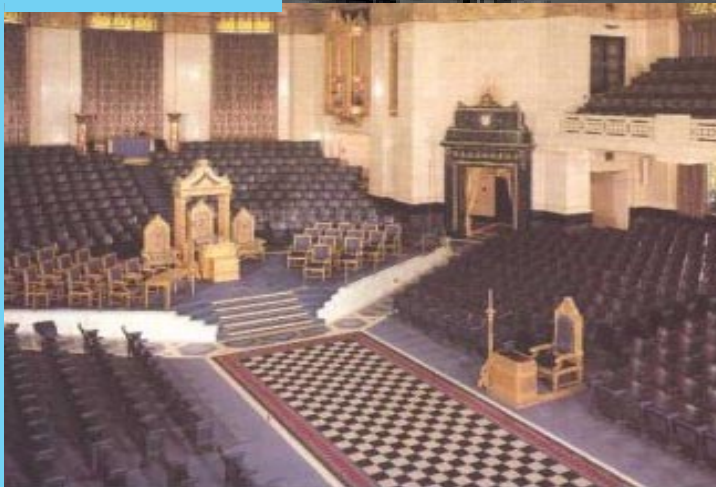


~ Lodgeroom International Magazine ~

Lodgeroom International Magazine

November 2008

Is she strong
enough to hold
the status as
the Mother of
Freemasonry.



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Between The Pillars

'I may not agree with what you say,

but I will defend to the death your right to say it'

I feel the need to tell a Story

by Bill McElligott

Remembrance Sunday is nearly upon us and it is at this time I think of my Mum and Dad.

They were ordinary people from the East End of London , Cockneys. I was born in St. Marys Hospital Bow. After the War we lived at 127 Roman Road, Bethnal Green. it was a Butchers Shop.

The poppy remembers those who have given the ultimate sacrifice for their

Friends, Brothers, Wives and family. This makes me remember my parents because like many of your Family history they lived it.

But the British way is to make light of the horrors of War. My Grand Father was killed in the first World War, I have one of those gunmetal memorial discs , they are about 4.5 inches in diameter with his name William John McElligott - Died with Honor - embossed on it.

My other Grandfather was a Regimental Sergeant Major in the Horse Guards, one

continued next page



The Lodgeroom Magazine International

Questions or Comments: admin@lodgeroomuk.com

Published by: Willam McElligott, P.M. PZ,
United Grand Lodge of England
Senior Editor: Giovanni Lombardo
Grande Oriente d'Italia

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Letters to the Editor



The staff at the Lodgeroom International would like to invite you to send your comments in for inclusion in the magazine. This magazine is for you, and we would like to hear what you think about

the articles and about the magazine. If you have any questions about the articles, or would like to ask the author a question, please feel free to send them in as well.

Send your comments to:

admin@lodgeroominternational.com

We will run your letters in the magazine and on the Lodgeroom US Lodgeroom International Magazine forum. We look forward to hearing from you!

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I feel the need to tell a Story

.....

of his jobs was to play giant Drums you see them at the Changing of the Guard a Large shire Horse with 2 Kettle drums mounted on it, well that was him banging the drums around 1915 to 1930.

My Mum during the War married an American GI, he was killed in France.

She married my Dad after the War in 1949, I was born 1950.

Mum used to tell me silly stories about what it was like during the War in London. The girls could not get stockings so they used a black pencil to draw a line down the back of their legs to make it look like they had stockings on, she said it was freezing but so long as you looked good. Then she would tell me about the 'Doodle Bugs', 'they made such a screeching sound' she said 'but so long as they made a noise everything was OK, it was when the noise stopped, the street went silent and all those walking along just going about their business, jumped into doorways and under arches, into the entrance of the underground anything that gave some shelter, then there was a great BANG then we knew it was safe to come out and everything started again , people rushing to work, getting on with their jobs, I hated those bloomin Doodle Bugs' she would always finish with. She had friends who's Husbands had gone to War and returned to find their Wives had been killed in the Bombing.

My Dad joined up as the War started did 6 1/2 years till it ended. He went through India, Africa [

continent], Burma, Egypt finished up with Monty fighting Rommel , he would have gladly died for Monty he absolutely adored the man.

But most of his time was spent attached to various groups , Anzacs, Gurkhas, Americans. He drove those large trucks with another truck attached to it. He would never say much about what happened out there, he praised the Gurkhas, he thought they were the best fighters and the most loyal.

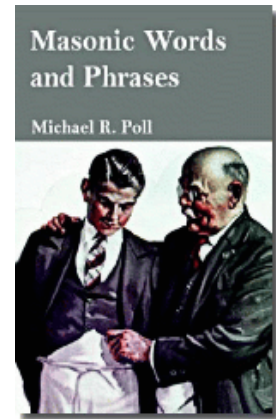
He would use that British humour to cover some of what must have been a terrible time. He used to say to me ' Son , I went all through the war, and I never saw a Jap. They shot at me a lot , but I never actually saw one, then blow me down, when I got back to Blighty, coming into Dover there was a truck load of them on the dock.'

Me and my Dad would always stand to attention when they had the Remembrance day service on the Radio, then on the tele. I would have been 5 to 15 years old at this time, but it always seemed the correct thing to do, to us.

Like when people used to stop in the street and bow their heads when a Funeral went by, or pull the curtains. Now they beep their horn to get past because the hearse is to slow.

So at this time I remember Mum and Dad and all the friends that never came back, that gave everything so that we can have the freedoms they never knew.

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Females in Freemasonry

Females in Freemasonry
by Bill McElligott

I am often confronted by Female Freemasons and I have to include Co Masons in this observation, and I must not refer to all of them, that tell me UGLE has no time for Females in Freemasonry, that it wants to keep Freemasonry as a Bastion of Male dominance.

Well my answer has been and is still, 'I have signed up to abide by the rules as set down for the 'time being' by my Grand Master and I continue to do that. But I have no objection to you creating and being to all external appearance a just and upright Freemason.'

What has changed in the last 150 years at Freemasons hall, London. The United Grand Lodge of England.

Females in Freemasonry

Then we see here a sample of what the atmosphere must have been like in 1933.

In his recent talk called 'A Fitting Memorial' to mark the 75th Anniversary of the opening of Freemasons' Hall John Hamil said this of Freemasons Hall Great Queen St. London.

On the 18th July 1933 some 6,299 brethren gathered at the Royal Albert Hall for an especial Grand Lodge meeting. The MW The Grand Master, HRH The Duke of Connaught, a younger son of Queen Victoria, presided accompanied by no less than four Royal Princes; HRH The Prince of Wales (later Duke of Windsor), HRH The Duke of York (later King George VI), HRH Prince Arthur of Connaught (the Grand Master's son) and the young Prince George, later to be Duke of Kent, our Grand Master and the father of our present Grand Master. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: to welcome the forty three delegations from sister Grand Lodges who had come to take part in the celebrations for the completion of the present Freemasons' Hall, and to invest HRH Prince George as Senior Grand Warden.

Now

THE FIRST UK EXHIBITION ON WOMEN AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH FREEMASONRY

One hundred years ago a new



Masonic organisation was formed in London. It was the first Grand Lodge founded in England to admit men and women as members on an equal basis. From its formation in 1717, the governing body of English freemasonry had restricted its membership to men. By the end of the nineteenth century women were campaigning for full civic and legal rights and wanted to join Masonic lodges too. Women and Freemasonry: The Centenary exhibition at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry at Freemasons' Hall in Covent Garden traces the history of their campaign. Women and Freemasonry: The Centenary runs from Wednesday 4

[continued on next page](#)



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Females in Freemasonry

June to Friday 19 December 2008 (weekdays only) and is free of charge to all visitors.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 11am to 5pm. Museum closed at weekends.

The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5AZ

I was at a Quatuor Coronati Lodge of Research meeting there not long ago, listening to a talk by Trevor McKewan of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon. And did you know the building is still standing even after the Exhibition had been running for three months.

So is this acceptance of Females in Freemasonry by mainstream Masonry restricted to London ?

No it would seem not.

John L. Cooper III, Ph.D.
Past Grand Secretarysaid in his address to the California Masonic Symposium
August 23, 2008
San Francisco, California

Women and Freemasonry
Three Centuries of a Masonic Family History

It is a privilege to be the lead speaker at this year's symposium. The topic "Women and Freemasonry" is an intriguing one, and today you will hear about it from any different

viewpoints. My task this morning is to provide an introduction to the topic, and to lay out some of the themes that will be considered in today's presentations and discussions. The title of my paper, "Three Centuries of a Masonic Family History," reflects my belief that the story of women and Freemasonry is more the story of a family history than it is the story of women who are in some way associated with what is otherwise a men's organization. The latter idea implies that the intrusion of women into the organization is somehow an aberration - something outside the norm - whose involvement must be seen as unusual or irregular, if not actually foreign to the nature of Freemasonry. I hope to dispel that idea this morning. Women have been a part of our family story in Freemasonry for a very long time, and although the current structure of mainstream Freemasonry is a male fraternal organization, I hope to show that studying Freemasonry only as such will not tell the whole story of who we are and what we do. There is much more to the story than the misleading picture of a "men's house" with women looking in from the outside, knocking at the door, or even occupying some of the rooms in the house.

The story that I will outline for you today has four major parts:

- Women and Freemasonry in guilds of stonemasons
- Women who became Freemasons by accident
- Women in parallel organizations with men's Freemasonry
- Women who are Freemasons

Women and Freemasonry in Guilds of Stonemasons

The First Female in Freemasonry

Here are some web site facts [snips] that may or may not be accurate. It is for the purpose of illustration of this subject..

Of course, we have a problem, haven't we; to try to explain that. My predecessors would not try to explain this; they were too male oriented. The fact remains that, there it is, in an ancient document of a 17th century date. That this could have been the case seems all the more likely as that in 1696 two widows are named as members in the Operative masons Court. Away in the South of England, we read in 1714 — that's before the Grand Lodge of England — of Mary Bannister, the daughter of a barber in the town of Barking, being apprenticed as a Mason for 7 years with a fee of 5/- which she paid to the Company.

Women Freemasons
by Bro. Dudley Wright
The Builder, August 1920: England
Although the Antient Charges forbid the admission or initiation of women into the Order of Free and Accepted Masons, there are known instances where as the result of accident or sometimes design the rule has been broken and women have been duly initiated. The most prominent instance is that of the Hon. Elizabeth St. Leger, or, as she

[continued on next page](#)

Females in Freemasonry

afterwards became, on marriage, the Hon. Mrs. Aldworth, who is referred to sometimes, though erroneously, as the “only woman who over obtained the honour of initiation into the sublime mysteries of Freemasonry.”

The Hon. Elizabeth St. Leger was a daughter of the first Viscount Doneraile, a resident of Cork. Her father was a very zealous Freemason and, as was the custom in his time — the early part of the eighteenth century - held an occasional lodge in his own house, when he was assisted by members of his own family and any brethren in the immediate neighbourhood and visitors to Doneraile House. This lodge was duly warranted and held the number 150 on the Register of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. The story runs that one evening previous to the initiation of a gentleman named Coppinger, Miss St. Leger hid herself in the room adjoining the one used as a lodgeroom. This room was at that time undergoing some alterations and Miss St. Leger is said to have removed a brick from the partition with her scissors and through the aperture thus created witnessed the ceremony of initiation. What she saw appears to have disturbed her so thoroughly that she at once determined upon making her escape, but failed to elude the vigilance of the tyler, who, armed with a sword stood barring her exit. Her shrieks alarmed the members of the lodge, who came rushing to the spot, when they learned that she had witnessed the whole of the ceremony which had just been enacted. After a considerable

discussion and yielding to the entreaties of her brother it was decided to admit her into the Order and she was duly initiated, and, in course of time, became the Master of the lodge.

