

Book Reviews

***The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos: Humanity and the New Story*, by Brian Swimme.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001. Paperback, 112 pages. US\$12.00. Also available in video for US\$59.95 by calling 1-800-273-3720.

In *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, Brian Swimme has provided a clear and yet profound introduction to what cosmologists are learning about the physical universe in which we live. Those engaged in esoteric study may often feel that they sense the energetic dynamism that forms the Life in which we live and move and have our being, but without any tangible proof of its existence. Swimme articulates that same reality but links it to the findings of contemporary science. He describes in rich and evocative language the ongoing evolution and wisdom of the cosmos.

The text of this book is structured around the question of where is the center of reality, the heart of the cosmos. The answer from Swimme is more than the scientific explanation of Existence first materializing 15 billion light-years from Earth. He also describes how each of us is living at the center of the cosmos. He helps us learn to experience our reality in a manner that is personally transformative. He provides a context for linking occult laws with scientific phenomena, giving examples such as the Sun's extravagant daily sacrifice of transforming four million tons of itself into light that we might live.

Often our lives become segmented, with the exoteric aspects seemingly unconnected to our esoteric experience. Swimme provides us with a way of engaging with our physical reality from a deeply sacred perspective. It is not possible to read this small gem and emerge with one's worldview unchanged.

Dr. Brian Swimme is a professor on the faculty of Philosophy, Cosmology and Consciousness at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

His research focuses on the evolutionary dynamics of the universe, the relationship between scientific cosmology and more traditional religious visions, the cultural implications of the new evolutionary epic, and the role of humanity in the unfolding story of Earth and cosmos. He has authored a number of books including *The Universe Is a Green Dragon* and *The Universe Story* (in collaboration with Thomas Berry) and has produced several video series including *Canticle to the Cosmos* and *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*. Swimme travels regularly to speak on cosmology and ecology at conferences and organizations, including the United Nations, UNESCO, and the State of the World Forum.

Dorothy Riddle
Vancouver, Canada.

***How Wide the Heart: The Roots of Peace in Palestine and Israel*, by Marko and Ana Pogačnik.** Lindisfarne Books, 2006. Paperback, 202 pages. US\$20.00.

Father and daughter, Marko and Ana Pogačnik have collaborated in writing several books, all of which pertain to the healing of the earth's landscape. Marko, an intuitive, has developed a profound sense of communication with the earth elementals. He discusses in lectures and books the tragedy that has befallen these evolutionary beings through neglect, thoughtlessness and destruction by human beings. A native of Slovenia, Marko studied sculpture and landscape art. With his daughter Ana, an archeologist and noted pianist, they have conducted many seminars and restorative projects designed to bring communication and understanding between communities and businesses and these beings which are eager for this healing process. This reviewer looks forward to hearing Marko Pogačnik speak at a seminar on Healing the Earth and Ourselves, sponsored by

SteinerBooks and Spiritual Research in New York City, March 2008.

How Wide the Heart describes a pilgrimage led by Marko and Ana Pogačnik in 2001. They and others interested in geomancy, and looking for ways to achieve lasting peace, traveled along the archetypal path that leads from the Pyramids across the Sinai Peninsula to Jerusalem. Along the way, they visited the holy sites of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. By meditating and tuning in to the vital energies of those ancient sites, they were able to decipher the emotional and spiritual dimensions of each location and put into place impulses for healing and regeneration.

The problems of Palestine and Israel, from this “heart center of the world,” are given a new examination in this book whereby one no longer feels helpless to “do” anything to promote peace and understanding. The analysis of conflicts is not so new perhaps, but the meditations which accompany the chapters in Part I and also the ones in Part II, written by Ana Pogačnik, are very deeply moving.

