

Occult Orders in Western Esotericism

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Abstract

This article presents a brief history of occult orders in the western esoteric tradition. The ancient mysteries are mentioned, but emphasis is placed on medieval fraternities, Rosicrucian and Masonic orders, and a number of modern orders. Comments are made about the Theosophical Society and secretive orders in the Church of Rome, which lie on the fringe of the topic area but shed valuable light on the “mainstream” occult orders.

The article attempts to generalize from the accounts of individual occult orders to larger truths. Patterns of similarity are identified across a broad spectrum of occult orders, even in sharply contrasting historical and other contexts. Such patterns, which include secrecy, discipline, the quest for self-transformation, and the use of ritual, are important to our understanding of western esotericism. They are noted herein and will be explored in more detail in a subsequent article.

Every effort has been made to validate descriptions of the various orders, yet the inherent secrecy of occult orders complicates research, and available information—particularly about the older orders—may be fragmentary or even inaccurate. Some famous occult orders may have existed only in legend. Yet, along with historically factual orders, they may still educate and inspire and thus serve Hierarchical Purpose.

Introduction

The western esoteric tradition can be traced from the ancient mysteries of Egypt, Israel and Greece through the early twentieth century, by which time cross-fertilization with its South Asian cousin was creating the robust modern esotericism we know today. During the Common Era, western esotericism was expressed in the Merkabah mysticism and

Kabbalah of Judaism and in the sacraments, mysticism, and mystical and speculative theology of Christianity. More relevant to our main theme it was also expressed in numerous occult orders, fraternities, lodges and societies that developed in Europe inside and outside the framework of institutional religion.

The term “occultism” has a range of meanings within esotericism and an unsavory connotation in popular usage. For present purposes it is defined as a subcategory of esotericism concerned with the purposeful transfer of energy from one level of reality to another in accordance with universal, but little-known, laws.¹ This definition qualifies neither the worthiness of intent nor the impulse by which the transfer or energy is accomplished. Implicit, however, is the assumption that the discovery of applicable laws and practical application may require dedicated effort and time.

Occultism is morally neutral; practitioners can apply it for good or evil and, correspondingly, draw upon higher or lower powers to do so. The expressions “right-“ and “left-hand path” date back at least to the thirteenth-century, when a text in the Christian chivalric tradition offered this explanation:

For the right-hand road you must read the way of Jesus Christ, the way of compassion, in which the knights of Our Lord travel by night and by day in the darkness of

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the body and in the soul's light. In the left-hand road you perceive the way of sinners, which holds dire peril for those who choose it.²

More generally we would say that occultism of the right-hand path is concerned with spiritual development and the betterment of humankind; that of the left-hand path is motivated by self-interest, ambition, or the desire to control or harm others.

We have spoken of occult *fraternities*, and the gender specificity is justified, given the history of our topic. Women played significant roles in the ancient mysteries. Porphyry (c.234–c.305) wrote of the *Mellissae*, priestesses of the Greek goddess Demeter; and the temple priestesses and Vestal Virgins of Rome may well have engaged in occult activity. But few opportunities were available to women during most of the Common Era.

Contemplative religious orders nourished women's mystical aspirations, but nuns were denied opportunities to administer the sacraments—which qualify as occult practices, properly understood. Outside the church, women were excluded even from mystical pursuits. No occult organizations of the kind discussed herein extended membership to women until the eighteenth century, and most still do not. The rule of the Knights Templar, which typified prevailing attitudes in the Middle Ages, warned: “The company of women is a perilous thing, for through them the ancient demon denied us the right to live in Paradise; and therefore women may not be received as sisters into the Order . . . and we believe it is dangerous for any religious man to look too much at women's faces.”³

Men who belonged to occult fraternities often occupied prominent positions in society and enjoyed public respect. Women with similar aspirations—whose only avenues of expression drew upon pre-Christian earth religions—were castigated as “witches.” Asymmetry of opportunity between men and women was stark and unyielding.

Occult orders, by their very nature, involve secrecy. It served multiple purposes but was essential throughout much of the Common Era

due to the threat of persecution. Individual churchmen and political figures may have dabbled in the occult, but with few exceptions, religious and civil institutions perceived occult orders as threatening and made vigorous, even fanatical, efforts to suppress them. Once exposed, members could expect imprisonment, torture, and grisly death. Accordingly, occult fraternities met behind locked doors or in remote locations. Initiation into occult orders and promotion to higher degrees required candidates to swear oaths of secrecy, violation of which typically carried the death penalty. Secret signs, passwords, gestures and grips allowed members to recognize one another. As secrecy increased, so did outside suspicion, making secrecy all the more necessary.

The secrecy of occult orders makes research difficult. Except in the rare instances in which initiatory oaths were violated, information about the teachings and practices of particular orders can only be gleaned indirectly. Equally difficult may be determining who belonged to an order, when it came into existence, or even whether it actually existed. Occult orders' mythologies often stretched back thousands of years before the orders were founded. Connections might be claimed with notable orders of antiquity or unbroken lineage from personages like Melchizedek, Abraham, Orpheus, Enoch or Thoth. Auras of mystery discouraged critical investigation, and leaders could deflect awkward questions by appealing to the secrecy with which charters, patents, teachings, symbols or rites had been entrusted to them.

Many stories have been told and novels written about occult orders, some by authors who clearly had inside knowledge. While the stories are fascinating, we can assume that descriptions of important rituals or teachings were fictionalized. Furthermore, some occult orders may never have existed beyond the literary imagination. Repetition and elaboration of stories fed romantic instincts and encouraged credibility, even when historical evidence argued against factual reality. Whether we should be concerned at all with fictitious occult orders is a matter to be discussed.

Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties, reasonably reliable information is available. This

article summarizes what is known about the most significant occult orders in the western esoteric tradition and places them in their respective contexts. The Theosophical Society is included in the discussion because of its early associations with Freemasonry, even though it soon developed a different organizational structure and drew more upon eastern than western esoteric traditions. Comments are also made about institutions that operate within the Church of Rome. Whether or not they can be considered “occult,” they mimic the secrecy, discipline, and organizational style of the occult orders and may enhance our understanding of the latter, as well as being of interest in their own right.

In addition to examining individual occult orders, the article seeks to identify patterns with a degree of universality. Such patterns include secrecy, discipline in rigidly hierarchical organizations, the extensive use of ritual, and self-transformation through graded initiations. Coherent themes, extending over multiple orders in radically different historical and social contexts can provide insights into the nature, objectives and merit of western esotericism as a whole. They are noted herein and will be explored in greater detail, along with coherent patterns of belief, in a second article.

The Ancient Mysteries

The mysteries were “secret religious groups composed of individuals who decided, through personal choice, to be initiated into the profound realities of a deity.”⁴ Their origin is uncertain. Some authorities claim that they developed from primitive community or tribal rituals. Others claim that they flourished in Atlantis and were brought to Egypt by migrants ahead of cataclysms that destroyed the island continent.⁵ Some esotericists assert that the mysteries were established by evolved beings charged with overseeing the evolution of human consciousness. A closely related assertion is that the mysteries embodied the ageless wisdom said to underlie all religions, philosophies, social movements, and educational systems.

Golden Age of the Mysteries

Much has been written about the Egyptian rites of Osiris, Isis Amen-Rā, and other deities; the temple rites of Israel; and the Greek mysteries. More limited information is available about the Essene school on Mount Carmel⁶ and the mystery school said to have been established by the Druids of pre-Roman Britain.⁷

The mysteries of Eleusis, in ancient Greece, were built around myths related in Homer’s *Hymn to Demeter*. An annual spring festival celebrated the return of Demeter’s daughter Persephone from the underworld. During festivals of the Dionysian, or Bacchic, mysteries, intoxicants and trance-inducing dance and music eroded social inhibitions, reportedly leading to mass orgies. But not all cult festivals involved sexual excess. At the spring festival of the Greco-Roman goddess Cybele devotees reportedly worked themselves into a frenzy and castrated themselves.⁸ Among much else the Cybele cult set a precedent for the self-mortification practices of some later occult orders.

The mysteries commonly were divided into the lesser and greater mysteries. An eighteenth-century writer contrasted the drama of the lesser mysteries with the mystical introspection of the greater. The latter, in his words, “obscurely intimated, by mystic and splendid visions, the felicity of the soul both here and hereafter, when purified from the defilements of a material nature, and constantly elevated to the realities of intellectual vision.”⁹ At Eleusis the greater mysteries allegedly were dedicated to Demeter, the lesser to Persephone.¹⁰

The lesser and greater mysteries also were distinguished by access to the rites and the level of secrecy in which they were conducted. The lesser mysteries may have involved relatively large numbers of people, with associated festivities open to the general public.¹¹ Colorful outdoor processions were led by priests claiming, or endowed by the community with, special powers and responsibilities.¹² Banners, sacred objects or symbols, or sacrificial items

were displayed and venerated. The great majority of onlookers no doubt enjoyed the spectacles but may have understood little of their meaning.

The greater mysteries were restricted to a small elite who had graduated from the lesser mysteries. They were enacted behind temple doors, in caves, or elsewhere away from the public gaze. Efforts were made, not only to protect the content of the greater mysteries, but even to ensure that the masses were unaware of their existence.

Secret rites included admission to the priesthood, promotion to higher ranks, and transmittal of sacerdotal authority to successive generations. Initiation required long training, ordeals to test aptitude and commitment, and administration of the customary oaths of secrecy. It often took the form of a ritual death, followed by “resurrection” to a life offering new insights and powers.¹³ In what we understand to have been typical initiation ceremonies, candidates were entombed for three days, during which they went into the deepest sleep. The hierophant (from the Greek: *hiera*, “holy,” and *phainein*, “to show”), or *mystagogue* (from *mystagomos*, “initiator into mysteries”), awakened them with a touch of the rod of power, or *thyrsus*. Initiates would then be given words or gestures of power, shown sacred objects or symbols, and introduced to the received wisdom of the particular initiatory grade.

We often speak of ancient mystery *schools*, but we should not envision classrooms, instructors and examinations; even library study was a late development. Human consciousness at the earliest times of the mysteries was focused at an emotional level: “Rarely . . . could [esoteric truths] be given in words. Neither the language nor the mentality of the recipients permitted this. Therefore, dramatic presentations and portrayals of the truths were composed After that, a highly formalized system of ceremonies became established.”¹⁴ Elaborate psychodramas were used to frighten, impress or inspire participants. When mental ability reached an adequate level, students had to memorize long passages from prescribed texts. Much of the content was allegorical and only hinted at esoteric truths; full understanding

depended on students’ own insights. The mystery schools may never have encouraged, or permitted, critical analysis or other aspects of research as we know it today.

Decline of the Mysteries

The Axial Age, conventionally dated from about 800 to 200 BCE, led to loss of interest in the old deities and a gradual decline of the ancient mysteries. “Eventually, the supply of candidates ran out, the stream of aspirants ceased to flow, and at last on a certain recorded day, the Rites of Eleusis were closed, the talismans and furniture removed, and the Rituals performed no more.”¹⁵

Philosophy, some of it agnostic, came to be valued over traditional religion, particularly in Greece. Yet the mysteries survived for several centuries and adapted to new environments. For example, the mysticism of Pythagoras incorporated sacred mathematics and music theory. To enhance mystical ability he insisted on strict asceticism, including vegetarianism, though we have no evidence that Pythagoras encouraged self-mutilation. Nor is it recorded that any kind of animal sacrifice was offered.

Socrates took an interest in the mysteries. According to Plato’s *Phaedo*, he stressed the importance of initiation: “[I]t seems those who established our mystic rites were no fools; they spoke in truth with a hidden meaning long ago when they said that whoever is uninitiated and unconsecrated when he comes to the house of Hades will lie in mud, but the purified and consecrated . . . will dwell with gods. . . . There are . . . many who carry the thyrsus but the Bacchantes are few.”¹⁶ *Bacchantes* were priests or votaries of the god Bacchus, also known as Dionysus.

The mysteries regained vigor during the Hellenistic period “and proved very popular among people seeking new and more satisfying religious experiences.”¹⁷ Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c.20 BCE–c.50 CE) described in favorable terms the rites of the Therapeutae of Egypt who offered healing therapies.¹⁸ Also the Greco-Romans imported foreign gods into their pantheons, and new cults developed around them.

