

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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President - Founder

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40th ANNIVERSARY
OF MANLY P. HALL'S
PUBLIC WORK
1960

CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN -- MARCH 1963

Dear Friend:

A letter came in recently from one of our friends, suggesting that we ought to follow the present trend in book publishing and break into the paperback field. Today many of the outstanding books of the world are available in this form, and everyone seems to be reasonably well satisfied. We have therefore decided to experiment by producing 300 paper-bound copies of one of our more expensive books, "Lectures on Ancient Philosophy," a basic text that should prove helpful to a large number of readers. Due to the size of the book, it will be substantially sewn, and it will have a heavy paper binding with an attractive front cover. Cloth bound copies will, of course, still be available. The book has 514 pages, including index, and is illustrated with twenty symbolic pictures. The paperback price will be \$3.00 (cloth bound, \$6.). We hope our little experiment will serve its purpose of making this material available to students who might not otherwise be able to own the book.

Our library exhibits are receiving much favorable attention, and many friends have expressed their pleasure at being able to view a new group of material each month. We might point out, incidentally, that these displays involve a considerable amount of work -- planning, preparing, and arranging the material. Our entire exhibits program, at our headquarters as well as in local public libraries, has been made possible through the efforts of Elizabeth Connelly and other members of the PRS Friends Committee, who have given faithfully of their time and talents to this activity for several years.

The March Library Exhibit, extending from the 3rd to the 31st, is on the sacred art of Tibet. In a way, this display is a tribute to the sorely afflicted people of Tibet, whose culture is threatened with extermination. No one can see the beautiful works of art of this remote country without realizing the deep spiritual dedication of the natives to their religious and philosophic institutions. We will show gold-bronze figures, illuminated manuscripts of sacred texts, temple paintings, and selected rare books from our extensive collection dealing with Tibet. We hope all those living in the area will keep this exhibit in mind, and recommend it to their friends.

The April exhibit, April 7th to 28th, will be centered around the Easter Season, featuring the story of the Bible from the great Gutenberg Bible of 1450 to contemporary editions by art presses. Each edition will be represented by an original leaf, attractively matted and described in detail. Many of these leaves are works of art in themselves, and collectors often frame them as they would rare pictures and engravings. The wonderful old hand-made paper, the deep black type, the composition of the page, and the insertion of hand-colored initials, are not only reminders of patient and inspired labor, but reveal more clearly than words the devotion of these old craftsmen to the sacred text of Holy Writ. Our exhibit will cover over a thousand years of written and printed Bible leaves. When you attend the lectures, be sure to reserve time for a leisurely study and perusal of these monuments to the glory of the graphic arts and the greater glory of God.

Speaking of the April exhibit -- "The Story of the Bible" -- we would like to bring to your attention that we are planning a special Easter program for Palm Sunday (April 7th). In addition to my regular morning lecture, I will give a talk at 3:00 p.m. on "Parsifal and the Easter Mystery." Our library, gift shop, and offices will be open from 10:00 a.m. until approximately 4:30 on that day, and we invite our out-of-town friends to take advantage of this opportunity to come to our headquarters to spend a pleasant day and strengthen their Easter spirit.

We are happy to announce the formation of a new P.R.S. Local Study Group. This is the Mar Vista Study Group, under the leadership of Mrs. Paula Andree. Those interested in learning more about this group are invited to write to Mrs. Andree at 13011 Venice Blvd., Los Angeles 66. Meetings are planned for the first and third Thursdays of each month, starting April 4th. There is a splendid note of enthusiasm among the group members, and we know that they will have useful and enjoyable meetings. We wish all success to this new group.



I have just been having a fascinating time with the Hyakumanto, a rather formidable word, and I think my findings have been sufficiently interesting to share them with you. The Hyakumanto are the one million pagodas of the Empress Shotoku. The Empress Koken was a devout Buddhist. In fact, some have felt that her piety was excessive, as it resulted in a vast project of religious expansion that threatened the economy of the Japanese Empire. After reigning for a few years, she abdicated and became a Buddhist nun. In 765 A.D., however, she returned to the throne as the Empress Shotoku, the 48th sovereign of the divine line. As a special act of merit, she caused one million Buddhist charms, taken from sections of the Vimala Nirbhasa Sutra, to be printed from hand-carved woodblocks on strips of thin paper, each 2 inches wide and 18 inches long. Following the instructions set forth in the sutra, a small wooden pagoda, about 8 inches high, was prepared for each of these charms. (See accompanying illustration). These miniature towers were distributed to the ten principal Buddhist temples of the Empire, where special rooms were built to store them. The upper central spire of the pagoda lifted out like a stopper, and the dharani, or charm, was rolled tightly and inserted in a small compartment under the spire. As the wooden blocks used to print the charms wore down rather rapidly, at least one hundred blocks were cut to publish the entire edition.

It is reported that six different charms derived from the same sutra can be found in these towers, a number of which have survived. It was due to the zeal of the Empress Shotoku, therefore, that Japan has the honor of having produced the earliest example of printed text known to exist. The concept of printing had been brought to Japan from China, but the oldest dated example of Chinese text printing is dated over 100 years after the pagodas of the Empress Shotoku. The Gutenberg Bible, the first printed book of the West, appeared 680 years after the death of the pious Japanese lady. Incidentally, the charms which she distributed were in the Sanskrit language, transliterated into Chinese characters with approximately the same phonetic value. In trying to atone for her worldly sins, the Empress Shotoku gave the printed word to the world.

This seems to bring us up to date, so we take this opportunity of wishing you a very happy Easter, and to tell you once again that we are ever mindful of your many kindnesses.

Very sincerely yours,

Marilyn P. Hall



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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