

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

Manly P. Hall, President and Founder

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## SOME MORE MUSINGS OF MPH

DEAR FRIENDS:



he years between 1930 and 1939 were busy and important. After I had finished my large book on symbolical philosophy and the manuscript was safely in the keeping of the H. S. Crocker Co., there was more time for other projects. In San Francisco I gave an extensive series of lectures as commentaries on the large book. These talks were recorded and transcribed and in 1929 appeared in print under the title Lectures on Ancient Philosophy. We still regard this work as our basic textbook. It included a frontispiece portrait by the distinguished photographer, William Mortenson. My journal, The All-Seeing Eye, had been suspended for three years because of the pressure of writing, but in October, 1930, the journal was revived for another year. This volume included some references to my activities at that time and I am using it now to jog my memory.

On October 2, 1930, I lectured in Chicago at the Masonic Temple, 32 W. Randolph St. It stood on the site of the old Iroquois Theater, scene of the worst theatrical fire in Chicago history. While in Chicago I spoke over radio station WMAQ, the broadcasting organ of the Chicago Daily News. From Chicago I was invited to speak in Kansas City, Missouri, and gave ten lectures at the Ivanhoe Masonic Temple. While in Kansas City I was invited to speak at Leavenworth Prison. There was an excellent attendance even though we were in competition with the baseball game. On this same trip arrangements were made for me to speak at the Roerich Institute.

My first visit to New York was especially meaningful. It brought me into contact with a number of unusual and interesting persons. While at the Roerich Institute, we had a number of interesting gatherings in the Roerich's penthouse apartment. Nicholas Roerich and his wife were in India but his son Svetoslav was most friendly and a splendid host. On a typical evening, Claude Bragdon, Talbot Mundy, Svetoslav, and myself discussed philosophical matters far into the night. Among those who became interested in our activities were Mrs. Clara Bell Walsh, official hostess of the City of New York, and Dr. John Manas, a cultured Greek gentleman and president of the Pythagorean Society. It was through Dr. Manas that I had the privilege of meeting Athenagoras I, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch for the Western Hemisphere and later Ecumenical Patriarch. My acquaintance with the patriarch extended over a number of years and we corresponded occasionally after he took up residence in Istanbul. He was in every sense of the word a magnificent person. A tall and majestic figure in his black robe and bonnet, he had a long gray beard with which those whom he embraced, including myself, came into direct contact. The patriarch was formerly a monk of Mt. Athos and often wished he could go back to the quiet solitude of monastic life. I remember on one occasion that he invited

me to have lunch at the parish of the church with a group of visitors from the Mt. Athos community. They were all bearded and had their own hair tied up in knots at the top of their heads. They certainly radiated a feeling of piety and unworldliness. On several occasions, I attended services at the Cathedral of St. Sophia which was the seat of the Greek Church in America. One Easter the patriarch invited me to participate in an unusual ritual. A square platform was set up in the center of the church floor; the patriarch stood on this platform and, as the members of the congregation passed before him, he presented each of them with a brightly colored hard-boiled egg in the shell. As I went by, Athenagoras smiled slyly and handed me two eggs. Later, I walked beside him outside the church in a ritualistic circumambulation.

Mrs. Walsh lived at the Plaza, and Walter Winchell once said of her that the hotel made a complete renovation without moving the miniature ceramic animals on her mantelpiece. It seemed, in spite of her fantastically wide acquaintance, she had never met Athenagoras. When I explained her interest to the patriarch at the headquarters of the diocese, Clara Bell was delighted; at the proper hour I introduced her to the patriarch. She took one look at him and burst into tears. Athenagoras had a very expressive face and his deep concern was obvious. It was also evident that he was not entirely prepared for Mrs. Walsh's tearful outburst. We remained for about thirty minutes and her tears never ceased flowing and we departed as quietly as possible. Later I asked what caused her tearful outburst and Mrs. Walsh replied, "I couldn't help it. He looked just like God."