Mithraism

Mithraism, the cult of the Roman man-god Mithras, can be viewed as a foreign import. Persian influence is evident in its beliefs and symbolism, but no organizational lineage seems to connect Mithraism with the much older cult of the Persian god Mithra.

More importantly Mithraism represented a transitional form between the ancient mysteries and the occult orders of later times. It provided men in the administrative and military classes of the Roman Empire with experiences and opportunities somewhat similar to those of modern Freemasonry. Mithraic temples, or *mithraea* (singular: *mithraeum*), resembled caves or grottos. Archeologists have found hundreds of *mithraea*, some well-preserved, located in Roman settlements from Asia Minor, to North Africa, to the British Isles and Scandinavia.¹⁹

The Greek historian Plutarch (c.46–120 CE) recorded that Mithraists “offered strange sacrifices . . . at Olympus, where they celebrated secret rites or mysteries.”²⁰ Among the rites were initiation into the order and promotion to higher degrees. Before a candidate could be initiated, he had to “show himself holy and steadfast by undergoing several graduated tests.”²¹ A series of frescoes in a *mithraeum* at Capura Vetere, Italy, shows the stages of an initiation ritual, which suggest a symbolic execution.²²

The Mithraic order had seven degrees: *Corax* (Raven), *Nymphus* (Lamp), *Miles* (Soldier), *Leo* (Lion), *Perses* (Persian), *Heliodromus* (Sun Runner), and *Pater* (Father). Each was associated with a planet: Corax with Mercury, Miles with Mars, Pater with Saturn, and so on; Heliodromus naturally was associated with the Sun. The higher degrees were reserved for the priesthood, and Pater seems to have been reserved for the spiritual leaders of important *mithraea*.²³

Mithras was said to have been born from a rock, and iconography shows him born holding a torch and a dagger. The one symbolized his role as the bringer of light, and the other identified him as a warrior.²⁴ The adult Mithras, “the Invincible,” was depicted in statuary and

relief sculpture slaying a bull after a long struggle. The image may have had astrological significance, but it may also depict renunciation of the physical life to seek the higher life of the spirit. Sculptures and frescoes often displayed wheat and grapes emerging from the bull’s wounded body. Mithras and his disciples are said to have celebrated his victory over the bull at a “last supper” before ascending to heaven in a fiery chariot. Initiates participated in a commemorative meal which included bread and wine, the man-made products of wheat and grapes.²⁵

The prominence of the bull in Mithraic iconography provides evidence of Mithraism’s ancient roots. The bull was a symbol of the Taurian Age, which began in the fifth millennium BCE and ended in the third; it was especially revered in the Minoan religion of ancient Crete. The initiatory grade of “Persian” suggests associations with Mithraism’s ancestor religion, yet Persian mythology never depicted Mithra slaying a bull.²⁶

Mithraism and Christianity developed concurrently, early in the Common Era, and were major competitors for the hearts and minds of Roman citizens. Because of the similarity of their rituals, particularly those involving bread and wine, arguments arose as to which one copied the other; more likely both were modeled on common antecedents. When the Roman Empire became Christianized, Mithraism was persecuted and many *mithraea* were destroyed. By the end of the fourth-century CE Mithraism had virtually disappeared. Yet its seven initiatory grades found their way into later occult orders, including modern Rosicrucianism.²⁷

Christian Mysteries?

Many esoteric writers have declared that Jesus Christ studied in an Egyptian mystery school. For example, one writer claimed that he went twice to Egypt, the first time to study at an advanced school “based on the science of communication with the higher worlds [and] the esoteric secrets of astronomy, chemistry, sound, and architecture.”²⁸ Various writers have placed Jesus with the Essenes, even in India and Tibet.²⁹ Others dispute such claims.

Within the melting pot of early Christianity, groups in the Greek-speaking world believed that Christ had founded a new mystery religion. Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.215 CE) allegedly spoke of Christianity thus: “O truly sacred mysteries! O pure light! In the blaze of the torches I have a vision of heaven and of God. I become one by initiation.”³⁰ The early church preserved practices of exclusiveness and secrecy harking back to the ancient mysteries. *Catechumens*, candidates for baptism, were dismissed prior to the “Mass of the Faithful.” In Eastern Orthodox churches the Mass, or “Liturgy,” is still celebrated behind a screen, or *iconostasis*. Moreover, the sacraments are referred to as the “Mysteries.” In both West and East baptism, confirmation, and holy orders are described as initiatory sacraments, and baptism is the traditional gateway to participation in the Eucharist.³¹

More generally, the ancient mysteries, as we understand them, came to an end with the dawning of the Piscean Age and the growth of the Christian church.³² Evidently, they had served their purpose. But important features of the mysteries carried over into the new occult orders that emerged. Also institutions were created by the church that shared significant characteristics with their counterparts outside.

Medieval Fraternities

Although the Mithraic Order collapsed in the fifth century, men of influence continued to come together in fraternities throughout the Middle Ages. Hard facts about them are difficult to come by, and determining the extent of occult activity is even harder. Occult practices may have been pursued alongside military, political, and other activities. The Vehmic courts of Westphalia, whose activities peaked in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, combined occult and judicial purposes; the courts conducted trials, issued sentences, and executed condemned persons—including political enemies—in secret.³³ Some modern fraternal orders, whose purposes are purely social, professional or political, cloak their initiation rituals in auras of occultism, and their medieval ancestors may have done likewise.

Knights of the Round Table

Certain writers have claimed that The Knights of the Round Table were initiates in an occult military fraternity, but whether they ever existed is unclear. King Arthur may have been a chieftain who rallied the Celts against the invading Anglo-Saxons in the fifth or sixth century, but contemporary historians never mentioned him.³⁴ The wizard Merlin was based in part on a Welsh prophet, Myrddin Wyllt, who may have been mentally ill. The Knights of the Round Table, the beautiful Queen Guinevere, and Arthur’s death at the hands of the evil knight Mordred were products of Celtic folklore, suitably Christianized and embellished by Norman and troubadour cultures.

The Arthurian legends gained wide popularity in Plantagenet England and (what is now) France.³⁵ The first significant compilation was Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* (“History of the Kings of Britain”), completed in 1138. *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, an anonymous work, was published in the early thirteenth century. The most complete collection is Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* (“The Death of Arthur”), published in 1485.

The Arthurian legends soon became interwoven with those of the Holy Grail, which may also be of Celtic origin. The first written reference to the Grail was the poem *Perceval, le Conte du Graal* (“The Story of the Grail”) by Chrétien de Troyes, a twelfth-century French trouvère. The legend was elaborated in two poems by Robert de Boron *Joseph d’Arimathie* (“Joseph of Arimathea”) and *Merlin*, written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Over the course of a century of telling and retelling, the Grail evolved from a serving bowl into the chalice from which Christ drank at the Last Supper and in which Joseph of Arimathea caught Jesus’ blood at the crucifixion.³⁶ Joseph brought the Grail to Glastonbury, in Roman Britain.

Joseph’s descendants, the Fisher Kings, formed a dynasty of Grail keepers. Eventually the Holy Grail was lost, and the Knights of the Round Table set out to recover it. Gawain and

Lancelot failed because they had sinned, the latter by “sinful commerce” with Guinevere.³⁷ Only Perceval, Bors and Galahad achieved their goal. Galahad, most noble and pure, finally vanished before his fellows’ eyes as a great multitude of angels carried his soul up to heaven.³⁸ Although Lancelot failed in the quest for the Grail, he had his days of glory, healing Sir Urry of the wounds caused by a curse, “while so many noble kings and knights have failed,” and rescuing his queen from the stake after she was convicted of adultery.³⁹

The Arthurian and Grail legends do not provide a coherent account of events; rather they offer a tapestry of esoteric symbols designed to enlighten those who read and ponder them. The symbolic quality of the Arthurian and Grail legends was understood even in the Middle Ages. For example, *The Quest for the Holy Grail* explains that the Round Table symbolized the celestial spheres and the zodiac.⁴⁰

Chivalric Orders of the High Middle Ages

The military religious order of the Knights Templar was historically factual. Perhaps the Templars absorbed some of the mystique of the Arthurian knights, but their organizational structure and discipline may have been modeled on the Ismaili Assassins of the Middle East.⁴¹ Discipline was absolute; members swore unquestioned obedience to the Master of the Order, who reported to the pope alone. The Templars adopted the equal-armed red cross as their emblem.

The Knights Templar were founded in 1120, ostensibly to protect pilgrims en route to the Holy Land. King Baldwin of Jerusalem granted the knights quarters in the royal palace on the Temple Mount, which had been captured from the Saracens two decades earlier.⁴² The Templars played important roles in the Crusades and an even more important role as the bankers of Europe, transporting gold from country to country and making loans to kings and nobles. In the process the order became immensely wealthy, self-confident, and distrusted.⁴³

The Knights Templars’ initiation rites may have resembled those of the Mithraic Order,

the Assassins, and modern Freemasonry. Meetings reportedly were held in guarded rooms, and any member who disclosed the order’s secrets was imprisoned or killed.⁴⁴ But whether they could be regarded as an occult order has long been debated. The Templars probably came into contact with esoteric teachings in the Middle East, and the Temple Mount allegedly lay above the ruins of the Temple of Solomon, greatly revered in Freemasonry. Yet there is little clear evidence that they brought occult knowledge back to the West or put it into practice.

In 1307 the Templars were charged with heresy, idolatry, blasphemy, “obscene rituals,” and satanic practices. A 127-count indictment alleged, among much else, that the Templars denied the divinity of Christ, their initiation rituals required candidates to spit upon or trample the crucifix, and they worshiped a head with magical powers.⁴⁵ The charges were almost certainly fabricated by King Philip IV of France. His court was bankrupt, he coveted the Templars’ wealth, and suppression of the order offered a convenient way to seize it. Pope Clement V, who was Philip’s lackey, tried to ensure that the Templars were given proper trials but was unable to do so. Confessions were extorted under torture and many knights were burned at the stake. The Knights were suppressed throughout Christendom. Those in England fared somewhat better than their counterparts on the continent of Europe, and it is said that a few escaped to Scotland to form the seeds of Freemasonry, which emerged a century or more later.

Also historically factual was the Noble Order of the Garter, founded by King Edward III in about 1348 and dedicated “to the honor of Almighty God, the glorious Virgin Saint Mary and St George the Martyr.”⁴⁶ The order expressed the chivalric ideals of the age, and its legends connect it with the Arthurian knights and also with the Crusades and the Knights Templar. Its emblem, the cross of St George {Figure 1(b)}, closely resembled the Templars’ equal-armed cross.⁴⁷ The Order of the Garter survives today, with the British monarch as its sovereign head. Appointment to the order is one of the highest honors conveyed in

the United Kingdom. Certainly the Order of the Garter is no longer an occult order. But in its original form, it may have had occult associations, and its symbolism seems to have influenced later occult fraternities.

Hermeticism

Hermeticism combined a Neoplatonic worldview with esoteric teachings attributed to the Greek god Hermes Trismegistus.⁴⁸ It encompassed magic, astrology and alchemy, with roots in Egypt and Persia. Hermeticism flourished during the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance with the support of civil rulers, like Cosimo de' Medici, and leading churchmen like Pope Alexander VI. Greatest of the Renaissance Hermeticists were Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1535), and Robert Fludd (1574–1637). Hermeticism may not have produced many fraternities, but it is important to our theme because the forms of magic it established became pervasive among later occult orders.

Medieval magic was a collection of spells, enchantments, divinations, evocations and incantations designed for almost every conceivable purpose. The church tried its best to suppress “bad,” or “black,” magic but tolerated what it considered “good,” or “white,” magic. It could hardly do otherwise; the cult of saints’ relics was at its peak, and relics were fought over, traded and venerated in the belief that they could work miracles. Relics were used for the healing of sickness, in both people and their animals; to secure political or economic advantage; and even to sway the outcome of battles. Differences between “pagan” practices and what the church endorsed and benefited from were slight and hard to explain.

Hermeticism did not replace these traditional forms of magic but it added new ones, including *theurgy* (“divine work”), a form of ceremonial magic which used ritual to invoke celestial beings. Magic and astrology thus were closely related in Hermeticism. The design and performance of Hermetic rituals required great care. The setting, paraphernalia, symbols, and words and gestures of power were considered critically important, and magicians often pre-

pared themselves by fasting and prayer before performing important rituals.