For many years I have led meditations, often about our heart nature. But these, coming as they do from a seemingly hopeless part of our planet, have lifted my spirit and inspired me at a deeper level. One quote is particularly evocative:

We cannot connect with the heart's energy and divine love out of fear of sin. Fear and eternal love have such different vibrations that they cannot find each other and never meet... Only through the heart and out of purest love can we experience the infinite divine power for which we are longing. [p. 112]

Centuries of religious heritage which have controlled us through our guilt or separateness, no matter whether Judaism, Christianity or Islam, do not serve us. The Pogačniks' connection with the spirits of the landscape as well as heavenly ones makes this book most valid in interpreting our heart's best interest. I recommend it for all concerned for the Earth and its myriad lives.

Sylvia Lagergren
Johnson City, Tennessee

“Freemasonry” and Ritual Work. The Misraim Service: Texts and Documents from the Cognitive-Ritual Section of the Esoteric School 1904-1919, by Rudolf Steiner and others. Introduction by Christopher Bamford; translated by John Wood. SteinerBooks, 2007. Paperback, 569 pages. US\$35.00.

It is widely known that Rudolf Steiner was appointed head of the newly constituted German Section of the Theosophical Society in 1902 and that, two years later, then-president Annie Besant asked him to lead the Esoteric Society for Germany and Austria. Within a few years, tensions developed between Steiner and the Theosophical Society that eventually led to a permanent split. In 1912 Steiner established his own organization, the Anthroposophical Society.

Most of us grew up viewing Rudolf Steiner as one of several influential individuals—others being Helena Roerich and Alice Bailey—whose roots lay in Blavatskian Theosophy but who chose for various reasons to follow their own paths. Certainly Steiner's esoteric teachings owed much to the earlier work of Helena Blavatsky and other first-generation Theosophists, albeit westernized and brought into closer alignment with Christianity. What many of us did not know was the extent of Steiner's connections with Masonic groups in Europe and his incorporation of Masonic ritual into the work of his Esoteric Society.

The recently published *“Freemasonry” and Ritual Work* is the product of an ongoing research effort sponsored by SteinerBooks to collect, translate (or retranslate), comment upon, and publish both the well-known speeches and writings of Rudolf Steiner and also his previously little-known works. This book provides a wealth of historical information on one of the outstanding esotericists of the last 150 years. It is a must-read for all who are fascinated by the evolution of western esotericism.

Documents reproduced in the book show that in 1905 Steiner and his future wife Marie von Sivers formed an association with the Order of Ancient Freemasons of the Memphis and Misraim Rites. The arrangement permitted Steiner

to form his own lodge, *Mystica Aeterna*, in Berlin. It was understood that inductees into the lodge would come primarily from the German Section of the Theosophical Society, and *Mystica Aeterna* became the “Misraim Service” of the Esoteric School.

Rudolf Steiner adapted existing Masonic rituals for initiation into the various grades and for other purposes, but he also developed new ones based on his own insights. As was customary in Masonic lodges, participants were sworn to preserve the secrecy of all rituals in use. After the Anthroposophical Society severed its connection with the Theosophical Society in 1913, some former members betrayed their oaths. In response Steiner announced:

Because of the betrayal it has become necessary to change our ritual in such a way that—while preserving the meaning of the main points—the rituals will have a different wording than that previously employed, so that they will not sound in unison with those of the others. [p. 144]

Little more than a year later, when World War I broke out, *Mystica Aeterna* ceased opera-

tions. Certain rituals were developed for the Christian Community, founded in 1922 to encourage religious renewal, but they were characteristically different from those previously used in the lodge.

Clearly, Rudolf Steiner sought to establish a link between Anthroposophy and the western esoteric tradition as it had been preserved through Freemasonry. However Marie Sivers Steiner denied that her husband had ever been initiated into the Craft. Writing in 1934 she explained:

Rudolf Steiner’s spiritual science, which is not restricted to secret circles nor practiced from the point of view of power politics but is available to all people, will be accepted in the consciousness of the present day. [p. 121]

Steiner, who is remembered for the breadth of his esoteric teachings, for his pioneering work in education and biodynamic agriculture, and for many other achievements, died 30 March 1925 in Dornach, Switzerland.

Editorial Staff

