

VICTOR HEAD CORRESPONDENCE—TYPED FROM ORIGINAL

409 Bensal Road
Hatboro, PA 19040
Monday 2 August 2004

Dear Ken [Schulte] ---

What a delightful collection of photographs! That one of Connie seated by some steps with a dark silky dress and flower in her hair is particularly precious to me and that face is how I remember her best but I wonder where that house was!

The Theosophists were founded by a Russian we knew as Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891), said to have been a psychic, an extensive traveler in India and other eastern countries and rightly or wrongly I've always described Theosophy as a westernized version of the highest in Hinduism. She was succeeded by Katharine Tingley (1847-1929) who founded the Raja Yoga Academy, also known as Lomaland, where the four of us stayed from early 1921 to early 1926, and by Annie Besant (1847-1933) said by Collegiate Dictionary to have been an English Theosophist, though I had the impression that a branch in or near Los Angeles followed her.

Sylvia and Connie were in the "endowed" department i.e. charity, while mother had to pay for me and Norman. Connie just loved Amy Reineman, but when she died and someone else took over who was a battleaxe (Amy's sister, I think) life became a total torment for Connie. Once, for what trifling offence I don't know, Connie was punished by being forced to live on bread and water for a week. I lived in a little round cottage with boys my age and seldom saw the other three except when dad and mother came to visit us occasionally.

There was no connection between Theosophists, which were and still are more or less worldwide today, and the Faithists or the Kosmon Fraternity which don't rate a place in the Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary.

Here are my probably not too reliable memories of childhood.

When I was still a baby I was in a high chair and a person across the table from me made a vicious face at me and I screamed, "Mama, Mama, Grace is making a face at me!" That is my earliest recollection. It was only much later that I learned that when I was about 1 ½ years old my mother and father were divorced and mother had brought the four of us to Sacratro Valley where a group of Faithists had built a ranch as a refuge for children from a San Diego orphanage. How mother knew of the place I don't know, but I do know she had befriended a Mr. Rose or Dr. Rose who was the head of Balboa Park, but was also known as Brother Rose among the Faithists. My guess is that he was wealthy and may have endowed the Fraternity or may have persuaded a city or county government to support them in their good work with orphans.

One of the older boys named Mahlon owned a motorcycle and befriended Norman, so mother told me some years later. Once when Mahlon was away, Norman went from one adult to another asserting "Mahlon's in a wreck! Mahlon's in a wreck!" which later turned out to be true. Mother also told me that Grace was a feeble minded adult, a victim of congenital syphilis. Also, how Brother Raymond, a former cook in the British Navy, was both cook and mechanic at Sacratro Valley.

Where the Christians had a cross for a symbol, the Faithists had in combination a cross of four equal arms denoting the principal compass points, circle representing God or infinity, and a leaf like maple or sycamore, denoting life. I remember a hymn we used to sing:

There is a light that cannot fade,
A light forever true,
It knows not time by sun or shade
But thrills all nature through

It thrills all nature through with love,
It thrills all nature through,
It knows not time by sun or shade,
But thrills all nature through.

The tune was beautiful, but I learned to hate it after going to church in Alpine from the Foss Ranch where I heard of Jesus for the first time and heard, to the same melody, these shocking words:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emanuel's veins.....

Those are all I remember and those of you who were brought up from infancy on fundamentalist Christian doctrine may never understand what a sudden shock those words were to a ten-year-old. No God that I could worship ever demanded a blood sacrifice!

The Faithists' Bible was called O-Ah-Spe. It was said that around 1870 or 1875 a dentist in Arizona was mystically instructed to place his typewriter by an eastern window and hold his hands over the keys and let the first rays of the morning sun take control—thus by a form of automatic writing the entire very long text came from unseen sources. Next he was instructed to place a drawing board by the window and hold a pencil above sheet after sheet of drawing paper so that hundreds of illustrations were provided from unseen sources, so it was said.