The third component of Hermeticism, alchemy, was aimed at producing the “philosopher’s stone,” a substance believed to have curative and rejuvenative powers in addition to the transmutation of base metals into gold.

At its best, Hermeticism was applied to worthy ends, such as self-perfection and spiritual growth. Agrippa believed that the planets offered benefits corresponding to their distinctive characteristics. For example, invoking the Sun brought “nobility of mind, perspicuity of imagination, the nature of knowledge and opinion, maturity, counsel, zeal, light of justice, reason and judgment distinguishing right from wrong, purging light from the darkness of ignorance, the glory of truth found out, and charity the queen of all virtues.”⁴⁹ Austrian nobleman Paracelsus (1493–1541) explored alchemy’s applications to medicine.⁵⁰

As might be expected, Hermeticism was not always applied to worthy ends, and some practitioners strayed onto the left-hand path. Despite the involvement of individual churchmen, institutional Christianity was always suspicious of Hermeticism, and abuses eventually persuaded the authorities to suppress it. Hermeticism also fell victim to the new mindset of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment. As early as the seventeenth-century, research provided persuasive evidence that Hermes did not write the Hermetic texts.⁵¹

Notwithstanding those setbacks Hermeticism continued to have a large following, and a vast literature remained in circulation. The writing style was highly allegorical, however, and key information was omitted—traditionally communicated orally from a magus or master alchemist to trusted students. Groups of students gathered around a master formed Hermeticism’s first occult schools. Then, as Hermeticism was driven underground, more formal secret societies probably sprang up; but little is known about them. Meanwhile, some aspects of Hermeticism found their way into Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry. And a strong Hermetic revival—with reduced expectations—took place in the nineteenth century.

Figure 1. Emblems of Selected Orders



(a) Knights Templar



(b) Order of the Garter



(c) Rose Cross



(d) Freemasonry



(e) Scottish Rite Masons



(f) Royal Arch Masons



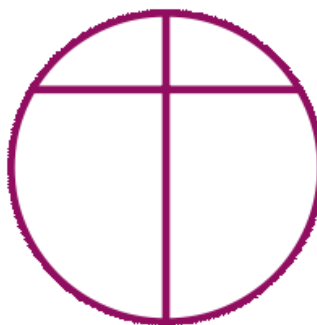
(g) Martiniem



(h) Theosophical Society



(i) Knights of Columbus



(j) Opus Dei

The Rose Cross

A series of remarkable documents appeared in Cassell, Germany, between 1614 and 1616. Known as the Rosicrucian Manifestoes, they included the *Fama Fraternitatis* (“Account of the Brotherhood”), the *Confessio Fraternitatis* (“Confession of the Brotherhood”), and *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*. The manifestoes, all published anonymously, referred to a mysterious figure “Father C. R. C.,” or Christian Rosencreutz, said to have lived from 1378 to 1484. Reportedly, he came into possession of esoteric teachings; including “mathematics, physic and magic,” while traveling in North Africa and the Middle East.⁵² After returning to the German state of his birth in 1408, he founded the Fraternity of the Rose Cross.⁵³

The Fraternity of the Rose Cross was charged with disseminating the founder’s teachings, performing noble works of service, and changing the course of history. Initially, it consisted of only four brothers, and four others were recruited during Rosencreutz’s lifetime. Even eight might seem a very small number, considering the enormity of their undertaking, but the Knights Templar originally took on responsibility for protecting pilgrims to the Holy Land with only nine members.⁵⁴ The brothers lived together for a while but then dispersed to work in different countries. They were told to “follow the custom of the country” and not wear distinctive clothing. Moreover, the fraternity “should remain secret for one hundred years.”⁵⁵

An important service mission was “to cure the sick, and that gratis.” “Brother I. O.,” we were told, “is much spoken of; and chiefly because he cured a young Earl of Norfolk of the leprosie.”⁵⁶ What mode of healing was used was not revealed, but circumstantial evidence suggests that it may have involved alchemy. Father C. R. C. had mastered “the transmutation of metals,”⁵⁷ and Paracelsus independently had introduced alchemical arts into his medical practice.

The Rosicrucian manifestoes expected the teachings to “lay a new foundation of sciences.”⁵⁸ An “Invisible College” would teach

“without books or marks’ all the languages of the world . . . and draw man from error.”⁵⁹ When the Royal Society of London was founded in 1660, some saw it as fulfilling that prophecy.⁶⁰

Authorship of the manifestoes has never been established. Some commentators point to English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626) or Welsh mathematician and occultist John Dee (1527–c.1608). Dee also dabbled in Hermeticism, and significantly, his glyph, the *Monad Hieroglyphic*, appears on the front page of the *Chymical Wedding*.

The manifestoes provoked great interest, and numerous attempts were made to contact the Fraternity of the Rose Cross; but all failed. The 100-year period of secrecy was understandable because the fraternity allegedly was founded before the Reformation, when the threat of persecution was very real. The fact that neither the fraternity nor Christian Rosencreutz appear in the historical record could be explained by necessity. By the early seventeenth century, however, the century of secrecy should have expired, and Cassell, where the manifestoes were published, lay in Protestant Europe, beyond the reach of the Inquisition.

Many people began to suspect that the fraternity and its founder were purely mythical. Some of the Rosicrucian symbols, including the rose, the symbol of Mary, may have come from the Order of the Garter. The name Rosencreutz was itself a self-reference. Perhaps the fraternity’s mysterious founder was simply an allegorical figure. Or “Rosencreutz” may have been a pseudonym for someone else.

Modern Rosicrucian Paul Foster Case (1884–1954) concluded on the basis of gematria, that Father C. R. C. was none other than Jesus Christ.⁶¹ He also asserted that the Fraternity of the Rose Cross always has been invisible; people do not recognize the Brothers “because the minds behind those eyes cannot recognize the marks of a true Rosicrucian.”⁶² The Fraternity, he argued, “does not come in corporate form before the world, because by its very nature it cannot.” Yet “True Rosicrucians know one another . . . Their means of recognition cannot be counterfeited nor betrayed, for these

tokens are more subtle than the signs and passwords of ordinary secret societies.”⁶³

Theosophist and Freemason Charles Leadbeater (1854–1934) insisted that the Fraternity and Father C. R. C. were historically factual: “Despite the assertions of scholars and the absence of corroborating evidence, Christian Rosencreutz did indeed found the Order of the Rose Cross, and he was, in fact, an incarnation of a mighty Master of the Wisdom who [sic] we revere today as the H.O.A.T.F. [Head of All True Freemasons].”⁶⁴

Manly Palmer Hall (1901–1990), whose teachings were closer than either Case’s or Leadbeater’s to early Rosicrucianism, declared: “[T]he true Rosicrucian Brotherhood consisted of a limited number of highly-developed adepts, or initiates.”⁶⁵ Moreover, Rosencreutz’s alleged longevity—106 years—was understandable because “those of the higher degrees were no longer subject to the laws of mortality.”

Freemasonry

Declining interest in the Fraternity of the Rose Cross coincided with the emergence of speculative Freemasonry. The several branches of Freemasonry comprise by far the largest and most durable group of occult orders. Freemasonry has flourished for more than four centuries, appealing not just to the nobility but to men in all walks of life. Occasionally, it has accepted women.

Origins and Development of Freemasonry

The origins of Freemasonry, like those of Rosicrucianism, are clouded in mystery, but they go back farther in time. A popular legend links it to Hiram Abif and construction of Solomon’s temple. Other legends link Freemasonry to the Knights Templar. The most plausible explanation is that modern “speculative” Freemasonry emerged from the operative masonry of the medieval craft guilds. The craft guilds restricted entry to their trades to individuals who served required apprenticeships and, in some cases, paid a required fee. The stonemason’s guilds supervised construction of the Gothic cathedrals of Europe, which are

said to encode important esoteric knowledge. Freemasonry is often referred to as “the Craft.”

William Sinclair (1410–1484), builder of Rosslyn Chapel, in Scotland, is sometimes named as the first Grand Master. But the first credible reference to Freemasonry, in anything like its present form, is in the minutes of a 1598 meeting in Edinburgh.⁶⁶ Elias Ashmole, aspiring alchemist and charter fellow of the Royal Society, was accepted into a Masonic lodge in Warrington, England, in 1646.⁶⁷ Records of lodges conferring the degree of “Scots Master” date from the 1730s. Numerous Masonic orders were formed during the eighteenth century, all with their degrees and closely guarded rituals. By the end of the century, Freemasonry had spread throughout Europe and North America, and even to Russia.

Early Masonic orders engaged in a wide variety of occult activities. The rituals of some lodges resembled religious services, complete with vestments, incense, and sacred music.⁶⁸ Those of others were less savory. More than a few lodges practiced the evocation of “spirits” of a low vibration and used magic for selfish or spiteful purposes. Freemasons also dabbled in Hermetic practices; Ashmole’s interest in alchemy was not atypical.

Reform movements began, in the eighteenth century, either to purge abuses or, in the skeptical spirit of the Enlightenment, to eliminate occult practices altogether. Several new Masonic orders came into being, including the Bavarian Illuminati, the Rite of Strict Observance, and the Order of Elect Cohens.⁶⁹

The Illuminati, founded by Johann Adam Weishaupt (1748–1830), sought to counter “superstition,” prejudice, and the church’s domination in Bavaria and other Roman Catholic countries. Ahead of its time, the order also supported the education and treatment of women as intellectual equals, though it did not accept them as members. The order was banned in 1771, along with all other secret societies in Bavaria, under an edict of Elector Karl Theodor. Weishaupt escaped and wrote five pamphlets while in hiding.⁷⁰ Remnants of the Illuminati were suspected of involvement in the French Revolution, and to this day, con-

spiracy theorists believe that the order is bent on global domination and has infiltrated institutions of power throughout the world.

German mystic and philosopher Karl von Eckartshausen (1752–1803) was inducted into the Illuminati but withdrew his membership to embark on a quest to recover the esoteric dimensions of Christianity. His most influential work *Die Wolke über dem Heiligtum* (“The Cloud upon the Sanctuary”) describes the “Invisible Celestial Church,” a religious tradition that preserved elements of the ancient mysteries.⁷¹

The Rite of Strict Observance was founded in about 1764 by Baron Karl Gotthelf von Hund (1722–1776) with the mission of eliminating what were considered superstitious practices. It appealed to German national pride and attracted members from below the ranks of the nobility, but it was short-lived and was dissolved in 1782.

Also of note is the Swedenborg Rite. Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) was an influential Lutheran writer who produced the twelve-volume *Heavenly Mysteries* and the three-volume *Heaven and Hell*. Swedenborg had no interest in founding any kind of institution. But after his death, followers founded the Swedenborgian Church, which is still in operation, and his writings influenced two branches of Freemasonry. The Duke of Södermanland, Grand Master of Freemasonry in Sweden, incorporated Swedenborg’s teachings into a unique system of degrees and rituals.⁷² What is known as the Swedenborg Rite, however, was founded in 1773, by the Marquis de Thorn in Avignon, France. Combining occult and political activities, it was short-lived. But it was revived a number of times, and its patents were

purchased by the Ordo Templi Orientis, to be discussed in its turn.

The famous, or infamous, Count Alessandro di Cagliostro (1743–1795) established the Egyptian Rite in Masonry in 1784, dedicated to the moral and spiritual regeneration of mankind. He injected new life into the Rite of Misraïm, which dates from no later than the 1730s. Cagliostro died in a papal dungeon, a victim of the Inquisition’s hostility toward Freemasonry.⁷³ The Rite of Misraïm, which contained references to alchemy and other aspects of the Egyptian mysteries, eventually merged with one of its variants, the Rite of Memphis, founded by Jacques Etienne Marconis de Nègre in 1838. The Rite of Mem-

phis–Misraïm continues to operate in many countries.

Martinism

Martinism was named for Jacques Martinez de Pasqually (1727?–1774) and his principal disciple, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin. De Pasqually was probably born in Grenoble, France, though some said that he was of Portuguese or even Jewish origin. Pasqually became involved in Freemasonry in early adulthood and served as an important leader of the reform movement already mentioned. In 1761 he founded l’Ordre de Chevaliers Maçons Elus Coëns de l’Univers, commonly known as the Order of Elect Cohens (*Cohens* is the Hebrew word for “Priests”). The order promoted spiritual growth, and initiates in the higher degrees practiced theurgic invocations in hope of attaining the Beatific Vision.

