewed the memo prepared by Brant Jackson of the Atlanta Lodge and disseminated by President, John Algeo, but do not find it persuasive.

It is our view that the true nature of TSIA is Congregational and that control of local assets, membership and, in turn, what is studied rests with the local Lodges. If this were not so, the national directors would not be proposing these bylaw changes. If the changes are ratified, the nature of TSIA will be changed from Congregational to Episcopal, and power over Lodge assets and membership will be controlled from the top. With control of assets and membership goes control of what is studied, and in this there is inherent danger to the objects of The Theosophical Society.

In their well-meaning but misguided effort to protect Theosophical assets, the national Board of Directors supported an unsuccessful lawsuit against the Boston Lodge led by a small minority faction. The primary issues were control of Lodge assets and control of what was being studied. The result was just the opposite of conserving Theosophical assets. The lawsuit caused a serious wastage of financial assets in the payment of large legal expenses and a serious wastage of people assets through the loss of the Boston Lodge and its substantial membership which continues successfully

and independently to present Theosophy. Membership in TSIA has declined to 4200, and this is worrisome. Our Society cannot afford the squandering of assets which will become only worse if these proposed bylaw changes are ratified.

The problem of seeking to control from hierarchical levels is not only a national problem, but appears to be an international one. Recently the Canadian section of the Society and the Danish section of the Society have been separated from the Adyar international headquarters. In both instances the primary issues were control of assets and control of what was being studied.

We believe that the principles inherent in the declared objects of The Theosophical Society must be protected with the utmost vigor if our Society is to be healthy. To repeat the second and third declared objects, they are: to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science, and to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man. We already have indications, in the instances of Boston, Canada and Denmark, that the freedom to pursue the declared objects is threatened.

We urge you to discuss this important issue with your fellow members, to make the problem known to members-at-large, and to vote against these proposed bylaw changes. It is fine for Lodges to adopt provisions pertaining to protection of their assets, but this does not necessitate giving power over them to national headquarters.

Our committee has arisen spontaneously to oppose the proposed bylaw changes, because we recognize the dangers to TSIA, and to the declared objects of The Theosophical Society. We believe there are other Lodges in concert with our views. Please telephone any of us if you wish to discuss the matter or need further information. If you wish to join us in opposition to these proposed bylaw changes please let us know.

#### In Theosophy

The Theosophical Society in Akron, *Lori Whitfield*, Pres. Tel: 216-836-9959

The Theosophical Society in Miami, *Sy Ginsburg*, Pres. Tel: 305-463-8900

The Theosophical Society in Minneapolis, *Rolf J. Canton*, Pres. Tel: 612-822-3155

The Theosophical Society in Ravalli County, *Terry A. Wallace*, Pres. Tel: 406-251-3771

Theosophical Society of St Louis, *Carl Trauernicht, Jr.* Chairman, Tel: 314-421-0911

The Theosophical Society in St. Petersburg, *Mohamed Mokhtar*, Pres. Tel: 813-593-8277

*The Theosophical Society in Miami  
& South Florida*

831 S.E. 9TH STREET, DEERFIELD BEACH, FLORIDA 33441

TELEPHONE (954) 420-0908

January 10,1996

Members of the Board of Directors

The Theosophical Society in Miami

831 S.E. 9th Street

Deerfield Beach, FL. 33441

Dear Fellow Board Members:

When I accepted the job of President in 1993 upon the resignation and relocation of past President, Nori Rao, it was for the explicit purpose of helping get the job done of moving our Lodge from its no longer satisfactory Miami location to something better. I ran for election as President in 1994 because, although we had successfully moved, I wanted to help solidify the Lodge in its new location. That job has now been completed. We have over 100 members, an ample bank balance, a fully paid for Lodge building and we offer a wide program of studies in accordance with the declared objects of the Theosophical Society. In March of 1995 at the time when we were seeking officer nominations, I made my intention known to several of you not to stand for re-election in 1996, and that it would be important for the Lodge to develop adequate leadership to carry forward. This was because I had completed my original purpose and because there are other demands upon my time, particularly requiring travel, which will take me away from local activities for weeks at a time.