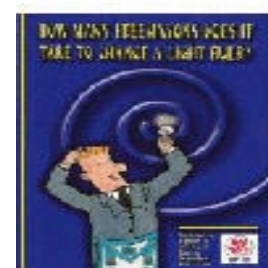
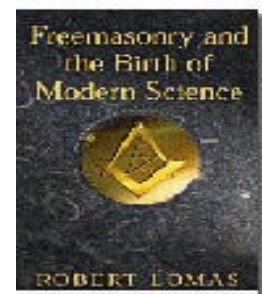
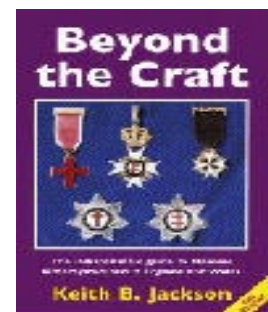
The Order was created by Rob Morris in 1850 when, while confined by illness, he set down the principles of the order in his Rosary of the Eastern Star. By 1855, he had organized a “Supreme Constellation” in New York, which chartered chapters throughout the United States.

In 1866, Dr. Morris started working with Robert Macoy, and handed the Order over to him while Morris was travelling in the Holy Land. Macoy organized the current system of Chapters, and modified Dr. Morris’ Rosary into a Ritual.

The “General Grand Chapter” was formed in Indianapolis, Indiana on November 6, 1876. Committees formed at that time created the Ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star in more or less its current form.

The emblem of the Order is a five-pointed star representing the Star of Bethlehem with the white ray of the star pointing downwards towards the manger.[4]. In the Chapter room, the downward-pointing white ray points to the West. The character-building lessons taught in

continued on next page



Females in Freemasonry

the Order are stories inspired by Biblical figures:

Sisters:

In R.H. Baxter's translation of the Regius Poem or Halliwell MS, (said to be the oldest of the Old Constitutions, c.1390), we find:

1. An exhortation to improve each others' knowledge of the craft, 'And so each one shall teach the other, And love together as sister and brother' (Martin, v.1, p.6);
 2. A prohibition against displacement when a job has already commenced, 'There shall no master supplant another, But be together as sister and brother' (ibid., p.,13);
 3. And an injunction to take turns at being stewards, 'Amiably to serve each other, As though they were sister and brother' (ibid., p.19).
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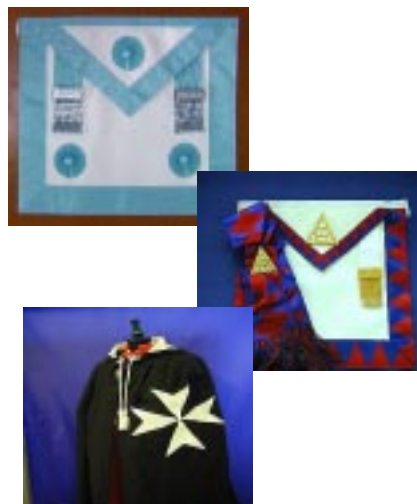
Dame Masons:

According to Rev. Cryer (p.22): 'In the records of the Corpus Christi Guild at York in 1408 it is noted that an Apprentice had to swear to obey "the Master, or Dame, or any other Freemason"...' Likewise, Professors Rich and Reyes (p.6) report, '...a record from 1408 where newly initiated Masons swore to obey "the Master, or Dame, or any other ruling Freemason".' Moreover, A.F.A. Woodford has

reported the word 'Dame' appeared in each Apprentice Charge in the Old Manuscript Constitutions (p.146). For example, we read:

1. 'He shall be true to God and the Holy Church, his prince, his master and dame whom he shall serve.' (Cox, pp.97/8)
 2. 'He shall not steal or pack away his master's or dame's goods, nor absent himself from their service, nor go from them about his own pleasure by day or by night, without their consent.' (ibid.)
 3. 'You shall not maintain any disobedient argument with your Master, Dame or any Free-Mason.' (Gould, v.I, p.75)
-

Medieval illustrations depict women involved in the building trades.



We have a US Store and a UK Store, but you can use either.

At Wurzburg building sites, women formed a consistent majority of the low skilled workers between 1428 and 1524, (the over all ratio exceeded three to one).

Other records show women joining masons' guilds at Basel and Strasbough, (e.g., Sabina). In England, around 1389, over 99 % of more than 500 surviving returns from 'brotherhoods', show both women and men as members (the guilds of priests and those of scholars presumably accounting for the remaining 1%). Every clause in the 1389 Certificate of the Guild of Masons at Lincoln referred to both brothers and sisters. Carpenters admitted women, and stonemasons often combined with them the other artisans. The 'Old Charges' referred to 'brothers and sisters', 'Masters and Dames' and to "...he or she that is to be made a mason..."

Snips from :

- <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/>
- <http://www.geocities.com/womenmasons/craftswomen.html>
- http://www.themasonictrowel.com/Articles/General/female_files/craftswomen_by_Priede.htm

Links:

- <http://www.bessel.org/womenfmy.htm>

So I repeat my answer : 'I have signed up to abide by the rules as set down for the 'time being' by my Grand Master and I continue to do that. But I have no objection to you creating and being to all external appearance a just and upright Freemason.'

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SQUARE AND COMPASSES

Lodge talk from

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You were introduced to the square and compasses very early in your Masonic career in fact they were among the first items discussed on your night of Initiation. They are in evidence throughout all Lodge meetings, and it is therefore desirable that you should have a ready understanding of their Masonic significance.

The dictionary defines “emblem” as a symbol, while “symbol” is an emblem, but typifying a special quality of concept. It adds that a symbol implies a transfer of meaning from the physical emblem to an idea by means of an allegory or metaphor.

This is not confusing when you consider that the letters of the alphabet are symbols and when combined into words they convey all kinds of meanings to you, the amount depending upon your knowledge. They convey meanings because you recognise them and can associate them with understandable facts and experiences.

Until this is so, the meanings are hidden: if you cannot read, the messages are lost.

So it is in Freemasonry, which is illustrated by symbols. The symbols of Masonry are used to reveal its meanings, not to conceal them but they will remain concealed until one can read the symbols, and understand them, and can recognise and interpret the message contained in each one.

I thought we could examine Lodge Talks from around the world I will place another here next issue

So when we talk of the symbolism of an emblem we are looking for the metaphor of transferred meaning associated with it.

The square, the compasses, and the square and compasses combined have long been accepted as Masonic symbols to teach Masons to “square their actions and to keep them within due bounds”. The fact that these emblems enjoy universal recognition of what they stand for was proved in a celebrated court case in the USA in the 19th Century when it was ruled that the sign of the square belonged exclusively to Freemasonry.

Let us look at the two parts separately. The square as a tool of operative masons was used to test the accuracy of the sides of a stone; to prove that they were squares with regard to the other sides, and that all angles were identical. It thus acted as a standard from which the stones were judged as being fit or otherwise for the building.

The square has two meanings - the angle of 90°, the fourth part of a circle, and the two-armed implement containing an angle of 90°. It has been used symbolically for a long time. To the Chinese in 2500 BC “square” meant honest and straightforward. By the 4th Century BC Mencius taught that all men must apply the square figuratively to their lives if they would walk in the straight paths of wisdom and keep within the bounds of honour and virtue.

Note, too, that nowhere in nature is

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THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SQUARE AND COMPASSES

a perfect square to be found. It must be made by man working with materials - wood, stone, metals - provided by nature. From this we infer that man must work with the GAOTU to secure the bounty He bestows upon His creatures.

In Masonry the square is a symbol of morality and is presented as one of the Great Lights, a Working Tool, and the emblem of the WM. It inculcates the principle of morality, honesty and truthfulness, and points out our duty to our neighbour, to all Mankind, to the Craft.

The compasses were used by operative masons to mark out the ground from the scaled plans of the intended structure. This instrument, working with one point in the centre, describes the circumference of a circle, thus limiting an area to the part enclosed. In the same way the compasses remind us that in His unerring and impartial justice, God has defined the limits of good and evil, and that we shall be rewarded or punished according to the way we have kept within this circumference or gone beyond it.

The symbolism of the compasses thus supplements the inner light we obtain from the V.S.L. by pointing out the duty we owe to ourselves - the duty of keeping our desires within due bounds, and of circumscribing our passions and prejudices. Without this voluntary restriction, this practice of self-discipline, we cannot be fully free. The square and compasses, then, refer to a Mason's duty to the Craft



and to himself, a symbol of Brotherhood appropriate to the ideals of Masonry. This combination is very old, too, as the Chinese for many years BC used the square and compasses to suggest order, regularity and propriety.

The position of the square and compasses on the VSL has special significance now, connected with the

progress of the candidate through the degrees. However, during the 18th Century the points of the compasses and the ends of the arms of the square were directed away from the Master toward the candidate

to indicate that he was included in the body of Freemasonry.

From the symbolism of the square and compasses we can learn the way to live. The standard of life, or the

standard of living, cannot be measured in terms of material things like cars, TV sets and other technical

devices, excellent though they are. They are merely aids to living. The real standard is measured in terms of

intangible factors; obligation to the family and friends, widening to concern for one's neighbour, to the acceptance of responsibility toward the weak - welfare of the community in place of gain for self.

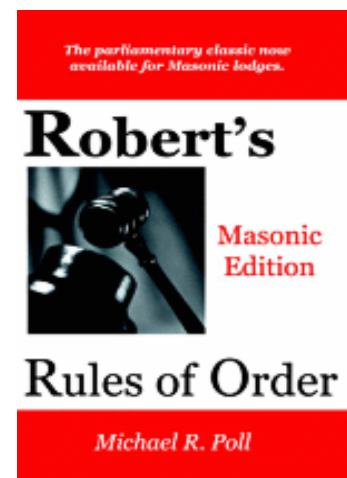
This is what we understand by morality and this is what we practise when we act upon the square.

As Joseph Fort Newton says, A society without standards will be a society without stability and it will one day go down. Not only nations but also whole civilisations have perished in the past for lack of righteousness. Hence the importance attached to the square of virtue, and the reasons why Masons call it the symbol of their Craft. It is the symbol of that moral law upon which life must be based if it is to continue.

So we as Masons know that the square and compasses are not just abstract symbols, but through their symbolism they show us that every day, no matter with whom we are or where we are, we should "Square our actions and keep them within due bounds".

Bibliography: Jones: Freemasons' Guide and Compendium
Mackey: Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry,
Pick & Knight Freemasons' Pocket Reference Book
January, 2000

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Intellectual Pride by René Guénon

IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTER about the new attitude taken toward esoterism in certain religious circles we said that from time to time, and as it were incidentally, the accounts concerning this order of things introduce certain ill-willed insinuations which, even if not a result of any well-defined intention, nevertheless accord poorly with the very admission of esoterism, be this admission only as it were 'in principle'. Among these insinuations is one we think it not pointless to reexamine more particularly. This is the reproach of 'intellectual pride', which is certainly nothing new—far from it—but which reappears here once again and, rather strangely, is always aimed at those who adhere to the most authentically traditional esoteric doctrines. Must one thereby conclude that they are considered to be more troublesome than the counterfeits of all kinds? This is indeed very possible, and in such cases moreover the counterfeits are doubtless rather to be regarded as having to be treated gently since, as we have noted, they create the most troubling confusions and by this very fact are auxiliaries (assuredly involuntary but no less useful for all that) of the new 'tactic' believed to be necessary in confronting the circumstances.

The expression 'intellectual pride' is manifestly self-contradictory, for its words still have a definite meaning—but we are sometimes tempted to doubt this is so for most of our contemporaries—pride can only be of a purely sentimental order. In a certain sense one could

speak of pride in connection with reason because this belongs to the individual order just as sentiment does, so that between the one and the other reciprocal reactions are always possible. But how could this be so in the order of pure intellectuality, which is essentially supra-individual? And once it is by hypothesis a matter of esoterism, it is obvious that there can be no question of reason but only of the transcendent intellect, either directly, as in the case of true metaphysical and initiatic realization, or at least indirectly, but yet also quite real, as in the case of knowledge that is still merely theoretical, since in each case it is a question of things that reason is incapable of attaining. This moreover is why the rationalists are always so bent on denying its existence; esoterism inconveniences them as much as it does the most exclusive religious exo-terists, although naturally for very different reasons; but, motives aside, this is in fact a rather curious 'conjunction'.