Pasqually promoted his esoteric teachings through the Elect Cohens and in his single

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book *Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings* (1775). Martinism may have emerged from Freemasonry, but it drew heavily upon Gnostic and Kabbalistic concepts and also from the teachings of mystical philosopher Jakob Böhme (1575–1624). In particular we find important parallels between his work and the Gnostic *Tripartite Tractate*. Pasqually referred to Christ as the “Spiritual Divine Regenerator,”⁷⁴ a concept also explored by Swedenborg, the nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox writer John of Kronstadt,⁷⁵ and others.

French nobleman Saint-Martin (1743–1803) was an initiate in the Elect Cohens. During magical rituals he sensed the presence of various entities and received communications from them: “[C]ommunications of all kinds were numerous and frequent, in which I had my share,” and there was every indication that Christ was present. Yet Saint-Martin was suspicious of “the forms which showed themselves to me.” “[U]nless things come from the Center itself,” he continued, “I do not give them my confidence.”⁷⁶ Eventually, he distanced himself from the Elect Cohens and from magical rituals to promote a strictly mystical form of Martinism.⁷⁷

In place of Pasqually’s “Divine Regenerator,” Saint-Martin spoke of the “Repairer of humanity.”⁷⁸ Through the Repairer’s efforts man could return to the primeval state of Paradise. Yet in order to do so, or do so more quickly, it was necessary to discover the Lost Word:

The mythical history of Freemasonry informs us that there once existed a WORD of surpassing value, and claiming a profound veneration; that this Word was known to but few; that it was at length lost; and that a temporary substitute for it was adopted. But as the very philosophy of Masonry teaches us that there can be no death without a resurrection[;] it follows that the loss of the Word must suppose its eventual recovery.⁷⁹

Saint-Martin, like many other Freemasons, attached considerable importance to the Lost Word. The Word, the key to truth and power, supposedly was lost with the death of Hiram Abif.⁸⁰ It was partially recovered in the fourth

gospel. Yet, as Saint-Martin’s biographer Arthur Waite explained: “Christians, in presenting it under the name of the Word, have divined the second only of its titles, and that consequently which is the more difficult to comprehend.”⁸¹ Nevertheless the Word was the name at “which every knee should bow.”⁸² Waite also proclaimed: “The divine heart, which may be compared to the mother of a family, and is truly the mother of all mankind, even as power is the father, is the organ and the eternal generator of whatsoever is in God or in our principle.”⁸³ Reference to the divine feminine reflected Böhme’s influence on Martinism.

Saint-Martin in turn influenced Eliphas Lévi (1810-1875) and Gérard Encausse (1865–1916), the latter better known by his pseudonym “Papus.” In 1886, Encausse and French writer and politician Augustin Chaboseau (1868–1946) founded a new Masonic order, which they called the Martinist Order, giving yet another meaning to Martinism. The first Supreme Council was convened four years later. The Martinist Order initially had four degrees: Associate, Mystic, Unknown Superior, and Unknown Superior Initiator. A fifth degree, Free Initiator, was added later. The Martinist Order has since fragmented into a number of competing organizations, including the Ancient Martinist Order, the Rose Cross Martinist Order, and the Martinist Order of Unknown Philosophers. Whether Pasqually or Saint-Martin would have approved of Encausse’s Martinist Order, or its derivatives, is unknown.

Modern Freemasonry

The basic organizational unit of all Masonic orders is the lodge. New lodges must be chartered by a Grand Lodge, which exercises authority in a given jurisdiction.

All Masonic orders have three basic degrees, typically designated Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. Orders that confer only those three are referred to as Blue Lodges, Craft Lodges, or Ancient Craft Lodges. Orders that offer additional degrees are termed “appendant bodies.” The Swedenborg Rite offered three further degrees: Illuminated

Theosophite, Blue Brother, and Red Brother. The Scottish Rite recognizes a total of thirty-three degrees, the highest being Knight Aspirant (31°), Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret (32°), and Sovereign Grand Inspector General (33°). The Rite of Memphis–Misraïm recognizes ninety.

The York Rite is a collection of autonomous, appendant bodies. The three primary bodies are the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons; the Council of Royal & Select Masters, or Council of Cryptic Masons; and the Commandery of Knights Templar. The Royal Arch offers three additional degrees, the highest being Royal Arch Mason. Cryptic Masonry, so-named because its rituals traditionally were performed in crypts, also offers three degrees, the highest being Super Excellent Master.

The Knights Templar Masonic order, founded in 1779, was not the first to claim associations with the medieval Templars. Three decades earlier, Baron von Hund, founder of the Order of Strict Observance, claimed to have received a ritual from the reconstituted Templar Order and to have met two “unknown superiors.” Those superiors, one of whom allegedly was Prince Charles Edward Stuart,⁸⁴ were said to direct all of masonry. Be that as it may, the Knights Templar Masonic order is one of the few that restricts membership to baptized Christians. Otherwise, Freemasonry is non-sectarian, only requiring members to affirm belief in the Great Architect of the Universe. Jews have played prominent roles in several Masonic orders, but Roman Catholics are forbidden to join by their church.⁸⁵

Initiation rituals include the customary oath of secrecy. For example, an initiation ritual for the Master Mason degree requires the candidate to pledge:

I [name] most solemnly swear that I will always hail, ever conceal, and never reveal any of the secrets, arts, parts, point, or points of the . . . Degree to any person or persons whomsoever, except it be to a true and lawful brother of this Degree, or in a regularly constituted Lodge of Master Masons.⁸⁶

Initiation for Royal Arch Mason demands a long, multi-item oath that begins with the expected promise to protect secrets of the degree. Later, the oath seems to commit the candidate to help his fellows, regardless of moral or legal justification: “I furthermore promise and swear, that I will assist a Companion Royal Arch Mason when I see him engaged in any difficulty and I will espouse his cause as far as to extricate him from the same, whether he be right or wrong.”⁸⁷

Following their vows, candidates are shown signs and given secret words of power. Master Masons are said to discover the Lost Word, and the initiation ceremony concludes accordingly:

The High Priest then reads to them from a book the charge in this Degree, informing them that the Degree owes its origin to Zerubbabel and his associates, who built the Temple by order of Cyrus, King of Persia. He likewise informs them that the discovery of the secret vault and the inestimable treasures, with the long-lost word, actually took place in the manner represented in conferring this Degree, and that it is the circumstance upon which the Degree is principally founded.⁸⁸

Critics complain that the Royal Arch Mason initiation combines “pagan oral tradition” with language from 2 *Thessalonians* 3:6-12. The name of Christ is removed, however, and “The Lodge here takes teaching that pertains solely to the Church of Jesus Christ and applies it to its Masonic membership.”⁸⁹

Freemasonry retains symbols and rituals of esoteric significance. All Freemasons recognize the emblem depicting the compass and square, the tools of the medieval craft masons {Figure 1(d)}. Individual Masonic organizations have their own emblems, and two are shown in Figure 1(e), (f). Initiation rituals are occasions for elaborate ceremony.

Today, however, members are attracted to Freemasonry more by the social, business or political opportunities it provides—or at best by its emphasis on character-building. The mission statement of the Scottish Rite, for example, makes no mention of occult activity.

Instead, it identifies its mission thus: “to strengthen the community and believes that each man should act in civil life according to his individual judgment and the dictates of his conscience.” A member of the Scottish Rite seeks to “Exalt the dignity of every person, the human side of his daily activities, and the maximum service to humanity. Aid mankind’s search in God’s universe for identity, for development and for destiny, and thereby produce better men in a better world, happier men in a happier world and wiser men in a wiser world.”⁹⁰

Some Masonic orders or individual lodges engage in worthy charitable endeavors. For example, the “Shriners,” more properly known as the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, are renowned for their service activities, particularly their children’s hospitals. The order was established in 1870, as an appendant body to Freemasonry, and membership is open to all Master Masons. It has branches throughout the world. In recent years the Shriners have tried to allay suspicions that they are associated with Islam. Their official name was changed in 2010 to Shriners International, and most meeting places are no longer known as “temples.” Yet members continue to wear Middle Eastern apparel, including the fez, in parades.

The first printed constitution of Freemasonry, published in 1720, specified that women were ineligible for membership, and gender exclusivity has remained the norm ever since. Yet a few “lodges of adoption,” in which women could attain certain degrees, were created during the eighteenth century. In 1801, a Masonic lodge in Sweden reportedly became the first to have accepted both female and male members.

The most famous incident occurred in 1881, when Mlle. Maria Desraimes was inducted into an otherwise all-male lodge in France. The lodge was immediately suspended, but Georges Martin, a thirty-third degree Mason and French senator, emerged as a champion of women’s rights and joined with Desraimes to promote the cause.⁹¹ The result was the establishment of several lodges in which women played significant roles, including la Respectable Loge Le Droit Humain, Maçonnerie Mixte

(“the Worshipful Lodge Human Rights, Co-Masonry”). Theosophist Annie Besant was initiated into the lodge in Paris and thereafter formed many new lodges throughout the English-speaking world. Besant’s efforts led to formation of the Eastern Order of International Co-Freemasonry.⁹²

New Orders

Most occult orders in the eighteenth century were Masonic in principles and organization. But Freemasonry was changing, and new types of occult orders began to emerge, inspired by particular esoteric traditions. At the same time, the need for strict secrecy became less urgent, and published material became available, giving us greater insight into their objectives, values and activities. The latter years of the nineteenth century were graced by a great cross-fertilization among different esoteric systems and by the inflow of wisdom from the traditions of South Asia. From that cross-fertilization—brought about in large measure because prominent individuals belonged to multiple organizations—has come the robust system of esotericism we know today.

Rosicrucian Revival

Although all attempts to contact the Fraternity of the Rose Cross failed, groups claiming to be its rightful successors began to be formed as early as the mid-seventeenth century, and many others followed later. None could establish lineage with the true Rose Cross, yet they drew their inspiration from the manifestoes, as well as from other aspects of western occultism.⁹³

The Fraternitas Rosae Crucis was founded in the United States in 1858 by Pascal Beverly Randolph (1825–1875). And the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia was founded in Britain in 1865 by Robert Wentworth Little (1840–1878) and six other Freemasons.

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was appointed head of the German Section of the Theosophical Society in 1902. Three years later he secured warrants from Theodore Reuss to perform rites of the Memphis–Misraïm Rite of Freemasonry in the Esoteric School, an elite

group within the Society (see discussion below).⁹⁴ When Steiner transferred the school to the newly formed Anthroposophical Society in 1913, he changed its initiatory rituals in the belief that certain members had violated their oaths of secrecy.⁹⁵ Anthroposophy absorbed some elements of eastern esotericism, but it lies primarily in the Rosicrucian tradition.

The Rosicrucian Fellowship, founded in 1908 by Max Heindel (1865–1919), claimed to promulgate “the true Rosicrucian Philosophy,” based on esoteric knowledge provided by certain “Elder Brothers.” When he sought to build a center of healing and a sanitarium, Heindel reported being warned in words that echo the *Fama*: “If ever you make these priceless teachings subservient to mammon, the light will fade and the movement will fail.”⁹⁶ Still in existence, the Rosicrucian Fellowship describes itself as “An International Association of Christian Mystics for the Aquarian Age.” In 1935, two of Heindel’s Dutch students, the brothers Jan and Wim Leene, founded the *Rozekruisers Genootschap* (“Rosicrucian Society”), later known as *Lectorium Rosicrucianum*.⁹⁷

The Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) was founded in 1915 by businessman and inventor Harvey Spencer Lewis (1883–1939) with the goal of studying “the elusive mysteries of life and the universe.” Its mission statement affirms: “The Rosicrucian teachings allow individuals to direct their own lives, experience inner peace, and leave their mark on humanity.”⁹⁸ Emphasis is placed on “mastery of life,” awakening one’s innate potential for higher knowledge and experiencing an aware union with Divine or Cosmic Consciousness. With his inventions, which included the “Color Organ” and “Sympathetic Vibration Harp,” Spencer Lewis would have been very much at home during the Renaissance or in the ancient school of Pythagoras.

