

# The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN - JUNE 1974

## The Stairway To Heaven

Dear Friends:



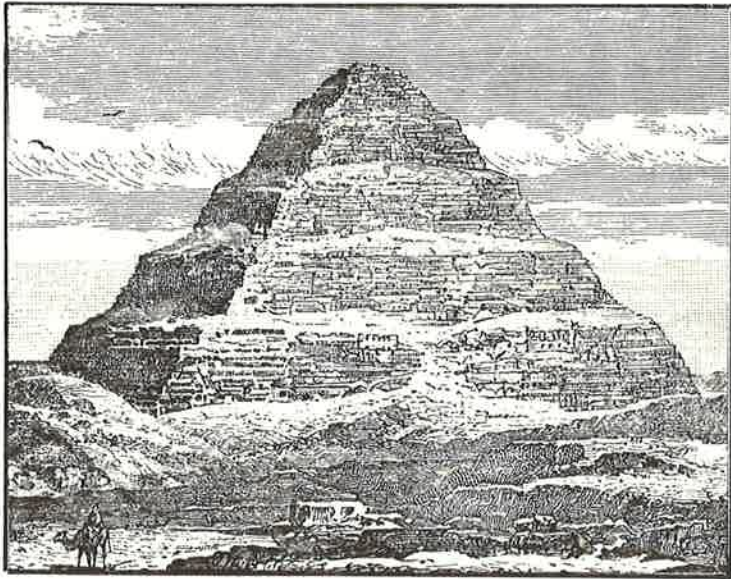
early every tourist to Egypt visits the Pyramids of Giza which are but a short distance from Cairo. Few, however, make the more difficult trip to the Step Pyramid of Sakkara. This is built of terraces which converge toward the apex and is said to be the oldest in the Egyptian area. Actually, step pyramids were relatively common in the Valley of the Euphrates where they were called "ziggurats." One of the most famous of these ziggurats stood in the city of Borsippa. This "holy mountain," as it was called, was described on a clay cylinder written by Nebuchadnezzar and deposited in a corner of the ziggurat of *Birs Nimrod*.

"The Temple of the Seven Spheres, the Tower of Borsip, which a former king had built ... but had not finished its upper part, from remote days had fallen into decay. The channel for drawing off the water had not been properly provided; rain and tempest had washed away its brick; the bricks of the roof were cracked; the bricks of the buildings were washed away into heaps of rubbish. The Pyramid is the Temple of the Heaven and Earth, the seat of Marduk, the chief of the Gods. The place of the Oracle, the spot of His rest, I have ordained in the form of a cupola with shining gold."

Ziggurats or Holy Mounds, usually rose in seven terraces and are referred to in the old writings as "Houses of the Seven Climates" and ascending from the bottom, the terraces were of different colors to represent the Seven Lights of the Earth: the Sun, Moon and five Planets with their orbits. According to Rawlinson, the terraces were of the following colors in ascending order: black (Saturn), red (Mars), gold (the Sun), pale yellow (Venus), azure blue (Mercury), orange (Jupiter), and the top silver-plated (the Moon).

In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante reverses this order. He follows the Ptolemaic arrangement ascending from the lowest heaven, the Moon, to the seventh and highest heaven, Saturn. He then assigns an eighth heaven (the fixed stars); a ninth heaven, the great cosmic Sun; and the tenth heaven, the Empyrean (the Abode of God). (Note: The above references are from the *Temples of the Orient and Their Message* by Lady E.A. Gordon.





The Step Pyramid of Sakkara

Most ancient peoples believed that the superior regions of creation were above the earth, whereas the inferior parts were subterranean as suggested in *Dante's Inferno*. In the Great Pyramid of Giza the interior rooms are arranged in a more or less vertical order, evidently to symbolize the three major divisions of the theological cosmos of antiquity -- heaven, earth and hell. It has been suggested that tombs were the earliest forms of Temples. They represented gateways leading from the realms of mortality through death to eternal life. The souls of the dead were regarded as powerful spirits, guardians of the living; and it was assumed that in the afterlife the deceased person would continue the type of existence he had known in this world. In China the Jade Cicada was placed in the mouth of the dead to signify by the fluttering of its wings, the

breath of eternal life. The scarab was the Egyptian version of the cicada and representations of it were placed over the heart of the deceased person, and drawings of this insect adorn the mummy case and the mortuary apartment.

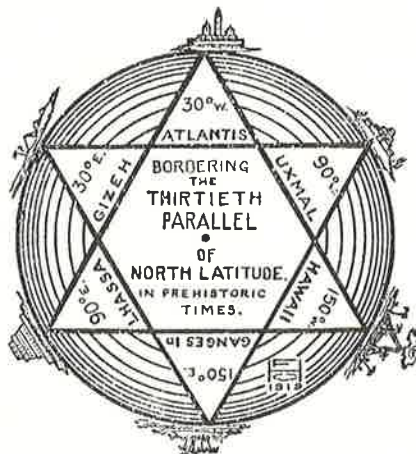
There is a strange conflict in the ancient concept of death, due probably to an unreconciled mingling of several different streams of belief. Generally, however, the soul -- to escape from the realm of mortal illusion -- must ascend the ladder of seven rungs, the upper end of which pointed to the Constellation of the Great Bear, the Jewel of Seven Stars. This concept formed part of the initiation rites of the Persian God, Mythras, which were celebrated under the city of Rome. It was a Mythraic stone of the Sun God slaying the Bull (overcoming the constellation of Taurus) found in Britain, that gave us the word "Oxford." The Step Pyramids were therefore ladders leading upward into the skies. Some of them reached a height of over 300 feet and among these ziggurats or symbolic mountains, must be included the Tower of Babel. There is a legend that says that those who reached the top of this tower could hear the angels singing in Paradise.