At bottom, the reproach in question might seem to be inspired above all by the modern mania for equality that will not suffer anything that surpasses the 'average'; but what is most astonishing is to see similar prejudices, which are the sign of a clearly anti-traditional mentality shared by people who claim a tradition, even if only from the exoteric point of view. This certainly proves that they are seriously affected by the modern spirit, although they probably are not aware of it themselves; and this is yet one more of the contradictions so frequent in our time which one is really obliged to note even while one is astonished

Esoteric

that they should generally pass so unnoticed. But this contradiction reaches its most extreme degree when it is found, not among those who are resolved to admit nothing other than exoterism and declare this expressly, but, as here, among those who seem to accept a certain esoterism, whatever be its value and authenticity, for after all they should at least realize that the same reproach could also be made against them by intransigent exoterists. Must it be concluded from this that their claim to esoterism ultimately is only a mask, and that its purpose is above all to bring back to the 'herd' those who might be tempted to leave it were a way not found to divert them from true esoterism? If this were so, it would explain everything quite nicely, with the accusation of 'intellectual pride' then raised up before them as a sort of bogeyman, while at the same time the presentation of some pseudo-esoterism or other would give their aspirations an illusory and wholly inoffensive satisfaction. Once again, to deny the plausibility of this hypothesis would presume of very defective knowledge of the mentality of certain circles.

Now, regarding this alleged 'intellectual pride', we can go further toward the heart of the

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Intellectual Pride by René Guénon

matter. It would be a strange pride indeed that ends by denying any value to the individuality in itself by making it appear as strictly null in comparison with the Principle. In short, this reproach proceeds from exactly the same incomprehension as that of egoism, which is sometimes also leveled at anyone who seeks to attain final Deliverance. How can one speak of 'egoism' where by very definition there is no longer any ego? It would be, if not more just, at least more logical, to see egoism in the preoccupation with 'salvation' (which does not, of course, at all mean that the latter is illegitimate), or to find the mark of a certain pride in the desire to 'immortalize' the individuality instead of striving to go beyond it. The exoterists ought well to reflect on this, for it would make them a bit more circumspect in the accusations they hurl so thoughtlessly. In connection with the being that attains Deliverance, we will further add that such realization of a universal order has consequences that are very much more extensive and effective than common 'altruism', which is but a concern for the interests of a mere collectivity and which consequently in no way leaves the individual order; in the supra-individual order where there is no longer any 'I', there is likewise no longer any 'other', because this is a domain where all beings are one, 'fused but not confused' according to Eck-hart's expression, and thereby they truly realize the words of Christ, 'That they may be one even as the Father and I are one.'

What is true of pride is equally true of humility, which, being its contrary, is situated exactly on the same level, and which has the same exclusively sentimental and individual character. But, in a wholly different order, there is something which, spiritually, is much more valuable than this humility, and this is 'spiritual poverty' understood in its true meaning, that is the recognition one's total dependence on the Principle; and who could have a more real and more complete consciousness of this than true esoterists? We will go even further: today, who other than these is still truly aware of this to any degree; and even among the adherents of traditional exoterism, except perhaps for certain ever rarer exceptions, is there anything more than a wholly verbal and outward affirmation of this? We strongly doubt it for this profound reason: to use the terms of the Far-Eastern tradition, which allow us to express most easily what we want to say here, the fully 'normal' man must be yin with respect to the Principle, but to the Principle alone, and by reason of his 'central' position he must be yang in relation to all manifestation. On the contrary, fallen man adopts an attitude by which he tends more and more to become yang in relation to the Principle (or rather gives himself the illusion of doing so, for it goes without saying that this is an impossibility) and yin in relation to manifestation; and it is from this that both pride and humility are born. When the fall reaches its last phase, pride finally results in the negation of the Principle, and humility the negation of all hierarchy; the religious exoterists

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obviously refuse the first of these two negations; indeed, they reject it with a true horror when it takes on the name of atheism. But, on the contrary, we often have the impression that they are not very far removed from the second!!

1. We will take advantage of this occasion to note in passing a particularly grotesque reproach made against us which, in the final analysis, belongs to the same order of ideas, that is to say the intrusion of sentimentality into a domain to which it has no legitimate access. It seems that our writings have the serious defect of 'lacking joy'! That certain things bring us joy or not depends in any case only on our own individual dispositions, and in themselves these things have nothing to do with the matter, being wholly independent of such contingencies. This cannot and must not be of interest to anyone, and it would be perfectly ridiculous and improper to introduce anything like this into an exposition of traditional doctrines in regard to which individualities, ours as well as any other's, count for absolutely nothing.

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Shakti and Shâkta

Shakti and Shâkta
by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe),
[1918]

Chapter One Indian Religion As Bharata Dharma

A FRIEND of mine who read the first edition of this book suggested that I should add to it an opening Chapter, stating the most general and fundamental principles of the subject as a guide to the understanding of what follows, together with an outline of the latter in which the relation of the several parts should be shown. I have not at present the time, nor in the present book the space, to give effect to my friend's wishes in the way I would have desired, but will not altogether neglect them.

To the Western, Indian Religion generally seems a "jungle" of contradictory beliefs amidst which he is lost. Only those who have understood its main principles can show them the path.

It has been asserted that there is no such thing as Indian Religion, though there are many Religions in India. This is not so. As I have already pointed out (Is India Civilized?) there is a common Indian religion which I have called Bharata Dharma, which is an Aryan religion (Aryadharmā) held by all Aryans whether Brahmanic, Buddhist or Jaina. These are the three main divisions of the Bharata Dharma. I exclude other religions in India, namely, the Semitic religions,

Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Not that all these are purely Semitic. Christianity became in part Aryanized when it was adopted by the Western Aryans, as also happened with Islam when accepted by such Eastern Aryans as the Persians and the Aryanized peoples of India. Thus Sufism is either a form of Vedānta or indebted to it.

The general Indian Religion or Bharata Dharma holds that the world is an Order or Cosmos. It is not a Chaos of things and beings thrown haphazard together, in which there is no binding relation or rule. The world-order is Dharma, which is that by which the universe is upheld (Dharyate). Without Dharma it would fall to pieces and dissolve into nothingness. But this is not possible, for though there is Disorder (Adharma), it exists, and can exist only locally, for a time, and in particular parts of the whole. Order however will and, from the nature of things, must ultimately assert itself. And this is the meaning of the saying that Righteousness or Dharma prevails. This is in the nature of things, for Dharma is not a law imposed from without by the Ukase of some Celestial Czar. It is the nature of things; that which constitutes them what they are (Svalakshana-dharanat Dharma). It is the expression of their true being and can only cease to be, when they themselves cease to be. Belief in righteousness is then in something not arbitrarily imposed from without by a Lawgiver, but belief in a Principle of Reason which all men can recognize for themselves if they will. Again Dharma is not only the law of each being but necessarily also of the whole, and expresses the right relations of each part to the whole. This whole is again

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harmonious, otherwise it would dissolve. The principle which holds it together as one mighty organism is Dharma. The particular Dharma calls for such recognition and action in accordance therewith. Religion, therefore, which etymologically means that which obliges or binds together, is in its most fundamental sense the recognition that the world is an Order, of which each man, being, and thing, is a part, and to which each man stands in a definite, established relation; together with action based on, and consistent with, such recognition, and in harmony with the whole cosmic activity. Whilst therefore the religious man is he who feels that he is bound in varying ways to all being, the irreligious man is he who egoistically considers everything from the standpoint of his limited self and its interests, without regard for his fellows, or the world at large. The essentially irreligious character of such an attitude is shown by the fact that, if it were adopted by all, it would lead to the negation of Cosmos, that is Chaos. Therefore all Religions are agreed in the essentials of morality and hold that selfishness, in its widest sense, is the root of all sin (Adharma). Morality is thus the true nature of man. The general Dharma (Samanya Dharma) is the universal law governing all, just as the particular Dharma (Vishesha Dharma) varies with, and is peculiar to, each class of being. It follows from what is above stated that disharmony is suffering. This is an obvious fact. Wrong conduct is

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productive of ill, as right conduct is productive of good. As a man sows, so he will reap. There is an Immanent Justice. But these results, though they may appear at once, do not always do so. The fruit of no action is lost. It must, according to the law of causality, which is a law of reason, bear effect. If its author does not suffer for it here and now in the present life, he will do so in some future one. Birth and death mean the creation and destruction of bodies. The spirits so embodied are infinite in number and eternal. The material universe comes and goes. This in Brahmanism has been said (see Sanatana Vaidika Dharma by Bhagavan Das) to be "the Systole and Diastole of the one Universal Heart, Itself at rest -- the moveless play of Consciousness". The appearance and disappearance of the Universe is the nature or Svabhava of That which it ultimately is. Its immediate cause is Desire, which Buddhism calls Trishna -- or Thirst, that is desire or thirst for world-enjoyment in the universe of form. Action (Karma) is prompted by desire and breeds again desire. This action may be good (Dharma) or bad (Adharma) leading to enjoyment or suffering. Each embodied soul (Jivatma) will be reborn and reborn into the world until it is freed from all desire. This involves the doctrine of Re-incarnation. These multiple births and deaths in the transmigratory worlds are called Samsara or Wandering. The world is a Dvandva, that is, a composite of happiness and suffering. Happiness of a transitory kind may be had

therein by adherence to Dharma in following Kama (desire) and Artha (the means) by which lawful desires may be given effect. These constitute what Brahmanism calls the Trivarga of the Purushartha, or three aims of sentient being. But just as desire leads to manifestation in form, so desirelessness leads away from it. Those who reach this state seek Moksha or Nirvana (the fourth Purushartha), which is a state of Bliss beyond the worlds of changing forms. For there is a rest from suffering which Desire (together with a natural tendency to pass its right limits) brings upon men. They must, therefore, either live with desire in harmony with the universal order, or if desireless, they may (for each is master of his future) pass beyond the manifest and become That which is Moksha or Nirvana. Religion, and therefore true civilization, consists in the upholding of Dharma as the individual and general good, and the fostering of spiritual progress, so that, with justice to all beings, true happiness, which is the immediate and ultimate end of all Humanity, and indeed of all being, may be attained.

Anyone who holds these beliefs follows the Bharata Dharma or common principles of all Aryan beliefs. Thus as regards God we may either deny His existence (Atheism) or affirm it (Theism) or say we have no sufficient proof one way or another (Agnosticism). It is possible to accept the concept of an eternal Law (Dharma) and its sanctions in a self-governed universe without belief in a personal Lord (Ishvara). So Samkhya, which proceeds on intellectual proof only, does not deny God but holds that the being of a Lord is "not proved".