I attended the national convention at Wheaton in July, 1995, and what I observed there, began to make me think that there could be a real purpose in my continuing as President, if our members wanted me to continue. This is because of the disingenuousness on the part of the national officers and directors of the Theosophical Society in America (TSA), that I observed. Specifically, this had to do with the proposed bylaw referendum sprung on myself and other Society members with no prior notice, and as a fait accompli. These bylaw changes, now voted for, are in my opinion and the opinion of the ad hoc committee of Lodge Presidents, invalid. Our Lodge, as you know, has previously voted not to accept them and not to change our own bylaws and corporate charter as would be required by these new national bylaws.

While I do not expect TSA to attack our autonomy immediately, there is the possibility that they will eventually do so given the predilection of the present officers and directors for attacking their own Lodges. The legal advice that I have received leads me to believe that in any lawsuit by which TSA attacks our local control of assets, membership and what is studied and taught,



we will prevail. However, lawsuits are expensive and in such an eventuality, we could dissipate our building fund or worse in defense of our autonomy. This is not idle speculation. It happened to the Boston Lodge on a very big scale.

The primary reason given me by the national President for the new bylaws affecting control of Lodge assets and membership, was to protect member assets from mis-administration at local Lodges. Troubles at the Boston Lodge were cited in support of this and there was suggested to me, the possibility of misapplication of funds in Boston by certain members there. I personally investigated this situation, visiting the Boston Lodge at its new location, and received from them documentation of what happened in Boston. I discovered that quite the opposite was true. I do not believe there was any misapplication of funds by Boston Lodge members. I discovered that in the attempt by the national officers and directors to gain control of the Boston Lodge assets because they did not like what was being studied, specifically the Alice Bailey teachings, they forced a lawsuit on the Lodge. The result was a settlement in which about \$217,000 of Boston Lodge assets were squandered on paying lawyers for both sides. I consider the actions of the national officers and directors to have been outrageous.

A secondary reason given me was trouble that Adyar had with the Danish and Canadian sections. I subsequently discovered, mainly because of communication with other Theosophists on the Internet, that the Canadian section voluntarily separated from Adyar, and that the Danish section had been expelled. The Danish section was attacked in litigation by Adyar for control of assets in a manner similar to the attack of TSA on the Boston Lodge. Adyar was unsuccessful in Denmark, just as TSA was unsuccessful in the Boston affair, and the Danish section has grown considerably since its separation from Adyar. There was also news that a section in the former Yugoslavia had been expelled by Adyar. Within the past week, a Danish Theosophist has begun to post information on the Internet about what happened in Denmark. The reason given for the expulsion of the Danish section was Adyar's disapproval of Theosophists in Denmark studying the teachings of Alice Bailey and of Sai Baba. I intend to verify this, but believe it to be true. These events in Boston, in Denmark, and also in Canada which I am presently looking into, all happened in the 1980s and early 1990s. These events are not new, but few members of the TSA have had knowledge of them because of lack of publicity. With the Internet, truth is coming out.

In researching these problems, I have come to the opinion that the leaders of the Esoteric School, founded by Blavatsky, but supposedly completely separate from the Theosophical Society, actually dominate the Society at both the national and international levels. Unlike the Society, which is in principle non-dogmatic and non-Episcopal, although the invalid new bylaws attempt to change this, the Esoteric School is dogmatic and is Episcopal. This has been denied to me by the national President, but I do not believe him. The evidence indicates otherwise. I believe that this influence of the Esoteric School on the Society is a bad thing. I do not believe that the present national and international officers and directors see themselves as culpable in the disastrous results of the Boston Lodge situation, and in the Canadian and Danish sections situation. They think they are working in the best interests of the Society. I believe they are in error, and I continue to hope that they will eventually understand this.