Towers or mounds certainly originated in the worship of mountains, and everywhere among the religions of mankind, there are sacred mountains. Some of these, like Olympus and Kailas (Mt. Meru), are actually physical peaks as was Mount Sinai where Moses received The Ten Commandments. It is probable that volcanic mountains were held in special reverence as they have been in all the countries bordering on the "Ring of Fire" surrounding the Pacific Ocean. In the Babylonian myth of Ishtar and Tammuz, the order of descent through the seven regions is clearly indicated. Tammuz, the culture hero and a vegetation deity, dies and descends into the Underworld. Ishtar, the Queen of Heaven, then descends along the seven orbits of the ziggurat in search of Tammuz in order that she may restore him to life. As she descends she must pass through the seven gates and each of the gatekeepers demands payment in the form of one of the adornments that Ishtar wears. When she reaches the Underworld, therefore, all of the symbols of her Divinity have been taken away from her. She does rescue Tammuz, but from this point on, the legend falls into the complexities of Babylonian theology. The implication is that Ishtar signifies both the Universal Spirit and the Human Spirit. The Spirit descending into embodiment is deprived of its spiritual powers (adornments) as a result of the physical body gradually obscuring the activities of consciousness. When the

spirit has transmuted or redeemed the body, the two deities return to the upper world and the adornments of Ishtar are returned to her.

The Masonic writer, Frank C. Higgins, in his book *Ancient Freemasonry* includes an ingenious and unusual diagram to support his belief that the great monumental centers of antiquity were distributed around the earth according to a definite formula. He writes, "For instance, a line straight through the earth on degrees of east and west longitude, would pass from Lhasa, Thibet, to New Orleans, but the present delta of the Mississippi was either hopeless swamp or far out in the Gulf of Mexico in previous times, whereas the closest point of terra firma immediately South is on the peninsula of Yucatan, ..."

Higgins shows the points of a six-pointed star bordering the 30th Parallel of North Latitude. The first point at the top coincides with the assumed location of Atlantis; the second with the Mayan city of Uxmal; the third with the Ganges River in India; the fourth with Lhasa in Tibet; and the fifth with the cathedral at Giza. It is a fascinating speculation and may coincide with the physical planet, Earth, like the rings of an onion, and a field of the earth radiating into bands. Life descending to from the outer band of the earth's magnetic field.



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Ancient star-gazers built natural hills, or on their ziggurats and before the invention of the telescope were already representing Venus as a crescent, and giving the body of the Deity representing Saturn a surrounding ring. By observation and careful recording they unfolded the art of mundane astrology. Thus the ziggurat helped ancient man to orient himself in time and space. Astrology and theology were closely associated as is testified to by the Druidic rituals at Stonehenge and Carnac in Brittany. Even physically therefore, the Step Pyramids are stairways leading up to the greater universe which man discovered, sought to understand and foolishly believed he could conquer. These were the monuments set up in Egypt, the altars of unknown Gods and roads of light leading upward from the dark house of hidden places which we call our "mortal world."

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Perhaps the above meanderings will have special interest as we approach the Summer Solstice which occurs about the 20th of June. At this time the sun has reached the northern extremity of its orbit bringing summer to our hemisphere. To our remote ancestors the annual rebirth of the sovereign sun was a time of great rejoicing, and was appropriately a revelation of the Divine Plan to bring all life to physical and spiritual maturity. We hope that you are planning an interesting and relaxing vacation, and that while resting we can remind you to continue growing.

Always most sincerely,

*Mary P. Hall*

The following list of books are included in Mr. Hall's list of recommended reading and have long been rare and out of print. These books may be ordered directly from The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. (address on page one). Please add 35¢ for handling on orders of less than \$5.00, and Sales Tax is to be included by California residents. NOTE: Prices are subject to change without notice.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
Saturn, The Reaper	Alan Leo	(P) \$ 2.00
Selected Sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom	Edward Conze	(P) 2.75
Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot	Trans. Suzuki (Shaku)	(P) 2.50
The Signature of All Things	Jacob Boehme	5.00
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The Spirit of Masonry	Foster Bailey	(P) 1.75
Table of Houses for Northern Latitudes	Raphael	3.50
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Things Japanese	Mock Joya	15.00
This Man From Lebanon	Young	4.50
Thomas Taylor, The Platonist Selected Writings	Intro. K. Raine & Harper	8.50
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Tibetan Yoga & Secret Doctrine	Evans-Wentz	(P) 2.95
The Training of A Zen Buddhist Monk	D. T. Suzuki	6.00
Two Essays on Analytical Psychology #7	C. G. Jung	9.00

BOOKS BY MANLY P. HALL

The Guru	\$ 5.25	Collected Writings, Vol. I	\$ 6.50
Pathways of Philosophy	6.50	Words to the Wise	6.50
Buddhism and Psychotherapy	6.50	Questions and Answers	6.50
The Way of Heaven	5.00	Journey in Truth	6.50