Another important spokesperson for the Rosicrucian revival was Manly Palmer Hall, who founded the Philosophical Research Society, with headquarters in Los Angeles. His comments on the Rose Cross and the identity of Christian Rosencreutz have already been noted.

Theosophical Society

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York City in 1875 by Russian noblewoman Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891) and American soldier and lawyer Henry Steel Olcott (1823–1907). It adopted an ambitious threefold mission: “To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color. To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy and science. To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in Humanity.”⁹⁹ Lodges were formed in London, Paris and elsewhere.

Both Olcott and Blavatsky had extensive connections with Freemasonry, and the Theosophical Society shares with Martinism the six-pointed star in its emblem {Figure 1(g), (h)}. Early plans called for the Theosophical Society to be organized on Masonic lines, with degrees and rituals.¹⁰⁰ Those plans were soon abandoned, but local branches are still called “lodges.” The Society created a dual structure in which meetings of its inner circle, the Esoteric Section, were closed to the public. An announcement of the formation of the Esoteric Section described its mission thus:

Owing to the fact that a large number of fellows of the society have felt the need to form a body of esoteric students, to be organized on the ORIGINAL LINES and devised by the *real* founders of the T.S., the following order has been issued by the founding president:

I. To promote the esoteric interests of the Theosophical Society by the deeper study of esoteric philosophy, there is hereby organized a body to the known as the “Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society.”

II. The constitution and sole direction of the same is vested in Madame H. P. Blavatsky, as its head; she is solely responsible to the members for results; and the section has no official or corporate connection with the Exoteric Society, save in the person of the founding president.¹⁰¹

Blavatsky and Olcott soon moved the Society’s headquarters to Adyar, India, where they

and other members met important Indian teachers and studied eastern philosophies.¹⁰² Since then the word *theosophy*, which had deep roots in western esotericism, has come to mean the westernized form of Hindu and Buddhist teachings. Indeed, the Theosophical Society's greatest achievement may have been to bring eastern esoteric teachings in understandable form to the West.

Blavatsky served as a spiritualist medium in her early years, and she continued to use trance as one means of receiving esoteric knowledge. Allegedly, she also received letters from the "mahatmas," three of whom were later identified as the Masters Morya, Kuthumi, and Djwhal Khul. Her most important publication was *The Secret Doctrine*, a monumental work published in 1888.¹⁰³

Political and ideological rivalries plagued the Theosophical Society almost from the beginning. Arthur Percy Sinnett (1840–1921) became head of the London lodge in 1885, displacing Anna Kingsford in a dispute that involved the increasing emphasis being given to Buddhism. Annie Wood Besant (1847–1933) became president of the Adyar Society after Blavatsky's death, and she and Charles Webster Leadbeater used clairvoyance as a primary tool in esoteric research. American lawyer William Quan Judge (1851–1896) was opposed to such methods and formed a separate Theosophical Society with headquarters in Pasadena, California. Fragmentation continued in the United States and elsewhere.

While the early Theosophical Society focused on Hindu and Buddhist teachings, Besant, Leadbeater, and Geoffrey Hodson (1886–1983) later promoted a Christianization movement that included formation of the Liberal Catholic Church. Leadbeater became its second presiding bishop and created much of the LCC's liturgy, based primarily on Roman Catholic precedents.¹⁰⁴ The Christianization of Theosophical teachings outraged the Pasadena Society and exacerbated mutual hostility.¹⁰⁵

The Theosophical Society never became a Masonic-style organization, but, in addition to their roles in the Christian Theosophy movement, Besant, Leadbeater and Hodson became

members of the Eastern Order of International Co-Freemasonry. Leadbeater, a thirty-third degree Mason, authored the influential books *The Hidden Life in Freemasonry* (1926) and *Glimpses of Masonic History* (1926), which sought to link modern Freemasonry with the ancient mysteries. He also used his very considerable clairvoyant abilities to study Masonic rituals:

It is by the use of those perfectly natural but super-normal faculties that much of the information given in this book has been obtained. Anyone who, having developed such sight, watches a Masonic ceremony, will see that a very great deal more is being done than is expressed in the mere words of the ritual, beautiful and dignified as they often are.¹⁰⁶

Several other prominent members left the Theosophical Society to pursue their own paths. Anna Kingsford and Rudolf Steiner have already been mentioned. Another was Alice Ann Bailey (1880–1949), who founded the Arcane School and authored twenty-four books of esoteric philosophy, most of them dictated by the Master Djwhal Khul. Helena Ivanovna Roerich (1879–1949), who translated *The Secret Doctrine* into Russian, served as amanuensis for the Master Morya and published the *Agni Yoga* teachings.

Hermetic Revival

Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846–1888) was influenced by Martinism but became a leader in the emerging Hermetic revival movement. She converted to Roman Catholicism after having a vision of Mary Magdalene. But, like Blavatsky, she served as a trance medium, receiving esoteric knowledge from the inner planes. Kingsford emerged as the leading exponent of esoteric Christianity in her time and a pioneer in feminist theology. During her brief stint as head of the London branch of the Theosophical Society she opposed the increasing prominence being given to Buddhist teachings. She also came to believe that the *mahatmas* communicating with Helena Blavatsky and others were untrustworthy or inferior to the entities she herself channeled. In 1884, she and Edward Maitland (1824–1897) founded the Hermetic

Society, which was short-lived but provided a prototype for the more successful Golden Dawn.

Three Freemasons founded the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1888. With the stated mission of preserving “the body of knowledge known as Hermeticism or the Western Esoteric Tradition,” it was dedicated to the philosophical, spiritual, and psychic evolution of humanity.¹⁰⁷ It affirmed tolerance for all religious beliefs and admitted women on equal terms with men. The Golden Dawn was structured on Masonic lines but created a unique system of degrees based on the sephiroth on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.

For a decade the Golden Dawn was the most important center of European esotericism. Samuel Liddell “MacGregor” Mathers (1854–1918), one of the founders, soon seized the leadership position. Other prominent members included esoteric historian Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942), actress Florence Farr (1860–1917), Irish revolutionary Maud Gonne (1866–1953), Irish writer William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), and Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). Anglo-Catholic mystic Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941) was a member for a short time.¹⁰⁸

Mathers and others claimed to have contacts with the “Secret Chiefs” and received important esoteric knowledge. They paid lip service to secrecy, yet members published numerous books revealing its rituals and teachings. The Golden Dawn brought the teachings of the western esoteric tradition for the first time to a wide audience;¹⁰⁹ indeed that, and its gender inclusiveness, are among its greatest contributions. Yet the most significant activities within its walls were rituals and theatrical drama, often created on the lines of ancient mystery rites. While most members of the Golden Dawn were dedicated to self-enlightenment, some strayed onto the left-hand path. Others opposed the strong occult emphasis; for example, Waite—like Saint-Martin whose biography he wrote—urged a more mystical focus.

The Order of the Golden Dawn did not last long into the twentieth century, but derivative

organizations still exist, including the Builders of the Adytum, founded by Paul Foster Case. Dion Fortune (1890–1946), an initiate in another derivative organization, was a proficient trance medium and received important esoteric knowledge. She went on to found the Fraternity of the Inner Light, which had a Christian flavor but also engaged in magical ritual. In turn, Servants of the Light spun off from the Fraternity of the Inner Light and evolved into a mystery school headed by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki (1929–).¹¹⁰ Although the Servants offer courses in the same vein as the Golden Dawn, it also focuses on the Sacred Feminine and return of the Goddess.

Another important spokesperson for the Hermetic revival was French Egyptologist René Schwaller de Lubicz (1887–1961). He is best known for conducting a twelve-year study of the esoteric symbolism of the Temple of Luxor in Egypt, reported in his influential book *Le Temple dans l'Homme* (“The Temple in Man”), published in 1949. De Lubicz was one of the few people in the twentieth century said to have produced the philosopher’s stone and turned lead into gold.

Ordo Templi Orientis

The Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO)—also described as the “Order of the Temple of the East” or “Order of Oriental Templars”—was established sometime between 1895 and 1904. Its founders included Karl Kellner (1851–1905), a wealthy Austrian industrialist, and Anglo-German occultist Theodor Reuss (1855–1923). In 1902 Reuss and others acquired patents to perform a number of Masonic rites, including the Rite of Memphis–Misraïm, the Swedenborg Rite, and Gérard Encausse’s Order of Martinism. Together they formed the core of the OTO’s occult rituals. Charters subsequently were given to lodges in a number of European countries and the United States. Nine degrees were offered, of which the first six were Masonic in character.

Aleister Crowley, who had quarreled with MacGregor Mathers in the Golden Dawn, was admitted to the OTO in 1910 and soon rose to a leadership position. He introduced the occult

philosophy of *Thelema*, whose amoral maxim was “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.” It was expounded in the *Book of the Law*, which, he claimed, had been dictated to him by Aiwass, an entity who described himself as the “Lord of Silence.”¹¹¹

Under Crowley’s influence the OTO expanded to include the *Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica*, or “Gnostic Catholic Church,”¹¹² for which Crowley wrote the “Gnostic Mass,” a parody of the sacred liturgies of the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches. Commenting on the need for the new liturgy, Crowley wrote:

Human nature demands (in the case of most people) the satisfaction of the religious instinct, and, to very many, this may best be done by ceremonial means. I wished therefore to construct a ritual through which people might enter into ecstasy as they have always done under the influence of appropriate ritual.¹¹³

Whereas the OTO’s Masonic rituals were performed in secret, Crowley intended the Gnostic Mass to be available to the public. The text was published in 1918, and its first public performance was in 1933. “Celebration” of the Gnostic Mass called for the following officials:

The Priest. Bears the Sacred Lance, and is clothed at first in a plain white robe.

The Priestess. Should be actually *Virgo Intacta*, or specially dedicated to the service of the Great Order. She is clothed in white, blue, and gold. She bears the Sword from a red girdle, and the Paten and Hosts, or Cakes of Light.

The Deacon. He is clothed in white and yellow. He bears the Book of the Law. Two Children [who actually can be adults]. They are clothed in white and black. One bears a pitcher of water and a cellar of salt, the other a censer of fire and a casket of perfume.¹¹⁴

The words of consecration were: “By the virtue of the Rod [the lance], Be this bread the Body of God! . . . By the virtue of the Rod, Be this wine the Blood of God!”¹¹⁵ Communicants received a whole goblet of wine and a Cake of Light.

Needless to say, traditional Christians viewed the Gnostic Mass as sacrilegious. Crowley may have deserved the title of “wickedest man in the world,” awarded by the British press, or perhaps he never took his occultism seriously but delighted in causing offense and outrage.¹¹⁶

Whatever his motives, he was a brilliant man, with profound understanding of occult symbolism.

Orders within the Church of Rome

Separate from the occult orders we have discussed, but frequently interacting with them, are powerful fraternities within the Catholic Church. Generally, they are hostile to extra-religious occultism, yet they imitate occult orders in organizational style, discipline and secrecy. The Knights Templar were discussed separately because of its different historical context and because the church eventually turned against them. The orders discussed in this section continue, at the time of writing, to receive the church’s full blessing.

Society of Jesus

On 15 August 1534, seven men, including Basque nobleman and soldier Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491–1556), met in the crypt of the church of Saint Denis, Montmartre, France. In the belief that they had been called together for a special purpose, they took religious vows and called themselves the Company of Jesus.¹¹⁷ Three years later they traveled to Rome and petitioned for ordination into the priesthood and recognition as a religious order. Pope Paul III responded favorably, and in 1540, their order was officially constituted as the Society of Jesus; its members came to be called Jesuits.