The patriarch Athenagoras attended most of my lectures in New York and often brought with him members of his various committees. He was present at my Town Hall appearances and at the two appearances at Carnegie Hall. Before one of my Town Hall talks, I told the patriarch that I had a quinsy sore throat. On the day of the lecture, my doctor had lanced my throat and packed the inside of it with absorbent cotton. If this worked loose while I was speaking (there was no public address system) the consequences might have been very serious. The patriarch was seated in a box and as I went on the platform I glanced in his direction. He made the sign of the cross, put his hand to his throat, and then folded his hands in prayer. The packing stayed in.

Another delightful New Yorker was Evangeline Adams, the outstanding astrologer of her time. I had met her in California and found that we had certain astrological opinions in common. Evangeline had her studio in Carnegie Hall and according to some reports had a larger personal mail than the President of the United States. We both broadcast over station WOR. I spoke every Sunday afternoon while in New York, my subjects being of philosophical and cultural import. According to the press, Mrs. Adams, a direct descendant of President John Quincy Adams, was the official prognosticator for the House of Morgan. Evangeline's radio program was sponsored by one of the larger toothpaste companies and she had to install automatic letter openers to take care of the mail. On a wall of her office was a cartoon which was greatly liked. It showed two hoboos sitting on a park bench. One was saying to the other, "You should have consulted Evangeline Adams."

Being in New York at the Christmas season, I was invited to contribute to a program held on December 28 at the old historical Episcopal church of St.-Marks-in-the-Bouwerie. This was the church attended by Peter Stuyvesant and included among its early congregations many historic personalities. When I was there the church was presided over by a Dr. Guthrie, an innovationist frequently in



trouble with his bishop. The reason for the difficulty can be appreciated from the incident in which I was involved. A special astrological service was to be conducted in the church and included a ritual in which the various officers impersonated the constellations. Evangeline Adams attended and introduced me. In some deference to the ecclesiastical surroundings, I discussed the relation of astrology to religion. Poor Dr. Guthrie was determined to defy the theological establishment. He introduced impressionistic dancing and various types of secular music. He was a devout man, however, and devoted most of his life to a research program to determine the exact features of Jesus.

On February 4, 1931, I began my first series of public lectures at Pythian Temple, 135 W. 70th St., and continued until the end of March. During this same period I spoke for the New History Society in the ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, and soon after I was invited to address the American Society of Psychical Research in historical old Hyslop House. Personal activities included browsing through a number of antiquarian book shops where I discovered several treasures including a number of original woodblock prints by Albrecht Durer. In the New York Public Library I was finally able to examine several large boxes containing the papers of Isaac Myer who wrote most learnedly on the cabala. Although the attendants in the manuscript section of the library were reluctant to wheel out these boxes, they are worth careful study. Myer apparently was in communication with Madame Blavatsky and it would seem that much of his material has never been printed. Curiously enough, there are a number of items involving Harry Houdini, the famous escape artist. It would seem from the Myer papers that Houdini had substantial interest in esoteric subjects. While at the Roerich Institute, I took an art course on dynamic symmetry based upon the canons of Leonardo da Vinci. This course helped me in my studies of ancient architectural contexts. I also made several trips to the suburbs to visit my surviving relatives and found that they were still convinced that I should have remained in the insurance business. Even in the nineteen-thirties the encroachments of progress had destroyed many of the pleasant landmarks we had known in childhood. There was a favorite spot outside New Rochelle where gypsies used to have their camps. Needless to say these bohemians had long departed and sub-dividers were hard at work "improving" the neighborhood.

In those days the country was in the midst of a terrible depression. Several of my radio talks dealt with this crisis, and we might terminate this letter with a quotation from a broadcast over station WOR. "It seems to be the destiny of rich men to be famous, yet the most famous men in history were poor. Diogenes had no house but a tub; Socrates was lord of an empty larder; Buddha carried a beggar's bowl; the Holy Nazarene had no place to lay his head; and Mohammed pegged his own shoes and was too poor to buy wood for cooking purposes. All through the ages, however, these men have been regarded as the most fortunate of all mortals for each possessed an internal wealth that not even kings could buy."

Most sincerely yours,

*Manly P. Hall*



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