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There are then based on this common foundation three main religions, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. Of the second, a great and universal faith, it has been said that, with each fresh acquirement of knowledge, it seems more difficult to separate it from the Hinduism out of which it emerged and into which (in Northern Buddhism) it relapsed. This is of course not to say that there are no differences between the two, but that they share in certain general and common principles as their base. Brahmanism, of which the Shakta doctrine and practice is a particular form, accepts Veda as its ultimate authority. By this, in its form as the four Vedas, is revealed the doctrine of the Brahman, the "All-pervader," the infinite Substance which is in Itself (Svarupa) Consciousness (Caitanya or Cit), from Which comes creation, maintenance and withdrawal, commonly called destruction (though man, not God, destroys), and Which in Its relation to the universe which the Brahman controls is known as Ishvara, the Ruling Lord or Personal God. Veda both as spiritual experience and the word "which is heard" (Shruti) is the warrant for this. But Shruti, as the ultimate authority, has received various interpretations and so we find in Brahmanism, as in Christianity, differing schools and sects adopting various interpretations of the Revealed Word. Veda says: "All this (that is, the Universe) is Brahman." All are agreed that Brahman or Spirit is relatively to us, Being (Sat), Consciousness (Cit) and Bliss

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(Ananda). It is Saccidananda. But in what sense is "This" (Idam) Brahman? The Monistic interpretation (Advaitavada), as given for instance by the great scholastic Shamkaracarya, is that there is a complete identity in essence of both. There is one Spirit (Atma) with two aspects: as transcendent supreme (Paramatma), and as immanent and embodied (Jivatma). The two are at base one when we eliminate Avidya in the form of mind and body. According to the qualified Monism (Vishishtadvaita) of the great scholastic Ramanuja, "This" is Brahman in the sense that it is the body of the Brahman, just as we distinguish our body from our inner self. According to the Dualists (Dvaitavada) the saying is interpreted in terms of nearness (Samipya) and likeness (Sadrishya) for, though God and man are distinct, the former so pervades and is so inextricably involved in the universe as creator and maintainer, that the latter, in this sense, seems to be Brahman through proximity.

Then again there is the Shuddhadvaita of that branch of the Agamas which is called Shaivasiddhanta, the Vaishnava Pañcaratra doctrine, the Advaita of the Kashmirian Shaiva-gama (Trika), the followers of which, though Advaitins, have very subtly criticized Shamkara's doctrine on several points. Difference of views upon this question and that of the nature of Maya, which the world is said to be, necessarily implies difference upon other matters of

doctrine. Then there are, with many resemblances, some differences in ritual practice. Thus it comes about that Brahmanism includes many divisions of worshippers calling themselves by different names. There are Smartas who are the present day representatives of the old Vaidik doctrine and ritual practice, and on the other hand a number of divisions of worshippers calling themselves Shaktas, Shaivas, Vaishnavas and so forth with sub-divisions of these. It is not possible to make hard and fast distinctions between the sects which share much in common and have been influenced one by the other. Indeed the universality of much of religious doctrine and practice is an established fact. What exists in India as elsewhere to-day has in other times and places been in varying degrees anticipated. "In Religion," it has been said (Gnostics and Their Remains, viii) "there is no new thing. The same ideas are worked up over and over again." In

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India as elsewhere, but particularly in India where religious activity has been syncretistic rather than by way of supersession, there is much which is common to all sects and more again which is common between particular groups of sects. These latter are governed in general, that is, in their older forms, by the Agamas or Tantra-Shastras, which, at any rate to-day and for centuries past (whatever may have been their origin), admit the authority of the Vedas and recognize other Scriptures. (As to these, see the Introduction to the Kaulacarya Satyananda's Commentary on the Isha Upanishad which I have published.)

The meaning of Veda is not commonly rightly understood. But this is a vast subject which underlies all others, touching as it does the seat of all authority and knowledge into which I have not the space to enter here. There are four main classes of Brahmanical Scripture, namely, Veda or Shruti, Smriti, Purana, and Agama. There are also four ages or Yugas the latter being a fraction of a Kalpa or Day of Brahma of 4,320,000,000 years. This period is the life of an universe, on the expiration of which all re-enters Brahma and thereafter issues from it. A Mahayuga is composed of the Four Ages called Satya, Treta, Dvapara, Kali, the first being the golden age of righteousness since when all has gradually declined physically, morally, and spiritually. For each of the ages a suitable Shastra is given, for Satya or Krita the Vedas, for

Treta the Smritishastra, for Dvapara the Puranas, and for Kaliyuga the Agama or Tantra Shastra. So the Kularnava Tantra says:

Krite shrutyukta acarastretayam smriti-sambhavah

Dvapare tu puranoktah, kalavagamasammatah

(see also Mahanirvana Tantra, I -- 28 et seq.) and the Tara-pradipa says that in the Kaliyuga (the supposed present age) the Tantrika and not the Vaidika Dharma, in the sense of mode of life and ritual, is to be followed (see Principles of Tantra). When it is said that the Agama is the peculiar Scripture of the Kali age, this does not mean (at any rate to any particular division of its followers) that something is presented which is opposed to Veda. It is true however that, as between these followers, there is sometimes a conflict on the question whether a particular form of the Agama is unvedic (Avidika) or not. The Agama, however, as a whole, purports to be a presentment of the teaching of Veda, just as the Puranas and Smritis are. It is that presentment of Vaidik truth which is suitable for the Kali age. Indeed the Shakta followers of the Agama claim that its Tantras contain the



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very core of the Veda to which it is described to bear the same relation as the Supreme Spirit (Paramatma) to the embodied spirit (Jivatma). In a similar way, in the seven Tantrik Acaras (see Ch. IV post), Kaulacara is the controlling, informing life of the gross body called Vedacara, each of the Acaras, which follow the latter up to Kaulacara, being more and more subtle sheaths. The Tantra Shastra is thus that presentment of Vedantic truth which is modeled, as regards mode of life and ritual, to meet the characteristics and infirmities of the Kaliyuga. As men have no longer the capacity, longevity and moral strength required to carry out the Vaidika Karmakanda (ritual section), the Tantra Shastra prescribes a Sadhana of its own for the attainment of the common end of all Shastra, that is, a happy life on earth, Heaven thereafter, and at length Liberation. Religion is in fact the true pursuit of happiness.

As explained in the next and following Chapters, this Agama, which governs according to its followers the Kali-yuga, is itself divided into several schools or communities of worshippers. One of these divisions is the Shakta. It is with Shakta doctrine and worship, one of the forms of Brahmanism, which is again a form of the general Bharata Dharma, that this book deals.

The Shakta is so called because he is a worshipper of Shakti (Power), that is, God in Mother-form as the Supreme Power which creates,

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sustains and withdraws the universe. His rule of life is Shaktadharmā, his doctrine of Shakti is Shaktivāda or Shaktā Darshana. God is worshipped as the Great Mother because, in this aspect, God is active, and produces, nourishes, and maintains all. Theological Godhead is no more female than male or neuter. God is Mother to the Sadhaka who worships Her Lotus Feet, the dust on which are millions of universes. The Power, or active aspect of the immanent God, is thus called Shakti. In Her static transcendent aspect the Mother or Shakti or Shivé is of the same nature as Shiva or "the Good". That is, philosophically speaking, Shiva is the unchanging Consciousness, and Shakti is its changing Power appearing as mind and matter. Shiva-Shakti is therefore Consciousness and Its Power. This then is the doctrine of dual aspects of the one Brahman acting through Its Trinity of Powers (Iccha, Will; Jñāna, Knowledge; Kriya, Action). In the static transcendent aspect (Shiva) the one Brahman does not change and in the kinetic immanent aspect (Shivé or Shakti) It does. There is thus changelessness in change. The individual or embodied Spirit (Jivatma) is one with the transcendent spirit (Paramatma). The former is a part (Amsha) of the latter, and the enveloping mind and body are manifestations of Supreme Power. Shaktā Darshana is therefore a form of Monism (Advaitavāda). In creation an effect is produced without change in the Producer. In

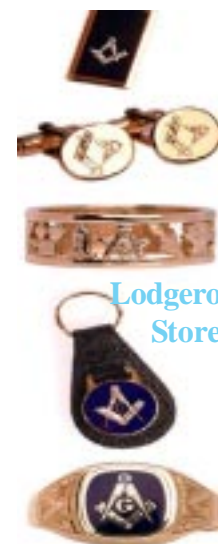
creation the Power (Shakti) "goes forth" (Prasharati) in a series of emanations or transformations, which are called, in the Shaiva and Shaktā Tantras, the 36 Tattvas. These mark the various stages through which Shiva, the Supreme Consciousness, as Shakti, presents Itself as object to Itself as subject, the latter at first experiencing the former as part of the Self, and then through the operations of Maya Shakti as different from the Self. This is the final stage in which every Self (Purusha) is mutually exclusive of every other. Maya, which achieves this, is one of the Powers of the Mother or Devi. The Will-to-become-many (Bahu syam prajayeya) is the creative impulse which not only creates but reproduces an eternal order. The Lord remembers the diversities latent in His own Maya Shakti due to the previous Karmas of Jivas and allows them to unfold themselves by His volition. It is that Power by which infinite formless Consciousness veils Itself to Itself and negates and limits Itself in order that it may experience Itself as Form.

This Maya Shakti assumes the form of Prakriti Tattva, which is composed of three Gunas or Factors called Sattva, Rajas, Tamas. The function of Prakriti is to veil, limit, or finitize pure infinite formless Consciousness, so as to produce form, for without such limitation there cannot be the appearance of form. These Gunas work by mutual suppression. The function of Tamas is to veil Consciousness, of Sattva to reveal it, and of Rajas the active principle to make either Tamas suppress Sattva or Sattva suppress Tamas. These Gunas are present in all particular existence, as in the general cause or Prakriti Shakti.

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Evolution means the increased operation of Sattva Guna. Thus the mineral world is more subject to Tamas than the rest. There is less Tamas and more Sattva in the vegetable world. In the animal world Sattva is increased, and still more so in man, who may rise through the cultivation of the Sattva Guna to Pure Consciousness (Moksha) Itself. To use Western parlance, Consciousness more and more appears as forms evolve and rise to man. Consciousness does not in itself change, but its mental and material envelopes do, thus releasing and giving Consciousness more play. As Pure Consciousness is Spirit, the release of It from the bonds of matter means that Forms which issue from the Power of Spirit (Shakti) become more and more Sattvik. A truly Sattvik man is therefore a spiritual man. The aim of Sadhana is therefore the cultivation of the Sattva Guna. Nature (Prakriti) is thus the Veil

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of Spirit as Tamas Guna, the Revealer of Spirit as Sattva Guna, and the Activity (Rajas Guna) which makes either work. Thus the upward or revealing movement from the predominance of Tamas to that of Sattva represents the spiritual progress of the embodied Spirit or Jivatma.

It is the desire for the life of form which produces the universe. This desire exists in the collective Vasanas, held like all else, in inchoate state in the Mother-Power, which passing from its own (Svarupa) formless state gives effect to them. Upon the expiration of the vast length of time which constitutes a day of Brahma the whole universe is withdrawn into the great Causal Womb (Yoni) which produced it. The limited selves are withdrawn into it, and again, when the creative throes are felt, are put forth from it, each appearing in that form and state which its previous Karma had made for it. Those who do good Karma but with desire and self-regard (Sakama) go, on death, to Heaven and thereafter reap their reward in good future birth on earth -- for Heaven is also a transitory state. The bad are punished by evil births on earth and suffering in the Hells which are also transitory. Those, however, who have rid themselves of all self-regarding desire and work selflessly (Nishkama Karma) realize the Brahman nature which is Saccidananda. Such are liberated, that is never appear again in the World of Form, which is the world of suffering, and enter into the

infinite ocean of Bliss Itself. This is Moksha or Mukti or Liberation. As it is freedom from the universe of form, it can only be attained through detachment from the world and desirelessness. For those who desire the world of form cannot be freed of it. Life, therefore, is a field in which man, who has gradually ascended through lower forms of mineral, vegetable and animal life, is given the opportunity of heaven-life and Liberation. The universe has a moral purpose, namely the affording to all existence of a field wherein it may reap the fruit of its actions. The forms of life are therefore the stairs (Sopana) on which man mounts to the state of infinite, eternal, and formless Bliss. This then is the origin and the end of man. He has made for himself his own past and present condition and will make his future one. His essential nature is free. If wise, he adopts the means (Sadhana) which lead to lasting happiness, for that of the world is not to be had by all, and even when attained is perishable and mixed with suffering. This Sadhana consists of various means and disciplines employed to produce purity of mind (Cittashuddhi), and devotion to, and worship of, the Magna Mater of all. It is with these means that the religious Tantra Shastras are mainly concerned. The Shakta Tantra Shastra contains a most elaborate and wonderful ritual, partly its own, partly of Vaidik origin. To a ritualist it is of absorbing interest.