It is because of the communications revolution, exemplified by the Internet and by Fax machines, that we are now beginning to find out from all over the world just what has been going on within the Theosophical Society. For me it explains very much, and especially the decline in overall TSA membership that continues, and in my view will continue, given the present attitude of our national officers and directors. Our national President told me he was not happy with the Theosophical exchanges on the Internet because it has given people an opportunity to "grind axes" and to make mis-statements. Notwithstanding his view, I believe the communications revolution will eventually change the Theosophical Society, and for the better. This will take time

Meanwhile, what are we to do? In my opinion the Theosophical Society, under the principles set down by the early members in the declared objects, is worthy of support despite the actions of national and international officers and directors against their own Lodges and sections. Those principles make it the only sizable non-dogmatic spiritual organization that I know of. But the Society must live those principles, not just pay lip service to them. In furtherance of this, I believe our Lodge can be at the forefront of a Theosophical renewal. We are a big and growing Lodge, living up to the declared objects and meeting the needs of spiritually minded people in our community, in a non-dogmatic way, in accordance with those objects. For this purpose I would like to suggest that we adopt a four pointed approach going forward.

First, we should attempt to remain affiliated with the present Theosophical Society in America, and with the Theosophical Society at Adyar. We can work for change, although it will be a slow process. For this reason I am currently running as a candidate for Southeast District Director, a national Board position. It will be an uphill battle to win the election against entrenched forces, but I think it is worth the attempt.

Second, we must begin to assert ourselves as the autonomous Florida corporation that we legally are. For example, we should look upon The Theosophical Society in Miami as affiliated with The Theosophical Society in America and with the Theosophical Society at Adyar. We must not see ourselves as a subservient Branch to a national and international headquarters. There is precedent for this in the approach of the Theosophical Society of Saint Louis, which is the oldest Lodge in the country, and which has followed this strategy. This is important in the defense of our autonomy. It is a position that we have already staked out by our vote last autumn not to change our corporate charter or bylaws should the new national bylaw changes be adopted. You already know that these bylaw changes did pass in the referendum which I and 5 other Lodge Presidents believe to be illegal and invalid. We have so notified TSA.

Third, we need to continue to protect our Lodge within its legal framework. In addition to myself, two of the other five Lodge heads of our ad hoc committee are lawyers. They are also litigators. We will continue to make clear to the officers and directors of TSA that their bylaw referendum is invalid and of no import. If necessary, we may have to incur legal expenses in support of our position. For now this is not necessary, since we have done nothing, and the entire problem is a result of the actions of the officers and directors of TSA. It is their problem. But we need to be prepared to use the financial resources of our Lodge if that is eventually

needed to maintain our position. This raises the question of the status of our building fund. Until we are certain that TSA will not attack our autonomy, we need to expand the fund, to conserve our resources and to continue to encourage the growth of membership in our Lodge.

Fourth, we should begin to associate ourselves with other like-minded Theosophical groups both within the existing TSA and Adyar organizations, and also with other Theosophical groups independent of these organizations. This is a time of change. The old Theosophical structures are breaking down and will continue to break down as part of the communications revolution. One need only look at the chronically declining TSA membership, in spite of the growth of our Lodge and a few others, to understand that this is happening. We should be at the forefront of developing some kind of association of free-thinking Theosophists really dedicated to the declared objects, not just paying lip service to them. We know from experience that our approach to Theosophical outreach works and will enable the Society to grow. In this respect we can help other groups and we can help TSA. TSA needs us a lot more than we need them.

On the basis of this four-pointed approach, I am willing to stand for another term as President if the members want me, and if there is a strong team of other active and dedicated officers, directors and members, because there is a need and I believe we can be useful in meeting that need for the benefit of Theosophy. Although the four points outlined above are certainly subject to modification, I am not willing to stand again for election as President without our taking a strong stand, and without full support and cooperation from such a team. I expect to be doing considerably more traveling over the next two years, so in order for us to be an active and successful Lodge, we need to have a full complement of strong officers, directors and advisory board members who will all help shoulder the load of a job that may in all respects be much bigger than was the job of moving the Lodge. This is my view of the situation. I look forward to knowing yours.

Sincerely, Sy Ginsburg, President