Formed at the height of the Counter-Reformation, the Society of Jesus assumed the role of combating what it considered the apostasy of the Protestant Reformation. Although it was not a military order, like the Knights Templar, the Jesuits saw themselves as the “special soldiers of Pope”¹¹⁸ and absorbed some of the Templars’ ethos, notably its discipline. They represented a new type of religious order: neither monks, like the Benedictines, nor friars, like the Dominicans and Francis-

cans. Jesuits receive twelve years' intensive training; submit to Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises;¹¹⁹ and pledge absolute obedience to the order's Superior General. At the end of their training, Jesuits may take simple or special vows. Those who take the latter become "professed"; they form an elite who elect delegates to the General Congregation, who in turn elect the Superior General.¹²⁰

The order itself places itself at the pope's exclusive disposal. It was initially conceived as a missionary order, but Jesuits also became outstanding scholars, preachers and teachers. They sought out and debated Protestants on points of doctrine and served as confessors to the monarchs and aristocracy of Roman Catholic Europe. Jesuits were sent into some of the most hostile environments, like Elizabethan England, where they were feared and hated as foreign agents; some suffered the most gruesome deaths. From 1773 to 1814, the Jesuits were suppressed, except in Poland and Russia, following disputes with slave owners in South America.¹²¹ They never accumulated wealth, like the Knights Templar, but over time, they acquired enormous power and influence. A Jesuit was elected pope in 2013 and took the name Francis I.

Individual Jesuits took an interest in occultism. For example, Athanasius Kirchner (c.1601–1680) published his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* containing numerous references to the Hermetic literature.¹²² Kirchner believed that Egyptian hieroglyphics—which Hermes, the inventor of language, must have designed—were sacred talismans. More generally, the only occult practices Jesuits engage in are to administer

the sacraments and celebrate the Mass, just as all ordained priests do. Yet training in the Society of Jesus includes a range of occult topics, and their libraries contain extensive collections of occult books, including some on the Index

Ritual, or what could be considered symbolism in motion, is universal, not only among occult orders but in institutional Christianity and the larger society. Religious festivals, important affairs of state, and events... all provide opportunities for elaborate, meaningful pageantry. Dramatic ritual appeals to the senses, emotions and mind; and for occult orders, it can communicate esoteric truths.... Ritual provides a vessel into which nonphysical energy can flow, and from which it can be directed to intended purposes.

of Prohibited Books. The ostensible purpose is to prepare Jesuits to combat extra-religious occultism wherever they might find it.¹²³

Knights of Columbus

The Knights of Columbus was formed in 1881 in New Haven, Connecticut. Its founder, a priest ordained five years earlier, was Michael J. McGivney, the son of Irish immigrants. The Knights' mission was to promote the principles of "Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism."¹²⁴ It also provided its members with mutual financial benefits, including insurance.

Formation of the Knights of Columbus served to enhance Roman Catholic laymen's pride in their religious and national heritage. Italian explorer Christopher Columbus was selected as patron. Another important objective was to provide alternatives to other fraternal organizations, which often discriminated against Roman Catholics, and to Masonic organizations, from which they were prohibited from joining. Membership initially was restricted to white Roman Catholic men. Since the 1960s, however, the Knights have admitted African Americans and Hispanics.

The Knights of Columbus is divided into "councils," resembling Masonic lodges. Members advance through four degrees, corresponding to the elements of their fourfold mission. According to information published by one council: "The Fourth Degree [Patriotism]

is the highest degree of the order. Members of this degree are addressed as ‘Sir Knight.’ The primary purpose of the Fourth Degree is to foster the spirit of patriotism and to encourage active Catholic citizenship.”¹²⁵ Fewer than twenty percent of members attain the fourth degree, but advancement through the ranks can be quite rapid: “A Knight is eligible to join the Fourth Degree after one year from the date of his First Degree, providing he has completed the 2nd and 3rd degrees.”¹²⁶ The Color Core, often seen in parades, is comprised of fourth-degree Knights.

President John F. Kennedy was a fourth-degree Knight, and many other prominent Roman Catholics are members. The Knights of Columbus cultivates political connections among foreign heads of state and politicians in the United States. Most U.S. presidents, regardless of religious affiliation, have either addressed the organization’s national conventions or sent personal greetings.

The Knights’ governance structure is described thus:

As Knights of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd degrees meet as a Council, the 4th degree Knights meet in Assemblies. . . . The Supreme

Board of Directors appoints a Supreme Master and twenty Vice Supreme Masters to govern the Fourth Degree. Each Vice Supreme Master oversees a Province which is then broken up into Districts. The Supreme Master appoints District Masters to supervise several assemblies. Each assembly is led by a Navigator. Other elected assembly officers include the Captain, Admiral, Pilot, Scribe, Purser, Comptroller, Sentinels and Trustees. A Friar and Color Corps Commander are appointed by the Navigator. Assembly officers are properly addressed by using the title “faithful” (e.g. Faithful Navigator).¹²⁷

McGivney died at the age of thirty-eight. He is being considered for canonization and has been declared “venerable.” If his cause is successful, he would become the first American-born priest to be declared a saint.

The Knights of Columbus served as a model for the Knights of Saint Columbanus, founded in Ireland in 1915, and the Knights of St Columba, established in the United Kingdom four years later. Like the parent organization in the United States, they look to Ireland as the source of their Roman Catholicism and share similar principles and goals. They all see Freemasons as their main Protestant opponents. The Knights of Saint Columbanus played a significant role in the struggle for Irish independence and has continued to support pro-Catholic, right-wing causes in the Republic of Ireland.

The emblem of the Knights of Columbus {Figure 1(i)} contains the Roman *fascis*, a symbol of political power. Critics have pointed out that the same symbol inspired Benito Mussolini’s Fascist movement.

Opus Dei

Opus Dei (Latin: “The Work of God”) was founded in 1928 by Spanish priest Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer (1902–1975). It offers membership to Roman Catholic laymen and priests, with the goal of spreading “throughout society a profound awareness of the universal call to holiness and apostolate through one’s professional work carried out with freedom and personal responsibility.” Another version of the mission statement adds: “and for improving society.”¹²⁸

The emblem adopted by Opus Dei {Figure 1(j)} is unique in its simplicity but evokes insights from the standpoint of sacred geometry. If the upper arc is reflected about the horizontal arm of the cross, one obtains a *vesica piscis*, a figure of timeless mystical significance. It was used by early Christians to identify themselves and used more recently in the seals of both ecclesiastical institutions and Masonic lodges.

Opus Dei is recognized within the church as a *prelature*, governed by a prelate (bishop) nominated by specific members and appointed by the pope. It offers two primary grades: Supernumerary and Numerary. Supernumeraries can be married laymen who live with their families. They are required to follow a prescribed

“Plan of Life” and to contribute a substantial portion of their income to Opus Dei. Moreover, their loyalty is pledged to the organization rather than to a local parish or diocese. Numeraries, who live in community houses, are pledged to celibacy, assign all income to the organization, and submit all correspondence to examination by superiors. Numeraries are encouraged to perform penitential acts, including use of the *cilice*, a spiked chain worn around the thigh, and the “discipline,” a knotted scourge. Women may join Opus Dei as Numerary Assistants, to work as servants in community houses.¹²⁹ Currently, it is estimated that more than 80,000 men belong to Opus Dei. All positions of authority are held by clergy, and all clerical members are Numeraries.

As in the Knights Templar, unquestioned obedience to superiors is demanded of all members. One of Opus Dei’s maxims is: “Obedience, the sure way. Blind obedience to your superior, the way of sanctity. Obedience in your apostolate the only way, for in a work of God, the spirit must be to obey or to leave.”¹³⁰ Ironically, the requirement of total obedience would seem to contradict the principle of an apostolate “carried out with freedom and personal responsibility.” Members are strictly prohibited from reading books that expose, or are critical of, Opus Dei practices. Because of that censorship, many Supernumerary members are unaware of the full range of Opus Dei’s activities or of the criticisms leveled against it.

Opus Dei has enjoyed strong backing from the Vatican.¹³¹ Former members, however, including clergy, have criticized its secrecy, practices of self-mortification, and recruiting methods—likened to those of cults.¹³² The organization has supported right-wing political movements, including General Franco’s fascist regime in Spain. Escriva was canonized in 2002 under unusual circumstances. No Devil’s Advocate was appointed, and damaging charges brought by prominent clergy who knew Escriva personally were disregarded.¹³³ One allegation was that Escriva defended the reputation of Adolf Hitler and minimized the scope of the Holocaust.

Reflections

The fifth root race, we are told, originated in central Asia and then moved westward through the Middle East to Europe. The fifth *subrace*, with its strong mental and practical focus, emerged as a recognizable ethnic group in medieval times, in Europe itself.¹³⁴ Not surprisingly, the western esoteric tradition—the esotericism of Europe, a few neighboring countries, and former colonies—took a path distinct from that of its counterparts elsewhere in the world; mysticism was not neglected, but greater emphasis was placed on occultism. Significantly, the fifth subrace is associated with Anglo-Saxon ethnicity,¹³⁵ and the great majority of the occult orders discussed herein arose in the Anglo-Saxon lands of England, Northern France, and what is now Germany.

The occult orders we have discussed offered fellowship and protection from outside interference but required members to submit some measure of individual will to the collective will of the order—typically the will of the ruling body or head of the particular order. Individual will was permitted only where necessary to perform approved occult practices.

While the level of discipline varied from one order to another, it was the Knights Templar, the Society of Jesus, and Opus Dei—all three established with at least the initial blessing of the Church of Rome—that demanded complete and unquestioned obedience. The religious common denominator is hard to ignore, and we might see parallels in authoritarian cults. But we should also note that the Templars were a military order, and the Jesuits viewed themselves as “soldiers,” so military-style discipline may have come naturally to them.

Strong discipline and the submission of will to superior authority are not necessarily viewed as oppressive or disagreeable; the church-related orders never lacked applicants for membership. In addition to appealing to sacrificial impulse—imitative of Christ’s submission to the Father—discipline may give members a sense of security and group bonding: a welcome alternative to the loneliness of the

larger society. Moreover, submission to superior authority lifts the burden of making difficult personal choices. Symbolism has always been important in occultism. Occult orders make use of a variety of symbols in their rituals and teachings and treat those symbols, along with the significance attached to them, with the greatest secrecy. But not all symbols are protected thus. Since the Middle Ages, most occult orders have created distinctive emblems to express their ideals, focus members' loyalty and aspiration—and perhaps instill fear in enemies. The emblems may have esoteric significance, but they are public symbols, playing a similar role to national flags. Members of occult orders sometimes identify themselves with special clothing or insignia, but the Fraternity of the Rose Cross specifically forbade such practices.

Ritual, or what could be considered symbolism in motion, is universal, not only among occult orders but in institutional Christianity and the larger society. Religious festivals, important affairs of state, and events like the Olympic Games all provide opportunities for elaborate, meaningful pageantry. Dramatic ritual appeals to the senses, emotions and mind; and for occult orders, it can communicate esoteric truths. Coupled with gestures and words of power, and special regalia, ritual can also be a powerful instrument of magic. Ritual provides a vessel into which nonphysical energy can flow, and from which it can be directed to intended purposes.

Occultism demands important moral choices; practitioners must decide whether to use its inherent power for good or evil. Throughout the period studied herein, occultism was not infrequently motivated by curiosity, ambition, domination or spite. Magical rituals often degenerated into attempts to conjure and control lower entities; and occult temples were turned into dangerous circuses. The Rosicrucian movement of the seventeenth century and the Masonic reform movement of the eighteenth discouraged abuses and the redirection of occult work to worthy ends. But abuse continued, and the *Ordo Templi Orientis* drew charges of sacrilege.

Given the history of abuse, it is understandable that institutional Christianity was reluctant to categorize its sacraments as occult rituals. In the words of French occultist Éliphas Lévi: “sorcerers outraged the children of the Magi.”¹³⁶ Yet Lévi's life ambition was to see reconciliation between religious ritual and occult practice.

The *Therapeutae*, Paracelsus' alchemy, the Rosicrucians—including its modern forms—and most recently the churches have been the only expressions of western occultism to attach any significant importance to healing, a most noble application of occultism.¹³⁷ The Rosicrucian manifestoes also encouraged other forms of service,¹³⁸ and in more modern times, the Shriners have demonstrated a commendable commitment to service.

Otherwise, western occult orders have mostly been self-serving. Where abuses were avoided, they stimulated members' spiritual growth. But they paid little attention to service or outreach. In that respect, the occult orders compared unfavorably with institutional Christianity. The church of the Middle Ages may have been corrupt and materialistic, but clergy continued to administer the sacraments and provide pastoral care. In addition to pursuing the contemplative life, the religious orders embraced a strong service mission, offering the only formal welfare programs of their time. Most Masonic fraternities encourage character-building and good citizenship but largely cater to the social, business and political interests of their own members.