Ritual is an art, the art of religion. Art is the outward material expression of ideas intellectually held and emotionally felt. Ritual art is concerned with the expression of those ideas and feelings which are specifically called religious. It is a

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mode by which religious truth is presented, and made intelligible in material forms and symbols to the mind. It appeals to all natures passionately sensible of that Beauty in which, to some, God most manifests Himself. But it is more than this. For it is the means by which the mind is transformed and purified. In particular according to Indian principles it is the instrument whereby the consciousness of the worshipper (Sadhaka) is shaped in actual fact into forms of experience which embody the truths which Scripture teaches. The Shakta is thus taught that he is one with Shiva and His Power or Shakti. This is not a matter of mere argument. It is a matter for experience. It is ritual and Yoga-practice which secure that experience for him. How profound Indian ritual is, will be admitted by those who have understood the general principles of all ritual and symbolism, and have studied it in its Indian form, with a knowledge of the principles of which it is an expression. Those who speak of "mummery," "gibberish" and "superstition" betray both their incapacity and ignorance.

The Agamas are not themselves treatises on Philosophy, though they impliedly contain a particular theory of life. They are what is called Sadhana Shastras, that is, practical Scriptures prescribing the means by which happiness, the quest of all mankind, may be attained. And as lasting happiness is God, they teach how man by worship and by practice of the disciplines prescribed, may attain a divine

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experience. From incidental statements and the practices described the philosophy is extracted.

The speaker of the Tantras and the revealer of the Shakta Tantra is Shiva Himself or Shivé the Devi Herself. Now it is the first who teaches and the second who listens (Agama). Now again the latter assumes the role of Guru and answers the questions of Shiva (Nigama). For the two are one. Sometimes there are other interlocutors. Thus one of the Tantras is called Ishvarakartikeya-samvada, for there the Lord addresses his son Kartikeya. The Tantra Shastra therefore claims to be a Revelation, and of the same essential truths as those contained in the Eternal Veda which is an authority to itself (Svatah-siddha). Those who have had experience of the truths recorded in Shastra, have also proclaimed the practical means whereby their experience was gained. "Adopt those means" they say, "and you will also have for yourself our experience." This is the importance of Sadhana and all Sadhana Shastras. The Guru says: "Do as I tell you. Follow the method prescribed by Scripture. Curb your desires. Attain a pure disposition, and thus only will you obtain that certainty, that experience which will render any questionings unnecessary." The practical importance of the Agama lies in its assumption of these principles and in the methods which it enjoins for the attainment of that state in which the truth is realized. The following

Chapters shortly explain some of the main features of both the philosophy and practice of the Shakta division of the Agama. For their full development many volumes are necessary. What is here said is a mere sketch in a popular form of a vast subject.

I will conclude this Chapter with extracts from a Bengali letter written to me shortly before his death, now many years ago, by Pandit Shiva-candra Vidyarnava, the Shakta author of the Tantratattva which I have published under the title Principles of Tantra. The words in brackets are my own.

"At the present time the general public are ignorant of the principles of the Tantra Shastra. The cause of this ignorance is the fact that the Tantra Shastra is a Sadhana Shastra, the greater part of which becomes intelligible only by Sadhana. For this reason the Shastra and its Teachers prohibit their general promulgation. So long as the Shastra was learnt from Gurus only, this golden rule was of immense good. In course of time the old Sadhana has become almost extinct, and along with it, the knowledge of the deep and mighty principles of the Shastra is almost lost. Nevertheless some faint shadowings of these principles (which can be thoroughly known by Sadhana only) have been put before the public partly with the view to preserve Shastric knowledge from destruction, and partly for commercial reasons. When I commenced to write Tantra-tattva some 25 years ago, Bengali society was in a perilous state owing to the influx of other religions, want of faith and a spirit of disputation. Shortly before this a number of

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English books had appeared on the Tantra Shastra which, whilst ignorant of Dharma, Sadhana and Siddhi contained some hideous and outrageous pictures drawn by the Bengali historians and novelists ignorant of, and unfaithful to, Shastric principles. The English books by English writers contained merely a reflection of what English-educated Bengalis of those days had written. Both are even to-day equally ignorant of the Tantra Shastra. For this reason in writing Tantratattva I could not go deeply into the subject as my heart wished. I had to spend my time in removing thorns (objections and charges) from the path by reasoning and argument. I could not therefore deal in my book with most of the



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subjects which, when I brought out the first volume, I promised to discuss. The Tantra Shastra is broadly divided into three parts, namely Sadhana, Siddhi (that which is gained by Sadhana) and Philosophy (Darshana). Unlike other systems it is not narrow nor does it generate doubt by setting forth conflicting views. For its speaker is One and not many and He is omniscient. The philosophy is however scattered throughout the Tantrik treatises and is dealt with, as occasion arises, in connection with Sadhana and Siddhi. Could (as I had suggested to him) such parts be collected and arranged, according to the principles of the subject-matter, they would form a vast system of philosophy wonderful, divine, lasting, true, and carrying conviction to men. As a Philosophy it is at the head of all others. You have prayed to Parameshvara (God) for my long life, and my desire to carry out my project makes me also pray for it. But the state of my body makes me doubt whether the prayer will be granted. By the grace therefore of the Mother the sooner the work is done the better. You say 'that those who worship Parameshvara, He makes of one family. Let therefore all distinctions be put aside for all Sadhakas are, as such, one.' This noble principle is the final word of all Shastras, all communities, and all religions. All distinctions which arise from differences in the physical body are distinctions for the human world only. They have no place in the world of worship of Parameshvara. The more therefore that we shall

approach Him the more will the differences between you and me vanish. It is because both of us pray for the removal of all such differences, that I am led to rely on your encouragement and help and am bold to take up on your encouragement and help and am bold to take up this difficult and daring work. If by your grace the gate of this Tantrik philosophy is opened in the third part of Tantra-tattva I dare to say that the learned in all countries will gaze, and be astonished for it is pure truth, and for this reason I shall be able to place it before them with perfect clearness."

Unfortunately this project of a third part of the Tantra-tattva could not be carried out owing to the lamented death of its author, which followed not long after the receipt of this letter. Naturally, like all believers throughout the whole world, he claimed for his Scripture the possession in all its details of what was true or good. Whilst others may not concede this, I think that those with knowledge and understanding and free from prejudice will allow that it contains a profoundly conceived doctrine, wonderfully worked out in practice. Some of its ideas and principles are shared (through it be under other names and forms) by all religious men, and others either by all or some Indian communities, who are not Shaktas. Leaving therefore for the moment aside what may be said to be peculiar to itself it cannot be that wholly absurd, repulsive, and infamous system ("lust, mummery and magic" as Brian Hodgson called it) which it has been said to be. An impartial criticism may be summed up in the few words that, together with what has value, it contains

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some practices which are not generally approved and which have led to abuse. As to these the reader is referred to the Chapter on the Pañcatattva or Secret Ritual.

I conclude with a translation of an article in Bengali by a well-known writer, (P. Bandyopadhyaya, in the Sahitya, Shrubby 1320, Calcutta, July-August 1913). It was evoked by the publication of Arthur Abalone's Translation of, and Introduction to, the Mahanirvana Tantra. It is an interesting statement as regards the Shakta Tantra and Bengali views thereon. Omitting here some commendatory statements touching A. Avalon's work and the writer's "thanks a hundred times" for the English version, the article continues as follows:

"At one time the Mahanirvana Tantra had some popularity in Bengal. It was printed and published under the editorship of Pandit Ananda-candra Vedanta-vagisha and issued from the Adi-Brahmo-Samaj Press. Raja Ram Mohan Roy himself was a follower of the Tantras, married after the Shaiva form and used to practice the Tantrik worship. His spiritual preceptor Svami Hariharananda, was well known to be a saint who had attained to perfection (Siddha-purusa). He endeavored to establish the Mahanirvana Tantra as the Scripture of the Brahmo-Samaj. The formula and the forms of the Brahmo Church are borrowed from the initiation in Brahman worship, (Brahma-diksha) in this Tantra. The later Brahmos somewhat losing their selves in their spirit of

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imitation of Christian rituals were led to abandon the path shown to them by Raja Ram Mohan; but yet even now many among them recite the Hymn to the Brahman which occurs in the Mahanirvana Tantra. In the first era of the excessive dissemination of English culture and training Bengal resounded with opprobrious criticisms of the Tantras. No one among the educated in Bengal could praise them. Even those who called themselves Hindus were unable outwardly to support the Tantrik doctrines. But even then there were very great Tantrik Sadhakas and men learned in the Tantras with whose help the principles of the Tantras might have been explained to the public. But the educated Bengali of the age was bewitched by the Christian culture, and no one cared to inquire what did or did not exist in their paternal heritage; the more especially that any who attempted to study the Tantras ran the risk of exposing themselves to contumely from the 'educated community'. Maharaja Sir Jatindra Mohan Tagore of sacred name alone published two or three works with the help of the venerable Pandit Jaganmohan Tarkalankara. The Hara-tattva-didhiti associated with the name of his father is even now acknowledged to be a marvelously glorious production of the genius of the Pandits of Bengal. The venerable (Vridhha) Pandit Jaganmohan also published a commentary on the Mahanirvana Tantra. Even at that epoch such study of the Tantras was confined to a certain section of the educated in Bengal. Maharaja Sir Jatindra

Mohan alone endeavored to understand and appreciate men like Bama Khepa (mad Bama), the Naked Father (Nengta Baba) of Kadda and Svami Sadananda. The educated community of Bengal had only neglect and contempt for Sadhakas like Bishe Pagla (the mad Bishe) and Binu the Candala woman. Bengal is even now governed by the Tantra; even now the Hindus of Bengal receive Tantrik initiation. But the glory and the honor which the Tantra had and received in the time of Maharajas Krishna-candra and Shiva-candra no longer exist. This is the reason why the Tantrik Sadhakas of Bengal are not so well known at present. It seems as if the World-Mother has again willed it, has again desired to manifest Her power, so that Arthur Avalon is studying the Tantras and has published so beautiful a version of the Mahanirvana. The English educated Bengali will now, we may hope, turn his attention to the Tantra.

"The special virtue of the Tantra lies in its mode of Sadhana. It is neither mere worship (Upasana) nor prayer. It is not lamenting or contrition or repentance before the Deity. It is the Sadhana which is the union of Purusha and Prakriti; the Sadhana which joins the Male Principle and the Mother Element within the body, and strives to make the attributed attributeless. That which is in me and that for which I am (this consciousness is ever present in me) is spread, like butter in milk, throughout the created world of moving and unmoving things, through the gross and the subtle, the conscious and unconscious, through all. It is the object of Tantrik Sadhana to merge that self-principle (Svarat) into the Universal (Virat).

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This Sadhana is to be performed through the awakening of the forces within the body. A man is Siddha in this Sadhana when he is able to awaken Kundalini and pierce the six Cakras. This is not mere 'philosophy' a mere attempt to ponder upon husks of words, but something which is to be done in a thoroughly practical manner. The Tantras say -- 'Begin practicing under the guidance of a good Guru; if you do not obtain favorable results immediately, you can freely give it up.' No other religion dares to give so bold a challenge. We believe that the Sadhana of the Moslems and the 'esoteric religion' or secret Sadhana (and rituals) of the Christians of the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches is based on this ground work of the Tantras.