Years ago I had a copy of O-Ah-Spe (not sure how it was spelled) but I foolishly destroyed it in fear it might offend my Christian family and friends. Some chapters seemed scientific and certainly appealed to my dad. I guess mother saw to it that dad got a copy after he had remarried. The word vortexia (sp?) appeared many times to account for all forms of matter and energy and motion, even matter at a sub-microscopic level. Since Thompson discovered the electron in 1897 and Rutherford the atom in 1911, and Niels Bohr sub-atomic quantum mechanics in 1913, it would appear that O-Ah-Spe pre-dated all of them. Hence, its appeal to some scientists and engineers. Some chapters gave advice in proper philosophy of living. Others gave long histories of the prophets including Jesus, Mohammed, etc. and told expurgated versions of many stories of the Old Testament (no drunks or murderers or adulterers made into heroes) which pleased my mother.

Friday, 13 August 2004

Well, I didn't think when I started this that I was going to make a sermon out of it, but now that I've gone this far I might as well finish and make copies for all my loved ones to give them an idea of where this old heretic is coming from.

I don't think I'm a Theosophist or a Faithist, though son David has lived one of the basic tenets of Theosophy (or Hinduism) practically from babyhood without being taught it, and that is a profound respect for all living things. He would step carefully to avoid stepping on an ant! I was so thankful that he never was engaged in combat while he was in Viet Nam. There was a time when some of the soldiers thought it was amusing to pour gasoline on a rat and set it on fire. He went in the tent and came out with a machete, chopped the rat in half and told the rest, "If I see any of you doing that again I'll beat the shit out of you." Dave is a little guy like his dad (5' 7", I think) but he still held the machete. They didn't know he had been Montgomery County Champion in high school wrestling. Next day one of them challenged him. He didn't have to beat him up, just pinned him to the ground till he gave up.

I have no doubt that the Theosophists and the Faithists have left their mark on me, but I like to think of myself as a Christian or perhaps a Jesusian. There are three passages of scripture I keep coming back to:

1. God created man in His own image. As I preached from the pulpit of the Methodist Church in Lynn, Massachusetts, at the height of World War II, 1943, "That process of creation is a long way from complete today."
2. When asked "When saw we thee hungry and fed thee or thirsty and gave thee drink or naked and clothed thee or sick or in prison and visited thee," and the answer "Insasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto Me."
3. The prophet Micah, putting aside the notion that God was ever pleased with such ignorant actions as blood sacrifices, said, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with thy God?"

To those who say that my mother or my beloved Sister Mary at Sacraero Valley are burning in the fires of Hell forever because of their theology, I say, when are you going to break away from the notions of an Old Testament God of hate and war and demanding blood sacrifices and learn to love the God of love that Jesus taught? And when you say that Jesus preached eternal damnation and a "lake of fire" I can only remind you that the content of scripture has been tampered with many times by those who would use fear to control and unruly population.

"In the cross of Christ I glory" says one old hymn but that is not for me. Rather, I find that Christ on the cross is my personal shame. I am only "saved" by realizing that there is that in my character which resents parental authority that I too might well have shouted "crucify Him!" Only as such humility has taken control of us can we humans claim to have taken another step toward being created in the image of God!

End of sermon.

A few years ago Flo and I attended an Elderhostel at an Episcopal monastery on the Hudson, just across the run from Roosevelt's Hyde Park. It was called the Holy Cross Monastery. One of the courses was taught by a Roman Catholic Priest about a Roman Catholic Trappist Monk named Thomas Merton. Merton had traveled among many nations and cultures of the Far East and liked to picture God on the top of a huge conical mountain. Around the base of the mountain were many cultures: Judaism, Christianity, the Muslims, Taoists, Hindus, Buddhists and a hundred more, you name it, and all striving toward the mountain top and how long would it be before we come to realize we're all worshipping the same God?

To all who receive this I say...

Love and God Bless!

Vic Head