If the purity of ritual can be undermined by abuse, its effectiveness can be undermined by negligence. For example, most modern Masonic orders and organizations like the Knights of Columbus view traditional ceremonies as little more than harmless anachronisms. Yet efforts have been made to preserve ritual's potentially powerful role in occultism. The Martinists took pains to ensure that the esoteric origins and meaning of their rituals were understood, and the Eastern Order of International Co-Freemasonry has done the same. The Golden Dawn and its derivatives encouraged serious

interest in theurgic ritual among its members and explained ritual's value to an audience that might otherwise have little contact with it. Elaborate ceremony has been restored in some Christian denominations that adopted austere forms of worship after the Reformation.¹³⁹ The Liberal Catholic Church has invested considerable effort in exploring the esoteric dimensions of sacramental ritual.¹⁴⁰

Secrecy is inherent in occult orders and at one time was necessary to protect the orders and their members from persecution. It can also create a sense of mystery and enhance a fraternity's appeal. The promise of receiving secret teachings attracts members, and access to those teachings upon initiation is empowering; knowledge is power, especially when it is denied to others. By the late nineteenth century, however, the threat of persecution was essentially over, and some—but not all—occult orders began to lower their guard. Consequently, we know more about modern orders than earlier ones. For example, descriptions of Golden Dawn rituals are probably accurate.¹⁴¹

In recent decades many writers have published works on the occult orders of the more distant past.¹⁴² But accounts of initiation rites, and the like, are rarely supported by authoritative documentation, leaving the reader to wonder whether the information is a retelling of legends and fiction or, in the case of esoteric writers, were obtained by channeling.¹⁴³ New myths have arisen within the esoteric literature, gathering believers as they are told and retold. If the information was channeled or obtained by clairvoyant investigation—as in Charles Leadbeater's work—assessment of credibility shifts to authors' ability to transmit data without contamination and the reliability of their sources.

Esoteric knowledge is disseminated more freely now than in the past, yet it would be a mistake to suppose that all is now exoteric. Rather, "esotericism" has taken on new meaning. Teachings can be published, but understanding them may require long study, along with insight that can only be gained through a discipline of meditation and self-purification. Esotericism has not gone away, even in an era

of mass communication and access to worldwide data resources.

A common feature of all occult orders is their tiered structure. The ancient mysteries were divided into the lesser and greater mysteries. Beginning with Mithraism, if not earlier, occult orders have offered graded systems of degrees. These degrees were created and awarded by human hierophants, and progress through the degrees has sometimes been motivated by glamour, ambition and competitiveness. Yet the degrees still hint at the much-more-important initiations recognized by the Planetary Hierarchy and which are described in detail in the trans-Himalayan teachings.¹⁴⁴

Occult orders offer insights into the workings of the Planetary Hierarchy, the Great White Brotherhood. Although we speak of occult orders as being *esoteric*, they are *exoteric* relative to their higher counterpart. A few orders, like the Rose Cross and the Theosophical Society, may have been founded or inspired by members of the Hierarchy to serve as extensions of their work. Many people believe that the ancient mysteries were so inspired. Whether the gender-exclusiveness of the western occult orders reflects the makeup of the Great White Brotherhood is an issue of far-reaching importance, but one that cannot be resolved here.

Some occult orders existed only in the imagination of bards, troubadours, or fiction writers.¹⁴⁵ Yet the stories of the Holy Grail and the Rose Cross are no less important because their historicity is in question. Their real message is a moral one, describing the spiritual journey, the quest for something of inestimable value, and the initiatory path. The Hierarchy may well have inspired such stories for educational purposes. King Arthur, surrounded by his knights and betrayed by one of his own, bears a striking resemblance to Christ. Galahad's assumption into heaven resembles both Elijah's and Christ's. Sir Galahad exemplified human perfection, and Bors and Perceval may have attained important initiations. Perhaps Lancelot and the other knights failed, but they would have new opportunities in the future.

Conclusions

This article has examined historical data on occult orders in western esotericism, with emphasis on orders founded during the Common Era. They included medieval fraternities, Rosicrucian and Masonic orders, and a number of modern occult orders. Comments about the Theosophical Society, Jesuits, Knights of Columbus, and Opus Dei, which lie on the fringe of the topic area, contribute to our understanding of the occult orders, as more conventionally understood.

Although inherent secrecy was a major hindrance, it has been possible to construct a reasonably reliable history of occult orders during the period of interest. In most cases, we have been able to identify the nature, objectives and practices of the various orders, and to trace the circumstances in which they were founded, flourished, and may have gone into decline.

Our purpose has been to examine occult orders as they existed in their respective historical and social contexts. It was not to evaluate the beliefs, practices or attitudes of particular occult orders in the light of today's expectations, or to recommend them to today's esoteric students. Accordingly, value judgments have been kept to a minimum. Differences between what happened in the past and what we might expect now help measure the expansion of human consciousness.

The study of individual occult orders is of obvious interest, but value is enhanced when larger truths are derived from them. The "Reflections" section attempted to discern characteristic patterns that extend across the spectrum of the occult orders, even to the fringe societies. Pervasive themes have been identified, including the purposeful use of symbolism and ceremony; discipline, mutual bonding, and collective consciousness; and goals of self-transformation and initiation. Such common themes assure us of an underlying coherence in western esotericism, transcending both the divisions among occult orders and the mutual hostility between institutional Christianity and occult orders outside its control. Along with pervasive patterns of belief, these themes will

be discussed in detail in a second article: "Themes in Western Esotericism."

Another larger truth is the recognition that the initiatory grades and organizational structure of the occult orders—even ones that may have been purely fictional—provide insights into the workings of the Planetary Hierarchy and the opportunities it offers to individuals and groups on the Path of Return.

¹ Occultism is distinguished from other areas of esotericism, like mysticism and psychism.

² *The Quest for the Holy Grail* (trans., P. M. Matarasso; London: Penguin Books, c.1325/1969), 70.

³ Stephen Howarth, *The Knights Templar* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1982), 54. The rule urged knights, in particular, to "flee from women's kisses."

⁴ Marvin W. Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 4.

⁵ Some writers date the mysteries to ancient Lemuria. See for example Grace F. Knoche, *The Mystery Schools* (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1999), <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/mysterys/mystsch1.htm>. (Last accessed Nov. 15, 2013).

⁶ Torkom Saraydarian, *Christ: The Avatar of Sacrificial Love* (Cave Creek, AZ: TSG Publishing Foundation, 1974), 65.

⁷ Manly P. Hall, *Secret Teachings of All Ages* (Los Angeles, Philosophical Research Society, 1928), 22.

⁸ According to myth, Cybele's young lover Attis castrated himself under a pine tree and bled to death. At the cult's spring festival, a pine tree decked with violets was carried into the sanctuary with the effigy of a man tied to its trunk—a kind of pagan crucifix. In some versions of the myth Attis rose from the dead.

⁹ Thomas Taylor, *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* (1790/1891, 90; reprint; Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2010).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 29-30. Hall refers to Demeter by her Roman name Ceres.

¹¹ The medieval fairs and pageants held on Christian feast days echo those earlier precedents.

¹² See the description of the Egyptian mysteries given by Geoffrey Hodson in *Light of the Sanctuary* (Manila, Philippines: Theosophical Publishers, 1988), 184. Pageantry reportedly reached a level in Ptolemaic Egypt, rarely surpassed before or since. See for example Chip

- Brown, "The Search for Cleopatra," *National Geographic* (July 2011), 40-63.
- ¹³ The raising of Lazarus from the dead (*John* 11:1-46) has been interpreted as an initiation ritual. See for example Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 1908/1940), 64ff. Also Manly P. Hall, *The Mystical Christ* (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1951), 126-127.
- ¹⁴ Sandra Hodson (ed.), *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition* (Manila, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 1992), 84.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.
- ¹⁶ Plato, *Phaedo*, 69c (trans., W. Rouse; *Great Dialogues of Plato*, Denver, CO: Mentor Books, 1956). Rouse translated the last sentence: "Many are called but few are chosen," drawing on biblical phraseology. G. M. A. Grube offered the more accurate translation shown here.
- ¹⁷ Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries*, 3.
- ¹⁸ Philo of Alexandria, *On the Contemplative Life*, §70-71, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/gno/fff/fff09.htm>. (Last accessed Nov. 15, 2013). The Jewish Therapeutae should not be confused with the *therapeutae*, or attendants, at the much-earlier Egyptian healing temples.
- ¹⁹ David Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- ²⁰ Plutarch, *Life of Pompey* (trans., R. Warner; *Fall of the Roman Republic*, London: Penguin, 1972).
- ²¹ Manfred Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras* (trans., R. Gordon; New York: Routledge, 2000), 102.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 102.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 131ff.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 108ff.
- ²⁶ Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*, 6-10.
- ²⁷ See for example Robert Gilbert's series of lectures, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WO2rT8M8OL>. (Last accessed January 2, 2014).
- ²⁸ Saraydarian, *Christ: The Avatar of Sacrificial Love*, 64-72.
- ²⁹ Nicholas Roerich, *Heart of Asia* (New York: Roerich Museum Press, 1930), 23-29.
- ³⁰ (Attributed to) Clement of Alexandria, *Letter to Theodore*, reproduced in Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and Secret Mark*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973. The authenticity of the work and its attribution to church father Clement are disputed by many academic historians.
- ³¹ According to Saraydarian, baptism, the Eucharist, "and other sacraments were taught in all these centers in the world by great Masters many thousands of years before the Christian era." *Christ: The Avatar of Sacrificial Love*, 66fn.
- ³² Precisely when the Piscean Age began is a topic of continuing debate, but most authorities agree that it lay somewhere in the period 400 BCE to 200 CE. Early Christians' use of the fish as an identifying icon is often taken to be a symbol of the nascent Piscean Age.
- ³³ The Vehmic Courts, and the terror they instilled in people, feature in Walter Scott's novel *Anne of Geierstein* (1829). Other writers depict the Vehm as supportive of the church and emperor and performing a useful role in maintaining law and order. See for example Arkon Duraul, *A History of Secret Societies* (reprint; New York: Pocket Books, 1962), 240-252.
- ³⁴ The first known reference to Arthur is in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, attributed to the Welsh priest Nennius.
- ³⁵ P. M. Matarosso, Introduction to *The Quest for the Holy Grail* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 9-17.
- ³⁶ In a version of the legend by German epic poet Wolfram von Eshenbach (c.1170-c.1220), the grail was a precious stone that fell from the sky.
- ³⁷ *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 93. Lancelot's infatuation with Queen Guinevere owes much to the tradition of courtly love expressed by the Troubadours.
- ³⁸ Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur: the Winchester Manuscript*, book 7 (reprint; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 401.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, book 12, 460-466, 475-477.
- ⁴⁰ *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, 99.
- ⁴¹ Daraul, *A History of Secret Societies*, 33-35.
- ⁴² Howarth, *The Knights Templar*, 43.
- ⁴³ Daraul, *A History of Secret Societies*, 48ff.
- ⁴⁴ Howarth, *The Knights Templar*, 295.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 294. The head was variously alleged to be that of Jesus; Hugh de Payens, founder of the Templars; Satan; Mohammed; or the devil Baphomet (a name which may have been coined as an indirect reference to Mohammed).
- ⁴⁶ Hargrave Jennings, *The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries* (reprint; London: Hesperides, 1870), especially 317.
- ⁴⁷ The cross of St George has since been incorporated into the emblems and flags of several nations and royal houses. It also appears on the