"Wherever there is Sadhana we believe that there is the system of the Tantra. While treating of the Tantras some time back in the Sahitya, I hinted at this conclusion and I cannot say that the author, Arthur Avalon, has not noticed it too. For he has expressed his surprise at the similarity which exists between the Roman Catholic and the Tantrik mode of Sadhana. The Tantra has made the Yoga-system of Patañjali easily practicable and has combined with it the Tantrik rituals and the ceremonial observances (Karma-kanda); that is the reason why the Tantrik system of Sadhana has been adopted by all the religious sects of India. If this theory of the antiquarians, that the Tantra was brought into India from Chaldea or Shakadvipa be correct, then it may

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also be inferred that the Tantra passed from Chaldea to Europe. The Tantra is to be found in all the strata of Buddhism; the Tantrik Sadhana is manifest in Confucianism; and Shintoism is but another name of the Tantrik cult. Many historians acknowledge that the worship of Shakti or Tantrik Sadhana which was prevalent in Egypt from ancient times spread into Phoenicia and Greece. Consequently we may suppose that the influence of the Tantra was felt in primitive Christianity.

"The Tantra contains nothing like idolatry or 'worship of the doll' which we, taking the cue from the Christian missionaries, nowadays call it. This truth, the author, Arthur Avalon, has made very clear in the Introduction to his translation. The Tantra repeatedly says that one is to adore the Deity by becoming a Deity (Devata) himself. The Ishta-devata is the very self of Atman, and not separate from It; He is the receptacle of all, yet He is not contained in anything, for He is the great witness, the eternal Purusha. The true Tantrik worship is the worship in and by the mind. The less subtle form of Tantrik worship is that of the Yantra. Form is born of the Yantra. The form is made manifest by Japa, and awakened by Mantra-Shakti. Tens of millions of beautiful forms of the Mother bloom forth in the heavens of the heart of the Siddhapurusha. Devotees or aspirants of a lower order of competency (Nimna-adhikari) under the directions of the

Guru adore the great Maya by making manifest'. (to themselves) one of Her various forms which can be only seen by Dhyana (meditation). That is not mere worship of the idol! if it were so, the image would not be thrown into the water; no one in that case would be so irreverent as to sink the earthen image of the Goddess in the water. The Primordial Shakti is to be awakened by Bhava, by Dhyana, by Japa and by the piercing of the six Cakras. She is all will. No one can say when and how She shows Herself and to what Sadhaka. We only know that She is, and there are Her names and forms. Wonderfully transcending is Her form -- far beyond the reach of word or

thought. This has made the Bengali Bhakta sing this

plaintive song --
'Hard indeed is it to approach the sea of forms, and to

bathe in it.
Ah me, this my coming is perhaps in vain?'

"The Tantra deals with another special subject --

Mantra-Shakti. It is no exaggeration to say that we have never heard even from any Bengali Pandit such a clear exposition of Mantra-Shakti as that which the author, Arthur Avalon, has given in his Introduction to the Mahanirvana Tantra. We had thought that Mantra-Shakti was a thing to be felt and not to be explained to others. But the author with the force of his genius has in his simple exposition given us such explanation of it as is possible in the English language. The Tantras say that the soul in the

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body is the very self of the letters -- of the Dhvani (sound). The Mother, the embodiment of the fifty letters (Varna), is present in the various letters in the different Cakras. Like the melody which issues when the chords of a lute are struck, the Mother who moves in the six Cakras and who is the very self of the letters awakens with a burst of harmony when the chords of the letters (Varnas) are struck in their order; and Siddhi becomes as easy of attainment to the Sadhaka as the Amalaka fruit in one's hand when She is roused. That is why the great Sadhaka Ramaprasad awakened the Mother by the invocation -- 'Arise O Mother (Jagrihi, janani)'. That is the reason why the Bhakta sang --

'How long wilt thou sleep in the Muladhara, O Mother

Kulakundalini?'

"The Bodhana (awakening) ceremony in the Durga Puja is nothing but the awakening of the Shakti of the Mother, the mere rousing of the consciousness of the Kundalini. This awakening is performed by Mantra-Shakti. The Mantra is nothing but the harmonious sound of the lute of the body. When the symphony is perfect, She who embodies the Worlds (Jaganmayi) rouses Herself. When She is awake it does not take long before the union of Shiva and Shakti takes place. Do Japa once; do Japa according to rule looking up to the Guru, and the effects of Japa of which we hear in the Tantra will prove to be true at every step. Then you will understand that the Tantra is not mere trickery, or a false

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weaving out of words. What is wanted is the good Guru; Mantra capable of granting Siddhi, and application (Sadhana). Arthur Avalon has grasped the meaning of the principles of Mantra which are so difficult to understand. We may certainly say that he could only make this impossible thing possible through inherent tendencies (Samskara) acquired in his previous life.

"The Tantra accepts the doctrine of rebirth. It does not, however, acknowledge it as a mere matter of argument or reasoning but like a geographical map it makes clear the unending chain of existences of the Sadhaka. The Tantra has two divisions, the Dharma of Society (Samaja) and the Dharma of Spiritual Culture (Sadhana). According to the regulation of Samaja-Dharma it acknowledges birth and caste. But in Sadhana-Dharma there is no caste distinction, no Brahmana or Shudra, no man or woman; distinction between high and low follows success in Sadhana and Siddhi. We only find the question of fitness or worthiness (Adhikara-tattva) in the Tantra. This fitness (Adhikara) is discovered with reference to the Samskaras of past existences; that is why the Candala Purnananda is a Brahmana, and Kripasiddha the Sadhaka is equal to Sarvananda; that is why Ramaprasada of the Vaidya caste is fit to be honored even by Brahmanas. The Tantra is to be studied with the aid of the teachings of the Guru; for its language is extraordinary, and its exposition

impossible with a mere grammatical knowledge of roots and inflections. The Tantra is only a system of Shakti-Sadhana. There are rules in it whereby we may draw Shakti from all created things. There is nothing to be accepted or rejected in it. Whatever is helpful for Sadhana is acceptable. This Sadhana is decided according to the fitness of the particular person (Adhikari-anusare). He must follow that for which he is fit or worthy. Shakti pervades all and embraces all beings and all things, the inanimate and the moving, beasts and birds, men and women. The unfolding of the Power (Shakti) enclosed within the body of the animal (Jiva) as well as the man is brought about only with the help of the tendencies within the body. The mode of Sadhana is ascertained with regard to these tendencies. The very meaning of Sadhana is unfolding, rousing up or awakening of Power (Shakti). Thus the Shakta obtains power from all actions in the world. The Sadhana of the Tantra is not to be measured by the little measuring-yard of the well-being or ill-being of your community or mine.

"Let you understand and I understand, O my mind --

Whether any one else understands it or not."

The author, Arthur Avalon, is fully conscious of this. In spite of it, he has tried to explain almost all points making them easy to comprehend for the intellect of materialistic civilized society of to-day. For this attempt on his part we are grateful to him.

"The Tantra has no notion of some separate far-seeing God. It preaches

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no such doctrine in it as that God the Creator rules the Universe from heaven. In the eye of the Tantra the body of the Sadhaka is the Universe, the auto-kratos (Atma-Shakti) within the body is the desired (Ishta) and the "to be sought for" (Sadhya), Deity (Devata) of the Sadhaka. The unfolding of this self-power is to be brought about by self-realization (Atma-darshana) which is to be achieved through Sadhana. Whoever realizes his self attains to Liberation (Mukti). The author, Arthur Avalon, has treated of these matters (Siddhanta) in his work, the Tantra-tattva. Many of the topics dealt with in the Mahanirvana Tantra will not be fully understood without a thorough perusal of the book. The Principles of the Tantra must be lectured on to the Bengali afresh. If the

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Mahanirvana Tantra as translated by Arthur Avalon is spread abroad, if the Bengali is once more desirous to hear, that attempt might well be undertaken.

"Our land of Bengal used to be ruled by Tantrik works such as the Saradatilaka, Shaktanandatarangini, Pranatoshini, Tantrasara, etc. Then the Mahanirvana Tantra did not have so great an influence. It seems to us that, considering the form into which, as a result of English education and culture, the mind of the Bengali has been shaped, the Mahanirvana is a proper Tantra for the time. Raja Ram Mohan Roy endeavored to encourage regard for the Mahanirvana Tantra because he understood this. If the English translation of the Mahanirvana Tantra by Arthur Avalon is well received by the thoughtful public in Bengal, the study of the original Sanskrit work may gradually come into vogue. This much hope we may entertain. In fact, the English-educated Bengali community is without religion (Dharma) or action (Karma), and is devoid of the sense of nationality (Jatiya Dharma) and caste. The Mahanirvana Tantra alone is fit for the country and the race at the present time. We believe that probably because such an impossibility is going to be possible, a cultured, influential, rich Englishman like Arthur Avalon, honored of the rulers, has translated and published the Mahanirvana Tantra. When his Tantratattva is published we shall be able to speak out much more. For the present we ask the educated people of Bengal

to read this most unprecedented Mahanirvana Tantra. Arthur Avalon has not spoken a single word to satisfy himself nor tried to explain things according to his own imagination. He has only given what are true inferences according to the principles of Shastric reasoning. An auspicious opportunity for the English-knowing public to understand the Tantra has arrived. It is a counsel of the Tantra itself, that if you desire to renounce anything, renounce it only after a thorough acquaintance with it; if you desire to embrace anything new, accept it only after a searching inquiry. The Tantra embodies the old religion (Dharma) of Bengal; even if it is to be cast away for good, that ought only to be done after it has been fully known. In the present case a thoughtful and educated Englishman of high position has taken it upon himself to give us a full introduction to the Tantra. We can frankly say that in this Introduction he has not tried a jot to shirk or to gloss over the conclusions of the Shastra, with the vanity of explanation born of his imagination. He has endeavored to bring before the mind of his readers whatever actually is in the Tantra, be it regarded as either good or evil. Will not the Bengali receive with welcome such a full offering (Arghya) made by a Bhakta from a foreign land?"

The Man who would be King

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The wheel of the world swings through the same phases again and again. Summer passed and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper

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continued and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night issue, and a strained waiting for something to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. A few great men had died in the past two years, the machines worked with more clatter, and some of the trees in the office garden were a few feet taller. But that was all the difference. I passed over to the press-room, and went through just such a scene as I have already described. The nervous tension was stronger than it had been two years before, and I felt the heat more acutely.

At three o'clock I cried, "Print off," and turned to go, when there crept to my chair what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear. I could hardly see whether he walked or crawled—this ragwrapped, whining cripple who addressed me by name, crying that he was come back. "Can you give me a drink?" he whimpered. "For the Lord's sake, give me a drink!" I went back to the office, the man following with groans of pain, and I turned up the lamp. "Don't you know me?" he gasped, dropping into a chair, and he turned his drawn face, surmounted by a shock of gray hair, to the light. I looked at him intently. Once before had I seen eyebrows that met over the nose in an inch-broad black band, but for the life of me I could not tell where. "I don't know you," I

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said, handing him the whisky.

“What can I do for you?”

He took a gulp of the spirit raw, and shivered in spite of the suffocating heat. “I’ve come back,”

Kafiristan—me and Dravot—crowned Kings we was! In this office we settled it—you setting there and giving us the books.

I am Peachey,—Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan,—and you’ve been setting here ever since—O Lord!” I was more than a little astonished, and expressed my feelings accordingly.

“It’s true,” said Carnehan, with a dry cackle, nursing his feet, which were wrapped in rags—”true as gospel. Kings we were, with crowns upon our heads—me and Dravot—poor Dan—oh, poor, poor Dan, that would never take advice, not though I begged of him!” “Take the whisky,” I said, “and take your own time. Tell me all you can recollect of everything from beginning to end. You got across the Border on your camels, Dravot dressed as a mad priest and you his servant. Do you remember that?” “I ain’t mad—yet, but I shall be that way soon. Of course I remember. Keep looking at me, or maybe my words will go all to pieces. Keep looking at me in my eyes and don’t say anything.”