- emblem of the Episcopal Church in the United States.
- ⁴⁸ Hermes absorbed many of the characteristics of the Egyptian Thoth; both were considered gods of writing and magic.
- ⁴⁹ Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (trans., J. Freake; Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn, 1993), book 3, ch. 37, 587.
- ⁵⁰ Andrew Weeks, *Paracelsus: Speculative Theory and the Crisis of the Early Reformation* (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York, 1997), 63ff. Paracelsus' full name was Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus Von Hohenheim.
- ⁵¹ Swiss classical scholar and philologist Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) used emerging methods of textual criticism to demonstrate that the classical Hermetic texts were not nearly as old as previously believed.
- ⁵² *Fama Fraternitatis: A Discovery of the Fraternity of the most Laudable Order of the Rosy Cross* (trans., T. Vaughn, 1652. Rosicrucian Archive), <http://www.crcsite.org/fama.htm>. (Last accessed January 7, 2014).
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Howarth, *The Knights Templar*, 43.
- ⁵⁵ *Fama Fraternitatis*.
- ⁵⁶ *Fama Fraternitatis*. The story may be apocryphal. Earls of Norfolk held office from 1399 to 1425 and from 1477 to 1660, but none was known to have suffered from leprosy. The last significant outbreak of leprosy among the English aristocracy occurred in the thirteenth century
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ *Confessio Fraternitatis* (trans., T. Vaughn), 1652, ch. IV, <http://www.crcsite.org/confessio.htm>. (Last accessed Sept 30, 2013).
- ⁵⁹ Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 58ff. Also: Paul Foster Case, *The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1985).
- ⁶⁰ In its earliest years the Royal Society was not yet the bastion of empirical science it became later.
- ⁶¹ Case, *The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order*, 37-64. Gematria assigns numbers to letters and makes deductions from the numerical results thus obtained.
- ⁶² Ibid., 5.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Charles W. Leadbeater, *Glimpses of Masonic History* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1926), 296. One Masonic order associates the H.O.A.T.F. with the Count of Saint Germain, but others reject this association.
- ⁶⁵ Manly P. Hall, *Secret Teachings of All Ages* (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1977), ch. 140.
- ⁶⁶ Leadbeater, *Glimpses of Masonic History*, 243.
- ⁶⁷ Tobias Churton, *The Magus of Freemasonry* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions), 92-117. Churton depicts Freemasonry in the seventeenth century as being in transition from operative, i.e., guild, masonry to modern speculative Freemasonry.
- ⁶⁸ Amadeus Mozart was one of several composers who wrote music for Masonic use. See Jacques Henry, *Mozart the Freemason* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1991).
- ⁶⁹ The Elect Cohens are discussed under "Martinism," below.
- ⁷⁰ Source: "Bavarian Illuminati," <http://www.bavarian-illuminati.info/>. (Last accessed January 11, 2014.)
- ⁷¹ Arthur E. Waite, Introduction to Karl Eckartshausen, *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary*, 1909, x, <http://www.sacredtexts.com/eso/cuts/cuts02.htm> (Last accessed March 19, 2013.)
- ⁷² The Duke eventually became King Carl XIII of Sweden.
- ⁷³ Reportedly Cagliostro subsequently incarnated as Helena Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society. See Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II* (New York: Lucis, 1955), 331-332.
- ⁷⁴ Arthur E. Waite, *The Life of Louis Claude de St Martin, The Unknown Philosopher, and the Substance of his Transcendental Doctrine* (London: Wellby, 1901), 13.
- ⁷⁵ John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*, part 1, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/kronstadt/christlife.ii.html>. (Last accessed October 25, 2013). He wrote: "God has granted us existence—the greatest gift of His goodness, and after we had fallen away from Him, from life into death, He gave us for our regeneration, to bring us back to life, His Son."
- ⁷⁶ Waite, *The Life of Louis Claude de St Martin*, 47.
- ⁷⁷ Interestingly, his biographer, Arthur Waite, distanced himself from the magical rituals of the Golden Dawn to pursue a mystical path.
- ⁷⁸ The concept of the Repairer had been explored by the Safed Kabbalists two centuries earlier, though not of course with reference to Christ.
- ⁷⁹ See for example "The Lost Word," <http://www.sacred-exts.com/mas/sof/sof33.htm>.

- (Last accessed December 20, 2013). Emphasis in original.
- ⁸⁰ Masons cite an ancient Babylonian poem, which begins: “The Word that causes the heavens on high to tremble, The Word that makes the world below to quake, The Word that bringeth destruction to the Annunakis, His Word is beyond the diviner, beyond the seer!”
- ⁸¹ Waite, *The Life of Louis Claude de St Martin*, etc., 236.
- ⁸² *Philippians* 2:10.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 237.
- ⁸⁴ Roman Catholic Prince Charles Edward Stuart (1720–1788), “Bonnie Prince Charlie,” led the Jacobite uprising of 1745 against the Hanoverian King George II.
- ⁸⁵ The first decree prohibiting Roman Catholics from joining Masonic orders was issued by Pope Clement XII in 1738, and most subsequent popes have supported the ban. As noted, Cagliostro was persecuted by the Roman Inquisition in the 1790s. But outside the Papal States enforcement seems to have been lax during much of the eighteenth century. Mozart was both a Freemason and a Roman Catholic in good standing, and Bonnie Prince Charlie and other prominent Catholics of the period may also have been Freemasons.
- ⁸⁶ Malcolm C. Duncan, *Masonic Ritual and Monitor* (New York: McKay, undated), 94.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 252. Zerubbabel was the Persian governor of the province of Judah during the reign of King Cyrus. After the return of the Jews from Babylon he helped rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.
- ⁸⁹ Source: Evangelical Truth, <http://www.evangelicaltruth.com/RoyalArch.htm>. Last accessed January 1, 2013. The accuracy of the allegation cannot be determined.
- ⁹⁰ Source: Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Northern Jurisdiction, U.S.A., <http://www.scottishritenmj.org/AbouttheScottishRite.aspx>. (Last accessed December 31, 2013).
- ⁹¹ Arthur E. Waite, “Co-Masonry,” *A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* (New York: University Books, 1921).
- ⁹² Source: Eastern Order of International Co-Freemasonry, <http://comasonic.net/>. (Last accessed January 14, 2014).
- ⁹³ Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1972), 139ff.
- ⁹⁴ Christopher Bamford, introduction to Rudolf Steiner, *“Freemasonry” and Ritual Work* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2007), xvi.
- ⁹⁵ Hella Wiesberger, “Preliminary Remarks, II,” to Steiner, *“Freemasonry” and Ritual Work*, 144. The Anthroposophical Society’s headquarters is in Dornach, Switzerland.
- ⁹⁶ Max Heindel, *Echoes from Mount Ecclesia*, Los Angeles: Rosicrucian Fellowship June & July 1913, 1-2.
- ⁹⁷ Jan Leene and coworker Henriette Stok-Huizer developed the group’s foundational teachings under the pen names Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri.
- ⁹⁸ Source: *Mastery of Life*, Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, 1987.
- ⁹⁹ Source: Theosophical Society International Headquarters, Adyar, India.
- ¹⁰⁰ K. Paul Johnson, *The Masters Revealed: Madame Blavatsky and the Myth of the Great White Lodge* (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 1994), 89.
- ¹⁰¹ Announcement in *Lucifer*, vol. 3, October 1888. Capitalization and italicization—hallmarks of Blavatsky’s writing style—in the original.
- ¹⁰² An important point of contact between traditional eastern teachings and Theosophy was the Vedāntin scholar Tallapragada Subba Row (1856–1890).
- ¹⁰³ Helena P. Blavatsky *The Secret Doctrine* (Adyar: India: Theosophical University Press, 1888).
- ¹⁰⁴ Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1920).
- ¹⁰⁵ Members of the Pasadena Society continue to refer to the work of Besant et al. as “pseudo-Theosophy.”
- ¹⁰⁶ Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Hidden Life in Freemasonry* (Adyar, India: Theosophical University Press, 1926), x.
- ¹⁰⁷ See for example Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1940/1971).
- ¹⁰⁸ Michael Stoeber, “Evelyn Underhill on Magic, Sacrament, and Spiritual Transformation,” 2003, http://www.evelynunderhill.org/newsletter/EUA_2003/newsletter_2003_final_final.PDF. (Last accessed March 15, 2014.)
- ¹⁰⁹ Mary K. Greer. *Women of the Golden Dawn* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1995). See also: W. Wynn Westcott. “Historic Lecture.” Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

- ¹¹⁰ Source: Servants of the Light, <http://servantsofthelight.org/aboutSOL/history.html>. (Last accessed March 15, 2014).
- ¹¹¹ See for example Susan Roberts, *The Magician of the Golden Dawn: The Story of Aleister Crowley* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1978), 121-122.
- ¹¹² The OTO's church had no connection with l'Église Gnostique de France, in which Gérard Encausse was consecrated a bishop, or with other Gnostic-revival churches still operating in Europe and North America.
- ¹¹³ Aleister Crowley, *Confessions of Aleister Crowley* (London: Arkana, 1989). Parenthesis in original.
- ¹¹⁴ *Liber XV, Canon Missæ*, §II, <http://gnosticmass.org/Mass-Missal.pdf>. (Last accessed December 31, 2013). Some capitalization removed.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, §VI.
- ¹¹⁶ One well-known institution declined to publish research because it listed Crowley among the references.
- ¹¹⁷ Christopher Hollis, *The Jesuits: A History* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), 13. Montmartre, now part of Paris, was then a village beyond the city walls.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.
- ¹¹⁹ The Spiritual Exercises, developed when Ignatius was a prisoner of war, form the basis of intense, month-long retreats in which participants contemplate their sins in relation to the passion of Christ.
- ¹²⁰ Hollis, *The Jesuits*, 17.
- ¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 134ff.
- ¹²² The three-volume work was published in Rome in 1652–1654.
- ¹²³ Allegedly the Jesuits took special aim at the Bavarian Illuminati and helped bring about their downfall. See Daraul, *A History of Secret Societies*, 273.
- ¹²⁴ Source: Knights of Columbus, <http://www.kofc.org/un/en/about/principles/index.html>. (Last accessed December 28, 2013).
- ¹²⁵ Source: Faithful Shepherd Council, <http://eaganknights.com/degrees.php>. (Last accessed December 28, 2013).
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁸ Source: Opus Dei, <http://www.opusdei.us/>. (Last accessed December 31, 2013).
- ¹²⁹ Source: Opus Dei Awareness Network, http://www.odan.org/what_is_opus_dei.htm. (Last accessed December 28, 2013).
- ¹³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹³¹ Whether such backing will continue remains to be seen. Pope Francis is a Jesuit, and the Society of Jesus has often been critical of Opus Dei.
- ¹³² Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), and the motion picture of the same name (2006), portrayed Opus Dei in a negative light. Whether the portrayal was accurate is difficult to assess, but Opus Dei reported an increase in membership applications after the film's release.
- ¹³³ A Devil's Advocate is normally appointed during canonization procedures to draw attention to any doubts concerning a candidate's sanctity and worthiness to be declared a saint.
- ¹³⁴ Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater declared that the fifth subrace originated in Asia in 20,000 BCE, and only one of three branches reached Europe. See their *Man: Whence, How and Wither* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1971), 331-333. By contrast, most other writers have assumed that the fifth subrace emerged much more recently.
- ¹³⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (New York: Lucis, 1927), ix.
- ¹³⁶ Éliphas Lévi, *The History of Magic* (trans., A. Waite; New York: Samuel Weiser, 1913/1969), 374.
- ¹³⁷ See for example the "Rosicrucian Healing Service," <http://rosicrucianhealing.org/>. (Last accessed January 22, 2014.)
- ¹³⁸ John F. Nash, "Service Ideals in the Rosicrucian Movement," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Winter 2005), 33-42.
- ¹³⁹ This was a major goal of Anglo-Catholicism. John F. Nash, *The Sacramental Church*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011.
- ¹⁴⁰ Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1920).
- ¹⁴¹ See for example, Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn* (St Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1971); Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn* (Rochester, VT: Park Street, 1995).
- ¹⁴² Rudolf Steiner gave a detailed account of initiation into the Apprentice degree of Freemasonry in "The Temple Legend," lecture, Berlin, December 2, 1904, <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA093/English/RSP1985/19041202p01.html> (Last accessed January 11, 2014). Another author offered the following description of initiation into an order founded in 1780 that "was not officially Rosicrucian, but purported to contain all the elements of the earlier Order": "The candidate was led into a room covered with black, and the

floor and furniture covered in black cloth. The room was lit by a central candlestick in the shape of a human figure. . . .” Duraul, *A History of Secret Societies*, 235-237.

¹⁴³ Channeling—a term often trivialized in modern usage—is defined here more correctly as “the communication of information to or through a physically embodied human being from a source that is said to exist on some other level or dimension of reality than the physical as we know it, and that is not from the normal mind

(or self) of the channel.” Jon Klimo, *Channeling* (New York: Tarcher, 1987), 2. Parenthesis in original.

¹⁴⁴ See for example Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (New York: Lucis, 1922); Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1933).

¹⁴⁵ Cynics have made similar comments about the scriptural record of Jesus Christ.