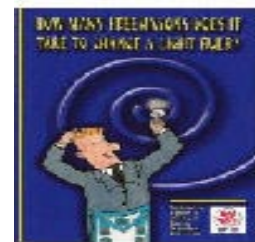
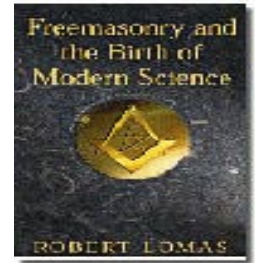
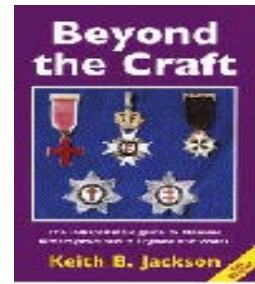
I leaned forward and looked into his face as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird’s claw, and upon the back was a ragged, red,



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The Man who would be King

diamond-shaped scar. “No, don’t look there. Look at me,” said Carnehan. “That comes afterward, but for the Lord’s sake don’t distract me.

We left with that caravan, me and Dravot playing all sorts of antics to amuse the people we were with. Dravot used to make us laugh in the evenings when all the people was cooking their dinners—cooking their dinners, and . . . what did they do then? They lit little fires with sparks that went into Dravot’s beard, and we all laughed—fit to die. Little red fires they was, going into Dravot’s big red beard—so funny.” His eyes left mine and he smiled foolishly. “You went as far as Jagdallak with that caravan,” I said, at a venture, “after you had lit those fires. To Jagdallak, where you turned off to try to get into Kafiristan.” “No, we didn’t, neither. What are you talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak, because we heard the roads was good. But they wasn’t good enough for our two camels— mine and Dravot’s. When we left the caravan, Dravot took off all his clothes and mine too, and said we would be heathen, because the Kafirs didn’t allow Mohammedans to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt and between, and such a sight as Daniel Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see again. He burned half his beard, and slung a sheepskin over his shoulder, and shaved his head into patterns.

He shaved mine too, and made me wear outrageous things to look like a heathen.

That was in a most mountaineous country, and our camels couldn’t go along any more because of the mountains. They were tall and black, and coming home I saw them fight like wild goats —there are lots of goats in Kafiristan. And these mountains, they never keep still, no more than the goats. Always fighting they are, and don’t let you sleep at night.” “Take some more whisky,” I said, very slowly. “What did you and Daniel Dravot do when the camels could go no farther because of the rough roads that led into Kafiristan?” “What did which do? There was a party called Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan that was with Dravot.

Shall I tell you about him? He died out there in the cold. Slap from the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirligig that you can sell to the Amir. No; they was two for three ha’pence, those whirligigs, or I am much mistaken and woful sore And then these camels were no use, and Peachey said to Dravot, ‘For the Lord’s sake let’s get out of this before our heads are chopped off,’ and with that they killed the camels all among the mountains, not having anything in particular to eat, but first they took off the boxes with the guns and the ammunition, till two men came along driving four mules. Dravot up and dances in front of them, singing, ‘Sell me four mules.’ Says the first man, ‘If you are rich enough to buy, you are rich enough to rob;’ but before ever he could put his hand to his knife, Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and the other party runs away. So Carnehan loaded the mules with the rifles that was taken off the camels, and together we starts forward into

those bitter-cold mountaineous parts, and never a road broader than the back of your hand.”

He paused for a moment, while I asked him if he could remember the nature of the country through which he had journeyed. “I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn’t as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died. The country was mountaineous and the mules were most contrary, and the inhabitants was dispersed and solitary.



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Tim Bryce On...

By Wr. Tim Bryce, PM, MPS
timb001@phmainstreet.com
Palm Harbor, Florida, USA
"A Foot Soldier for Freemasonry"

TEACHING MASONIC CATECHISMS

by W.: Tim Bryce, PM, MPS
timb001@phmainstreet.com
Palm Harbor, Florida, USA
"A Foot Soldier for Freemasonry"

I have had the pleasure of teaching several Brothers their Masonic catechisms over the years. I find it to be good practice for me and keeps me sharp when I'm called upon to provide assistance in degree work. More importantly, it has offered me an opportunity to get to know some very fine men. Very rarely will I instruct more than one person at a time. I find it is better to teach one-on-one since people tend to learn the memory work at their own unique pace. It also allows me to concentrate on the nuances of each person's ability to absorb the material.

Although I try to teach at a regularly scheduled time and place, I recognize our professional lives make it difficult to do so. Consequently, I am willing to meet the Brother as needs require, be it at the Lodge, his office or mine, my house or his. (Frankly, I prefer the latter as it affords me the opportunity to smoke a cigar as we sit outside.)

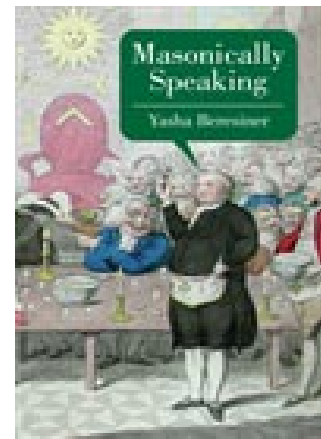
When teaching a new Brother the catechism, I am looking for the fire in him to learn the work and, if I see it, I'll bend over backwards to help him master it. But I have had a couple of occasions where the student really didn't want to learn the material. In this situation I have offered to help him find another instructor who could possibly help him. Inevitably, it is not the instructor but the individual who simply lacks interest and eventually drops out.

In the past, you have probably heard me say that the only reason we learn catechisms is to perpetuate our degree work. This is why I think it is vital to not only teach the catechism, but to also describe how Freemasonry works, the history of both the fraternity and the Lodge, and the customs to be observed. In addition, I take the student to a Masonic degree so they can observe it from the sidelines (thereby more clearly assimilating the degree). Again, I think it is important to develop a rapport with the student and express your commitment to the person. In turn, the student expresses his commitment to you. I learned this from my own instructor, and we remain fast friends and trusted Brothers to this day.

Sometimes, Lodges appoint a Lodge Instructor to teach the work. Such dedicated people are becoming increasingly hard to find. When a Lodge Instructor is not available, it is wise to get the junior officers to teach the work, particularly the Wardens and Deacons. This does two things: it forces the Lodge officers to sharpen their memorization work, and it provides the means to get to know the new Brothers who may play a vital role for the officer should he ever reach the East.

After a Brother has been raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, I am often thanked by the student for my efforts. But as I tell them, they did all of the hard work, not me. I expect nothing in return other than the Brother does a good job and

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Tim Bryce On...

By Wr. Tim Bryce, PM, MPS
timb001@phmainstreet.com
Palm Harbor, Florida, USA
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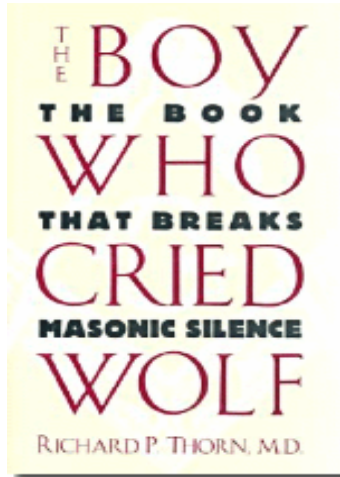
perhaps teaches someone else down the road. Being an instructor is a big responsibility and should not be taken lightly; you have to be one part teacher, one part coach, and one part Brother. You shouldn't simply teach the student his catechism, you need to teach them to be a Mason and to seek further light. A little investment of time in the Brother early on will inevitably pay dividends later on for Freemasonry and the Lodge.

Keep the Faith!

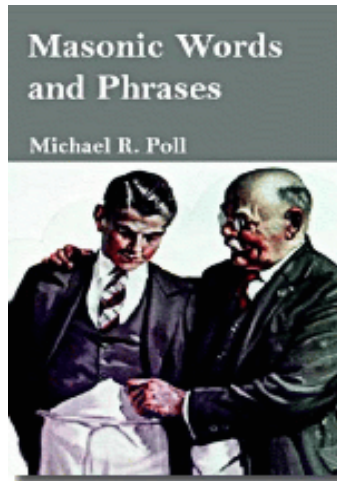
NOTE: The opinions expressed in this essay are my own and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of any Grand Masonic jurisdiction or any other Masonic related body.

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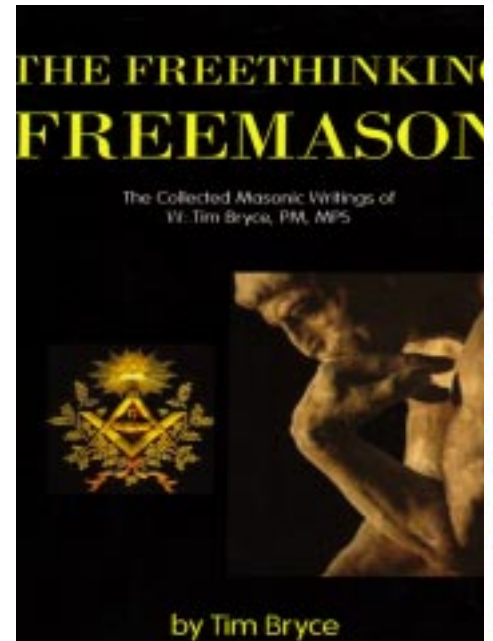
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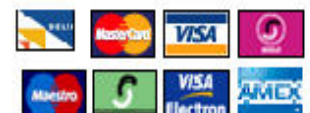


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Masonic Numbers

The numbers of US Freemasons in the 51 largest Grand Lodges in that country dropped below 1.5 million in 2007, their lowest ebb in more than a century, according to the latest figures issued by the Masonic Service Association.

In fiscal 2007, there were 1,483,449 Master Masons in the 51 state-based Grand Lodges in the US. This figure is a far cry from the 4,103,161 Freemasons reported working in Lodges in those Obediences in 1959, the year those numbers peaked. It also is far lower than the lowest ebb in the 20th Century for those Grand Lodges in 1941, with a reported 2,451,301 Freemasons.

This places the number of Master Masons in those Grand Lodges at their lowest since the 19th Century.

While the continually declining numbers are not a surprise, they do reflect the continued decline in the number of US Freemasons in the larger Grand Lodges, which started in 1965 when those number first fell below 4 million. There were less than 3 million reported in 1984 and the number dropped below 2 million in 1998, according to the MSA's compilation.

Not all Grand Lodges in the US experienced a decline in fiscal 2007 compared to the year prior, MSA reported. Delaware and Massachusetts both reported an increase of 36 and 604 Brothers respectively in that time. Delaware reported 5,111 Brothers in 2007 while Massachusetts reported



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37,777.

The three state-based US Grand Lodges with the greatest decline in that period were Texas, which reportedly lost 3,405 Brothers; Pennsylvania, which lost 2,774; and Indiana which lost 2,633.

Despite their declining numbers, the Grand Lodges of Pennsylvania and Texas in 2007 continued among the three largest in the US. The largest Grand Lodge in the US in fiscal 2007 were Pennsylvania with 120,502 Brothers reported that year. Ohio and Texas, with 114,661 and 98,398 members respectively in fiscal 2007, came in second and third. The Ohio 2007 membership reflected a drop of 2,100 Brothers since the previous year.

MSA also reports similar declines in mainstream lodges in Canada, where the number of Freemasons already is below 1 million. In that country, the largest number of Freemasons continues to be in Ontario with a reported 52,130 in fiscal 2007, which is 1,383 members reported in the province in 2006. However, the news was better in Newfoundland/Labrador, were

Masonic Numbers

the number of Freemasons increased by 18 to 2,130 in fiscal 2007.

MSA reported the total number of Freemasons in Canada in fiscal 2007 was 93,644, 2,378 fewer than in 2006.

The MSA figures for US Grand Lodges in 2007 corresponds with a worldwide decline in the number of Freemasons in so-called “mainstream” Grand Lodges”. The number of Australia Freemasons has declined to 53,000 and the number in New Zealand has dropped to 11,200, according to the October edition of Harashim, the Australian and New Zealand Masonic Research Council’s quarterly newsletter. The publication cited Pentagraph’s “List of Lodges Masonic”. Similar declines have been reported in Great Britain.

None Mainstream Grand Lodges, such as those under the umbrella of Prince Hall, have been anecdotally reported to be experiencing large growth in the past decade. However, details about these gains are sketchy, largely because these Grand Lodges often do not report their numbers, citing traditional



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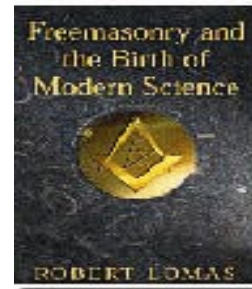
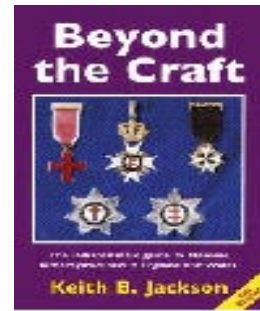
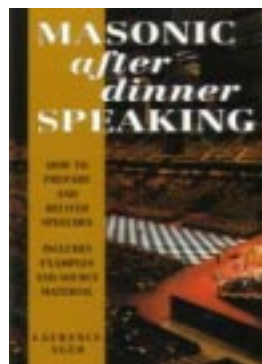
secrecy.

MSA’s latest figures, as well as similar numbers of US Freemasons since 1925, are available online here:

<http://www.msana.com/msastats.asp>

MSA’s figures traditionally have been much respected but the association cautions the figures are its own compilation. “These figures are based upon M.S.A. records and do not necessarily correspond exactly with those published by other sources,” MSA reported on its website.

Paul Bessels site will give graphic representation of the figures.



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What happened to the Six GOfEAs

By Bro. Karen Kidd
You Know Which Ones?

I have no advice to offer the Grand Orient de France as She labors with Her identity as a Malecraft Masonic Obedience.

I do have a question: What will become of the six women initiated this past spring and summer into otherwise Male-Only GOfE lodges?

I also have a sad suspicion: that I am one of a relative few who even wants to know.

I ask because I think what was done to these women was wrong. No human being should ever be used as a tool. It is especially reprehensible for Master Masons to do it to Candidates and Entered Apprentices. And so, as a Master Mason myself, and mindful of my Ob*, I feel it incumbent upon me to ask the question; and hope to be assured the abuse is not continuing.

So far, in all the reports about this matter, no such assurance is forthcoming.

For anyone who hasn't kept up, the French Press Agency (AFP) reported in the last few weeks, in a story carried in a number of French daily newspapers¹, the five GOfE lodges were suspended for initiating of six women. That was the decision reached during the GOfE's Convent last month, according to the AFP report, which cited its source as GOfE Grand Master Pierre Lambicchi. Lambicchi is successor to now Past Grand Master

Jean-Michel Quillardet.

Three of the lodges already were provisionally suspended when the Convent convene. The decision extended that suspension to the other two lodges "for not respecting a decision of the Convent", the FPA reported. Four of the lodges are in Paris while the fifth lodge is in Gers, according to published reports.

The Convent apparently went easier on the individual members of those lodges, according to the regional daily newspaper Sud Ouest, which reported the Convent "considered inadmissible" a move to suspend those 169 Masons in the five lodges. "The three judges noted that the Council of the Order did not bring any new evidence, and therefore the lodges concerned could not undergo a double judgment," the newspaper reported. "Sud Ouest understands that the Masonic tribunal thus refused to impose a sanction that the Masons of Gers describe as 'disproportionate'."

In handing down these decisions, the Convent also issued statements that would seem an attempt to clarify GOfE's commitment to gender-based Masonry. The Convent declared that while the GOfE is not essentially a Male-Only Obedience, it also is not Co-Masonic. Women Mason are permitted to visit and work in GOfE Lodges, so GOfE Lodge meetings can be, and often are, mixed. However, those Lodges are not to initiate women or accept them as members.

The Convent did not call for an end

Co - Masonic

to the debate over whether to initiate women. With a sizable minority found to be in favor during last year's Convent vote, the debate wasn't likely to cease anyway. And, so, that struggle continues.

The Convent's decision, on its face, seems a balanced one. The Lodges were punished but the individual members were not. And while the Convent clarified the GOfE's position, it did not change anything.

I think it would have been tragic had any changes been made. By this careful action, the GOfE, I hope, will preserve the near perfect balance between gender-based and Co-Masonic Obediences that has been achieved in that country. And will leave inviolate a place where those male Brethren who cannot accept women on anything but a sexual level may continue to labor.

These dissenting Brothers long have been in the majority in the GOfE. At last year's Convent, sixty percent of the 1,200 delegates in attendance rejected a proposal by Bro. Quillardet that GOfE lodges be allowed to initiate women. At the time, Bro. Quillardet commented he felt encouraged by the result, that had the vote occurred earlier, it would have been more overwhelmingly against.

Apparently, they're still against it.

This doesn't mean GOfE is blind to women Freemasons, as are other Male-Only bodies in the world. In fact, the GOfE has followed rather a slippery policy toward their Female

[continued on next page](#)

What happened to the Six G^OD^F EAs

Brethren almost since the Obedience's beginning in 1773. Then the G^OD^F recognized Adoptive Masonry but insisted those Adoptive Lodges remain under its direct supervision. Little more than a Century later came the internal struggles that lead, ultimately, to the formation of the French-based Co-Masonic body, Le Droit Humain, and the Female-only Grande Loge éminine de France. All three of these bodies today are in amity and intervisitation is permitted.

In France today, 69 percent of Freemasons are in Male-Only Lodges, 20 percent belong to Co-Masonic Lodges and 11 percent are in Female-only Lodges, according to numbers issued by the World Association of International Studies. While the overwhelming majority of French Masons are men, the number of women in France who've entered the Craft in the last three decades has more than doubled, rising from 10 percent of all French Masons to almost 25 percent².

Recognize them She might but G^OD^F historically has been very sensitive about Her image before other Malecraft bodies in the world, most of whom are not in amity with G^OD^F. In 2002, then G^OD^F Grand Master Alain Bauer felt the need to defend his Obedience's legitimacy by pointing out the G^OD^F had never initiated women. At the same time, he side stepped the question of whether the G^OD^F had ever recognized women Freemasons. Clearly She has. And does.

So She must also know, without doubt, that these six women initiated into these five lodges are Entered Apprentice Freemasons.

I've heard these women dismissed as having been involved, from the beginning, in the strange, unidentified politics that lead these Lodges to initiate them. That these women should be at all culpable is impossible. No one, no matter how well informed, no matter what they read, no matter how much is revealed to them, can possibly know what they are getting into when they become a Freemasons. Regardless of their personal motivations, these women cannot be at fault. They cannot be held accountable for what their Lodges have done.

I can know that and still acknowledge that the G^OD^F, clearly, is a sovereign body, as are the Lodges who labor under Her. I won't presume to tell Her what she should do.

I will, however, observe that Bro. Lambicchi feels quite comfortable discussing this matter with the Profane press. That the Lodges have been punished, and the details of other actions taken by the Convent, is known in the Profane press in France because Bro. Lambicchi shared that information with them. I would appreciate equal candor about what will happen – and has happened – to these Entered Apprentices.

I also will utter my hopes in this matter: I am in great hopes that our Brethren in the G^OD^F will, indeed, recall the lesson, so recently impressed upon these five Entered Apprentices, and that they will be C*utious.

Co - Masonic

I hope, they will ponder whether it ever is appropriate to use people as tools.

I hope they will remember what it's like to be an Entered Apprentice.

And I hope they will consider what it might have been like for them, had they been Entered Apprentices with the whole Masonic world watching.

I further hope that these women will be given the opportunity to be taken in by Co-Masonic and/or Femalecraft Lodges, of which there is an abundance in France. And, there, be allowed to continue their progress in Masonry.

- 1 Per usual, I am indebted to Bro. Clay Anderson for providing the French to English translation.
- 2 The World Association of International Studies figures on the worldwide population of Freemasons is available online here: <http://cgi.stanford.edu/group/wais/cgi-bin/index.php?p=7853>



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The Sign of a Mason

The Sign of a Mason

by: Martin Faulks

Publisher: Lewis Masonic

Product code: L2894

ISBN: 9780853182894

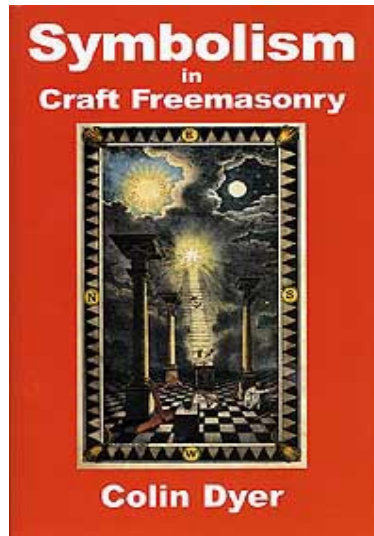
Are you ready for a sponsored laugh? All royalties from this book go to the New masonic Samaritan Fund who help Freemasons and their dependants in times of medical need. It will also help you whenever you need a joke or a one liner at the festive board! It's pocket sized and unlike most other joke books this title only contains jokes about Freemasons and Freemasonry. Perhaps laughter is the best medicine after all!

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Book Review

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Symbolism in Craft Freemasonry

by: Colin Dyer

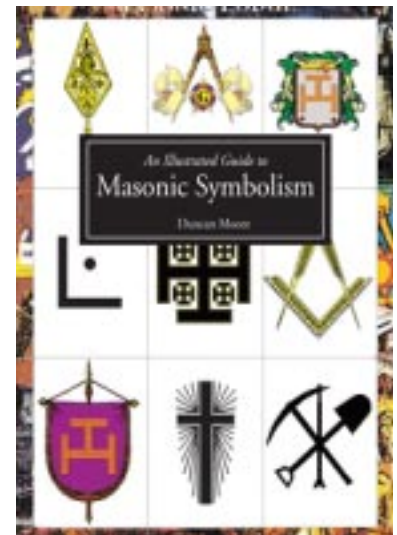
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ISBN: 9780853182931

This title contains in-depth analysis of the meanings and possible origins of almost every aspect of Masonic symbolism.

Subjects covered include all Craft Ceremonies, Lodge furniture, Tracing Boards, Working Tools, Masonic clothing and much more!



The Illustrated Guide to Masonic Symbolism

This new book sets out a clear and easy to understand explanation of Masonic symbols primarily for the new Mason and interested general readers, although long serving Masons will find much of interest in this new look at symbols and what they mean.

The author looks in detail at the origins and derivations of the symbols used and shows how they got into operative and then speculative Masonry. While concentrating on Craft and Royal Arch symbols, the author also describes the three degrees of Craft Freemasonry and gives reference to the symbols in the Lodge, on the Tracing Board and the officers' collar jewels.

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Jokes and Humor Factoids

There are more Samoans in Los Angeles than on American Samoa.

First novel ever written on a typewriter: Tom Sawyer.

Some species of earthworms in Australia can measure more than ten feet in length.

The longest recorded flight of a chicken is thirteen seconds.

There are more chickens than people in the world.

The albatross is a bird who can fly all day long... Without flapping his wings!

The average women's thighs are one and a half times larger in circumference than the average man's.

Soccer legend Pele's real name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento.

The common goldfish is the only animal that can see both infra-red and ultra-violet light.

Only one-third of the people that can twitch their ears can twitch only one at a time.

There are about 3,000 hot dog vendors in metropolitan New York.

The largest blossom in the world is the flower of the Rafflesia Arnoldi. It measures over 3 feet across and smells of rotting carrion.

The national anthem of Greece has 158 verses. No one in Greece has memorised all 158 verses.

The word "Checkmate" in chess comes from the Persian phrase "Shah Mat," which means "the king is dead".

Croatia was the first country to recognise the United States in 1776.

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